And In His Eyes, A Galaxy

by Penkindisbestspecibus

Summary

Midoriya Inko attracts small objects. Midoriya Hisashi breathes fire.

Midoriya Izuku is full of stars.

Notes

I'm not going to lie to you. I (mostly) don't know where I'm going with this.

This started as an idea I had to explore the potential of the rest of Yuuei. We see the class of 1-A, and bits of 1-B, but from the Support Department and the Gen Department, we only see one person each.
Tags will be added as they arise, but again, this is a train with no driver. I'm not sure what, if any, relationships will form but if they do, expect them to do so relatively slowly.

This is inspired by the great various versions of Izuku I've read, but also more directly inspired by the Worm Fanfic 'Glassmaker' by JinglyJangles on the Spacebattles forum.
Midoriya Hisashi breathed fire. Izuku wanted to be like him once, exhaling gouts of flame like a circus performer. He’s okay, he thinks, with what he is. It may not be a firebreather, but it’s him.

His eyes are bright and twinkling, his skin practically glows. Everything about him is bright.

Midoriya Izuku is full of stars.

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When Izuku is four, his mother, Inko, takes him to the hospital to see a Quirkologist. Four is the year that quirks often begin to express themselves, and as far as Inko can tell, Izuku has shown no signs. He certainly hasn’t attracted any objects the way she can, and thankfully, he has not set fire to anything with precocious fire breathing.

The Doctor sits Izuku down in a chair, and begins a basic check up to start off with. Blood pressure, heartbeat. He puts a standard thermometer in Izuku’s mouth to check his temperature, instructing him to hold it under his tongue and to leave it for several minutes.

(Little Izuku being Little Izuku, he huffs and he puffs and does his best to summon up the flame within)

In retrospect, he probably should’ve been tipped off the moment Izuku complained of a funny taste in his mouth. Regardless, when the Doctor went to remove the thermometer from Izuku’s mouth, only half of it came away in his hand.

Ruefully, the Doctor realises that he should’ve stuck to protocol and used the Quirk Thermometer. It was a mistake to think that just because there was no outside sign of fire or thermal activity, that the boy wasn’t capable of it.

They schedule more tests. Scans. Thermometers of increasing heat tolerance. It’s starting to become something of a circus, and Inko does her best to remain calm throughout all of this. Izuku, for his part, is just curious.

Ultimately, they conclude that Izuku has inherited a mutated version of his father’s quirk - not particularly uncommon. Most of the terms go over Izuku’s head, but he tries his best to follow along. What he gets is that his father’s stomach made a spark of electricity and that this ignited the gas already produced.

Izuku’s stomach ‘ionizes’ it into plasma. Compared to his father, this is apparently the difference between a drop of rain and an entire monsoon. As a side effect, they note that Izuku can consume things a baseline human probably shouldn’t - like mercury filled thermometers.
Later, in primary school, Izuku learns that stars are also made of plasma. He’s delighted to be full of stars, and he imagines entire galaxies swirling in his gut.

Since learning of his Quirk, he’s taken to eating odd things. His mother isn’t sure if she should stop him or not - chewing on metal is normally not okay, but knowing that it’ll have no adverse effects on him changes that. Belatedly, she ends up telling him not to eat random things. If he’s going to eat metal, he can purchase it from the hardware store.

Visits to the hardware store become something like visits to the candy store, where an excited Izuku buys handfuls of nuts, bolts and screws to snack on like they were trail mix whilst a bemused Inko watches. The staff soon adjust, and are always happy to see their cutest customer.

Iron has a tangy flavour to it, sort of but not quite similar to a sour candy, that Izuku finds he enjoys. Nickel has a creaminess to it, though he finds copper bitter and the less said about tin the better.

Kacchan asks him why he’s chewing on bolts once. “Because it’s tasty!” is all Izuku says. Kacchan tries a bolt, and spits it out, but Kacchan also likes really spicy food so Izuku’s not sure he has taste buds anymore.

Izuku is seven the first time he vomits.

His mother takes him to a carnival, and he’s so excited he almost vibrates out of his chair. There’s carnival food, although Izuku has already eaten a few ingots worth of metal, and then there are rides. Izuku’s fine until he takes a ride on something called ‘The Twirler’.

It twirls alright. It twirls so hard and so fast that when it finally stops, Izuku stumbles a few feet and Inko wisely guides him towards a bin. When he retches, it suddenly occurs to her that perhaps a person whose quirk involved plasma in their stomach should not be made to vomit the contents of said stomach.

Fortunately or unfortunately, it’s too late to even warn Izuku, even if it's too late to reach the bin.

His vomit is not what anyone expects. It is certainly not chunks of half-digested food, swimming in bile, and for that, everyone is a little thankful, Izuku included. It is not a burst of superheated air and plasma, and for that, everyone should be thankful (alas, only Inko is aware of the potential danger, and she is the only one who is properly relieved). It is, instead, a small white hot gooey mess that begins to cool almost immediately after leaving Izuku’s mouth.

Inko knows better than to touch it, but Izuku doesn’t. He reaches out with his childish hands and scoops it up. Inko wants to tell him not to, to let it go because grabbing your vomit is very much not
It is a polite thing to do (and certainly not hygienic), but the rest of her is still unsure what parts of normality still apply to Izuku, so she ends up only watching as the still slightly nauseous Izuku begins playing with the substance, rolling it into a ball as it cools.

In short order, he’s holding a somewhat spherical blob of silvery metal.

It stands to reason that the boy who eats metal also pukes metal. Inko shouldn’t be so surprised at the things Izuku does, but he always seems to find a way to simultaneously worry and impress her.

Inko takes the metal to a Quirkologist, who after initial testing, suggests she’d be better off seeing a geologist or some kind of engineer. Metal byproduct isn’t incredibly rare but it is uncommon, and they don’t have the facilities to test the qualities of the metal.

Izuku’s weird puke-metal turns out to be a steel alloy made up of the various metals he enjoys snacking on. That in itself isn’t so remarkable, but after more tests, it turns out to be a surprisingly useful metal. The Engineer she sees professes it’s usefulness, bandying terms she herself isn’t too familiar with - coefficients, scales. Her degree was in social services, not metallurgy. She thinks she gets the gist of ‘Shape-memory alloy’ though. The general meaning seems to be that whatever weird metal Izuku made is quite useful, and could she possibly tell them the source of it?

She politely refuses, citing personal reasons. She doesn’t want to open up her son to that kind of scrutiny or pressure. When he’s older, he can decide. They’re disappointed, but understanding. They ask to keep the metal. Inko checks with Izuku, and he agrees. He can, after all, make more. Surely?

Izuku does make more. He learns to shape them into figurines, little models of animals and people. Blobby, indistinct models but each one he makes gets progressively more detailed. Shaping the blobs of metal with his fingers is hard though, so soon he learns to shape tools out of the metal first.

It only takes him a few weeks to learn that he doesn’t have to vomit to make the metals - chewing works just as well, but it does take a little longer. It’s a lot more pleasant a sensation too; akin to chewing gum.

Izuku runs lots of tests on his metals, creating rudimentary scales of his own. They are, for the most part, quite similar, although he finds that if he adds more zinc, he creates a ‘harder’ metal. Less malleable. Copper makes for very conductive metals, but they are also soft and squishy compared to the others.

Inko is kind enough to let Izuku take over the garage, and he turns it into a workspace for all his figurines and tools. Particularly pretty and well made ones get put on the mantle.
He asks Kacchan if he thinks he can be a hero. Kacchan takes one look at him and snorts.

“What would you do, Deku? Spit metal at villains?” And goes right back to blasting rocks across the lake.

Izuku frowns, but he can’t say Kacchan is entirely wrong. The stars are all inside of Izuku. He has no way to get them out. Heroes like Endeavour can make the fire from any part of them. Izuku can’t even cough it up if he tries.

He stuffs a handful of lake sand and gravel into his mouth to take his mind off things. The gritty texture is nice, even if the overly sweet flavour isn’t Izuku’s favourite. He has a blob of glass to play with soon enough, and he makes it into a small starburst.

“For you,” He says as he hands it to Kacchan. It’s got a soft gold tint to it but the center remains a flare of orange, and it very much reminds him of Kacchan.

Kacchan takes it with only mild hesitation.

Izuku stares down at his collection of handmade figurines and baubles.

He can’t be a Hero like All Might or Endeavour or Kacchan. But Izuku knows Heroes. He loves them. He’s wanted to be like All Might since he was even aware who All Might was.

But, he thinks, it’s okay that he can’t be like All Might. Kacchan is better suited to being like All Might than he is. Although, Kacchan’s attitude makes him more like Endeavour than All Might. He’d never say that to his face though, not without being prepared to run for a good handful of minutes.

Izuku is full of stars, and he can’t get those stars out of him in a way that is immediately helpful to Heroics. But he can get them out - in his metals.

Plenty of Heroes rely on devices or gadgets meant to assist or amplify their abilities. Rather than being like All Might, couldn’t he be someone like Power Loader? Heroes have a dangerous job. Couldn’t his metal make that job just a little safer?

Nodding his head, he starts to work on his very first project - a shield.

Chapter End Notes

I know myself better than to promise consistent updates.

I'm wrapping up my diploma course though, and hope to spend the next few months writing again so who knows?
Visions of Nebulae

Chapter Summary

Izuku's dreams crystallize into perfect, terrible clarity.

Chapter Notes

I am absolutely floored by the response this has gotten. Absolutely floored.
You are all incredible and I appreciate every single one of you.
EDIT: whoops didn't mean to post this already. Oh well.
I've gotten a better handle on the direction now.
EDIT 2: Fucking. God. Sorry anyone who just received an update that WAS not meant to happen. Chapter 4 is not ready yet because Chapter 3 isn’t even posted and I should stop editing this on my phone.

Midoriya Izuku cannot feel fire. It’s a useful quality to have when your hobby involves pressing white hot metals into shape with your bare hands. Rather than feel a terrible burning sensation, to Izuku’s hands it simply feels like warm clay. His natural abilities make him well equipped to create metalcrafts and glass baubles and his supportive mother helps this talent flourish but there is one teeny little issue though.

As hot as it is, Izuku’s mouth is still only as big as a human mouth, and no amount of plasma in his stomach will change that. Midoriya Inko lets Izuku have a workshop but she rather sensibly draws the line at a literal forge.

Fortunately, an acquaintance of his father is willing to assist the young aspiring smith. Daruma Hoji is a blacksmith who is happy to lend his forge to the young man when it’s not in use, for a small affordable rental fee. He even offers some tips and tricks to Izuku regarding, until now unconsidered, techniques such as quenching or tempering.

Daruma Hoji is a traditional swordsman, but Izuku has no interest in swords beyond a passing curiosity. This doesn't stop Izuku from making a few of his own under Hoji’s tutelage, although he’s careful to keep them blunt.

“Ya could be an incredible Hero,” Hoji tells him, inspecting the dinner plate sized buckler Izuku made years ago. “Maybe with a name like… Masamune. Wait. Nah that one was taken ages ago, but I guess you could be the second comin’.”

“That's very kind of you, Hoji-san,” says Izuku, wiping sweat from his brow (he only sweats when he exerts himself). Masamune, the Samurai Hero. He remembers reading about him, and his ability to generate blades of light. “But I don't want to be that kind of Hero.”
“Really? What kinda Hero d’ya wanna be?”

‘Never fear! Why? For I am here!’

“I want people to hold something I’ve made and think ‘I have no reason to fear because I have this.’” He traces the large ‘D’ he carved into the shield. "I want to be the Hero that inspires that kind of feeling."

Hoji lets out a barking laugh, slapping Izuku on the back. “Yer a great kid. World could do with more Heroes like that. Now why don't you gimme a hand with this frame?”

Izuku blows glass like bubblegum, and ends up with a round, green flask. Hoji graciously accepts the gift, remarking that Izuku is a boy of many talents. Izuku thinks they're all really the same talent when you think about it.

They're walking home together one day when Izuku grabs Katsuki’s wrist suddenly. Izuku’s hands, like the rest of him really, are incredibly warm against his skin but hours working metal have turned them rough and calloused.

“Deku,” Katsuki says in a tone that is incredibly patient for him, which really means it's only a half angry snarl, “What the fuck are you doing?”

Izuku looks up at him and Izuku's eyes are so big and wide and full of so many things and Katsuki is adrift and lost and how can he breathe amongst the nebulae how can he find his way amongst the stars and then "I'm measuring you, Kacchan,” Izuku says off handedly, already returning to the task at hand. Somewhere, he has produced a loose tape measure and is busy using it to take all sorts of measurements. Katsuki’s fingers, hand, his wrist.

“I can fucking see that,” He snaps, after regaining his composure. It only takes him a second or two because he has been dealing with Izuku for years now. “I'm asking why you see the fucking need to do this.”

Izuku, somewhat predictably, does not respond immediately, and when he does, it does not answer his question at all. “Did you know you share a lot of similarities with Ingenium?”

“I don't even fucking know who that is.”

It’s a testament to their bond of childhood friendship, Izuku thinks, that Katsuki has remained patiently calm through this. Or at least as patiently calm as he ever is. “A new Hero. Well, not that
new, but there were some videos of his latest battle, against the Scarecrow Villain. He uses his quirk a lot like you do.”

But Katsuki’s patience, as exceptional as it is for Izuku alone, reaches its end soon enough. “As interesting as I’m sure that asshole’s fight was, it does not explain why you are fucking measuring me.”

Izuku has the unmitigated gall to give him a blank look which does nothing to assuage Katsuki’s desire to blow him to tiny pieces. “It’s for armor, Kacchan.”

This mollifies Katsuki, at least enough that Izuku goes unexploded today. “Why didn’t you just fucking say so from the start, idiot?” He snaps, although he already knows the answer. Explaining things may as well be kryptonite to Izuku. Katsuki’s not sure if he just can’t explain his reasoning or won’t. He’s not sure it would make sense to anyone but Izuku either.

Izuku for his part says and does nothing that would make it any clearer. “Obviously you can’t use gloves because you need your palms clear - or maybe permeable fabric? I can’t do fabric. Maybe a mesh. Out of chain? Have to link a whole bunch of strands together, maybe weave it like a cloth. Do you think Best Jeanist can affect metal fiber or does it have to be organic? Actually, can he affect hair?” Izuku is doing the thing where he rambles and rants and Katsuki can’t keep up. Apparently breathing plasma is very efficient because Izuku never seems to take a breath.

He knows from past experience though, that if someone doesn't apply the brakes, Izuku will literally keep going for hours. “Deku. Point. Now.”

He blinks, in the way that someone might when they realise they reached their destination whilst walking on autopilot. “Right! Bracers.” He declares, still explaining nothing.

“Bracers?” Katsuki prompts.

“Bracers. I got the idea after watching Ingenium. You can use explosions for maneuvering, because your body still reacts to the force you just have to absorb it but how and where you absorb it lets you control the direction.” Izuku lifts Katsuki’s arm and begins pointing at different parts. “Like if you keep the arm straight and tense, then it’s a clear vector like this right? But if you bend your elbow, you can add angular momentum and turn your body.” At last, Izuku pauses. “So. Bracers.”

He’s definitely twitching. “Deku. You do realise that explained absolutely jack shit?”

Izuku blinks again, because of course he forgets to explain the ‘obvious’ leaps of logic. “Like a hammer,” He says, pointedly avoiding a condescending tone. “If you were to swing your arm normally like this,” and he makes a knife hand motion with his arm extended, “You only have so much time to generate force. But if you spin around,” and he demonstrates by twirling in place with his arm out, gently tapping his wrist against Katsuki, “You wind up more and build more speed and thus more force right? Except most people can’t spare the time to spin like that. But Ingenium expels gas from his arms like a jet engine, and you can use explosions.”

Katsuki rubs his wrist, a thoughtful scowl on his face.

Izuku goes in for the kill. “And you can’t really use gloves because they’d impede your quirk, so bracers on the wrist for both defense and offense. Could also add stuff like knee pads or elbow pads, maybe even boots.”

“They better look fucking cool, Deku.”
“Izu-kun,” Inko calls, knocking on his door. She waits a minute before cracking it open to peer at her son.

Izuku is lost to the world, muttering to himself as he scribbles on sheets of graph paper. Diagrams and schematics are plastered over the wall, designs for everything from costumes to what Inko can only assume is some sort of portable barrier.

“Izuku, come on. It's time for dinner.” Her matronly tone brooks no arguments but even its maternal power is not enough to disrupt Izuku’s trance. She reaches out to shake his shoulder, and his wide-eyed gaze snaps to hers.

For a moment, she’s looking at Hisashi, manic and muttering, eyes gleaming with secrets she could never understand and the world is falling away out from under her feet

And then Izuku blinks. “Oh. Sorry! I’ll set the table,” He says and Inko lets out a breath she didn’t realise she was holding.

“I made gyudon,” She says, already halfway to forgetting the swirling stars she saw in Izuku’s eyes.

Izuku is truly Hisashi’s son, and many who knew the man intimately would consider this cause for concern.

Izuku’s first set of armor is made to Katsuki’s measurements and it's as much to see if he can as it is for Katsuki himself. Izuku knows he’ll grow out of it within the year regardless.

The armor has the color of burnished brass, shaped and moulded by Izuku’s fingers and tools. Individual plates are held and secured with leather straps and small buckles. The helmet has a visor made out of a weird alien hybrid Izuku spat out using acrylic, fibreglass and silicon. All of which left an awful bitter aftertaste in his mouth.

The overall impression Izuku gets is one of the Ancient Greek Heroes they're reading about in History. Odysseus. Hercules. Achilles.

Almost pointedly, a plate extends along the back of the heel.

Combined with a new, larger buckler, Izuku can’t help but feel a spear would complete the ensemble.

Instead of a spear, perhaps a staff? Katsuki wouldn't need one but Izuku thinks one could be useful
for his own purposes. If he becomes the kind of Hero that makes wondrous things, there are bound to be people who would try to make him stop.

He should ask his mother if he could enrol in martial arts classes.
Dreaming of the Cosmos

Chapter Summary

Midoriya Izuku is very good at making friends. He's even better at pulling people into his orbit, dragging them along with the sheer force of his own existence, for there are few things in the universe capable of withstanding the will of Midoriya Izuku. Young, adolescent teenagers stand no chance.

Chapter Notes

This is the part where I subject you to what passes for my sense of humour.

Once again, I am simply overwhelmed by the response this has gotten. I try to answer every comment I feel that there is an answer I can provide, so if I don't respond to your comment it's simply because I'm waiting to respond to it and all the others all at once by saying: Thank you so much for taking the time to read 'In His Eyes, A Galaxy'.

Now a lot of people seem afraid for Starchild!Izuku. I mentioned this in one response but: Don't you think you're afraid for the wrong person?

I originally intended to let this stew a bit more and edit it but I'm posting it earlier than planned as an apology for accidentally posting and then deleting chapter 4. I really shouldn't edit this on my phone, but I spend so much time at bus stops and waiting for classes to start that I have to do something.

Shinsou Hitoshi is twelve when he meets the boy with stars in his eyes.

It's a foggy morning by the beach, cold enough that it might snow and certainly cold enough that nobody in their right mind thinks that it's the perfect time to visit the beach. Nobody would ever accuse Hitoshi of being in his right mind though, and so he likes to spend mornings like these clearing his head. As though the sharp winter sea air would clear away the clouds that haunt him.

He's walked for scarcely more than five minutes when he comes across the hunched figure of a boy who can't be older than him, dressed in classic summer beach wear. Which is just wildly inappropriate for the middle of winter. Hitoshi doesn't say anything at first, silently contemplating the strange intruder who has trespassed into what was meant to be his quiet meditative walk.

It's hard to stay silent when he shovels a handful of sand into his mouth.

"Why on this god forsaken earth are you eating sand?" is Hitoshi’s first words to the strange boy.

The boy looks at him, seeming very much like a startled deer caught grazing. The imagery is made only more intense when he chews a little.
Hitoshi thinks, for a long moment, that the boy is not allowed to be surprised by this as anyone with even a lick of common sense would agree the one chewing a handful of sand is the one who is surprising in this situation.

After what feels like an eternity, the boy finally stops chewing to open his mouth to speak. Hitoshi is not even sure how you chew sand. It's sand. “I like the crunch,” says the Boy Who Chews Sand, managing to explain everything and nothing about this situation simultaneously.

Hitoshi stares at him for a full three minutes, as his mind alternates between attempting to integrate this new knowledge into his already developed paradigm of how the world is, and simply ignoring this entire event and forgetting it ever happened. He personally would prefer to forget but he doubts he will ever, ever forget this moment.

The boy doesn't swallow his sand but Hitoshi isn't sure the alternative he chooses would make this any less surreal. Instead of swallowing, he simply lets it drool out in the form of white hot glass, burning bright in his hands but also clearly leaving him unharmed and decidedly unburnt. He proceeds to roll it into a small ball and then… shish kabobs it onto a metal skewer. Is… is he saving it for later? Is this some weird spirit way of cooking things?

Shinsou Hitoshi has never wanted to ask someone what they were doing more than ever, but a life of living with his quirk has made him very good at keeping his mouth shut. He's beginning to grow convinced that he is interacting with some strange fey spirit and that if he says or does the wrong thing, the spirit will disappear. He's not sure he wants it to disappear. He feels like that would be sad, in the same way that the loss of a beautiful forest is sad.

The spirit-fae-child rolls the skewer a bit as the ball cools and produces a string full of similar glass beads. Oh. They were making a necklace. “Pretty, isn't it?” They ask as they add the new bead to the others, and their eyes seem to glow with an inner light.

Hitoshi makes eye contact for a second, and he can feel the pull of gravity and it takes all his self control and will to tear his eyes away just after that single moment, afraid of what he'll see. Any words he could’ve said are gone now, so he answers with a nod. How else could he answer except with a nod?

The Fae beams at him and tilts their head to the side. Without warning, they grab Hitoshi’s wrist in calloused hands, well worked fingers tight against his bones. Compared to the winter air, they may as well as have been made of fire and for a moment, Hitoshi thinks he may actually be burned.

Their intention becomes clear in a moment though, as they produce a second string of much smaller beads and swiftly tie it around his wrist in a flash. “There,” says the Fae, nodding in satisfaction. And then they return to sifting through the sand, presumably for the choicest handfuls of sand to make more beads.

Hitoshi just half-walks and half-stumbles away, unsure of what just happened but certain he has no desire to question it further.
When Hitoshi arrives home, he looks at his parents with an expression of serene confusion. “I think I’ve been blessed by a spirit,” He confesses to their own confused stares.

Later that same day, Izuku tells Katsuki he made a friend.

“Did they say you were friends?” is Katsuki’s retort because he has spent too many years dealing with what passes for Deku’s thought processes.

“He accepted the friendship bracelet,” Izuku says, with all the wise certainty of a five year old.

Katsuki says nothing at that, a conflict warring in his mind between his intense desire to shake Izuku back and forth ask where his friendship bracelet is and his equally intense desire to present himself as above such childish concerns. Ultimately, his overwhelming desire not to engage in the futile exercise of attempting to explain the complete lack of common sense and logic present in the things Izuku says and does supercedes both and he just grunts.

(Besides, he thinks - there's no point in reading into why Deku gave some random chump a bracelet and not him because knowing Deku, he probably did because it complimented the colour of their shoes or something equally stupid)

Despite the power of the friendship bracelet, it will be three years until they cross paths again.

The dojo is full of students, all around the ages of eleven to thirteen. The fresh faced new students are seated in the seiza position in two neat little staggered rows along the matted floors whilst the more senior members stand at the ready across from them. There are few decorations in the dojo, aside from a few scrolls of calligraphy and koans, there is also a lovingly crafted needlepoint that reads ‘Live, Laugh,’ in gentle pink lettering and then immediately under them in bold red needlework designed to be evocative of dripping blood is ‘FIGHT’.

The Master of the dojo paces back and forth before them, a hunched old man in a grey gi covered in head to toe with wispy silver fur. Between his clenched teeth is an electronic cigar shaped like a half-peeled banana, and gently waving behind him is a furred tail. Aside from the tail and fur, the only other monkey-like feature of the retired Pro Hero ‘Sun Wukong (the Third)’ was his hand-like feet.

“ALRRRRIGHT MY FRESH-FACED LITTLE BABY CHIMPS!” He shouted suddenly, whipping around to face them with a fierce expression on his wizened face. “I! Am! Sun Wukong! The Third! Do you know what that means?” He doesn’t wait for an answer before he plucks the e-
cigar from his mouth and leans forward dangerously. “It means I am the Grand Master of the Monkey Style! Do you know why I look like a Monkey? Do you think I was born like this? No!” He whipped back around to resume pacing back and forth, this time gesticulating wildly with the hand holding his e-cigar, the other held clenched behind his back.

“I was not born with this handsome exterior! I was gifted it! By the Monkey Goddess herself! It was my prize for mastering the Monkey Style to an extent not even my predecessors had! Do you know what THAT means?!”

Izuku blinks slowly. Nobody else seems to be willing to answer, so he bravely volunteers by holding a hand up. “It means you’re really good at kung fu?” His response earns him a rapping from a staff he is certain wasn’t in Wukong’s hands a second ago and certainly isn’t anymore.

Sun Wukong glares so fiercely, it’s a wonder that Izuku’s head doesn’t explode into gore. “No! It means everything I just said was complete bananas! I was just MONKEYIN’ AROUND!” His demeanour does a complete 180, and he tilts his head back to let out whooping laugh. “Geddit? Monkeyin’ Around? Cuz it’s the name of ma Quirk! And I’m the Monkey King! TRIPLE PUN! MAHAHAHAAHAHA!” He laughs for a good full minute before snapping back to seriousness fast enough to give himself whiplash. “But enough monkeyin’ around, it’s time to learn how to monkey around!”

“You come to me as hairless little apes, but you will leave here as full fledged monkeys! You will become agile! Swift! Cunning! If you want to learn how to fight like a Gorilla, then you have come to the wrong place! Seriously, Mega Kong’s dojo is on the other side of town. But here, you will master combat as it was meant to be mastered - in all four dimensions!”

Someone raises a hand. “What’s the fourth dimension?” They ask, and are immediately struck with the staff again for the crime of not learning from Izuku’s mistake. Izuku, for his part, is really beginning to wonder where the staff keeps coming from. Almost as soon as its out, its gone again.

“What is the fourth dimension, you ask? What are they teaching you kids these days? The fourth dimension is Time of course!” He motions for one of the senior students, and they obediently carry over a training dummy. “To master the Monkey Style is to master the art of timing, in both combat and comedy! If you cannot deliver a knockout joke, how can you hope to deliver a knockout punch?” He stands a good five feet away from the dummy, seemingly completely serious. Then he suddenly starts making silly faces and hopping from foot to foot in front of it. “You must disarm your enemy not only of their physical weapons, but of their mental ones! And when they let down their guard…”

What follows next is far too fast for Izuku’s eyes to hope to catch, but for the briefest moment it appears as though Sun Wukong (the Third) had disappeared, and when he was visible again, it was with a sonorous boom akin to thunder and standing in a wide stance with a palm outstretched.

“MONKEY’S PAAAAAAWWW!” He bellowed, loud enough to rival the sonic boom of his movement. Where stood the dummy, there was only the splintered lower half. The students’ awe was palpable, Izuku’s included. “Of course, you don’t have to shout out your techniques like that. I just like to. Makes me feel like I’m in a shonen anime! MAHAHAHAAHAH!” He took a long drag from his e-cigar, and resumed his serious demeanour again.

“Now. The basis of all learning is imitation. That means Monkey See, Monkey Do! First, you will Monkey See what I Monkey Do! And then, you will Monkey Do whilst I Monkey See! Got it? If you got it, why are you still sittin’?! Stand up!”
After thirty minutes of practicing, the junior students are paired up with senior students for one-on-one training and practice for the last thirty minutes of their allotted hour. Izuku gets paired up with a young blonde boy with a thick, tufted tail.

Izuku’s senior introduces himself with a polite bow. “Hi! I’m Ojiro Mashirao.”

“Izuku! Midoriya Izuku,” He returns the greeting cheerfully, bowing a little deeper than his new senpai. “Please take care of me senpai.”

Winter is made significantly more bearable to Katsuki the more of it he spends at the Midoriya household. Simply sitting next to Izuku is like having a space heater nearby, and much like a space heater, Izuku is content to do his own thing and let Katsuki do his whilst still keeping him pleasantly warm. As far as Katsuki is concerned, this is the great appeal of space heaters. That Izuku is much more comfortable to lean against than a space heater simply means he is the superior choice of household appliance.

As usual, on this day Izuku is chewing some god forsaken substance and turning it into something less god forsaken and so Katsuki busies himself with playing on a handheld console, with his back leaning up against Izuku’s own back. All is well.

Until Izuku starts grinding glass.

“Deku, what the fuck?” Katsuki thinks he is perfectly entitled to his incredulous reaction as much as he simultaneously thinks he isn’t. This is Midoriya ‘Deku’ Izuku he is dealing with. Grinding glass is relatively tame compared to some of the weirder things he’s done.

Izuku doesn't even glance up from what he's doing, but Katsuki knows better than to expect anything else (Izuku has always been prone to hyperfocusing, but where he used to hyperfocus about Pro Heroes, he has moved on to Weird Crafts). He has a small disc of glass held in a vice and is slowly grinding it down with a pedal-powered wheel, and a small metal frame that will presumably hold it beside it. “Hoji-san lent me this kit. It's been pretty useful for practice but I still haven't gotten the hang of it.” Izuku holds up the disc to one eye and squints through it, but apparently isn’t satisfied because he pops it back in the vice and resumes grinding.

Katsuki takes a moment to actually look at what Izuku was doing. Until now he had essentially ignored him outside of sitting back to back to leech off his ambient heat. Now that he was actually paying attention to what he had laid out in front of him it was… fairly obvious actually. The schematics, the pieces, the already ground lenses. “… A telescope, Deku?”

Izuku just nods. “Today a telescope, tomorrow binoculars, the future… who knows? Maybe some kind of zoom goggles. Adjustable lenses or maybe variable zoom. Or both! Ooh, I wonder how you could translate UV into seeable light. I guess the same way you alter any frequency of light, but…”

and the Deku Train has left the station.

Katsuki turns around to his game again and calmly reaches for a pair of earbuds. He could, feasibly, tell Izuku to cram it, but listening to music achieves the same general goal. Tuning Izuku out is something he has down to a fine art by now anyway, and having to listen to music is a very small
price to pay to avoid getting into arguments with his mother over the heating bill.
Many people who witness Midoriya Izuku believe he is destined for great things. For better, or for worse, they're right.

Hello, and welcome to Chapter 4 of 'And In His Eyes, A Galaxy'.

Once again, I'm still overwhelmed by the response to, what began as at least, a sort of indulgent side project. Thank you all, again, to everyone who has read this, regardless of whether they've commented or left kudos.

But enough of me waffling about how much you're inflating my ego.

This chapter helps spread a lot of the foundation and seeds for future Plot Events, and I welcome you to come up with various theories on what those are. I enjoy reading what people think will happen (or is happening), whether they're right or wrong. 'And In His Eyes, A Galaxy' right now to me, is sort of like a larva incubating in a cocoon. So many things are still being set on the stage, but when the curtain rises, I hope the pay off will be worth it.

On that note, I'm aiming to build each chapter bigger and better than before, but also trying not to sacrifice the atmosphere that is core to the story as a whole. Hopefully I'm succeeding.

There's some speculation on how Izuku's Quirk actually functions, and for the most part, I'm keeping it fast and loose. Frankly, how Quirks work in Canon!BNHA is already kind of fast and loose, but I'm trying to keep to a loose set of rules and logic. Does this mean there is more to Izuku's Quirk than eating metal and spewing alloys? Probably.

The last thing I wanted to mention was a brief reference to the inspirations (and how I visualise) the Monkey Style that Sun Wukong (the Third) teaches. Obviously, Monkey Style Kung Fu is one of those inspirations, but I also envisioned a lot of Pencak Silat-style movements and attacks. I'd definitely recommend watching videos of either, if you want to get an idea of what it might look like in practice.

But without further ado, here's Chapter 4!

With the advent of summer comes various summer traditions and the most important one, as far as Bakugou Katsuki is concerned, is hiking up a mountain before dawn.

Personally, as far as Midoriya Izuku is concerned, he doesn’t quite see the appeal of an exhausting
trek during a time he’d much rather be sleeping.

“Hurry up, Deku,” Katsuki barks out, tromping up the trail with a practiced gait. Katsuki has been hiking up mountain trails since before he was four, although, admittedly, much of the early days were spent being carried by his father.

Izuku huffs, hunched over with his hands on his knees. He has no idea how Katsuki manages. His legs are experiencing a painful sensation he would’ve identified as ‘burning’ if he had ever been familiar with the very concept outside of ‘a thing that happens to other people’ and his stomach is making unpleasant noises that he’s pretty sure suggest it’s about to rebel against the natural order of things and expel whatever’s left of last night’s dinner. “How much… further?” He manages to get out in between controlled pants as he tries to smooth his breathing out.

The jerk is perfectly fine and not the least bit tired or exhausted by the trek of course, standing there like the fact that Izuku is not used to endurance hiking is a personal insult. “It’s like five more fucking minutes, tops. Seriously, you’re not fucking failing on me now are you, Deku?”

If Izuku didn’t know any better, he’d say Katsuki was worried for him. But he does know better, so he thinks it instead. “I can… I can make it.” He grits out, straightening himself. He takes five steps before he’s forced to lean on a tree for support. “Or… maybe you can just… bury me here, instead.”

Katsuki stomps over to him, sliding an arm under and around his shoulder to very impatiently begin half-dragging, half-helping Izuku up the remaining stretch. “Fucking drama queen,” He mutters. “If you fucking die here, I will blow your body to smithereens and scatter your fucking ashes. There’s your fucking burial.”

Izuku, wisely, says nothing about Katsuki’s willingness to help him, or about how he thinks Katsuki is the one being dramatic. He says nothing at all, in fact, until they finally reach the peak. There is a single wooden bench present, and Izuku sends his thoughts and prayers to whatever poor soul was tasked with bringing it up this mountain right before he lurches forward to collapse in it, relieved beyond words to finally be off his feet.

After dumping the backpack unceremoniously in Izuku’s lap, Katsuki slouches into the spot next to him with all the impatience and disdain Izuku has come to expect from just about everything Katsuki does. “There. Was that so fucking hard?” He snaps, reaching over to open the pack and retrieve a bento.

“Yes,” Izuku says, cashing in on his one free smartass remark per conversation before pulling a bottle of water out and pouring its contents down his throat. He’s halfway done with the bottle when he notices Katsuki’s eyes on him, and he, very slowly, stops.

Katsuki’s face is scrunched up in an expression Izuku doesn’t recognise, which is strange, because he’s seen all of Katsuki’s expressions. Angry, frustrated, bloodthirsty, triumphant, hangry, irritated, annoyed, impatient, furious, apoplectic rage… The whole range. “… Where does the water even go?” He mutters, squinting at the bottle in Izuku’s hand. “How does it even… go anywhere? Wouldn’t it just turn to steam or some bullshit like that?”

Is this… no, that wasn’t Katsuki’s confused face (he knows, because his confused face is the same as
his irritated face - Izuku is ninety percent sure Katsuki experiences confusion the same way that he experiences irritation). “I guess it would,” Izuku admits, returning to drain the rest of his bottle. If Izuku is being honest (and he always is), he has no idea how his digestive system works outside of the fact that it does. Any further thinking on what that expression could’ve been is, perhaps fortunately, erased from Izuku’s mind because the sun is rising.

He takes it back. He completely sees the appeal of this ordeal now because the view from up here is incredible. His eyes drank in every inch of the sight, of the light breaking through the clouds and the first rays screaming across the cityscape of Musutafu. This mountain has to have been designed by someone because the panorama is too exquisite for Izuku to believe otherwise.

“Holy shit,” He breathes out, so soft and gentle as though he was afraid his words alone would shatter it.

“Fucking told you.”

Midoriya Izuku’s digestive system is in fact extremely efficient. It has to be, for Izuku’s quirk already necessitates that he nearly eat his own weight in food just to keep running.

Inko is fortunate that Izuku’s dietary requirements are essentially just the word ‘Yes’ written in size thirty two point font. It means he supplements most of her cooking with scrap metal donated by Hoji-san and saves her the misfortune of regularly dealing with the kind of bills normally associated with hosting a ten person dinner party.

“Master Wukong,” Izuku begins as he balances precariously on one hand, his other arm outstretched for balance as his legs dangle precariously in the air, “What makes a good staff?”

“What makes a good staff? Hm. I’m not sure I could describe it. I know a good staff when I hold one. Ojiro, if Midoriya is comfortable enough to ask questions, you aren’t fighting him hard enough.”

It’s been a year since Izuku first joined the dojo’s classes, and many of his initial classmates have either dropped out or moved on. Those remain are under much more serious expectations, and part of that is being put through exercises like sparring with a partner whilst both of you do handstands.

Ojiro has a clear advantage over Izuku, as his thick, powerful tail serves as a third limb he can attack with and it means Izuku is kept on the defensive for the most part. More than an extra way to attack, it also helps him keep his balance and make other attacks that would surely cause him to fall over otherwise.

Master Wukong’s words only serve to spur him into really abusing that advantage, and Izuku is forced to spring over a low sweep, landing uneasily on his hands. “Do you think I could borrow one then? Just to get a feel for it. I’m trying,” He folds his legs up against his chest and shifts a palm to balance a little better as one of Ojiro’s legs scythes through the space they were just occupying, “To make my own.” He unfolds one leg into a snap kick but Ojiro’s tail swats it to the side, forcing him
into an unfavourable turn. “But I figured there was more to a good staff than just being a long stick.”

Ojiro’s tail sweeps along like a literal broom, and Izuku can’t dodge fast enough to avoid being cleaned up with the dust. "Ha! Looks like I just made a clean sweep."

“Weapon training, for those who wish to opt in, will begin next year, Midoriya, but I suppose there’s no harm in letting you get a feel for one now.” Master Wukong peers down at him as he takes a moment to regain his breath on the surprisingly comfortable floor mats. “Twelve minutes that time; you’re improving. Excellent quip, Ojiro, but you still need to work on the delivery.” And then Wukong is gone, off to supervise and commentate on a different pair.

“You know, I still think you’d probably do better if you weren’t always distracted,” Ojiro says as he helps him up with a friendly hand.

Izuku shrugs, dusting himself off a little. “Probably,” He admits, “But I can’t help it, Ojiro-senpai.” He stretches his arms out above his head and glances at the clock. Five minutes left before the training session’s out, not really enough time to get another spar in. “If I stopped thinking, I’m pretty sure I’d die.”

Ojiro snorts, adjusting his gi a little. “I think if you stopped thinking, Midoriya, it would be because you were already dead.”

Izuku tilts his head to the side for a moment, pondering the thought. “I should get that engraved on my tombstone,” He mutters with such complete seriousness and conviction that Ojiro isn’t sure if he’s joking or not.

He decides to laugh a little anyway, although it’s tinged with the sort of awkward nervousness that these little laughs tend to have.

Izuku chalks it up as a victory regardless. Today, a nervous titter; tomorrow, a sensible chuckle; the future, side-splitting laughter followed by a leg sweep.

A good staff, it seems to Izuku’s untrained hands, should be just a little heavier on the ends than the middle. It’s more about the balance, than the weight itself, Wukong explains. If you can swing it around for hours without tiring, then it’s a decent weight for you. Wukong’s own staff is so heavy Izuku can’t imagine swinging it for more than ten minutes.

Izuku learns that electricity, much like fire, has no appreciable effect on his body beyond a vague sense of tingling. He thinks this is not too surprising, given that electricity and fire are quite similar in many ways but it is no less heart stopping for Midoriya Inko to walk into the garage after hearing several loud crackling noises only to find her son holding a pair of jumper cables attached to a car battery.
Despite her best efforts, she can only wrangle a vague promise out of him to seek adult supervision the next time he tries something like this. In her heart, she knows it will be useless.

This discovery proves imminently useful to the fledgeling inventor though, and he begins experimenting with electronics to a worrying degree. He doesn’t have access to the equipment or tools that would really let him go wild with circuits and wires, and this fact is a great relief to both Inko and the faculty of Koriyama Junior High alike, but he still finds in himself the designs for particularly simple self-defense devices.

Such as a small wire-frame he takes to wearing under his shirt. Connected to a small array of batteries kept in a pack against the small of his back, the circuit is only completed when his left thumb touches his left pinky finger and delivers a payload equal to most commercial grade tasers. Although Izuku has to remember not to grab anything conductive with his left hand.

Surprisingly, he manages to avoid electrocuting anyone by accident.

The Principal’s office is full of knick knacks, ranging from a Newton’s cradle to an assortment of motivational posters that don’t really motivate. Koutami-sensei is a serious-looking middle-aged woman who seemed like she would be much more at home in an office building giving a presentation on sales figures and managing a cubicle farm than she does overseeing the education of teenagers.

“Midoriya, please take a seat.” Her gaze flicks up from the papers she’s shuffling only briefly to acknowledge his presence.

Izuku does as she asks, slipping into the touch-too-low chair and reaching out to take up a pair of the puzzle toys she keeps on her desk to fiddle with.

She’s still shuffling papers, but her attention is decidedly more on Izuku now. “Now, Midoriya. Do you understand why we’re having this meeting?”

He blinks owlishly at her, slow and deliberate. “No.” He genuinely can’t remember the purpose of this meeting. He’s sure he was aware of it at some stage, but whatever it was, his mind has discarded it. Idly, he feels one of the puzzle rings come loose.

Koutami-sensei purses her lips, but continues searching her papers for something. “Do you remember the lab report you handed in for Physics last Tuesday?” She seems to find what she’s looking for, because she pulls a familiar sheaf of papers stapled together at the top left corner in a plastic sheet. Izuku can just glimpse the cover page. ‘THE PHYSICS OF OPTICS - MIDORIYA IZUKU, CLASS 2-B’.

Tilting his head to the side, Izuku mulls it over. He vaguely remembers it. He wasn’t really concentrating that hard in class though, and most of what he did, he did on autopilot with Katsuki. “Did I do something wrong?” He says, although his tone is decidedly lackadaisical and not all matching with the atmosphere. Another puzzle ring comes loose from the first toy, and he manages to get two free of the second one.

He knows Koutami-sensei is Extra Serious because she plucks her horn-rimmed glasses off her face, and stares at him with her slit pupils. “Midoriya,” She says in the tone of someone who is trying to convey how calm they are without giving away the fact that they very much panicking in slow
motion, “This is a schematic.”

Izuku stares blankly at her. “Oops?” He offers. He must’ve accidentally drawn the designs he was thinking of in class instead of the report. He’s usually pretty good at catching himself when he does that, but it does mean he has restarted several assignments. The second puzzle toy is easier than the first, and he soon has a ring dangling on each finger. He spares it a glance, before fiddling with the first some more.

“Midoriya, this is a schematic for a laser rifle.” Oh. Her voice is doing that thing where she wants to raise it but also refuses to, and it sort of ends up sounding like the feeling of being pushed up against a chain-link fence. “It is solar powered.”

“Kacchan and I watched the sunrise the week before,” He offers as explanation. Ah. The first puzzle toy is finished.

Koutami-sensei closes her eyes for a moment, and becomes much calmer as she opens them again. “Midoriya, whilst this schematic is very impressive and Aritaka-sensei has opted to give you full marks for what is, ultimately, a demonstration that you fully understand the current unit of the class, schematics of solar-powered weapons are not acceptable classwork at Koriyama Junior High.” She pauses for a moment before realising that this is Midoriya Izuku she’s talking to and adds “Schematics of any weapon, irrespective of power source, are not acceptable classwork at Koriyama Junior High.”

“Oh,” says Izuku in a way that suggests he only half-understands what she’s saying. Admittedly, he’s only half paying attention. The other half is divided between thinking about that solar-powered laser rifle and playing with the puzzle rings.

She gives him a long, piercing look. “Midoriya. This is the second time you’ve done something like this. Last unit, instead of submitting a circuit diagram, you submitted this.” She pulls a second sheet of paper out, revealing a large and intricate diagram that Izuku can only barely remember doodling.

“... Did I make a mistake?”

“Midoriya, this is a satellite radio receiver. It is explicitly capable of being built by recycled parts. Aritaka-sensei built it using an old microwave. It is in the staff room, playing classical music at this very moment. Do you understand what any of that means, Midoriya?” Koutami-sensei is beginning to sound defeated, but she still finds it within herself to stare long and hard at Izuku. Izuku stares back, but mostly because he’s not sure how he’s supposed to be reacting to this. Eventually, she sighs in complete and utter defeat.

Izuku isn’t sure what he actually won, but he sure did beat her, it seems.

“It means you are absolutely beyond the scope of Aritaka-sensei’s teaching. She has suggested, and I agreed, that in place of future Physics classes, you will simply be allowed a free period to use as you see fit.”

He tilts his head to the side for a brief moment. "Can I go?" He asks, already diverting much more attention to the rifle.

Koutami-sensei, likewise, returns to shuffling paperwork and ignoring Izuku’s existence. "Yes. You may go, Midoriya."
It's only after Izuku is gone that Koutami-sensei realises that what had begun as two separate sets of differently linked puzzle rings has become one single linked set. She spends an hour attempting to separate them, before deciding that this is their fate now, and she is just going to pretend they were meant to be like that.

One month later, Koutami-sensei signs off on the creation of the ‘Invention Club’. It’s sole member is Midoriya Izuku, and it gives an increased base for which he can request access to various school resources and facilities, including both the Labs and the Workshops.

It is soon nicknamed 'The Midoriya Izuku Containment Club' by Izuku’s peers. The teachers do not correct this, though Bakugou Katsuki only snorts in derision at the very idea of the name.

As though any traditional social convention could possibly hope to contain Midoriya Izuku.

Chapter End Notes

Addendum: Fun fact - Izuku's lines at the start (I can make it... or you can just... bury me here...) are lifted almost verbatim from a conversation I had with my brother regarding a similar situation.

Every year, I go for a trek with the family up a trail near the city that I live in. Every year, because I am not a particularly athletic person, I basically die. It's served as inspiration for this bonding moment.
By Constellations Light

Chapter Summary

The problem with gravity is that it doesn't just crush everything around you - it crushes you as well.

Chapter Notes

I cannot stop saying this enough, but thank you everyone who reads this fic, leaves a kudos or a comment, or bookmarks it. I read every comment, every name on the kudos list, and every bookmark.

Without you, Chapter 5: By Constellation's Light would probably have still happened to be honest. Just maybe slower.

Jokes aside, I love all of you and I hope you'll love Chapter 5 as well. Shout out to ShadowState and Iceisawesome for the discussion and suggestions! Really, if YOU aren't also reading the comments, you're missing out on some prime stuff.

This chapter mostly helps finish setting the final touches before Chapter 6: Meteoric Impact which will finally be the moment Izuku steps foot in U.A (if only for the exams). And yes, that does mean he will finally meet Hatsume Mei next chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Midoriya Izuku dreams of stars, great bright and burning, swirling giants of gas and light. He sees the galaxies, sees the universe unfold in such awful clarity that it rings in his ears. He sees every atom, every molecule and particle, every quark and gluon and it is all so terribly beautiful that his soul seems to sing in harmony with the stars.

“Izuku?”

A voice cuts through the music of the stars, and when Izuku blinks, he’s standing on the balcony of his home, dressed in only his nightclothes, the worried face of Midoriya Inko dominating his vision.

“Izuku, you were sleepwalking,” She explains, seeming less worried now that Izuku is back on earth (as much as he ever is, at least) but this brief respite is washed away with fresh concern. “... Izuku, you’re crying,” She says, so soft and gentle that her words feel like a balm on his skin.

“Am I?” Izuku asks, distinctly unsure. His fingers come away wet when he wipes his cheek, and he glances down at his hands. “... Huh.”

“Are you okay? Was it a bad dream?”
He can only stare at his fingers, calloused from work, tears still slowly dripping. “… I don’t know,” He mumbles, looking back at his mother’s face. “I can’t remember what it was.”

When he lets his mind drift untethered, he could almost swear he hears a faint music in the back of his mind. He can never shake the impression that something about it is important but he can’t remember what it is.

Despite the multitude of peculiar habits and strange things that Izuku does, very few of the student body of Koriyama Junior High attempt to bully him, and of those few that made attempts, none pursue it anymore. This is partly because Midoriya Izuku is simply not very rewarding to bully (a group of upperclassmen delinquents attempted to shake him down for money once - Izuku asked them for a loan because he only had marbles in his pockets) and partly because the entirety of the student body of Koriyama Junior High has seen the predicament of Bakugou Katsuki and very wisely decided that they would like to avoid being trapped in Izuku’s personal gravity.

Of course, this doesn’t stop people who have had no exposure to Musutafu’s own local cryptid from attempting to antagonise him the way they would any other resident.

The mugger is tall, and sort of lumpy, with hands a little too large for their body. The baggy clothing doesn’t give much else away, and the shirt (Izuku thinks it’s a shirt) worn as a makeshift mask doesn’t help. “Give me your money! Give me all your fucking money!” They bluster, jabbing a serrated combat knife at Izuku.

He tilts his head to the side, inspecting the finish on the knife for a brief a moment. It's positively filthy with grime. Lips pursed together in disapproval, he reaches into a pocket and withdraws a microfiber cloth. “You should take better care of this,” He says idly, reaching up to wrap the cloth around the blade, “It’s a waste of a very nice knife to let it get so dirty.”

“Didn’t you fucking hear me?” The Mugger barks, slapping Izuku’s hand away. The cloth flutters to the ground, and Izuku frowns as he goes to pick it back up. “I said your money! Fucking give me your money or I swear to god I will stab you!”

“Izuku mutters, only half-paying attention. The cloth is a little dusty, but still quite useable and he stuffs it back into his pocket. “Can I borrow a pen?”

The knife is pressing up against Izuku’s chest now and he’s pretty sure the Mugger’s eyes are about to bulge out of their sockets. “GIVE ME THE GOD DAMN FUCKING MONEY!” They scream, spittle flying out of the slit cut in the shirt for their mouth.

Izuku scratches his cheek with a crooked finger, frowning a little harder. “I’m trying. I don’t have any cash on me, so unless you have a card reader I can only give you a cheque.”

The Mugger is still for a second, and then they let out a wordless cry of frustrated rage. Instead of
just pushing the knife forward, they pull it back to really thrust it at Izuku, the mark of an enthusiastic but amateur fighter. He has a moment to think that this is extremely rude of the Mugger before a gauntlet-clad fist slams into the side of their head.

“Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Izuku blinks, looking up at a white helmet that reminds him vaguely of the old Kamen Rider show that sometimes played on saturday mornings. Or maybe more like a Mecha anime. White armor, blue highlights…

“Ah,” He says blankly, “You’re the Turbo Hero, Ingenium.”

Izuku gets the impression that Ingenium is puffing out his chest at that, but it’s hard to tell with the armor. The way he puts his hands on his hips is very suggestive of it, though. “That’s right!” He says, “I happened to be patrolling in the area and I saw you needed help.”

“Oh. Does that mean you have a pen I can borrow?”

“A pen?” Ingenium echoes, sounding confused. Izuku doesn’t know what there is to be confused about - he said he was here to help right? “Oh! An autograph? Sure!” Ingenium withdraws a pen and a folded up sheet of paper from a very sensible compartment on his hip. “Who should I make it out to?”

Izuku stares at Ingenium, faintly confused for a moment before he glances at the downed Mugger who is in no state to respond to anything, before shrugging. “Make it out to ‘My Biggest Fan’. That way it will sell better on eBay.”

Ingenium freezes up for a moment, but shrugs slightly. Despite the incredibly blunt and nonchalant request and regardless of the purpose, he’s never one to refuse an autograph. Not only would it reflect badly on him, as a Pro Hero, but he strongly believes in the community outreach aspect of Heroics. In short order, he scrawls his signature on the paper, but he can’t help but dedicate it to ‘My Biggest and Most Honest Fan’ before he hands it back to Izuku.

“Thank you,” says Izuku and proceeds to very calmly fold it up before reaching down to tuck it into the downed Mugger’s belt.

If Ingenium had any idea how to react before, it has completely slipped his mind entirely as he watches the incredibly strange teenager begin to calmly walk away like this was just another routine moment of his life.
The sound of wood striking flesh fills the air of the dojo, as various students try their hands at various ‘Monkey approved’ weapons. Nunchaku, tonfas, wooden batons called ‘Tongkat’ and of course, staves.

The addition of a staff to Izuku’s repertoire significantly changes how he fights, but he feels that it sort of even out the advantage Ojiro gained from his tail. Sort of, because Ojiro is still much, much more agile and skilled than he is but the additional range granted by the staff means Izuku can keep him at a distance.

“Come on Midoriya!” Ojiro calls, dodging a flurry of rapid jabs, “You’re going to have to do more than play keep away to win.”

Izuku thinks that playing keep away is about as much as he can manage against Ojiro. “I’m just staving off the inevitable.” His eyes light up as Ojiro snorts and he darts forward to lash out in this brief opening.

Ojiro spins out of the way without even trying, and his thick, powerful tail collides with Izuku’s stomach. “A nice attempt,” He begins, grinning down at his downed partner, “But I’ll have to curtail it.”

Izuku frowns from his position on his back. “I’m not sure that’s what curtail means.”

“Midoriya, there are only so many tail puns to be made.”

He ponders it for a moment, and concedes the point. He rises up to his feet again, dusting himself off and resuming his initial ready stance. Ojiro is polite enough to wait for his junior to make the first move and Izuku goes for a loose sweep at his legs to (predictably) no avail. “Ojiro-senpai, you’re entering High School next year as well right?”

“That’s the plan.” Ojiro isn’t distracted at all by answering Izuku’s questions, partly because Master Wukong insists that all of his students learn how to banter whilst they fight. Multitasking is at the heart of his lessons, and it’s a valuable skill for any fighter to have. “I’ll probably have to drop out of the dojo, unfortunately, depending on where I end up.”

Izuku ducks under a roundhouse kick and flicks the tip of the staff up at where Ojiro was a millisecond ago. “Are you aiming for U.A?”

“Of course. It’s more ‘Hoping’ than ‘Aiming’, though.” He bats Izuku’s staff away before he crouches low to the ground. That’s all the warning Izuku gets before Ojiro’s tail thumps against the ground and launches him at Izuku like a cannonball.

Izuku manages to brace himself enough that he’s not immediately bowled over, but a second thump from the tail sends him to the ground.

“Ha! Guess I… Wait. I had something for this.” Ojiro’s face scrunches up for a few moments before he gives up trying to remember it. “Why did you ask, by the way? Thinking of applying as well?” He gets up off of Izuku to help him to his feet with a friendly hand.

“A friend’s aiming to get in as well,” Izuku says lightly, “I haven’t really thought about what High School I’m applying for yet.”

Ojiro frowns at him. “You really should be thinking more about this kind of thing,” says the unwitting soul who has only ever interacted with Izuku on a surface level.

Still, he can’t say Ojiro’s wrong. ”That’s why I’m asking. I need to make a decision soon.”
“Are you going to aim for U.A as well, then?” Ojiro asks, uncharacteristically going on the offense. His hands are a flurry of jabs, strikes and thrusts, and Izuku decides that the best defense against the stream of attacks is to just not be there, leaping back to create some distance.

Izuku has to think about it for a moment. “I have a scholarship so I guess,” He says, as nonchalant as he is noncommittal. It catches Ojiro off guard, even though it was only intended as an honest straightforward answer, and Izuku sweeps his feet out with the staff. He points one end of his staff at directly at Ojiro’s head in a clear display of triumph, although Izuku’s expression is not of victorious triumph, but mild confusion. “Are you feeling okay, Ojiro-senpai? An attack of that caliber shouldn’t have succeeded.”

“Izuku,” Ojiro says quietly, only vaguely aware of how faint his voice is, “How easy do you think getting into U.A is?” Ojiro is asking because Midoriya can be airy and distant in his thinking, but Ojiro’s certain he’s also one of the best students in the dojo. Or at least, he would be if he was capable of emptying his mind and focusing on the fight.

“I’m not sure,” Izuku admits as he steps away from Ojiro, and for once, is able to return the favour and help him up. “Aritaka-sensei put the application in for me earlier this year, and apparently it was approved. I still have to pass the entrance exams though.”

Ojiro is staring at him in a familiar way - it’s the stare of someone who is under the dawning realisation that the old family heirloom was secretly a priceless treasure and that their grandfather was not, in fact, a dashing archaeologist but instead an intrepid tomb raider.

Izuku tilts his head, faintly confused. Was it something he said?

“... Yeah. Go for U.A. I think. Can’t hurt to try, right?” Ojiro’s lips forms the words, his tongue utters them and they are in his voice but he doesn’t feel like they are his.

At the end of their final year of Junior High, Katsuki insists on taking Izuku out to the local mall to buy him a new set of tools for Christmas. Izuku’s not entirely sure they need to go to all the effort but Katsuki has always been very insistent on dragging him to various things or events outside of his normal routine and, quite unfairly if you ask Izuku, his mother completely supports him in these attempts.

Izuku has never been to the mall. His shopping experience extends to the local hardware store, the local convenience stores (the one near his house and the one near his school), and the local supermarket. The mall, in its vast and terrible glory, has so far avoided joining that list not by any deliberate choice on Izuku’s part but simply because he never really saw the need.

The experience is very alien to one who has managed to avoid it for fourteen years.

“There are so many people here,” Izuku mutters, with the carefully quiet voice of someone who is afraid that if they attract any attention, it will notice them. “Why are there so many people. You didn’t tell me there’d be this many people.”
Katsuki glances at him, a flash of irritation on his face. “It’s Christmas, Deku,” He grumbles as they step onto the escalator, “Of course there are fucking crowds. Bunch of assholes forgot to buy Christmas presents and left it to the last minute.”

Hesitant at first to step onto the escalator but far more unwilling to be left behind by Katsuki (Izuku is sure he will be swallowed by the crowds), he hurriedly follows him, reaching out to hold onto the sleeve of his shirt to keep him close.

“I’m not fucking holding your hand, Deku,” Katsuki snaps off-handedly, although he also doesn’t break Izuku’s grip.

Izuku is too busy staring at everything around him to comment. As the escalator rises, he can only see more people, flowing around each other like streams. A part of him is amazed at the fluidity of it all, but it’s smothered by a growing sense of nervousness at the idea of being surrounded by so many people. He starts to hum, low and quiet, and the harmony of it is a balm for his nerves.

Katsuki has his hands stuffed in his pockets and a particularly aggressive scowl but not even his usual air of barely restrained violence is enough to make the Christmas Crowds part like the Red Sea. At best, it creates a barely perceptible bubble of space around the two of them, but Izuku is all too willing to cling closer to stretch that bubble as far as it will go when they start to head into the main section, where the pressure of the deep sea of shoppers is even harder to bear.

“Deku,” He warns, “You are really fucking close right now, what the fuck is your problem?”

Izuku responds by graduating from holding onto his sleeve to a vice-like grip on his arm. He can’t hear his own voice attempting to harmonise. He’s being crushed by the pressure. There are too many people too many things too much too much
teneedspaceteneedspaceteneedsbreathecantbreathecantbreathe

The lack of verbal response is not unusual, but combined with how crushing his grip is on his arm, Katsuki is forced to consider that maybe something has rattled Izuku. It’s a theory that gains traction rather quickly because Izuku’s face is pale and sweaty, and he is definitely hyperventilating.

This was not the friendly bonding activity Katsuki had envisioned.

He’s not entirely sure on how to handle this (it’s a panic attack, he thinks, he’s pretty sure at least). He was prepared for a lot of eventualities and possible ways this could have gone but ‘Deku Has A Panic Attack’ was very much removed from the list of possibilities because up until this point, Katsuki was not sure Izuku was even capable of experiencing panic. He’d expected things like having to drag Izuku away from particularly interesting things or from eating something ridiculous.

Still, Katsuki is nothing if not decisive in a moment of crisis, and he seizes Izuku’s wrist in his hand and plows through the crowd towards the restrooms. Public toilets, even in a crowded mall during Christmas, are like deserted islands in the sea of shoppers. His endeavour is easily assisted by amping his aggressive scowl up several notches and for those who either don’t react or don’t notice, Bakugou Katsuki has mastered the art of Elbowing People Out Of His God Damn Way. He generally has no concern for how this makes other people feel, but the sentiment is doubled in this particular situation.
He barges into the male toilets with a still-hyperventilating Izuku in tow. A middle-aged man is busy washing his hands and turns to look at what caused the disturbance only to be greeted with a glare powered by all of Katsuki’s considerable aggression.

Wisely, the man leaves in a hurry, hands still dripping.

Katsuki wants to believe that Izuku will snap back to his ‘normal’ self if he’s just given a little time and space, but no part of him is willing to risk it. He racks his brain, trying to remember what people did on dramas or tv shows when someone was panicking.

“Alright. Al-fucking-right. Deku. Count to ten. Breathe in, count to ten, breathe out, count to ten.” He’s pretty sure there’s counting of some kind involved in this. It seems to be working somewhat, as at the very least Izuku is no longer hyperventilating. Against his better judgement, he lifts Izuku’s chin to make eye contact (eye contact has always been a bit dangerous when Izuku is acting oddly - the phrase ‘lost in your eyes’ is never so real any other time).

His eyes are wide and unfocused, far more than their usual degree. The green-gold corona flickered through his iris seems to glow with an inner light, and Katsuki can feel the familiar sensation of pulling like someone is taking his hand and saying ‘I have so many things to show you’ and there is just the faintest sound of singing but he has had fourteen years of exposure to everything about Izuku and he keeps his focus. Izuku’s pupils are slowly dilating, and if Katsuki were a poet, he would liken it to a black hole devouring the light. Instead all he can think is that it’s probably not a good sign.

Worse, it’s getting harder and harder to focus. The pull is getting more powerful, more insistent the longer he looks but as tempting as the idea of quite literally losing himself in Izuku’s eyes (he knows if he lets himself go he’ll never find his way back), he’s going to have to take drastic measures. He’s going to have do something he would never do otherwise.

“Izuku,” He says and although they’ve known each other for nearly their entire lives, Izuku’s actual name sits uneasy on his tongue. It just feels… wrong, on some fundamental level.

It has the desired effect though, because almost immediately Izuku snaps back to reality (or at least, as close to ‘reality’ as he gets) and frowns at him as though he weren’t just hyperventilating and lost in his own mind.

(Katsuki wonders if Izuku loses himself in his mind the same way he threatens to be lost in his eyes but he’ll never truly know)

“... Did you just call me by my actual name?” He says, because of course that’s what he’d focus on.

“Deku,” Katsuki begins, “Are you okay?”

Izuku blinks, thoughts of the crushing sensation, of the need to breathe, of the pressure and the lack of space still circling his mind like vultures waiting for him to break down.

“No,” He says in a tone that is entirely too calm, “I think I’d like to go now.”

It is the most direct and logical expression of his feelings and thoughts that Katsuki has ever heard, which only serves to alarm him just that much more.

“Alright,” Katsuki mutters, mentally planning their route out. The fastest and most direct method will
involve powering through the crowd again, so in a complete violation of his previous words, he takes Izuku’s hand in his own with a secure grip. “When you’re ready.”

Izuku does not panic on the way out although he does make a mental note to never step foot in the mall again. Later, Katsuki drops off a wrapped set of tools and stares at his face for far too long until Izuku insists that he's perfectly fine now.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: The Mugger Scene had several different variations, in terms of the actual Mugger and the Hero who responds. I ended up going with Ingenium as a call back to earlier chapters.

EDIT: You ever just post something and immediately remember you were supposed to edit a line but forgot

Because I did.
Meteoric Impact

Chapter Summary

Izuku is ready for U.A. Whether U.A is ready for Izuku an entirely different question.

Chapter Notes

Hello!

Yes! It's finally here! The long awaited meetings! Not only does Izuku meet Hatsume Mei, he also reunites with a confused Shinsou Hitoshi! Hopefully it meets everyone’s expectations of the scenes.

Introducing two new Original Characters (well, only one of them has been properly introduced), a healthy dose of what passes for Izuku's Logic (that is slowly beginning to rub off on Katsuki), and a mild dose of angst courtesy of Hitoshi. He gets over it. Sort of.

EDIT: No matter how many times I go over it before posting, I always find new errors after posting the chapter :V

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Izu-kun! It’s time to wake up! Katsuki-kun is already waiting for you downstairs!”

Izuku peels himself off of his bed, groggily searching for the alarm clock that was supposed to be on his nightstand. Why hadn't it woken him up? It was supposed to... oh. Right. He’d disassembled it two days ago. The parts were still in his workshop, and he was supposed to have re-assembled the new and improved version yesterday, but he’d ended up getting distracted by an opportunity to glimpse a supernova through his telescope. The rest of his day had been spent scribbling ideas down, half-formed designs and plans for a variety of things.

“Coming!” He calls back to his mother (and Katsuki as well, he supposes) before shuffling very slowly towards his dresser. He picks out a clean uniform, lays it out on his bed and goes to take a shower. The steaming hot water cascading down is enough to boil a potato but Izuku only feels refreshed and chipper. A hot shower never fails to wake him up in the mornings... although maybe he could boil an egg in the shower whilst he’s there? Cook breakfast and get refreshed. It’s an idea that holds some merit, but how long does it even take to boil an egg, he’s not actually sure.

“Izu-kun! Hurry up or you’ll be late!”

Izuku blinks, snapped out of the haze of calculations and thoughts. He’s already drawn half a design for a shower-friendly egg-holder using the fogged up bathroom mirror. Right. No time for designs.

“Coming Mom!” He calls back, reaching over to turn the shower off and grab a towel.

When Izuku finally comes down the stairs, gakuran still unbuttoned, there’s a small smorgasbord of
food available. Grilled fish, vegetables (pickled and fresh), miso soup, fried tofu, rice, all laid out in bowls waiting for him although Katsuki has helped himself to more than a small helping of rice and fish. Presumably, he ate breakfast at home but got badgered into eating here as well by Inko - not that it would take much convincing.

He wastes no time in joining Katsuki, greeting him only with a curt “Kacchan,” before he starts to shovel food into his face.

Katsuki responds to this by striking him on the top of the head and glaring. “At least say good morning to Inko-san, Deku!” He snaps, glaring at him heatedly.

Inko titters gently as she sweeps in to refill Katsuki’s cup of tea. “Katsuki-kun, there’s no need to get offended on my behalf,” She says, genuinely touched at his concern, “And I told you to call me Auntie!”

Katsuki nods politely. “Yes, Auntie.”

It is the most respect Katsuki shows practically anyone, and when Izuku had asked him why, he had only given him this blank look and said ‘She’s your mother’. Izuku isn’t sure what’s special about his mother in particular when he knows Katsuki would never be this polite to his own.

Further musing is predictably cut short when Katsuki starts to get impatient and shoves his backpack at him. “Come on, you can eat on the way,” He snaps. “If I'm late because I chose to stick around for your stupid ass I will annihilate you.”

“Jeez, I'm coming Kacchan, hold on,” is what Izuku wants to say but his mouth is full of pickled vegetables so nothing so eloquent comes out.

Inko, for her part, just waves to both of them with a beatific smile. “Good luck Katsuki-kun! Don't cause too much trouble Izuku!”

“Thanks for the food, Auntie,” Katsuki calls back.

Sometimes, Izuku thinks he will never understand why Katsuki does the things he does.

“What do you think the exam will be like, Kacchan?” is Izuku’s first words after he’s done eating the food he carried with him. “It’s a Heroics course so what would they even test for? Do you think they have dummies tied up over a fire and you have to swing in and save them?”

Katsuki doesn’t even glance at him, too busy keeping his hands in his pockets and glaring at anyone that gets too close. “Deku, even for you, that is ridiculously fucking stupid.”

Izuku puffs out his cheeks sulkily. “Well how would you test for Heroism then?” is what he asks but he already knows the general answer.

“Fighting of course, idiot.”

Izuku mentally declares himself the winner of Bakugou Bingo.

Katsuki huffs, elbowing him sharply. “Wipe that dumb smile off your face Deku, I know you're fucking laughing at me.” He doesn’t deny it, and Katsuki can't tell if that is more or less irritating.
Stupid fucking Deku.

“Kacchan, you should stop being so aggressive. Heroism is more than beating up acceptable targets,” Izuku says cheerfully, completely ignorant of the uncovered manhole in his path. “Unless you want to be like Endeavor. Second in ranking, not even in the Top Fifty for popularity.”

“I know that, asshole,” Katsuki grumbles, idly reaching out to jerk Izuku to the side, “But how fuck are you meant to test rescuing?”

For his part, being jerked to the side doesn’t even disrupt Izuku’s gait. “With dummies of course, Kacchan.”

“Yeah but you’d have to create a dangerous situation to rescue the dummies from and there is no fucking way U.A would allow some fuckwit to get seriously injured for the sake of a fucking exam.”

Izuku ponders it for a moment, before conceding the point. “Teachers or Robots?” He asks, moving onto what he considers the next obvious question.

It only takes half a minute for Katsuki to figure out what Izuku is actually asking. “Why the fuck would it be robots? It's probably other examinees.”

“That's silly Kacchan. That only proves who's better, not who’s good enough plus injuries? It has to be either Teachers or Robots,” Izuku declares, nodding to himself.

“Hmph. Teachers then. If it was robots, the repair bill would be fucking ridiculous.”

Izuku tilts his head to the side. “U.A is really something though. I think they could afford Robots.”

“It’s not about if they can, it's about why they would,” Katsuki mutters, “I realise that you’ve never thought about that difference but just. Fucking try. For once.”

Izuku stares at him and Katsuki knows that he fundamentally does not understand the concept of being able to afford robots but choosing not to use them. It's just as well that Izuku is not a very good coder despite his many talents, or the Midoriya Household would have achieved sentience.

Their debate over how U.A would test the applicants fighting ability is cut short when the sight of the towering gates comes into view.

“Wow. Photos don't do it justice do they?” Izuku whispers, awe struck.

Katsuki is similarly awed but for much less time. “Right. I’m heading for the Practical Exam. You head off where ever the fuck the Support Exam is and we’ll meet up here after the Written Exam.”

He pauses and then seizes him by the shoulder. “Repeat it back to me, Deku.”

“Meet up here after the Written Exam,” Izuku says breezily. “It’ll be fine, Kacchan.”

“Deku. If you were to get fucking lost again, I would never be able to face Auntie. I’m not allowed to attach a GPS to your thick skull so this will have to fucking do.” He finishes by slapping Izuku on the back in an uncharacteristic display of friendship. “See you in a few hours. If I don’t, I will hunt you down and drag you back home after I beat your dumb inconsiderate ass for making Auntie worry.”
Izuku privately thinks it’s Katsuki is the one who would be worrying. “Fine, fine. I have my phone on me anyway.”

Katsuki wordlessly hands him a familiar black smartphone accompanied by a look.

“Okay. I have it now and I promise I won’t lose it.”

Katsuki stares at him long and hard before slapping him on the back of the head and stalking off silently.

Izuku watches him go in equal silence, rubbing the back of his head ruefully. Just as he’s about to leave for his own exam, a voice calls out ‘YOU!’ and purely out of habit, Izuku turns around.

The faintly familiar figure of Shinsou Hitoshi is pointing incredulously at him.

“Me!” Izuku responds, grinning exuberantly.

The power of the friendship bracelet is undeniable by time, space or fate.

Shinsou Hitoshi has not forgotten the all too vivid memory of The Boy Who Chews Sand, but he has, for many days and nights, questioned the veracity of the event.

He had no name to call him, and any he related the story to (save his parents who he secretly believed merely wanted to spare his feelings) laughed in his face, as though the concept of a spirit who chewed sand into glass was too ridiculous in a world where people flew or fired lasers from body parts.

Hitoshi clung to the truth though, clung to the bracelet they claimed he just found on the beach and came up with a tall tale around (as though Hitoshi had ever done so before, as though Hitoshi had ever been so bravely gregarious) and now… now he was staring right at the Boy Who Chews Sand And Spits Baubles and he has no idea whether to be happy to meet him again or angry that he just showed up once and left.

It’s hard to be angry, he thinks, and all the fantasies of asking him what the fuck his deal was fade to the back of his mind because the Boy Who Chews Sand is so bright it’s almost like looking at the sun, all ecstatic grin and freckled skin. His eyes are the worst though, coronas of green-gold circling an endless void that's almost beckoning him in.

He takes it back. He's not the sun, but a galaxy condensed into the form a small teenager, a thousand glimmering stars all at once.

“Are you okay? You seem kind of out of it. Low blood sugar?”

Hitoshi snaps back to reality hard enough that he recoils slightly. “Uh… no. Thank you.” He pauses, before jolting as though shocked. “You! What's your name?!” If he doesn’t ask now he’ll forget and he’ll have to wait another three years or whatever blue moon red sun stars aligning mumbo jumbo is
necessary for their paths to cross again.

The Boy Who Might Be A Galaxy points to himself. “I’m Izuku! Midoriya Izuku.”

Shinsou Hitoshi repeats the name to himself mentally. It's less awe inspiring than he imagined but the weight of it still warms him to the bone. “I… I'm Hitoshi. Shinsou Hitoshi.”

“Great to see you again Hitoshi,” Izuku says cheerfully.

Hitoshi is a little bowled over by Izuku’s blatantly familiar use of his first name on top of his… well, everything but he manages to keep his wits. “You’re… here. At U.A.” Of course he is, Hitoshi thinks. He's so incredibly warm he has no trouble at all imagining Izuku as a Hero.

“Yup! Are you taking the Practical Exam as well?”

Hitoshi nods quietly. “Y… yeah. Gonna give it my all.” The words puncture his mood and deflate it flat. Izuku doesn’t know his Quirk. Izuku, so bright and warm, has chosen to be his friend but the bitter reminder of what he is will one day be a pill too much to swallow and then Izuku will leave like all the others.

Blissfully misjudging why Hitoshi seemed down, Izuku pats him on the shoulder in an attempt to cheer him up. “Come on! You’ll do great. If you ever find yourself wondering what to do, just think. ‘How can I help people who need it?’. If you do that, I'm sure you'll pass. That's what being a Hero is all about.”

Hitoshi wants to believe it's that easy.

Izuku checks his watch and pats him on the shoulder one more. “Great seeing you again. I'll catch you around!” and then he's off in a direction that does not lead to the Practical Exam at all.

Belatedly, Hitoshi realises he didn't so much as get his email address.

Hitoshi stares down the gargantuan Zero Pointer, and he feels the last dregs of any hope of passing fade. It just had to be Robots. He only managed to score one measly point.

His eyes linger on the prone form of a girl he doesn’t recognise, and he can see the massive tread hovering just above her like Damocles’ Mallet.

‘How can I help people who need it?’

Hitoshi grits his teeth, glass beads warm against his skin. It's against the rules, but nobody else is going to help her and he’s the only one. He might never be a Hero to the masses but he can be a Hero to just this one girl. If he can help just one person with his Quirk...

“Oi!” He shouts at another student, “You want to be a Hero right?!?”

Iida Tenya turns to answer just before he takes off again but the moment the words “Of course!” leave his mouth, his body is no longer his to command.

“Then save her!”
As he slowly paced down the corridor to the classroom the Support Exams were held, the first thing Izuku noticed was the noise. Rambunctious shouting interspersed with bouts of what could only rightly be described as maniacal cackling served to create an atmosphere that was equal parts disturbing and intriguing.

Nobody had ever accused Izuku of having a self preservation instinct worth a damn though, so he curiously stuck his head in through the door.

A girl with thick pink locks was hunched over a desk where she was cranking a spanner on something large and metal and loudly declaring that her ‘baby’ was going to blow the competition out of the water whilst the rest of the examinees looked on in a mix of apprehension, terror, and intrigue.

Next to her was an exasperated looking girl who had her desk pushed to the side, an array of tools laid out before her. Every now and then, at the pink-haired girls loud, boisterous prompting, she would pick up a tool with her left hand where it would momentarily (and strangely) sort of stutter visually, much like an image from a bad tv signal, before reappearing in her right hand with a similar visual effect. At this point, the Laughing Girl would seize it and use it on whatever it was she was tinkering with.

Spying an open seat next to the still-tinkering girl, Izuku casually strode in and set his bag down on it and took a seat. The Laughing Girl was too busy working on whatever project she had to notice Izuku’s presence, and the rest of the group seemed to be giving her too much of a berth to really react. He’s mostly curious as to what she’s working on.

It looks like some kind of… cannon or launcher, although Izuku can’t see what it launches.

The Tinkerer finally notices Izuku’s presence, so boldly close as it is, and her oddly cross-haired eyes light up. “Ah! Another minion! Here, hold this!” She thrusts a canister at him that he idly notes is the perfect size and shape to be ammunition for the launcher.

Ever helpful, Izuku obediently obliges.

The girl across on the other side just shoots him the look usually reserved for the use of people trapped under ten tonnes of steel begging to be freed. Izuku just beams back at her, and any hope of release dies.

“Now my lovely minions, behold what you have helped wrought! Rejoice for you have participated in the creation of the NetMaster 6000!” Tinkerer holds the newly christened NetMaster 6000 above her head as though she expects a shaft of light to burst through the roof and deliver a heavenly blessing.

Izuku claps softly in appreciation, although nobody else does which he thinks is a little rude. “Why 6000?” He asks.

The Tinkerer basks in his adulation for a moment before snapping her focus onto him, like some sort of attention-seeking missile. “Simple answer, minion! It’s a slimmed down version of the NetMaster 9000 of course! But it’s software upgradable.”
Izuku nods sagely. Makes perfect sense to him.

The Tinkerer grins at him, full of exuberance and energy, and there's almost an audible click as Izuku beams back. “Finally someone who appreciates a good high velocity net launcher!”

“It is a very good one,” Izuku says amicably, examining the canister, “Especially the propulsion. Gas powered?”

The Tinkerer is absolutely delighted. “Hydrogen-based, yes. Electric signal—”

“For ignition? But the exhaust—”

“Bleeds right out the sides with—”

“Oh! Is that—”

“Copper dimatitium dampeners yes,”

The Tool Girl groans quietly, head thumping against her desk. “Buddha save us all because God is clearly dead, there's two of them. I should've applied for Gen Ed. I should've known there would be more than one and they’d all apply for U.A. Someone wrap me in foil and stick me in the fridge because this turkey is roasted.” She is, unfortunately, the only person who grasps the importance of this moment. Everyone else is just sensibly afraid but without any of the dread the situation deserves.

Izuku and the Tinkerer are too busy firing off rapid half-sentences to even remember why they were even at this room. “But if you use titanium tristanite instead—”

“For the frame? Reduce the weight but without sacri—”

“Integrity and it’ll—”

“Look fucking boss!” The Tinkerer throws her head back and cackles, hands held up in the air.

Izuku isn’t sure what’s so funny but he’s definitely in a joyous mood himself.

The side door slammed opened suddenly, startling everyone in the room before a short, recognisable figure tromped in. With his hefty metal mask/helmet, thick claw-tipped gloves and bare chest, anyone would recognise the Pro Hero, Power Loader. “Looks like everyone made it on time,” He says, as he takes his place at the front of the classroom. “I’m gonna assume everyone read the instruction pamphlet, because if you didn’t, then you’ve already failed and you may as well leave now.” He pauses for a brief moment just to see if anyone actually did just fail then and there before continuing.

“Good! This is the Support Exam, as you all already know. If you didn’t know, then you should probably hurry along to wherever it is that you are supposed to be, or stick around, I don’t actually care.” He paused again, scratching the side of his mask like it was his face. “Anyway. The Support Department is the most stringent and selective Department in U.A! We’re tougher than even the Heroics Department, and we’re sure as hell tougher than General Education and Management!” He slammed his fists together with a loud ‘CLANK’ for emphasis, striking a suitably dramatic pose with his left hand pointing at the class. “Why? Because we are the Support! The backbone! The people who make sure Endeavor doesn’t become a streaker with fireproof clothing! That is why we’re the hardest and toughest department!”

“That, and budget limitations,” A new voice interjects, as a woman sticks her head in from the side
area. Her hair, done up in a messy but officious-looking bun is a smooth, cool blue colour, but Izuku can see the way it is slowly turning green from the roots up. Her casual, office lady hair and glasses are offset by the bright orange overalls stained with grease and other fluids she's wearing.

Power Loader nods seriously, surprisingly easily too considering his mask. “Yes. Budget limitations are very important in the Support Department. You too will learn of their power, provided you make it in. Now. Onto the actual Exam. I’ll call out your names, and you’ll come into the side room to present your device or design to be judged by a panel, then you will leave and receive your results within three to five business days.”

An examinee raises their hand. “What kind of criteria are we being tested on?”

“A variety of things,” Office-Mechanic-Lady says, raising a gloved hand to begin listing them off. “Obviously the ingenuity of the device itself. How feasible it is, if it’s only a design. What is it made for? Does it work? How well can you sell it? And I mean you, selling it to us. Not like, exchange of currency sale, but you have to convince us that your idea is worth it, that your device is worth it. If you make it as a Support Hero, that’s what you’ll have to do - sell your designs to other Pro Heroes. It’s not easy convincing some people to use your designs no matter how helpful it is.”

Power Loader shakes his head sadly. “It took seven of us, all begging, to install volume controls in Present Mic’s stuff.” He straightens himself. “Right! We’re doing this in Alphabetical Order, so Ashiro Tojo! Judgement time.”

A nervous looking boy picks up his backpack and follows the two into the side room, door shutting behind him. A few minutes later, he emerges, seeming deflated. So it goes for most of them, until they call out “HATSUME MEI!”

Tinkerer stands up, grinning deviously as she clutches her ‘baby’ to her chest. Izuku flashes her a smile and a thumbs up. “Good luck!” He says cheerfully, but Hatsume Mei cackles in response.

“Don’t need it!” She says in a sing song tone, practically prancing into the room. It takes a lot longer than most of the other students, but eventually she emerges, oozing confidence. “Best of luck, Maki-chan, Minion!” She declares, skipping out of the room. Izuku’s not sure when he became ‘Minion’, but it’s a nice enough nickname he supposes.

‘Maki-chan’ is next in line to be called, where Izuku learns her name is actually ‘Kouta Makino’. As she shuffles into the room, Izuku offers her the same gesture of good will he did Mei, but she just stares at him tiredly. “If you really want to help, you’ll kill me right now. Just choke me out. Slam me into the ground. I promise I’ll thank you in the afterlife.”

Izuku does not kill her, but only beams at her brighter, and she sighs before shuffling in. Her exam is a lot shorter than Mei’s, and in short order, she’s shuffling right back out.

“MIDORIYA IZUKU!” calls Power Loader’s voice, and Izuku stands up straight, backpack strap in one hand as he strides in.

The panel consists of three judges - Power Loader himself, Office-Mechanic-Lady, and the mechanically masked figure of Lunch Rush, the Cooking Hero. All three are seated behind a large, wooden desk, and have sheafs of papers and notes in front of them.
“Midoriya, Midoriya… Here we are.” Lunch-Rush’s voice is chipper and upbeat, higher in pitch than Izuku had perhaps expected. “Midoriya Izuku, Scholarship applicant. Quirk is listed as ‘Star Heart’. Heavily recommended by his teachers, especially one Aritaka-sensei. Perfect grades,” He lists, scanning down the sheet of paper. “Alright, Midoriya, let’s begin. What have you brought to the Exam?”

Izuku is only faintly nervous, but he plasters a bright face on regardless as he reaches into his bag. “It’s actually the first thing I ever made. Well, not ACTUALLY the first thing, but the same thing as the first thing I ever made.” In his hands is a large, round metal shield the colour of burnished brass. The smooth finish is polished to a shine, and a large green ‘D’ is painted on the center. “A shield,” He says, as though the clearly educated grown adults in front of him have never seen one before.

They all share a look. “Interesting,” Power Loader begins, leaning forward. “Does it do anything?”

“It’s primary function is shielding,” Izuku says quite cheerfully, “But it’s also quite aerodynamic and can hit pretty hard. Earlier prototypes doubled as dinner plates.”

They seem to take his words in stride, although Office-Mechanic-Lady jots down some notes.

“Dinner plates? Could it feasibly be used as a pan?” Lunch-Runch of course asks cooking related questions.

“Nope!” Izuku replies, popping the ‘p’, “It doesn't transfer heat very well, so it protects against fire-based attacks quite well. It is quite conductive, though, so the inside is coated with rubber to insulate against electrical attacks.”

Power Loader nods. “Interesting. May I inspect it?” He holds out a gloved hand patiently, and Izuku dutifully hands it to the Pro Hero. He taps it with his claws, pushes on it a little and generally inspects the build quality before handing it to the other two, who do much the same. “This metal, what is it?” He asks, genuinely curious.

Izuku straightens. “I call it ‘Dekusteel’. It’s a titanium based alloy with nickel, copper and iron as well some trace other metals and elements.”

Power Loader repeats it to himself a few times, and writes it down. “Deku, huh? Is that what the ‘D’ stands for?”

Izuku nods. It’s hard to get a read on any of them without seeing their faces, but they seem happy enough about what they’re seeing and hearing.

“I like it,” the Excavation Hero says, “s got a nice feel to it. Deku. Short and sweet.”

Office-Mechanic-Lady nods enthusiastically. “Sort of sounds like ‘Dekiru’ doesn’t it? ‘I can do it!’. ‘I can do it steel’. I like it too.”

Lunch-Rush hands the shield back to him, and he stuffs it back into his pack. “Now,” the Cooking Hero begins, “Why did you choose a Shield? Compared to a lot of the other examinees, this is rather mundane.”

“Well, my Quirk lends itself to Metallurgy really well,” Izuku says, tapping his stomach, “but I wanted a Shield because it protects.” He looks down at the Shield, almost wistfully. “I wanted something that would make someone feel safe - something they could hold and think ‘I don’t have to be afraid, because this will protect me’.”

The Three share a look again. “Thank you Midoriya,” Power Loader says, “That will be all.”
Picking Bakugou Katsuki out from the dispersing crowd is pretty easy, all things considered, especially given that he is angrily stalking towards Izuku like he’s been personally offended. Izuku wouldn’t put it past him, either.

Izuku brightens up considerably as he approaches, which just makes him scowl more. “Hey Kacchan! What was the Practical Exam like?” He doesn’t ask if Katsuki did well or not, because neither of them believe for a second that he won’t make it.

“It was fucking robots,” He muttered angrily. “Fucking. Robots.” Ah. That was why he was so angry. He was probably stewing over that the entire Written Exam. Katsuki glares at him half-heartedly before beginning to stalk off.

Izuku dutifully follows. “I made friends,” He says cheerfully, swinging his arms back and forth in a manner that would be childish for anyone else, but just sort of seems to suit him.

If it were anyone else, Katsuki would’ve been surprised at their ability to make friends at an exam. “Of course you did,” Katsuki grumbles, because nothing Izuku ever does will ever surprise him again.

(He says that to himself every year, and every year Izuku does something new)

Absolutely nobody is surprised to learn that Midoriya Izuku will be welcomed into the Support Department at U.A with a full scholarship. It doesn’t stop Inko from throwing a small party, even if the guests are only the Bakugou family. There's a delicious cake, a better spread, and Katsuki almost doesn't scowl for a moment.

Chapter End Notes

The NetMaster 6000 is a reference to the old Dilbert cartoons, specifically the episode titled 'The Name', because I am entirely the kind of person to reference Dilbert.

The discussion between Katsuki and Izuku regarding Teachers vs Robots is one of my favourite illustrations of Izuku's mental processes.

Have a snippet from the next chapter, 'Dark Matter Days':

“... I see. I’ll grab the next flight out - no, no it’s fine! I'm sure they can give me some time off, I mean, fourteen years no visit? I should see my son more than once right? What? No, everything's fine.”

See you then!
Chapter Summary

It's a day of firsts, for many people. This is the first day of High School, the first time Ojiro is witness to just how far the rabbit hole goes. It's the first time Midoriya Hisashi ever asked for time off.

Chapter Notes

I'm still completely overwhelmed by the response to this. Every day I wake up and go 'Hot damn', because there's always new comments to read and respond to.

But I was particularly blown away by the fact that there is now fanart of 'And In His Eyes, A Galaxy'! Check out this incredible art by Legendsgates!

I'm printing out a copy so I can have it buried with me when I die, so future generations will look back and wonder what my deal was.

This is a big chapter story-wise, because it is the chapter where Midoriya Hisashi finally enters the stage, with all the implications he carries with him. Hisashi is a lot of fun, for me as a writer, because he's basically a blank slate and you better believe I'm running away with it. I mentioned it earlier (either in a Notes section or in the comments), but the moment I started writing Chapter 2, I knew exactly who Hisashi was going to be in this story.

This is also the first chapter where a scene occurs where Izuku is not even present. Izuku will undeniably remain the main focus of the story, but there is a lot going on. I expect that Hitoshi and Katsuki will both have their own individual scenes as the story progresses, as satellite (heh) characters to Izuku's story.

As always, absolutely please share any thoughts or suggestions in the comments. I love the interaction! I live for it. But I've rambled on long enough, onto the story!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shinsou Hitoshi has been hanging around the front gates of U.A high for at least half an hour now. There have been a wide variety of odd looks and whispers but he’s always had people whispering about him ever since they learned of his quirk. Before, it had been pressuring, crushing. Now? Now he was in U.A. The Heroics Department no less! Let them whisper and stare and wonder, because he made it!

The only question he had left to answer now was if ‘Midoriya Izuku’ had made it. He hadn’t seen him in the Practical Exam but something about the strange boy made him believe he had (well, all of the things about the strange boy made him believe that), and so he had resolved to wait outside the gates to see if he could intercept him. He wasn’t missing him again, not when he knew exactly where he would be. Hitoshi categorically refused to let him be some kind of Halley's Comet in his life.
A shock of dark green hair, the colour of oak leaves in a rainstorm, catches his attention and he shouts out ‘YOU!’ again. It takes him a moment to remember that ‘You’ has a name, and he follows it up with “MIDORIYA!”

Izuku snaps to attention, bright gold-green eyes briefly confused before they lock onto him and the brightest grin Hitoshi has ever seen spreads across his face. “Hitoshi!” He calls back, waving at him enthusiastically.

It’s only now that Hitoshi realises that Midoriya isn’t alone, and next to him is a scowling blonde delinquent that he’s pretty sure he saw during the Exam, surrounded by a pile of destroyed machines. He finds himself faintly confused to see them next to each other - Izuku’s bright, incredible warmth versus the cold, scowling aggression of the Delinquent. They seemed so different in just about every aspect, that he can’t imagine the Delinquent wanting to be friends with anyone. But then, he’s only known Izuku for the equivalent of a few days but he still gets the intense feeling that Izuku would absolutely not care about any of that and be friends anyway.

He half-heartedly jogs over, flashing Izuku a brief but small smile and calmly returning the Delinquent’s irritated scowl with an indifferent expression.

“Hitoshi! You passed!” Izuku beams at him, and for a brief moment, he wonders if the Delinquent is always scowling because he’s actually squinting against the sun, “I knew you would of course, but it’s great to see you here anyway!”

The Delinquent is studying him carefully, as though he thinks Hitoshi is full of ulterior motives or hidden traps and Hitoshi has to wonder if a lot of people take advantage of Izuku’s overwhelming kindness and warmth that shines through every cell of his being. His eyes linger a little on Hitoshi’s hands, and he realises he’s looking at the bracelet Izuku gave him three years ago. Whatever he sees seems to satisfy him, because his features soften somewhat - downgrading from ‘I Will Murder Someone’ to ‘Must Be A Monday’ - and there’s something almost akin to… understanding in his eyes. Hitoshi is just vaguely aware that he’s never actually had anyone look at him like that.

He doesn’t know why he’s looking at him like that and he’s beginning to think he should.

“Bakugou Katsuki,” the Delinquent grunts, accompanied by the smallest nod. It seems a bit rude, but ‘a bit rude’ is probably about as polite as someone like that gets.

“Shinsou Hitoshi,” He offers, returning the nod.

Izuku is beaming brighter, because his friends are becoming friends and that’s the best thing a friend can ask for (although for Katsuki this is less Facebook Friends and more LinkedIn Connected).

“Hey, Hitoshi! Which class are you in, A or B?”

“... A?” Hitoshi offers, sounding unsure of himself. “Are you in 1-A as well, Midoriya?”

“Nope! Didn’t apply for Heroics,” He responds, and Hitoshi has no idea how to react to that. “But Kacchan is!”
‘Kacchan’ is scowling at him again, and there’s an implicit promise that if Hitoshi ever uses that nickname, there will be nothing left to find of him.

“If you’re not in Heroics, then…?”

Izuku grins. “1-F! Support Department.”

Oh. That makes some sense, Hitoshi thinks, beads warm against his skin.

“Okay,” Izuku says brightly, adjusting his bag straps, “Gotta run. Don’t want to be late on my first day. You guys should probably go too! And call me Izuku, okay? We’re friends!” And then Izuku is gone before Hitoshi can even think to shout ‘WAIT!’.

Katsuki turns to leave, but he pauses just long enough to glance at Hitoshi, and it doesn’t take a mind reader to get the meaning. When he turns back to start to languidly stride away, Hitoshi falls into step beside him.

Hitoshi isn’t brave enough to call them friends just yet (and it feels weird and fuzzy knowing Izuku is so willing to be his friend already), but even Katsuki’s silent willingness to be in his presence is good enough for him.

The classroom for 1-F is a lot smaller than Izuku expected. There are only six desks, arranged in a loose hexagon, although calling them ‘desks’ is a bit of a misnomer. They are more like workstations, with a laptop and drawing space each. Four of the six stations have already been claimed, and Izuku makes his way to the one in the front left. He can’t see Mei anywhere, but the other girl, Kouta Makino, is sitting at the back left, arranging her workstation to her exacting specifications. He contemplates going over and saying ‘Hi’, but decides to study the rest of the class first.

Directly to his right, a large, dusky-skinned boy wearing a cap is face down against his desk, dead to the world. He has a long, silky-looking silver mane that Izuku can’t help but be impressed by. His own hair refuses to obey just about anything he attempts.

The person behind him was much harder to read, given they were wearing a thick rubber suit in the style of hazmat-protection that he’s quite sure he didn’t see during the Exam. Izuku couldn’t even see their face, as it was obscured by a full face gasmask - all he could think was that the entire ensemble must’ve taken some time to put on in the morning. They seemed content to tap away at their laptop, one that had been modified to accommodate the thick fingers of the suit.

Lastly, in the back right station, was a girl hunched over something on her station. The most striking thing about her were the two disembodied, gloved hands hovering about her, alternating between working on whatever it was she was focused on, and occasionally brushing a stray lock of black hair out of her face. Izuku realised quite quickly that they were the only hands she had, as the sleeves of her uniform jacket were limply hanging where they were.

The door slammed open again before Izuku could continue his musings, and Power Loader strode in,
full of purpose and poise, followed by Office-Mechanic-Lady. “ALRIGHT EV... “ He cut himself off almost immediately. Izuku couldn’t see what he was doing behind the mask, but from the slight movements, he guessed he was scanning the classroom. “Five. There’s only five. Hatsume’s missing.”

Makino raised her hand. “Mei slept in, I think. She’ll be here shortly.”

“Are you going to start without her?” whispers Office-Mechanic-Lady, but Izuku is close enough to hear regardless.

Power Loader shifts a little, seeming disgruntled. “I’m not doing the speech twice, Setsu.”

Thankfully, they don’t have to wait longer than a few seconds before the door slams open again and Hatsume Mei’s loud, bombastic voice cries “MAKI-CHAN! YOU LEFT ME BEHIIIIIIND!” It takes her a few moments to realise that Power Loader is giving her the most unimpressed look one can through his mask. There’s an awkward second where they’re just staring at each other before Mei flashes him a bright grin and salute in lieu of an actual apology for being late.

“Alright! That’s enough of that, take a seat!” Power Loader barks, pointing at the only open workstation. He doesn’t wait for Mei to finish striding over before beginning. “You’re all here for one reason and one reason alone: because you’re going to be the best damn Support Heroes there is. You were all chosen not just because you showed all the qualities it takes to be a successful Support Hero. You showed all the qualities to be the best.

“You aren’t just clever or smart, you’re ingenious. You think outside the box. You have the spirit. Our motto at U.A is PLUS ULTRA! It means to go beyond and that is what you will damn well do! You won’t just be great, or incredible, or awesome, you will be the god damn best!” He clenched a hand into a fist, fingertips clanking. “NOW SAY IT WITH ME! PLUS ULTRA!”

Izuku responds quite enthusiastically, as does Mei, but the rest of the class seems fairly half-hearted about it. Makino seems more awkward about it than anything else, and the hitherto sleeping boy is very much just phoning it in.

“That don’t sound like ya’ll mean it! Say it again with feeling! PLUS ULTRA!”

The chorus is much more enthusiastic this time, although at least one of them is only doing it to make him shut up.

“That’s better! Now introductions. You all probably know me already as ‘Power Loader’,” He says, jerking a thumb at his chest, “But my name is Maijima Higari - here in class, that’s Maijima-sensei to you! My Quirk, ‘Iron Claws’, means exactly what it sounds like! But these babies aren’t just for fightin’, they’re also great at digging.” He swings his hand out to gesture at Office-Mechanic-Lady,
whose hair has turned a bright shade of orange. “This is my sidekick, Setsuna Hinako!”

“Sidekick is an inaccurate term. As I do not possess a Hero License, I am technically not a sidekick. But I am Maijima-senpai’s part-time assistant whilst I finish my Ph.D in Engineering. My Quirk, ‘Mood Hair’, is also rather self explanatory. It’ll be a pleasure working with everyone.” She finishes off with a small but polite bow.

“Right! Your turn now, you lot. We’ll start with you.” Power Loader gestures to the boy with the silver mane of hair, who only looks mildly disgruntled at having to go first.

“Alright. I’m Ogata Togashi. My Quirk is ‘Steel Mane’,” and at this point he paused to yawn, “Means I can Harden my hair into steel needles. S’bit of a pain cuz I have to hold my breath to do it, and it’s really tiring.”

Then it was the person behind him’s turn, who wasn’t even paying attention in favour of tapping away at the laptop. “Hm? Oh. My name is Shoutan Shin’ya,” They said, sounding vaguely disinterested and distant, “My Quirk is ‘Biohazard’. This suit is for your protection. I look forward to working with all of you.” No further explanation seemed forthcoming so they moved onto the next.

She leaned back in her chair, floating hands raised up in a finger guns pose. “Harishima Chizuru. My Quirk is called ‘Handy’ because my father thinks he’s a comedian. If it’s not obvious, my hands are not attached to my body and I have no arms - instead they float around in a radius around me. It’s something like two metres.” Her eyes turned dead cold. “You make a hand joke, I will use them to strangle you and nobody will be the wiser.”

Makino lets out a sigh and shifts a little in her seat, seeming uncomfortable with the attention. “I’m Kouta Makino. My Quirk, ‘Left to Right’, is the exciting ability to teleport any object from one hand to the other. There’s a limit on size but I only have to be touching it.”

“I’m Hatsume Mei!” Mei, of course, wastes absolutely no time in seizing the spotlight, launching into her introduction the moment Makino is finished. “My Quirk, ‘Zoom’ allows me to see clearly to a distance of up to two kilometres!”

And all that’s left is Izuku himself. He smiles brightly at the rest of the class, and begins. “Hi! I’m Midoriya Izuku. My Quirk, ‘Star Heart’, allows me to generate plasma in my stomach and use the heat to smelt metals.”

“Alright! Introductions are over. Time to begin. Open up your laptops, kids, it’s time to learn the principles of good design.”

__________________________________________

After a grueling introduction into the life of a Support Hero (which involved dissecting a lot of existing costumes and devices to understand why they were designed like that), it was time for lunch. Izuku piled his tray high with a precarious amount of food, earning him incredulous looks from some of the other students (and a thumbs up from Lunch-Rush) before he made a beeline to an empty table.
“Midoriya?”

Izuku looks up, and immediately starts beaming when he recognises the familiar face of Ojiro Mashirao, who is only faintly surprised to see him in return. Really, he should’ve guessed Midoriya was going to make it in easily. “Ojiro-senpai! Want to eat lunch together?” He says, around a mouthful of fried pork and rice.

“Uh. Sure,” Ojiro says, because it’s not like he had any plans to sit anywhere in particular, and a familiar face is always nice. “How’ve you been?” He settles down across from Izuku, his lunch looking like an ascetic’s snack compared to the small banquet Izuku collected.

Izuku beams, slurping up udon noodles as he does. “Pretty good! Settling into the new class, made new friends!”

Ojiro has been exposed to Izuku enough that the idea that he has already made new friends in the past few hours isn’t too surprising. What is surprising, is the person who sits down on Izuku’s left side.

He recognises Shinsou Hitoshi not just because they are in the same class, but because there was a rather dramatic argument between him and Iida Tenya near the very start. Hitoshi had used his Quirk on him during the Practical Exam, controlled him, admittedly all for a Heroic purpose (which was clearly recognised by U.A, if he was in 1-A). But nobody liked the idea of just being controlled like that, and it had left a sort of dark cloud surrounding him that nobody had wanted to get past.

“Izuku,” Hitoshi mutters in greeting, eyes flitting to Ojiro for a long moment before he mutters “Ojiro-san,” as well.

Ojiro has no idea how to react to this - there’s a lingering fear in his mind that if he responds, he’ll be Brainwashed but he knows it’s probably a stupid fear (but Hitoshi has already done it once to Tenya).

“Hitoshi!” Izuku responds cheerfully, “You know Ojiro-senpai?”

Because of course he knows Shinsou Hitoshi somehow. Ojiro shouldn’t be surprised he thinks, but he is all the same.

Hitoshi quirks an aristocratic eyebrow in a slow, deliberate motion, “We’re in the same class,” He says as explanation.

For Izuku, it’s as though Santa came early and he was leaving the entire sack in his stocking. His eyes light up and his entire expression morphs into one of pure ecstatic joy, because if Hitoshi and Ojiro are both in the same class and that class is 1-A then that means -

“Fucking hell Deku, you weren’t kidding,” mutters Bakugou fucking Katsuki, the OTHER person to get into an argument with Tenya, and Ojiro has definitely chosen the absolute wrong time to take a drink because he’s just sprayed it all over himself. How the hell is Izuku friends with both of them? One he could understand, but both? What is the common thread connecting them? Did they all go to the same school? What kind of nickname is Deku?!
Izuku pauses in eating a salad to correct him. “What? No, these are all old friends, Kacchan.” Izuku is so earnest in his statement, that Hitoshi nearly chokes on his saliva because they can’t have been friends for more than two days unless… unless he’s considered them friends *since three years ago and what is wrong with him?!*

Katsuki glances between Hitoshi and Ojiro, drinking in their incredulous reactions before he lets a small but amused grin spread across his face.

“It’s not that funny, Kacchan,” Izuku says, managing to sound chiding even though he’s got half a cheeseburger in his mouth. “Be nice to them.”

“No, fuck you. This is fucking hilarious.”

Ojiro is too busy craning his head around to see if anyone else is going to end up sitting at the table to attempt to understand what Katsuki finds so hilarious. If he finds out Izuku has a connection to everyone in 1-A, he’s not entirely sure what he’ll do but it would probably involve screaming in confusion.

Katsuki slumps into the space on Izuku’s right and leans back on the table as he peels the saran wrap off of his significantly more edible spicy chicken wrap. “Well, if these two aren’t the friends you made last time, then where the fuck are they?”

“Mei said she was going to the library and she dragged Makino with her,” Izuku supplies, finishing the last of his lunch at last.

Part of Ojiro isn’t sure how he managed, because he’s still only halfway through his own. The rest of him is just glad he doesn’t recognise those names because the idea that somehow Izuku was friends with the entirety of 1-A would’ve been too much for his mind to handle.

Hitoshi takes this as his moment to interject, and he pulls out a sleek grey smartphone. “Izuku, do you mind if we exchange emails?” Any lingering doubts regarding the truth of their friendship he held are all but obliterated in the brightness of Izuku’s smile.

“Of course! Hey, Ojiro-senpai, let’s exchange emails too,” He says cheerfully, already offering his phone to Hitoshi. Ojiro has his phone in his hands before he even realises what he’s doing, and by this point it’s too late to stop Izuku from taking it out of his hands and punching in his email.

Katsuki lets out a disgruntled sigh, but grudgingly offers his own phone. “May as fucking well. Too late to get out of this anyway.”

Ojiro’s beginning to understand, very slowly, what Katsuki means by ‘this’.

After their first day is over, as is tradition, Izuku waits for Katsuki at the gates and the two of them
walk home - but not before bidding goodbye to Hitoshi, who regrettably goes the other way.

“So, what was your first day like Kacchan?” He asks, hands laced at the back of his head as they walk, casually staring up at some drifting clouds that happen to resemble a dog chasing a rabbit. Or at least, to Izuku they do. If he squints, it's more like a frog eating a... rabbit.

“Absolute fucking bullshit,” He growls, “First there was this fucking idiot - Lida Kenya or some shit - fucking four-eyed halfbreed of a jock and a nerd got fucking uppity at me because I had my feet on the desk like fuck off, it’s a fucking desk, desks are for putting things on it's not going to care it's my feet, and then our dumb ass fucking teacher, Eraserhead.”

Izuku’s eyes light up. “The Pro Hero?” He asks, excitement dripping off every word.

“No Deku, it was just an ordinary teacher named ‘Eraserhead’ teaching a class on Heroics - yes it was the fucking Pro Hero,” Katsuki snaps, and shoots Izuku a glare when he gets even more excited. “Don’t start fanboying, he’s a fucking ass.”

Izuku takes that with a grain of salt because if Katsuki was to be believed, nearly everyone they met were assholes or idiots or something else.

Katsuki resumes his rant a moment after he’s sure Izuku isn’t going to start jumping up and down or something else stupid. “Fucking gives us a bunch of physical tests and says we can use our Quirks however we want, and then he tells us whoever gets the lowest score will be expelled! Of course, I wasn’t fucking worried because I motherfucking aced that bullshit,”

“Izuku adds, nodding in agreement.

“But after we’re all fucking done, he goes ‘None of you are being expelled, I was just motivating you’, like fuck off you dick, I swear to god, some of them were probably pissing their pants.” Katsuki takes a small breath now that his rant is concluded, before glancing at Izuku - who is back to looking up at the sky, and probably thinking of something weird. “What about you? How’s the fucking Support Department?”

Izuku hums, tapping his chin thoughtfully. “Energetic,” He begins, “We didn’t have anything that exciting. Maijima-sensei - Power Loader which is so cool - took us through an introduction to design principles. We haven’t done any real work yet, but we will soon!” He taps his chin a little more, and then he has a sudden thought, jolting through him as he claps his hands together. “Kacchan! It’s nearly your birthday isn’t it?”

From Izuku’s tone, Katsuki immediately knows that he won’t like what’s coming next. “Congratulations Deku, you can use a calendar,” He mutters sarcastically, although it carries an undertone of suspicion.

“Well, now that you have friends, I thought we could throw a proper birthday party!”

Katsuki very patiently restrains the urge to throttle Izuku and shake him back and forth because the reason Katsuki doesn’t have any friends is almost entirely Izuku’s fault (although, he wouldn’t trade
Izuku for any amount of friends but he’ll never admit to that to the idiot's face). “Abso-fucking-lutely not.”

Izuku starts pouting at him childishly, and his eyes are so bright and enticing, and not for the first time Katsuki curses the fact that it can be hard to stare at Izuku directly because looking away feels like admitting defeat but continuing to look is certain defeat.

“Okay, fucking fine! God. Damn it. We’ll have a fucking party, and you can invite those two fucking idiots but on one condition.”

Izuku brightens up even more, to the point that he’s practically glowing. He may actually be glowing, Katsuki isn’t sure and would not be surprised. “What?”

“You’re fucking hosting it,” Katsuki snaps, turning away. If Izuku hosts, then it means it’ll be at Izuku’s House, and most importantly, it means Midoriya Inko will be cooking. Having to deal with a birthday party is an entirely acceptable price to pay for that.

“Deal!” Izuku declares, shaking Katsuki’s hand for him.

Much like any deal with the Devil, Katsuki would soon consider this a grave mistake.

Somewhere, deep in the Alps of Switzerland, a tall, lanky man with hair the colour of a dying sun was humming thoughtfully to himself as he worked, blissfully unaware that he was about to be interrupted by his phone.

“♫I’m Miss Sugar Pink ♪, liquor liquor lips ♬, I’m gonna-”

He cut the song off with one hand, pressing the phone to his ear with his shoulder as he resumed his work. “Inko-chan! Darling, sorry. I know it's time for our usual call but something came up at work, and you know how it goes.”

Across from him there was a frazzled blonde man wearing a moulded half mask covering the lower half of his face, patterned with axes on each cheek, and he was giving him the most incredulous look he could convey.

He mouths ‘It’s my wife’ to him (although the other man can’t see given he is wearing an identical mask, patterned with flames), and returns to splitting his focus between working and being an attentive husband. “Uh huh. Uh huh. Oh really? I’ll send him a card! Hey, does he still like All Might?”
“Prometheus, can you please focus?” The Blonde hisses, sounding frantic.

‘Prometheus’ glared back, his eyes blazing with an inner fire. “Ares I am talking to my wife. It. Can. WAIT,” He snarls, a hand covering the phone. And then his voice is back to it's usual, light adoring tone. “You were saying my darling? Ooh! Nice! Just like his old man!”

‘Ares’ dragged his hand down his masked face, looking away lest he be drawn into the flames that still smolder in Prometheus’ eyes. “Prometheus we have thirty seconds till detonation WILL YOU PLEASE FOCUS ON DEFUSING THE BOMB?!”

Prometheus wasn’t listening, although his hands were still deep in the metal casing of the explosive. “… I see. I'll grab the next flight out - no, no it’s fine! I'm sure they can give me some time off. I mean, fourteen years no visit? I should see my son more than once right? What? No, everything's fine.”

“PROMETHEUS! NEUTRON BOMB! DEFUSE! NOW! PLEASE?! ”

Prometheus rolled his eyes and snipped a wire, causing the countdown clock to freeze immediately. “What? No, you misheard. Neutral Tom. He gets really angry and I'm the only one who can defuse the situation because we're friends. Yeah it's a bit of a misnomer. Okay! Love you! Kiss kiss!”

Ares slumped in relief, and slowly moved a radio to his lips. “Ares to Olympus. Skies are clear, confirmation code Delta Zulu Zulu Charlie.” His hand dropped away, and he fell backwards with a silent grunt. “Prometheus. Please. No more phone calls when you're defusing bombs.”

The radio crackled to life. “Hera to Ares, confirmation code acknowledged.” came a smooth, sensible feminine voice, “Artemis will be in with extraction in T-minus ten. Doctor Rasuvius?”

“Was already gone,” Ares muttered, rubbing his shoulder. “Turned out to be one of his robot doubles.”

“To be expected. The Doctor has been an elusive target since the beginning. Good work, agents.”

Prometheus hummed thoughtfully to himself and grabbed his own radio. “Hera, Prometheus speaking. Is it okay if I take the next, oh, two weeks off?”

“A holiday Prometheus? You’ve got the vacation days saved up by all means but what's the occasion?”

“Oh, my son’s about to follow in his old man's footsteps,” He says casually, stroking the chin of his mask.

Across from him, Ares choked.

To her credit, Hera’s voice doesn't even crack. “Make it a full month. You’ll be on call for consultation throughout, and I'm assigning Mnemosyne as your liaison for the duration.”
“Thanks! You’re a peach.” Midoriya Hisashi released the radio and stretched, arms cracking a little as he pushed them above his head. Hm. Should he buy a souvenir or was Izuku too old for that kind of thing...?

Chapter End Notes

Small little piece of trivia: Midoriya Hisashi’s general ringtone is not ‘Bubblegum Bitch’ by Marina and the Diamonds - only Inko is set to that - but in fact, ‘Work’ by Rihanna. Read into that what you will.

You would not believe how hard it was to stop myself from making a BIG MEATY CLAWS joke with Power Loader (These babies ain't just for attractin' mates!)

The Support Class only consists of six students because I am not not coming up with a full cast, even just as background characters. There's already a large cast of characters, and 90% of any and all OC's that exist within 'And In His Eyes, A Galaxy' are just there as background and building up narrative.

Sun Wukong (the Third), as an example, has already served his purpose within the narrative for the most part, and any return to narrative significance he might have will almost definitely just be some kind of callback or one-off (such as potentially coming to see Ojiro and Izuku compete in the Sport's Festival).

A snippet from Chapter 8: Sailing on Solar Winds:

“Hey, sport. How’ya doin?” were Midoriya Hisashi’s first words to his son, Midoriya Izuku in fourteen years.

Izuku stared at him for a long minute, and then turned his head to call down to his mother. “Mom! There’s a strange man on your balcony!”
Sailing on Solar Winds

Chapter Summary

It's a time for bonds. Bonds new, bonds unlikely, and bonds severed long ago.

Chapter Notes

I say this at the start of every chapter, but by god I'll say it again and again until this story is complete and probably afterwards still - thank you all so much for reading, commenting, subscribing, bookmarking, or just even looking. I love you. Group hug.

Shout out to Shoot-Style for this incredible fan art of Starchild!Izuku. I'm going to go out to the bus terminal and just hand it out like pamphlets without explanation because the world needs to see this.

That said, welcome to Chapter 8: Sailing on Solar Winds!

Izuku and Hisashi finally meet each other this chapter; more of whatever it is that Hisashi does comes to light as well. The Battle Trial occurs, with Katsuki & Uraraka vs Shinsou & Tenya! I spent a while thinking about potential match ups; originally I was going to have Shinsou & Uraraka vs Katsuki & Tenya, which would perfectly line up with canon arrangement, but I figured it would be more interesting (and also something U.A might decide on) to have Shinsou and Tenya on the same side, given the (mild) bad blood that exists between them.

At some stage whilst developing Shinsou's character a bit more fully from his canon counterpart, he turned into a complete gadfly. Canon!Shinsou was very good at getting under peoples' skin (and it's definitely a skill he should cultivate for his Quirk), but it was also in a very bitter way. AIHEAG!Shinsou (I think I might just make it 'Galaxy!', that scans better) is much less bitter, so there's more of a teasing element to the way he does it.

This is also the first iteration of Shinsou's costume in AIHEAG. There will be at least one more iteration before the final version. Possibly more if I can keep coming up with jokes about it (Send in suggestions!).

EDIT: I swear there are some things I only ever notice after hitting post.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Musutafu International Airport was a busy place to be, flocks of people heading in nearly every direction. Just outside Terminal 12, a fresh load of new arrivals surges forth as a gaggle of onlookers stand waiting for loved ones, guests and colleagues.

One particular arrival, a lanky man with a head of curly burning red hair, casually skimmed over the crowd, looking for a sign with his alias on it. Ah. There. ‘Matsuno Kobayashi’. As far as aliases go,
Hisashi had heard worse.

“You’re Mnemosyne?” He says, sounding faintly amused as he looks up at the figure holding the sign.

Seven feet of darkly skinned muscle and a thick drape of white dreadlocks looks back down at him, a hint of amusement in her eyes. “Not what you were expecting?” She replies, voice deep and husky.

He shrugs. “I thought you’d be older,” He admits lightly, glancing around. Nobody was paying attention to them, but it paid to be sure.

‘Mnemosyne’ smiles down at him, amusement dripping off her face. “I’m sixty seven.”

Hisashi whistles. “Shit, really? Late sixties and not a single wrinkle? Dermatologists must hate you - what is your secret?” Genuinely impressed, he leans up into her space to inspect her skin more closely.

‘Mnemosyne’ takes the invasion of her space in stride. “Genetics mostly. But I will admit to judicious use of cocoa butter and regular visits to the spa. Shall we be off?”

“Yeah, yeah.” His fun had, Hisashi reverts to being bored and disinterested.

‘Mnemosyne’ leads him out to the parking lot, where a large, blue hatchback sedan waits for them the same way any inanimate object waits - patiently. She holds the passenger door open for him before getting into the driver’s seat herself, checking her windows and waiting for her ‘guest’ to buckle himself in before starting the car. “We’ll be touching base first,” She says, calm as a cucumber as she takes off with a screech of tires, although Hisashi is fairly sure she is not obeying the speed limit at all, “The only other agent present in Japan right now is Phobos.”

“Only two? What, you on a shoestring budget or something?”

“Additional agents have simply been unnecessary for our purposes here,” She says, smoothly drifting around a corner, “The situation in Japan is very different than the one in the West. I had thought you would be aware of that. You grew up here, after all.”

Hisashi purses his lips together, looking out the window. “Yes, well, I wasn’t exactly paying attention to the socio-political climate at the time.”

“No, I imagine you weren’t.” The car weaves in and out of highway traffic in a way that is neither safe nor sane, but neither occupant of the car seems entirely bothered by it, although many a motorist is left shouting obscenities out of a window. "How familiar are you with the situation in Japan?"

He made a face at her, although she wasn't taking her eyes off the road to look back (which was perhaps one of the few road safety rules she was following). "I know there's a League of Villains, and that All Might is the Symbol of Peace."

She does spare an incredulous look for him after all. "That's all?"

He huffs, leaning against the side as she makes a particularly hard turn, "I'm sure there are a lot of
subtleties and nuances to the situation that were in the status reports that I didn't read because reading
a report is one thing, and experiencing it is another entirely," He snaps, although he seems faintly
apologetic the moment after. "Sorry. Long flight."

"You could've used it to read the reports," She responds dryly, speeding straight through a red light,
"But given your psych eval, I imagine you would've rather jumped out without a parachute."

"That does sound more fun."

"I'll give you the cliff notes version, then, but I expect you to at least read the dossiers at base. Our
presence is small in Japan because things are significantly more public here. We operate mostly in
recruitment and intelligence, headhunting other potential agents for the organisation. Potential
problems are dealt with by picking a suitable Hero or the Police and giving them an anonymous tip.
We rarely get our hands dirty." She pauses briefly, flicking her gaze over at him. "Hera tells me your
son is following in your footsteps. Anything I should be concerned about?"

He exhales slowly, flicking the cigarette out of the window. "Concern yourself with driving, old hag.
I'll concern myself with him."

"I'll take your word for it," She says in a tone that completely contradicted her words. The car skids
into a parking space with surprising grace, and Mnemosyne starts unbuckling her seatbelt. "We're
here."

Looming over them was a dilapidated warehouse who looked like it hadn’t seen a living being for
decades, surrounded by an equally rundown looking industrial district.

“Where’d you guys pick this place up? I didn’t realise the Classifieds had a section for ‘Rundown
Buildings’."

“I cannot believe I am supposed to work with you…”

Shinsou Hitoshi cranes his head to glance at his teammate, Iida Tenya. They’d been paired off
together for the training exercise, in the role of ‘Villains’. If he was honest, Hitoshi was a little
irritated at being the Villain, having spent most of his life being accused of just that, but he was
willing to endure it a little longer. Besides. This was only an exercise.

“I said I was sorry,” Hitoshi replies bluntly, in a tone that suggested he was not sorry at all. Their
opponents were Bakugou Katsuki and Uraraka Ochako and he had to focus his mental energy on
coming up with a plan or face certain failure. He knew enough about Katsuki to realise that he
couldn’t underestimate him, but his aggressive nature might make him vulnerable to Hitoshi’s Quirk.
Uraraka was more of an unknown. Bright, bubbly. Maybe use humour?

“Sorry?! You used me!” The real challenge would be working with Iida Tenya, who seemed very
hung up about the whole ‘Brainwashed’ thing. Hitoshi can’t blame him entirely, but he does wish
he’d get over it.

Hitoshi shrugs lightly. “I asked for permission,” He says, in a bland tone. He probably shouldn’t
deliberately rile Tenya up, but it was too much fun. He’d never been one to really mess with people
(except for bullies or assholes), but something about the idea of knowing he had actual friends (even if it was just Izuku) made him feel... free from his previous worries about how people thought about him. He no longer felt like he had to be the best he could be because Izuku accepted him without even knowing him.

“Permission?! You asked if I wanted to be a Hero!” Tenya was sputtering angrily at him, and Hitoshi quietly justified this as a lesson in anger management.

He adjusted the collar of his coat, frowning a little at his ‘costume’. He had all but given up on his dream to become a Hero long ago, and he honestly had no idea for a costume, so he’d just sent in the details of his Quirk and a picture of himself and let the company decide. Apparently, that meant looking like he was the host of the world’s worst game show. A sequinned, purple tuxedo coat with matching bow tie and flower in his breast pocket, with a pair of plain black slacks and polished shoes.

Was he supposed to rescue people and defeat villains, or reveal what was behind door number three?

“And you did something Heroic,” He says breezily, adjusting the bow tie a little. “I don’t see the problem.” He still needed a Hero name too. Maybe ‘The Question’? No, that sounded too... Noir-y. Mr Question? Kind of fit the Gameshow Host thing this costume had going on but it wasn't like the outfit was locked in (and he sure as hell wasn’t continuing with it). Captain Q-and-A? No, that was dumb.

Tenya huffs, stomping up to him. “The problem is you used your Quirk on me in a clear invasion of my-”

“Hush,” Hitoshi mutters, and Tenya fell silent (although Hitoshi hadn’t used his Quirk on him at all) as he lifted a megaphone to his lips. “Testing, testing, one two three.” He keeps his voice level and a little quiet, letting the megaphone turn it into a booming voice.

Tenya crosses his arms. “There’s no way they’ll fall for your Quirk. It’s too easily defeated by someone who knows it beforehand.”

“You shouldn’t underestimate the power of words,” Hitoshi remarks dryly, adjusting the megaphone a little, "'Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can break the heart.' And he knows that from experience, he thinks bitterly. But the past is the past. Now is time for the future. Satisfied with the settings, he raised the megaphone once again. "Ah there we go. Hello Bakugou, Uraraka. Can you hear me? I’m going to assume you can.” He calls out, skimming over the entire hall just in case they were already here. “Now I know what you’re thinking. ‘We know Shinsou’s Quirk, we can avoid it’. And I can see why you’d think that. But you know what? I think you’re forgetting something. I don’t need my Quirk to take you down.”

Tenya stares at him from behind his mecha-mask, and Hitoshi calmly lowers the megaphone. “What are you doing?” Tenya hisses, gesturing wildly with his arms. “You can’t take on both of them without a Quirk! Bakugou alone would be too much for you!”

Hitoshi lets him talk, fiddling with his flower a little bit. It was a lilac chrysanthemum, to keep with his colour scheme but he was never fond of them. He would’ve preferred something like a clematis or a bellflower. “I’m baiting him,” He says idly, “Was it not obvious? Besides. You're here as well, aren't you?”
That seems to mollify Tenya, but only a smidgen. “Do you at least have a plan?”

“Of course. I’m going to keep talking until they give up. Besides, regardless of if they fall for the bait or not, they have to come here to win.”

Tenya thinks this is the worst plan he’s ever heard, but he grudgingly goes along with it.

Without warning, the doors to the hall blasted open along with a good chunk of the doorway, sending smoke and rubble all over the place. An impressive opening move, but anyone who had known Bakugou Katsuki for five minutes would’ve predicted it.

Both Hitoshi and Tenya are quick to react, with Tenya revving his engines in preparation to attack the first person he sees, whilst Hitoshi just casually raises the megaphone again. “Knock, knock.” He says with a tone of casual disregard. They don’t respond, so he does it for them, adopting the most ridiculously high-pitched voice he can before continuing in his own disinterested tone. “Who’s there? Theodore. Theodore who? Theodore was unlocked you know.” No response. “Jeez, tough crowd. Don’t worry though, I can do this all day.”

Movement at the height of the dust cloud drew their attention, as Bakugou Katsuki soared through the sky, propelled by his own explosions and kept aloft by Uraraka’s quirk.

Tenya lifted off with a burst of speed and exhaust, attempting to tackle Katsuki, forcing him to propel himself backwards with another blast.

This suited Hitoshi just fine, as it left him to focus on Uraraka. “Hey, Uraraka. Do you know why I didn’t get any sleep last night?” He pauses briefly before continuing, “I read a book about anti-gravity, and just couldn’t put it down.” There’s a noise suspiciously like muffled laughter, and Hitoshi smirks. “I thought you’d appreciate that one, Uraraka. Now, cancel your Quirk.”

“NO DON’T YOU FUCKING-GAH! ASSFUCKER!”

Hitoshi smirks gently as Katsuki lands in a heap just a few feet away from him. Time to go in for the kill. “Why Bakugou, we’ve only known each for a few days. There’s need to fall for me so soon.”

Katsuki’s response is to grit his teeth and glare viciously at him, and Hitoshi has to admit, his self control is a lot better than he’d estimated. Goes to show you can’t read a book by it’s cover. But Hitoshi has a secret weapon hidden up in his sleeve (well, he has several, some of them actually literal) that he’s certain will get a verbal response.

“Hey Kacchan,” He drawls, going so far as to change his inflection and tone to better match Izuku’s.

Katsuki’s eyes bulge in their sockets, and he launches himself at Hitoshi without any more warning, a cannonball made of murder and fueled by rage. He does it all without saying a single thing.
and Hitoshi has a brief moment to think that he has really miscalculated Bakugou Katsuki when a blur of blue and white is suddenly between them.

Tenya’s Engine is gunning as hard as it can, and his leg slams into Katsuki’s stomach hard enough to make Hitoshi wince. The Explosion Hero(-in-training) is launched backwards by the force, colliding with what’s left of the doorway in an impact that is sure to send him to Recovery Girl later. “That was your plan?!” He says incredulously, turning back to Hitoshi, incredulity coming off him in waves. Really, Hitoshi’s impressed he’s so emotive given that he sort of looks like he’s cosplaying from a mecha anime.

Hitoshi makes a show of patting himself down as if to check for injuries before he shrugs at Tenya. “It worked didn’t it?” He remarks with a 'playful' smirk, completely ignoring the part where he didn’t plan this outcome at all.

Katsuki accepts his loss grudgingly, but there is murder in his eyes whenever he looks at Hitoshi. Hitoshi smiles back at him.

Anyone who so much as whispers ‘Kacchan’ is treated to the full force of Katsuki’s aggression and fury, focused through his pupils into a beam of pure hate.

Class 1-F is assigned a free period of sorts near the start of the day, labelled ‘Creation Time’. It’s two hours they get to themselves to design or build whatever it is they fancy, using the resources of the Support Department (within reason).

Izuku isn’t sure what he wants to build though; he knows who he wants to build it for. It’s Katsuki’s birthday soon, and he’s already been charged with hosting the party (it’s going to be GREAT), but it’s not a birthday unless there’s gifts. Every year since he knew he could, Izuku has given Katsuki a gift made with his Quirk. Those years were mostly things made of glass though, and Katsuki put them on his desk in a small collection. Now that Katsuki had made it into U.A, he wanted to make something more… Heroic.

“Whaaaaaaaaatcha doin?!” Suddenly, Mei’s face is close enough to his that he can feel her breath. The sudden invasion of his personal space makes him recoil slightly, but after an initial moment of adjustment, he seems to accept her presence there. “Not sure yet,” He admits, “It’s Kacchan’s birthday within a few weeks.”

Mei has a look of complete understanding on her face, even though Izuku is fairly certain she’s never met Katsuki. Maybe she has? “Get him a grenade launcher. Boys love grenade launchers.” It
definitely sounds like she has.

Katsuki *would* like something that weaponizes his sweat some more…

“Ohhh no,” interjects Makino, “I heard the words ‘grenade launcher’ and I am vetoing this. Absolutely not. Even if you kill me and bury my dismembered body in seven different locations, my restless spirit will still come back to tell you to stop. Absolutely no grenade launchers. Not after last time.”

“Awwwww, Maki-chan, I promise it’ll be different this time!”

“That’s what you said before last time!”

Izuku starts to tune them out, focusing his scattered attention span back onto the task of designing something for Katsuki. Weapons aren’t really his thing, and anyway, Katsuki’s Quirk is weapon enough.

(He’ll have to find out Ojiro-senpai and Hitoshi’s birthdays as well, and start making them things)

He’s seen the designs Katsuki submitted to the company (even helped a little), so he already knows what he has. He hadn’t been able to talk him into getting a helmet (Helmets were very protective!), and making him one now would just irritate him. The Grenadier Bracers would’ve already been made by the costume company, and whilst Izuku *could* probably improve on them, it would be a lot of work and research and calculations. No, he needed something Katsuki wouldn’t expect.

He blinked, glancing down at the half-formed schematic. All the talk about grenade launchers had made him get halfway through designing one, but an idea suddenly sparked in his head, consciously this time. ‘Range’ was Katsuki’s big weakness - really, one of his only ones - due to the nature of his Quirk and a ranged weapon *would* help him, and he could tie it into his defensive theme if he just…

“Mei, can you code?” He says suddenly, interrupting their still ongoing argument. He hadn’t been paying attention, but little bits of it still filtered in -something about a science fair a few years ago, and a potato battery.

“Code?” She says, intensely curious, “Not my strong point but I *can* do it. Really, if you want coding, then you should ask-”

Makino crosses her arms in an ‘X’ in front of her. “If it involves Explosions, then absolutely not. I swear on every God, living, dead or yet to be born, I will turn this class around and there will be no Disney World for anyone.”

Izuku has no idea what Disney World has to do with anything, but he presses on. “There *will* be explosions, but they won’t be my explosions, they’ll be Kacchan’s. His Quirk is ‘Explosion’, so it’s kind of a given. But anyway, Mei, I’ll probably need your help as well, if you’ll let me look at the NetMaster, because I was thinking of replacing the propulsion with…”

The three of them started to dig down and discuss Izuku’s idea, and after much coercing, cajoling, persuading and even a little begging, Makino agreed to help. Mei, of course, had been sold at the promise of explosions.
In order to accommodate the small class sizes of the Support Department, for subjects not directly related to Support, they are folded into the General Education classes. This sees 1-F joined to 1-C for English, as taught by the Pro Hero Present Mic. Izuku isn’t sure this is entirely appropriate though.

Far be it for him to disparage the abilities of the Pro Hero Present Mic (Izuku was a huge fan of his show and the directional speaker suit was fantastic engineering) but… was there just an abundance of Pro Heroes with Teaching degrees or what?

More directly interesting is the revelation that Makino not only has a sibling, but a sibling currently attending U.A as well. Kouta Shironaki (or, as Mei calls him, Naki-chan), looks like a constantly bored version of his sister; the same, dark hair tied back in a loose ponytail, the same angular brown eyes. They’re even both incredibly clever, although Shironaki doesn’t share her proclivity for creation. Really, they may as well have been identical twins, given the only difference is their uniforms, and the faint air of constant exasperation that follows Makino wherever she goes.

Izuku learns that his Quirk, ‘Grip’, allows him to adhere to anything that touches his skin and that Mei frequently uses him as an improvised tool holder due to his unflappable, unbothered nature. This includes her pens and pencils, which dangle off his ear like the world’s worst jewelry as they work on a group task.

Somehow, he manages to look completely serious throughout this, even when he stands up and delivers some answers to the rest of the class.

Izuku’s sphere of friendship is growing by the day. He really does need to sit down and make everyone friendship bracelets. That way he can keep track of who is his friend, and who he has not yet met.

When Izuku returns home, it’s to the sound of his mother pottering about in the kitchen and the smell of cigarette smoke lingering in the lounge. This is cause for concern to Izuku, because nobody he knows even tangentially smokes.

“Izu-kun!” His mother calls, and she sticks her head out through the door. There’s a sheen of sweat that suggests she’s been in there for a while now, which means she’s cooking much more than usual. “You’ll never guess who’s come to visit!”

Now Izuku is definitely confused, because the only people who come to visit are the Bakugou family, and Inko’s Book Club. Neither of which are surprising enough to make Izuku have to guess, although the Book Club isn't supposed to meet until this Thursday. “Is it All Might?” He offers, and he by no means actually expects to be correct.

“No silly! He’s upstairs, on the balcony!”
It’s a ‘he’, and Izuku wonders if this is meant to be some kind of game of ‘Guess Who’. Still, there’s an easy way to find out the answer and it’s just to see for himself. He climbs the stairs, pausing only to drop his backpack off in his room before he opens the door to his mother’s room, not sure what to expect.

A tall, lanky man is leaning over the balcony railing, a haze of smoke drifting up around his head and just faintly obscuring the curly halo of orange-red hair. He was dressed in a clean, only slightly rumpled white shirt and a pair of matching office slacks, topped off with an untied silk red necktie hanging around his neck. As he turned around, he met Izuku’s eyes - pools of molten magma seemed to simmer around a pitch black void, and there was the slightest sensation of something tugging at Izuku’s mind, matched by an equal tugging in the opposite direction.

(The second tugging had always been there, but it was only now that something else was pulling back that Izuku was aware of it)

“Hey, sport. How’ya doin?” were Midoriya Hisashi’s first words to his son, Midoriya Izuku in fourteen years.

Izuku stared at him for a long minute, and then turned his head to call down to his mother. “Mom! There’s a strange man on your balcony!”

Dinner was a tense, awkward affair. Izuku can’t help but be faintly suspicious of a strange man entering his life, claiming to be his father. He supposes his mother would know best regarding that state of affairs, but there was still something strange about the situation. Why now, after fourteen years? What exactly did he do that kept him away for so long?

(Why did he feel like he couldn’t trust his own father?)

Looking at him though, Izuku could see the resemblance. They had a similar facial structure (at least, they would once Izuku grew up), and their hair was very much the same mess of curls that refused to obey any command given by mortal men.

“So, sport,” Hisashi began, around a mouthful of rice and grilled fish, “How ya been?” His tone is painfully familiar, like this was routine. Like he hadn’t spent the last fourteen years abroad and outside of his son’s life to the point that Izuku himself hadn’t even remembered who he was.

“... I’ve been fine.” Izuku isn’t sure why he’s so defensive. It’s his father.

Hisashi takes it in stride, if he even notices. Would he notice? “I heard you got into U.A; that’s quite an achievement! I know it’s only been your second day, but make anything interesting?”
Izuku frowns, still feeling unsure but he wants to trust his father. “Uh… I’ve made some armor?” He offers, “Just metal armor though. Nothing too fancy.”

“Oh?” Hisashi says, nabbing some vegetables, “Tell me about it! I’ll do my best to keep up, so tell your old man all about it.”

Izuku launches into a lecture on metallurgy and blacksmithing, unsure of how much detail to go in (so he ends up going all in), and as he speaks, his father interjects with little questions and queries. Nothing untoward or particularly inquisitive but Izuku still can’t shake the feeling that he’s being… assessed. Sized up. Analyzed. There’s a piercing quality to his father’s stare that seems to burn right through him and illuminate every part of his soul.

“Wow, that all sounds pretty impressive. I’ll just have to take your word for it, sport,” Hisashi says cheerfully. It’s a lie, Izuku thinks. Hisashi knows exactly what Izuku was talking about, but he can’t figure out why. “What about your friends? Your mother mentioned you were making quite the little group.”

“Um. Kacchan is… well, Kacchan.” Izuku scratches his cheek, unsure of how to even describe their relationship, “He’s in the Heroics Department. So is Ojiro-senpai - we used to be part of the same dojo, run by Sun Wukong (the Third) - and Hitoshi.”

“No friends in the Support Department yet?” Hisashi says smoothly, nabbing a piece of tempura with his chopsticks.

“I do have, some?” He offers, feeling more sure that he can trust his father with every moment, “Makino and Mei. They’re really clever! Makino’s helping me with something right now actually, and Mei is as well but not AS much,” and all of Izuku’s nerves are washed away in the sea of enthusiasm he has for his friends.

And if he notices the hidden relief in Hisashi’s eyes, he doesn’t mention it.

“So Prometheus, how is your son?” Hera’s voice was as smooth and unfuzzed as ever, no matter what distance she was communicating to him from. Or time, for that matter.

Midoriya ‘Prometheus’ Hisashi leans back in the passenger seat of Mnemosyne’s sedan, smoke drifting lazily out of his mouth. “Stable,” He says after a long moment’s consideration, “Got a good network of friends. He’s a good kid. Better than I was, by far.”

“So he’s not going to hold anyone hostage?”

Hisashi frowned, clicking his teeth shut. “I maintain that the response I received did not reflect the objective academic value of my work, but-”

“Was because of the bias of the Board, yes. I am distinctly aware of how you came to our attention.”

“And nobody got hurt! Not seriously hurt anyway.” He paused. “Permanently, at least.”
Beside him, Mnemosyne stifled a snort.

“I need confirmation, Prometheus. Is your son going to be a danger?”

Hisashi’s eyes flare dangerously, and his grip tightens on the satellite phone and for a long moment, it seems like he might explode into rage. But after that moment, he sighs. “No. He’s not. He has a good support network, and a close anchor. He’ll do fine. Kid’s a lot better than I was; very big on the whole Hero thing. More likely to make a particle barrier than a particle beam. I mean, when Inko told me he was following in my footsteps, I thought he’d set the house on fire, but he hasn’t even done that, let alone build a death ray.”

“That’s good to hear. Continue as normal, agents. Olympus out.”

Hisashi sighs, leaning back in his chair again before glancing over at Mnemosyne. "Hey. You feel like a burger? I could go for a burger.”

"Prometheus, we already had fried chicken on the way here. You ate an entire family size bucket."

"Yeah, but I'm hungry again. I wanna see if this local place, Galaxy Burger, is still around, they did an awesome burger, like, with everything and I mean everything."

Mnemosyne sighs, resigned to her fate. "Alright. We'll get you a damn burger."

Chapter End Notes

No teaser this time.

I'm deliberately slowing the pace of updating to give me more editing time, but the actual pace of writing has remained steady for now.

Destiny 2 is coming to PC tomorrow so we'll see how long my pace can last with that temptation >.>
Chapter Summary

Like an Astronomer gazing through a telescope, they witness actions that occur in an entirely different world to them.

Chapter Notes

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

we've breached the 1000 kudos mark

Thank you all so much for helping it come this far, and ideally, helping it continue along.

As I mentioned earlier, Destiny 2 was released on PC and it's already eaten up a good chunk of my prodigious amounts of free time. Expect a longer refractory period between updates.

This chapter has the long awaited '1-A Meets Midoriya Izuku' scene; although how much of it is actually meeting Izuku is... debatable. Thanks for all the suggestions that came out regarding how it could go down! I did end up using some of the ideas.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I cannot fucking believe that fucking four-eyed nerd-jock got elected Class President.”

The third day of school saw the lunch group seemingly cemented into place, although given Hitoshi’s actions during the Battle Trial, it was silently but mutually agreed to keep either the table or Izuku (or both) in between him and Katsuki. If Izuku himself seemed to notice the budding sense of rivalry between the two, he showed no signs, but Ojiro secretly wondered if that was because he was too busy eating and being... well, Izuku. He knew Izuku could be perceptive and insightful from past experience, but he also seemed to be very selective about it.

Recent events were beginning to convince Ojiro that Izuku was a lot more aware of everything around him than his demeanor suggested - he just didn’t care.

“Really?” Hitoshi drawls, “And were you going to make a better one?” Ever since entering U.A he’s discovered a natural talent at riling people up - which is just as well, he thinks, for the purposes of his quirk. Using this talent on Katsuki is... probably not that great a choice, but it's good practice. And hilarious.

In true fashion, Katsuki glares over Izuku’s shoulder at him, scowl in full force. “You can fuck right
off with that shit. Show me where I said I wanted the fucking job, Zombie. I just can’t believe it’s fucking him.”

Ojiro shrugs at him, laying out some rice balls from his bento (and not even batting an eye when Izuku stole one). “Well, I voted for him,” He admits casually, taking a bite out of one.

“Why the fuck would you vote for that stuckup jackass? Did your brain migrate to your fucking tail, Monkey?” Katsuki snarls, slamming a palm against the table. The loud ‘BANG’ drew more than a few stares from other tables and groups, but it didn’t even faze the other three.

Really, Ojiro muses, he’d adjusted pretty fast to this new ‘normal’.

“Who did you vote for then, Bakugou?” Hitoshi asks, snapping his chopsticks apart to tuck into his bowl of somen.

“Yaoyorozu, of course.”

Ojiro and Hitoshi both blink, glancing at each other. Neither of them expected that particular answer but an unspoken agreement passes between them. They’re going to milk this for every last drop.

“You must really respect her if you’re using her actual name,” Hitoshi drawls, with a smirk that would be playful on anybody else’s face. Given Hitoshi looks like he hasn’t slept in years, it just makes him seem vaguely deranged.

Across from him, Ojiro nods. “Yeah. Didn’t take her as your type. Figured you’d be more into the wild ones, you know?”

For all his apparent patience during the Battle Trial Arc, it takes very little to set him off this time and Katsuki launches himself over the table at both of them, hands already sparking with smaller explosions. “THAT’S FUCKING IT, COME HERE, BOTH OF YOU, I’M GOING TO SEND YOU HOME IN A FUCKING JAR! ‘HERE’S WHAT’S LEFT OF YOUR STUPID SONS, THEY DIDN’T KEEP THEIR FUCKING MOUTHS SHUT!'”

Without even looking up from his katsudon, Izuku reaches out and halts Katsuki’s charge by seizing the back of his shirt, leaving him flailing impotently at a laughing Ojiro and Hitoshi. “That reminds me,” Izuku mumbles, finally glancing up, “It’s Kacchan’s birthday on the 20th, and you’re all invited to his birthday party at my house.”

“What the fuck, don’t invite them right after this shit!” Katsuki snarls, settling back in his chair. Well, as settled as he can be given he is frothing with rage. The vicious scowl on his face promises explosive retribution in the immediate future, when Izuku won’t be around to restrain him.

The discussion is cut short when the Intruder Alarm blares. They glance at each other, unsure of how to react until Iida Tenya floats into view atop the exit sign, and assumes control of the crowd with natural ease.

Hitoshi smirks at Katsuki. “See? He’s doing a great job already.”

“Fuck off Zombie.”
Izuku later learns there was a villain attack during 1-A’s trip to the Unforeseen Simulation Joint. Katsuki is only grumbling about it, so he assumes everything went fine.

Near the start of the second week of schooling, as Yamada ‘Present Mic’ Hizashi delivered an English lesson to the class of 1-A in the early morning period with his usual bombastic persona, there came a knocking at the door just shortly before an unfamiliar head of curly dark green hair (to most of the class) poked in.

Yamada paused, halfway through writing a sentence on the chalkboard before he recognised the intruder. “If it isn’t Midoriya! What brings you here?”

There’s an air of curiosity simmering in the class now, as is typical for any group of teenagers presented with something new and potentially interesting. The boy has an air about him that suggests he’s only really half there, but there’s an undeniable brightness and warmth to his expression.

“Ah, Yamada-sensei. Sorry to interrupt, but could I borrow Kacchan for a few minutes?”

And just like that, the curiosity boils over into intense confusion and mystery. Everyone who watched the Battle Trials immediately knows that Kacchan refers to Bakugou Katsuki. Those same people also know that when Shinsou Hitoshi used that nickname, it sent Katsuki into a murderous rage.

The only people already aware that Musutafu’s local cryptid is the only person allowed to use that nickname without risk of retribution remain faintly curious as to what he could possibly want with Katsuki at this moment.

Yamada, for his part, hums thoughtfully for a few seconds. “Can you do whatever you need to do here? Best not to disrupt Bakugou’s education experience, after all! Right Bakugou?” He flashes a thumbs up at Katsuki, who responds with an incredulous look.

Education experience? He could fucking do this with his eyes closed.

“That’s fine,” The Boy Who Cries Kacchan says, already stepping into the classroom, “I just need to take some measurements.” In his hands is a long spool of loose measuring tape, as carried by any self-respecting tailor.

“What? Fuck off Deku, you already have my measurements,”

With every line that’s spoken, every gesture and sentence, there is an increasing sense for the rest of 1-A that they are missing some very important parts of this thousand piece puzzle because Bakugou is being *nice* and why does this weird kid *have his measurements*?
Ojiro is briefly surprised to learn that Izuku has Katsuki’s measurements, but it makes sense when he thinks about it.

“The human body doesn’t stop growing until it’s at least eighteen years of age.”

Katsuki seems to accept this very grudgingly because he doesn’t say anything when ‘Deku’ shuffles over. Neither of them seem to notice the eyes of literally everyone else in the classroom (well, with a few exceptions).

“Alright! Back to the lesson, everyone, questions can wait until after I’m sure. Hagakure! Can you tell me what’s wrong in this sentence? SHOUT IT OUT!” As Yamada resumes teaching, the attention of the class is undeniably split between their Teacher, and whatever the hell is currently happening with Katsuki.

Katsuki, by now, is standing up next to his desk with a look of mild irritation on his face as the strange boy carefully measures nearly aspect of his arm - his wrists, hands, fingers, forearms, his elbow. The students closest to Katsuki’s seat can hear him muttering faintly under his breath about numbers and materials.

Kirishima is treated to the incredibly confusing sight of Izuku’s eyes glowing as he works, like some sort of fire is ignited in his mind.

(It’s just as well that he’s not close enough to make out fine details, for that is where the Devil dwells and he is always looking for company.)

“Bakugou! Can you identify what’s missing from this sentence? THROW YOUR HANDS UP IF YOU KNOW IT!”

Despite being treated like a mannequin, Katsuki manages to retain his air of irritated annoyance at everything which only flares with frustration at being called upon. “The participle,” He snaps off-handedly, immediately ceasing to pay attention when Yamada loudly declares ‘CORRECT! CAN I GET A HELL YEAH?’.

“Huh, your shoulders have gotten broader, Kacchan,” Izuku mutters quietly, and he loops the tailoring tape around Katsuki’s neck and jots that measurement down. They’re so close their foreheads are almost bumping against one another and the tension in the rest of the class is starting to steam with confusion and curiosity, because Bakugou ‘Touch Me And You Die’ Katsuki doesn’t even seem the least bit bothered by the close proximity. If anything, he just seems vaguely annoyed that the boy is blocking his view of the board.

Katsuki snorts dryly, and obediently lifts his arms without prompting so Izuku can wrap the tape around his chest, clearly familiar with the process. “Of course they fucking are. You try absorbing the recoil, see how your shoulders look after a few years.”

At his request, Ashido reaches over and pinches Kaminari but the dream does not go away.

“How was your costume? Did it fit? Need any adjustments?” Izuku mumbles, tugging a little with
the tape to make sure he’s getting the most accurate measurement of Katsuki’s waist he can.

Katsuki rolls his head a little, mulling the question over. “A little tight in the shoulders,” He mutters.

Izuku nods, finishes the last of his notes and stands up straight. “Alright, all done,” He declares cheerfully, bundling his notes and tape in his arms. “Sorry for the inconvenience, Yamada-sensei.”

Yamada just grins widely, flashing Izuku a cheerful pair of finger guns. “Any time Midoriya!” He calls, as the starry-eyed boy leaves the room. Really, this was going to be comedy gold and he could not wait to share it in the staff room.

Bakugou Katsuki has spent years being viewed as Midoriya Izuku’s Minder by his peers and so it did not occur to him that their interactions today would be any source of confusion for the rest of 1-A until he is surrounded by staring faces and unspoken questions at the end of the class period. Everyone (barring Ojiro and Hitoshi) are all looking at each other the way soldiers do before marching across a minefield, silently asking each other who’s going to be the first to risk certain death by explosion.

Never one to shy away from asking questions or speaking her mind, Asui Tsuyu leans forward, big wide black eyes peering at Katsuki. “Who was that, Bakugou?” She asks, lobbying the first question in an act of true bravery.

His first instinct is to reply ‘None of your fucking business’, which is Katsuki’s instinctive response to any kind of question that relates to him personally, but he knows from personal experience that just ignoring this particular issue will only make things worse. An entire semester where everyone was convinced he was under some kind of spell cast by Izuku taught him that much.

(Although, really, he just might be)

“Deku,” He growls, managing to sound at least a little patient. After a few moments he adds “If you value your fucking sanity, stay away from him,” because it’s bad enough that he’s forced into dealing with Monkey and Zombie, he does not need to add any of the rest of these chucklefucks to the circus.

“Eh?” Uraraka says, not sure why a warning like that is necessary, “He seemed nice! And I’m pretty sure I’ve seen him eating lunch with Ojiro-san and Shinsou-kun.”

There’s an immediate reaction within the rest of the class, as they suddenly realise that maybe those other two would be more willing to answer questions (well, Ojiro more than Shinsou), but Hitoshi has wisely disappeared (although to where, nobody is quite sure), which leaves Ojiro frozen in their midst, looking like a deer just caught in the crosshairs of the biggest hunting rifle he’s ever seen.

“I mean, I don’t really know him all that well,” Ojiro says, holding his hands up defensively as he tries to deflect their attention away, “Katsuki’s his childhood friend, I’m sure he knows much better
than I do.” He knows Katsuki will get revenge for throwing him under the bus like this, but frankly, the look on his face is worth it.

The revelation that Katsuki even has a childhood friend is enough to get their attention off Ojiro, who quickly takes advantage of the opening to start packing his things.

“He must be some kind of saint to deal with Bakugou’s temper for so long,” Kaminari mutters and Katsuki’s entire body twitches all at once and there is death in his eyes because that is it, he is going to kill everyone in this room and there is nobody here to stop him.

“YOU WANNA SAY THAT TO MY GOD DAMN FACE, SPARK-BRAIN?! COME HERE, I’LL FUCKING MARTYR YOU INTO THE SAINT OF KEEPING YOUR FUCKING MOUTH SHUT!”

“What the hell are you all excited about?” Aizawa Shouta mutters as he shuffles into the room, lifting up a fringe of lank hair with one hand to glare properly at the entire class. “Take your seats. Class is going to begin.”

When Izuku returns to 1-F’s Workshop, his mind is brimming with potential ideas. He makes a beeline for the metal stores, and begins selecting various bars and ingots, inspecting them closely the way one might inspect fruit for bruises or deformations. Rather than pop them into the nearby forge, he proceeds to slowly feed them into his mouth, right in front of his surprised classmates, many of whom stop what they are doing to stare in a mix of wonder and confusion.

“Okay,” Ogata mutters, hands frozen where they were sketching a costume design, “I am wide awake now.”

Izuku blinks, mouth full of a mix of copper, iron and nickel that he’s chewing into something entirely different.

“That. Is. AWESOME!” Mei’s exuberant shout attracts the attention of anyone who hadn’t already noticed what Izuku was doing, and she zooms into his space like lightning. “What else can you do? What can you make? Is it different? Is that how you got the metal for your shield? Can I have some?!”

Izuku opens his mouth to slowly let the molten metal drool out into his hands, shaping into something resembling an ingot before putting it aside when it’s cooled. “Yes,” He says simply, because it’s the answer to all of her questions. “But it might take a while.” As if to emphasize this, he starts chewing a fresh mouthful, cheeks bulging like a weird, recycling chipmunk.

Mei is only a little bit disappointed at that, but she still hangs around to watch Izuku work the metal with an expression of childish amazement. “Is this for that project you wanted help with?” She asks, watching Izuku’s pile of ingots grow.

“Sort of. I need to make the visor with polycarbonate first, and work in the LCD layer for the HUD. Makino’s coding. This is for the upgraded bracers and breastplate,” Izuku rattles off, tilting his head to the side. “Are you familiar with LCDs? I’ve never really worked with them.”
“Nope!” She replies cheerfully, “I’m more of a mechanical engineering girl. I can definitely help with the bracers though - you’re basing the upgrade of the NetMaster’s design after all!”

The two shared a friendly smile (although Mei’s was significantly more manic then Izuku’s) when they were interrupted by a small cough.

“You need help with LCDs right?” Ogata muttered, brushing strands of silver hair from his face, “That metal of yours looks pretty interesting and I happen to specialise in electronics. For a few bars of that metal, I’ll handle the LCD for you.”

Izuku beams so brightly that Ogata has to squint a little. “Deal!” He says in an enthusiastic chipper tone.

“Natch. Show me the design, and I’ll get to work.”

The fact that Ogata had intended this trade to be purely business does not stop Izuku from adding him to the list of his friends. Such quibbling little details like that have never stopped Izuku before. Why would they now?

“Izuku,” Hitoshi says during lunch, watching the other boy devour a bowl of ramen bigger than his head, “You do costume design as part of the Support Department right?”

Izuku is polite enough to wait until he’s finished slurping up the noodles, but not enough that he swallows before responding. “Yuh-huh,” He says, ignoring the way Katsuki thumps his shoulder and grumbles about proper manners like he, of all people, has the high ground in a conversation about decorum.

“Then could I ask you for assistance designing a proper hero costume? The one the company made for me is…” He’s not sure how best to describe it, so he settles for “Sequined,” as though it explains everything. As far as Hitoshi is concerned, it does.

Izuku doesn’t really get the problem with sequins, but if Hitoshi says it’s a problem, then it’s a problem. A Hero who doesn’t like their costume is definitely a problem, after all. “Alright,” He says cheerfully, setting aside the family-sized bowl for a moment, “What’s your Quirk?”

It’s only at this moment do the other three boys seated at the table realise, that this entire time, Izuku has had no idea what Hitoshi’s Quirk was.
Suddenly extremely self conscious, Hitoshi fumbles with his collar and looks away for a moment. It’s Izuku, the literal embodiment of warmth and kindness, so it should be fine. Should be. “It’s… called Brainwash,” He mumbles, “I can temporarily take control of anyone who talks back to me.” He braces himself for rejection even though his heart knows Izuku wouldn’t do that because years of experience have taught him this is the part where it happens. He’s just an impostor pretending to be a good person, and he’s just tricked Izuku into being friends.

“That’s pretty neat,” Izuku says, and it’s so casual that Hitoshi nearly chokes on his own saliva, “What are the limitations?”

He flounders mentally for a moment, before finding his ability to speak again. “Uh. A significant jolt of pain can break the control. They have to be able to see me. It doesn’t go through recordings or anything, but I can use a microphone or speaker.”

Izuku nods, pulling a notepad and pen out of… somewhere. Hitoshi wasn’t paying too much attention. “Okay, so maybe something like Present Mic’s directional speaker suit? But it needs to be more than just that, you’ve gotta stand out, be different. Maybe some way to encourage reactions from people…” He looked up from doodling a design for the speaker system, blinking owlishly at Hitoshi’s vaguely befuddled expression. “What’s your Hero name? Your costume should suit your name.”

“I haven’t decided on one yet,” He admits, picking at his sushi.

“What about ‘Zombie Lord’ or something?” Ojiro interjects, leaning forward. “Because when you Brainwashed Uraraka she kinda looked like a zombie.”

“It’s a bit… villainous, isn’t it?” Hitoshi mutters, fully aware that ‘a bit villainous’ pretty much describes his entire Quirk.

Katsuki snorts, arms folded over his chest. “How about ‘Annoying Asshole’?” He growls, “Descries you to a fucking ‘T’.”

“I’m pretty sure that’d be censored,” Hitoshi replies, taking a long draught from a cup of pitch black coffee.

Izuku’s eyes have lit up though, and he starts sketching more vigorously. “No, no, annoying is good,” He mumbles, “Annoying means they’re more likely to respond. Let’s go with ‘annoying’ as a theme.”

Katsuki twitches, before unfolding his arms for the express purpose of punching Izuku in the shoulder. “Deku, do not encourage his ass!” He snaps, ignoring the amused noises from the other two.

“Why not? He encourages you.”

Ojiro stifles his laughter as best he can, unwilling to draw too much of Katsuki’s ire (for now at least), but he can’t stop little peals of gigglesnorts from escaping.

“You want to fucking go Zombie? I’ll put you back in that grave you crawled out of, where you
belong,” Katsuki snarls, cracking his knuckles, but there’s not as much aggression behind it as usual.

Izuku idly notes that they’re really becoming a proper group of friends. “See? Annoying works,” He says cheerfully, ignoring Katsuki’s spluttering, “And maybe some capturing devices to detain the villains after you’ve got them to surrender...”

Izuku presents Hitoshi with a design later that day. It makes him look like a military officer except it has a whip instead of a gun.

Hitoshi is conflicted, because it’s a genuine gesture but on the other hand, it’s very… Midnight-inspired and he’s not sure Izuku is even aware of what that implies.

Midoriya Hisashi adjusts his necktie, frowning a little as he regards his reflection in the shiny finish of the one-way mirror. He’s never really liked wearing suits, so of course he’s ended up in a job where they were mandatory.

The suits that made up their uniforms were as much for appearance as protection - complex nanofiber weaves rendered them protected against bullets, knives, and even catching fire. All of which still hurt like a motherfucker (well, except the fire part but that was just because Hisashi was full of fire already) but it made life a lot easier for them. And maybe it makes them look pretty cool he admits, as he admires the way the red silk of the tie really finishes the ensemble.

One of the two burly guards standing by the door, dressed in much less snazzy suits, presses a finger to an earpiece. “The boss will see you now,” She grunts, standing to the side and opening the door.

Hisashi’s eyes took in the shape of her fingers and nails, idly identifying her Quirk as hand based (she wasn’t wearing gloves, like her partner was - probably grew claws or shifted nails or something) and he smiles at her with his eyes - it was a technique one had to develop when you frequently wore masks that covered the lower half of your face. “Thank you very much Miss…”

She didn’t answer.

“Miss Tweedle-dee then, and you as well Mister Tweedle-dum.” Antagonising them was probably not a move most would consider wise, but Hisashi knew they wouldn’t act against him. Besides. Even if they did, he could use it as leverage against their Boss after getting some frustration out by beating them into the ground.

The room was filled with a soft, smoky haze as ‘the Boss’ leans back in his leather chair, hands folded behind the back of his head in the universal gesture for complete control. “You must be Prometheus,” He croons, giving him a gap-toothed grin, eyes narrow and squinted behind his round glasses.
Hisashi scans the room with an experienced sweep of his eyes, identifying potential weapons and escape routes. ‘Ashtray to the temple and then out through the window’, he concludes to himself quietly, before slipping into the much smaller chair across from him. ‘And you must be the broker, ‘Giran’. A pleasure to meet you.’ He repeats the eye-smile, folding his hands in his lap calmly.

“If you don’t mind me asking, but where is Phobos? I was expecting to meet with him.”

Hisashi taps his fingers against his thigh, leaning back in his chair and oozing calm. “There was an unfortunate incident involving the Hero Killer. Don’t worry. The Doctor told me Phobos is expected to make a full recovery, although I wouldn’t mention the missing ear to him.”

Giran nods, deft fingers plucking what was left of his cigarette and dashing it against the ashtray on his desk. “I see, I see. Another question, if you don’t mind - what did Olympus want with the Hero Killer?”

Prometheus leans forward, eyes twinkling. “Giran,” He says softly, and the twinkles turn into a blaze, and the Underworld Broker was already seized, trapped in an inferno and everything was burning the world was fire and ash and smoke and he couldn’t breathe- “You know better than to pry into the secrets of the Gods. Olympus very much appreciates the working relationship that is currently cultivated with you. Finding a new broker willing to work with us would be very difficult if word came out of what happened to you.”

Giran slumps in his chair, breathing raggedly as sweat pours down his face. “Right, right” He mumbles, reaching for a new cigarette, “Forget I asked.”

Prometheus nods in satisfaction and leans back in his chair again. Truthfully, Phobos, whilst injured and missing an ear, was still perfectly capable of attending this meeting, but Prometheus was simply a better negotiator. Phobos, as the agent bearing the title of the God of Fear, was very good at terrifying people into submission but Mnemosyne thought a gentler touch was more appropriate. A touch that was still terrifying, but less likely to have Giran jump screaming out of the window to escape it.

Giran seems to have calmed down a great deal now, although he’d inhaled half of his cigarette. “Now. Business. What was it Olympus wanted from me?”

Prometheus taps his fingers against his thigh a little more, looking past Giran at the collection of books behind him before his eyes focus on the broker once more.

“There’s been something of a change up within the Yakuza hasn't there? Olympus wants to know everything you do.”

Izuku polishes the burnished metal of the breastplate with careful motions, working the oil into every
inch to keep it clean and shiny. Having been freshly made, it wasn’t like it was in any danger of collecting dust just yet but Izuku finds he enjoys the repetitive motions, the routine of it.

It was by far the easiest part of Katsuki’s Birthday Gift to make. He was still waiting on Ogata to finish the LCD for the visor and Mei was helping him redesign the bracers, but it was all coming together.

“Hey sport. Whatcha workin’ on?” came Hisashi’s voice from right behind him.

Izuku froze up, seized by momentary instinctive fear before he let out a breath. He hadn’t even heard him open the door, let alone walk over. Was his father secretly some kind of ninja? Was that why he was gone all the time?

“Oops, sorry buddy. Didn’t mean to scare ya like that. I brought burgers?”

“It’s fine,” Izuku mumbles, although he was honestly still trying to get his heart rate back to normal, and he turned around slowly, still breathing a little heavy.

True enough, Hisashi was standing a respectful distance away, holding a large paper bag labelled ‘GALAXY BURGER’ with an affably apologetic smile on his face.

“Oh nice,” Izuku says, returning to his normal cheerful self, “That’s the place that does—”

“Burgers with everything, I know.” Hisashi handed him the bag full of burgers, cheerfully producing his own bag from behind his back. He was clearly at least aware of Izuku’s appetite - but given that his own bag was practically brimming with enough food to feed a small family, it may just be an inherited trait. Given their similar Quirks, it wasn’t unlikely. “So whatcha workin’ on, if you don’t mind your old man prying?”

Izuku takes a large bite out of his triple deluxe burger, wiping a little bit of mayonnaise off his chin with a thumb. “Oh. Kacchan’s birthday gift,” He says brightly.

Hisashi nods solemnly, swallowing a mouthful of his own burger. “Is it a Death Ray?”

Confusion colours Izuku’s entire face, and he stares at his father in complete bewilderment. “Hisashi-san,” He says because he’s still not comfortable calling him ‘Dad’, “Why would it be a death ray?”

Hisashi just shrugs noncommittally. “I dunno what kids are into these days.” He waits a moment, but when Izuku returns a skeptical but quizzical look, he lets out a small laugh. “It was a joke. A little jokey joke, your old man’s bad sense of humour. But seriously, I actually don’t know what kids are into these days.”

Izuku frowns at him a little more, as much because he’s not entirely convinced by that answer as it is because that joke was just… bad, and not even the good kind of bad, before he shrugs himself. “Honestly, I don’t know what other people my age are into either,” He admits, “But it’s just armor. Well, upgraded armor designed to work with his Quirk but mostly armor.”
Swallowing the last of his first burger, Hisashi let out a small belch of flame in satisfaction before moving onto the next. “You really like armor, huh?”

“Uh-huh,” Izuku replies, already halfway through his second burger, “Armor’s important. A lot of Pro Hero’s don’t really seem to understand that? But I mean, some of them don’t really need armor, like All Might, but the others are just… they’ve got Quirks, yeah, incredible Quirks, but underneath it, they’re still human.” Izuku’s voice turned soft and quiet, his eyes unfocused although they held a gentle glow to them. “Sometimes, I think they forget that.”

“Yeah,” Hisashi mumbled, beginning to unfocus all the same, “They do.”

♫ Work, work, work, work, work ♪ blares suddenly out of his pocket, and the moment is destroyed utterly as Hisashi snaps to attention.

“Oops, duty calls!” He declares, shoving the rest of the second burger into his mouth and chewing rapidly. “Keep up the good work champ! I’m sure you’ll go far!” His partings words said, he ruffles Izuku’s hair before he’s gone out through the door, and all Izuku can catch is “You have the worst timing, you know?” before the door shuts behind him.

Izuku blinks to himself, glancing around. He feels like he’s missed something important,

Chapter End Notes

I’ll leave you with a snippet from Chapter 10: Basking in the Zenith:

*Katsuki immediately does not like his overly familiar tone, but his sense of suspicion is in full throttle because he’s never seen this man who has apparently heard of him. Working on overdrive, his brain collates everything he sees to come up with an answer. Curly head of hair that makes him look like his head is literally on fire; bright eyes like simmering magma, with an indescribable pulling sensation; wrinkles suggest he’s in his mid forties; open red blazer reveals shirt saying ‘SMOKING GUN’, combined with khaki shorts and flip-flops - no sense of fashion; facial structure and jawline disturbingly familiar. Conclusion?*

“You Midoriya Hisashi?” Katsuki growls, eyes narrowing dangerously.
Basking in the Zenith

Chapter Summary

Now is a time for everyone to enjoy the warm sunlight, but those who hide in the shadows will have to make do.

Chapter Notes

This is a Big(tm) Chapter in a few ways. It’s over 6k words, which makes it the largest chapter of AIHEAG so far. Featuring Katsuki meeting Hisashi, Katsuki’s Birthday Bash (thankfully not a literal bash), the Birthday Gift, Izuku Being Izuku, and... well, you’ll find out that last one.

I’m nearly done with my Diploma course (waiting on assessments to be marked and possibly resubmitted), which is also exciting! I might be gainfully employed in a month or two. A man can dream.

But enough about that! I’m releasing Chapter 10: 'Basking in the Zenith' earlier than originally planned to celebrate the beginning of NaNoWriMo. Naturally, I will be participating! Probably not with AIHEAG though, but my original project (which is admittedly already at 50k).

EDIT: Ugh noticed some errors.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There weren’t any official after-school clubs for either the Heroics or Support Departments - students of both were expected to spend that time practicing, training or creating. To that end, U.A.’s impressive facilities were open to their use from the extensive gymnasium with all sorts of incredible equipment to the Support workshops and all the resources that entailed. The students would have to be foolish not to take advantage of such an opportunity, and many do.

For Midoriya Izuku and Ojiro Mashirao, this means sparring on a cool Wednesday afternoon.

Both graduates from the Monkey Style dojo of Sun Wukong (the Third), they both still recognised the importance of maintaining their skills and what better method to do it than sparring with a partner experienced in that very style?


Izuku parries a tail swipe with his staff, spinning it in a hand to build momentum before lashing out in a wide strike that Mashirao easily dodges. “Hm?” He mumbles, blinking his eyes as if he had just been disturbed out of a daydream. Knowing him, he may very well just have been. “Oh. I guess? It’s nothing, Ojiro-senpai.”

“I told you, call me Mashirao now,” Mashirao says, dancing out of Izuku’s range. “And if you’re
bothered, you can tell me, you know? We’re friends after all.”

Izuku always brightens up every time someone admits to being his friend. It’s kind of adorable, Mashirao thinks, but they’ve been friends for at least a few years as far as Izuku is concerned so he’s not really sure why he has to do it every time. “Well. My father’s home,” Izuku says, and the way he says it suggests that there’s more to it than just… his father being home.

Mashirao darts forward, ducking under the answering thrust and going for a series of body blows. “Is he normally-” A sudden kick forces him back mid-sentence, inwardly impressed at the improvement in Izuku’s reaction times, “-not home?”

Izuku tilts his head to the side. “Well, this is the first time I’ve actually seen him, I think. He might’ve been around when I was a baby, but I don’t remember.”

Trust Izuku to say something like that like it was nothing. “Well, I guess it’s natural that his return would bother you then, if he’s been gone for so long. Anyone would be bothered by that.” Then again, Izuku was not ‘Anyone’.

“I guess?” Izuku replies, sounding unsure. “It’s just kind of… am I overreacting, Mashirao-senpai?”

Well. At least he’s using ‘Mashirao’ instead of ‘Ojiro’, he thinks ruefully. “Well, how are you reacting?” He asks because he has to. He’s not yet at Katsuki’s level, where he can intuitively understand what Izuku means based on context clues.

“I feel like I can’t trust him.” Izuku’s staff blurs in a series of sharp, shallow jabs, and Mashirao weaves between them like a river flowing between the reeds. “That’s weird isn’t it? It’s not like he does anything weird. He’s just… acting like a normal father, I guess. Not that I would know.”

Really, ‘weird’ is a bit of a… broad category coming from Izuku. For all Mashirao knows, this means that Izuku’s father could be doing anything from not buttering his toast to eating crystals because he thinks they heal his chakras. “I’m not really a therapist or anything, but trust takes time to build doesn’t it? You’ve just met him. That you don’t trust him immediately is normal. Just because he’s related to you, doesn’t mean you have to trust him.”

Izuku takes a moment to let it sink in before he brightens again. “Thanks, Mashirao-senpai,” Izuku says, already seeming more like his usual chipper self. He slides his hand down the length of the staff a little as it makes contact with Mashirao’s arm, and there’s a barely audible ‘click’ as his thumb presses up against a hidden switch.

It’s the only warning Mashirao gets before a few milliamperes of electrical current is delivered straight into his system, seizing his muscles up and causing him to collapse on the floor.

“Pretty shocking right, Mashirao-senpai?” Izuku pauses, glancing down at him. “... Are you okay? That shouldn’t have caused any permanent damage. It’s only a little over half a microcoulomb, so it shouldn’t have been too painful.”

Mashirao doesn’t respond for a moment, and Izuku is beginning to think he’s miscalculated (he can’t
have, he double checked with everyone, including Power Loader) when he suddenly shifts into a handspring, delivering a hefty double-footed kick to Izuku’s chest. Izuku goes tumbling down onto the mats as Mashirao cracks his neck. “Yeah, okay, I’ll give you that one,” He says, flexing his still-tingling fingers. “When did you add that to the staff?”

Izuku springs back onto his feet, whipping the staff in front of him just in case Mashirao attempts another surprise attack. “Yesterday!” He says, beaming brightly, “I only had to disassemble a few stun batons before I got the basic idea.”

“Of course,” Mashirao says dryly, “Just a few stun batons to learn how they work. No biggie.” Well. At least now he’s got to be more careful with touching the staff. It’ll be an interesting handicap. “We’re one-one now, so this’ll be the decider. Loser buys the winner a drink.”

“Bring it senpai. Lightning’s gonna strike twice.”

It was a cool, crisp Saturday morning that saw Bakugou Katsuki tromping up the path to the Midoriya Household. It’s a little past nine, so he knows from experience that Izuku will be awake enough not to complain too much about being dragged outside to do things that don’t involve being hunched over a desk.

He knocks three times, loud and clear before he calls “Good morning Auntie!” to announce his presence and goes to open the door. His hand is halfway to the door handle when it swings open of its own accord, and Katsuki comes face to face with an unfamiliar figure.

“Oh! You must be Katsuki. Pleasure to meetcha, champ,” The man says, holding his hand out, presumably for a handshake.

Katsuki immediately does not like his overly familiar tone, but his sense of suspicion is in full throttle because he’s never seen this man who has apparently heard of him. Working on overdrive, his brain collates everything he sees to come up with an answer. Curly head of hair that makes him look like his head is literally on fire; bright eyes like simmering magma, with an indescribable pulling sensation; wrinkles suggest he’s in his mid forties; open red blazer reveals shirt saying ‘SMOKING GUN’, combined with khaki shorts and flip-flops - no sense of fashion; facial structure and jawline disturbingly familiar. Conclusion?

“You Midoriya Hisashi?” Katsuki growls, eyes narrowing dangerously.

Hisashi beams in a gesture that is very Izuku-like, but lacks something of the charm. “Oh? Has Izukkun told you about me al-WHOOP!”

His suspicions confirmed, Katsuki wastes no time in seizing Hisashi by the hand and executing a textbook perfect over the shoulder throw. “YOU ABSOLUTE MOTHERFUCKER!” Katsuki roars, hands already sparking with the promise of death, “FUCKING LEAVE AUNTIE ALONE RAISING DEKU, WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!”
Hisashi has a relative eternity to consider how to react to being thrown before he decides to just roll with it, although he does shift his body to lessen the impact. He doesn’t want to break anything on his vacation after all and Katsuki’s technique is quite impressive for someone his age. “Me? I’m Midoriya Hisashi. Nice to meetcha!” He beams up at the boy, fully aware of how badly he’s pressing his buttons.

Katsuki twitches briefly before he tries to stomp on Hisashi’s face with surprising force. Hisashi rolls out of the way with an exaggerated ‘WAAH!’, and then Katsuki is stomping along the ground like they’re playing whack-a-mole with the world’s worst father. At some point, Hisashi’s back on his feet and ‘frantically stumbling’ out of the way of explosions he’s pretty sure are aimed at taking his head off.

He’s gotta hand it to him, the kid’s got spunk.

For his part, Katsuki soon realises that Hisashi is, somehow, far too slippery to just be caught by his explosions, so he changes tactics - he was hoping to debut this at the Sports Festival, but if it means he can blow Hisashi to pieces, he doesn’t mind (and it’s not like anyone else is around to witness his genius). He holds his hands out, a few inches apart and begins to form a small, condensed ball of light.

Hisashi has a moment to think to himself ‘Boy, Izuku really found an interesting pal’ before he’s forced to react to avoid creating an even bigger scene than they already have. In a single, instantaneous movement, he douses the budding flash bomb with a bottle of water from inside his coat, unintentionally soaking the front of Katsuki’s shirt as he does it. “Whew! Careful kiddo, you could get in trouble settin’ something like that off in a residential area,” Hisashi says cheerfully, like Katsuki wasn’t trying to literally murder him a few moments ago.

There’s an awful realisation in the back of Katsuki’s mind that Izuku’s weirdness is inheritable and not, as he had previously hoped, a weird anomaly. Any future generations of the Midoriya family might possibly end up just like him and the idea is terrifying because what if Izuku has cousins or half-siblings? HOW MANY OF THEM ARE OUT THERE? The rest of his mind is trying to wrap itself around the concept of a man wearing khaki’s and flip-flops managing to outmaneuver him. Katsuki is ninety percent sure anyone wearing both of those things at once should not be allowed to be agile nor nimble or in any way impressive and he can’t tell if it was even intentional which is even worse.

Before Katsuki can make a second attempt at blowing Hisashi up, Izuku sticks his head out through his bedroom window, finally disturbed out of his hyperfocused trance enough to see what was happening.

“Oh, it’s you Kacchan,” He says breezily, as though the source of the explosions would’ve been anyone else, “Sorry, I got distracted by something. Let me have a shower and get dressed, I’ll be down in a moment.” And then his head disappears back into his room, leaving Hisashi and Katsuki in an awkward silence.

“So!” Hisashi says brightly, ignoring (or just plain failing to notice, nobody’s quite sure) the
awkwardness in true Midoriya fashion, “How about some tea whilst Izuku gets ready? And maybe you can borrow a shirt. That one’s all wet.”

Katsuki is left feeling like he has no idea what to make of Hisashi, and it’s giving him an awful sense of deja vu.

Later, whilst they visit an arcade so Izuku can win more prize tickets than he can sensibly spend in a single sitting (he usually ends up giving them to random children), Katsuki asks Izuku what the hell his father does for a day job.

He refuses to believe him when he replies ‘Corporate Consultant’ because there is no damn way that man is a salaryman. He refuses to believe he was outmaneuvered by a suit.

“Your son is in U.A right? Gonna stick around for the Sports Festival then?”

The man bearing the title of ‘Phobos’ has a face that could be generously called ‘full of history’. The fresh, just-healed scars from an ill-fated meeting with the Hero Killer are minor details compared to the myriad of larger, more gruesome reminders of a violent life, including half a Glasgow Grin along his left side and the faint light of a cybernetic right eye just under what Hisashi is ninety percent sure is a bullet wound. It gives him a world weary uncle vibe - the kind of uncle the rest of the family quietly pretends doesn’t exist, and certainly isn’t invited to weddings or birthdays (but might make a showing for Passover).

“Not really,” Hisashi admits lightly, “Sitting in a crowded stadium, surrounded by people? Not exactly something I’m good at dealing with.” You need to give fire space, after all, or it’ll suffocate. That, or run rampant and consume everything around it and Hisashi is liable to do either when stressed enough.

Phobos shrugs, limping over with the help of a cane. It’ll be at least another few days before his leg is healed properly, according to the dubiously-credentialed ‘doctor’ they had on speed dial. “Why not use our corporate box?”

“Olympus has a corporate box?” Hisashi says, faintly incredulous, “Since when did that happen?”

“Did you not read the org-chart? Six Seeds AgriCorp is an Olympus’ shell company; Demeter or Persephone runs it, I forget who. They own the contract to supply the food for U.A’s catering needs, and as part of that, we get a corporate box for shows,” Phobos explains, pouring himself a drink from a well stocked fridge. Really, the ‘base’ was as much a place for the Agents to reside without the need to rent hotels or apartments as it was a place to work and plan missions, and so it had a lot of creature comforts.

Hisashi made a face. “Why does everyone think I’m the kind of person who reads documentation? I don’t have time for that! I have important things to do!”
Phobos stares at him blankly, and then very pointedly turns his gaze down to the, admittedly impressive, house of cards Hisashi is building. Hisashi in turn, just as pointedly, adds the finishing touches to the card balcony.

“That doesn’t explain why we have a corporate box. Unless you guys just like watching them compete. I never got the appeal of sports.”

“Eh, it’s kind of a nice break from work,” Phobos says lightly, “I tend to get stares if I sit in an actual crowd. Actual purpose is for talent scoutin’ though. We don’t usually recruit from places like U.A, but every now and then there’s someone who could be a good candidate.” Phobos takes a sip of his drink, and casually waves off the sudden change in Hisashi’s demeanour. “Relax, hey? We ain’t gonna send your son a recruitment offer or anythin’.”

He puffs his cheeks out and hunches over his mansion of cards. “What? My son not good enough for Olympus?” He mutters sullenly, like he wasn’t just about to explicitly threaten Phobos over it.

“Eh. It’s more that two of ya would probably drive Hades mental or somethin’. Besides. By all reports, your son’s just fine where he is, whereas with you, Hades wanted to… what did he say at the time?” Phobos waves a hand about, trying to find the words.

“Channel my creative energies to a more productive purpose,” Hisashi says dryly, casually collapsing his castle with a flick. “But really. What’s more productive than launching your own satellite?”

“I think he was worried about the part where you were going to use it to destroy Oxford University,” Phobos says, already holding a three-fingered hand up to cut Hisashi off. “Yeah, yeah, the board was biased. Think about it before the mission in a few days, hey? It’s a good opportunity. Take your wife out, see your son in action. Fun for the whole family. You only get so many chances before you end up like me.” Phobos grimaces for added emphasis, his gnarled and wrinkled face twisting with scar tissue into a mockery of a human expression.

Hisashi grumbles something about only destroying the Science Department, and returns to making an elaborate card house. Maybe Inko would like an outing like that? He’ll have to ask at dinner later.

The polished, orange-tinted visor looked up at Izuku, the gleaming metal of the thick banded frame designed to encircle a head and provide at least some protection whilst the thin visor shielded the upper half of the face. The culmination of a week’s hard work between several parties. If he was feeling poetic, he might have called it the Armor that Friendship Made.

Of course, if he called it that in front of Katsuki, he’d never get him to wear it.

There was more to his birthday gift than just the visor though, or he would’ve been done after a day or two. A dulled breastplate joined the visor, painted carefully in a basic woodlands camouflage pattern to give it a more ‘military’ feel in order to better suit Katsuki’s costume. But the piece de
The Grenadier Bracers, Mk II, resistance was easily the Grenadier Bracers, Mk II.

He knew he had originally dismissed the idea of upgrading them, because upgrading them would’ve meant having to borrow them and then trying to explain to Katsuki why. Katsuki wouldn’t have minded, of course, but Izuku wanted it to be a surprise and he couldn’t lie to him. But he could build them from the ground up, with Mei’s help. The idea he had would’ve involved basically gutting and rebuilding them anyway, so it wasn’t even like it was that much more work.

No, the Grenadier Bracers Mk II were the crux of the project - without them, there was no visor (but probably still a breastplate).

“Going to test them out?” Ogata says, yawning a little as he watches Izuku run his fingers over the ridges. “Tested all the components by themselves, but it’s probably worth it to make sure everything works together properly.”

Mei lets out a short cackle, picking up one of the bracers and clutching it to her chest. “Oh my beautiful baby, you are going to rock his world,” She croons, rocking it back and forth as though it were literally her child. “Of course we’re going to test it. How could we not?”

“Of course,” Izuku says, nodding agreeably, “Testing is important.” He pauses to beam at both of them, a wide, pearly grin on his face that is positively blinding. Thankfully, the other two are wearing safety goggles. “Thank you both, so much. I can’t have done this without either of you.” And Makino, he thinks, but she was busy talking to Maijima-sensei about something to do with her coding projects so her thank you will come later.

“Really,” Ogata says, taking a small step back, “It wasn’t much. That metal was thanks enough.”

Ogata’s valiant attempts to prevent what is coming prove futile, as Izuku wraps a surprisingly strong arm around each of them in turn and pulls them into a crushing group hug. Mei takes this in good humour, returning the gesture with gusto as Ogata slumps in their combined grip, an expression of intense resignation on his face.

“You guys are the best!” Izuku declares cheerfully, arms clenching a little tighter before he releases them both. “Kacchan’s gonna be thrilled.”

“He must be really important to you to go this far,” Mei says, “You should introduce us sometime!”

The Grenadier Bracers Mark II perform beyond Izuku’s expectations. Accuracy is well within expected ranges, but the range proves somewhat more impressive than previously expected, even with the projectile impact within tolerance.
It's the Twentieth of April. The banners and balloons are in place. The banquet is laid out on a table, a veritable feast of various foods (the main bulk of it being Katsuki’s favourites, which means anything liable to set your mouth on fire, including a large pot of Inko’s special curry). Hisashi is thankfully absent, off on an errand for the company he works for. Izuku is at once slightly confused that he’s spending so much of his vacation working, and glad that he’s not around during Katsuki’s Birthday Bash because given their interactions when they first met, it might make the ‘Bash’ part a little too literal for his liking.

All that’s missing are the guests.

As if answering that very thought, there’s a knocking at the door and Izuku rushes out of his chair to answer it. “Hey! Did you find the place okay?”

Shinsou Hitoshi blinks slowly, fist raised to knock a fifth time. “It wasn’t particularly difficult.” He says quietly, lowering his fist after a moment. He lifts his other hand up to show a plastic bag bulging with containers “My dad made some kakiage.”

“All right?” Izuku says, taking Hitoshi by the wrist so he can pull him into the living room, “I get lost sometimes, and I live here.”

Hitoshi allows himself to be dragged (although he knows he doesn’t really have a choice - working in the forge for several years has had the unintended side effect of making Izuku uncomfortably muscular), and doesn’t comment on Izuku’s response. “Nice place,” He murmurs, casting his gaze around.

“Thanks! Here’s where all the food is - help yourself if you’re hungry, there’s some drinks off to the side here. My mom’s out doing some errands, and you’re the first one here, so we’ve got the house to ourselves for now!”

He sets the containers of kakiage down by the feast, eyebrows rising steadily as he takes in the sheer size and variety. He’s seen how much Izuku puts away but it’s still frankly impressive knowing his mother made all of this, with or without Izuku’s help. “So uh. What are we doing whilst we wait?” Hitoshi has never been to a birthday party. He has no idea what they involve, aside from the vague promise that it will be fun and that there will be probably be cake. All of this is extremely new to him, and he's not sure whether to be nervous or excited. Being who he is, he errs on the side of nervous.

“Well, we’ve got the Wii set up in the living room, there’s movies, board games…” Izuku lists off, holding up a hand to mark them off with his fingers.

All of which sounds very fun and enjoyable, but Hitoshi has not had a huge amount of experience with most of them. Movies, yes. Games of most varieties? Not so much, except for the occasional RPG but those tended to be quite single player. “Uh. You choose?”
Izuku beams brightly at him, and Hitoshi wonders if he’s made a mistake.

Twenty minutes later, Mashirao arrives, awkwardly traipsing in through the ajar front door and wondering if he hasn’t accidentally wandered into a stranger’s house (the nameplate says ‘Midoriya’, though he’s still paranoid). The sound of voices draws him inexorably towards what turns out to be the living room, and he finds Izuku and Hitoshi sitting around a small table, with Scrabble, of all things, laid out in front of them.

“Quixotic,” Hitoshi drawls, laying out several tiles. “Triple word score, bonus for using all seven letters, that makes…” He looks at Izuku expectantly, who lowers his face into his hands.

“One hundred fifty two totally stupid points,” Izuku grumbles with a pout. He glances up at where Mashirao is standing, entirely unsure of how to react or respond to what he’s witnessing. “Oh! Mashirao-senpai! Sorry, I didn’t hear you come in!”

Hitoshi leans back from where he’s already sprawled out by the table, already drawing new tiles and adding them to his rack. “He was too busy getting roasted at Scrabble.”

“Shut up. If this were mathematics, you’d be the one getting roasted.”

Mashirao nods slowly, wondering if he’s drifted into a different universe because this is the most normal he’s ever witnessed Izuku. “Hi,” He says, after a moment’s pause, holding up a plastic bag of his own. “I uh… brought some chips?” He feels like the offering of a few bags of chips is kind of mediocre compared to the lavish spread, but Izuku lights up anyway and goes to take it off of him, and gives him much the same information he gave Hitoshi.

He joins them at the table, although after another round of Scrabble it becomes increasingly apparent that there is simply no defeating Shinsou Hitoshi, who seems to be a literal dictionary (although Hitoshi himself would attribute his talents to a lifetime of reading). They end up playing a friendly game of ‘Poker’ instead, betting hard candies from a bowl in lieu of actual money.

This proves to be something of a disadvantageous game for Ojiro Mashirao, as Shinsou Hitoshi has had years to perfect an uncaring countenance that is immune to the jibes of others, and Midoriya Izuku’s usual, vacant smile might not be the traditional form of a poker face but it’s sure as hell impossible for Mashirao to read.

It’s fortunate for him, then, that he happens to be surprisingly lucky. The first few hands see him scrape by with close wins, but he does falter a few times when he’s forced into a staring contest with Hitoshi’s blank stare and Izuku’s strangely intense eyes (it always feels like he’s teetering on an edge and about to fall, but into what, he’s never sure) but by the time Katsuki finally arrives, fashionably late to his own birthday party, Mashirao has managed to accumulate nearly two thirds of the entire pool of hard candies somehow.

“Of course you assholes start without me,” Katsuki grumbles, but there’s no heat to his words. “Move over, fuckers. I’ll show you how you fucking play Poker.”
Katsuki’s poker face leaves something to be desired, but his ability to read them is enough to half-convince Mashirao that he’s psychic. Mashirao still comes out on top, for ‘Luck’ is not something that can be read.

“We better make this quick,” Hisashi murmurs, adjusting his tie a little and making sure his mask was in place, “I promised my wife I’d be home for dinner tonight.”

Mnemosyne doesn’t respond at first, surveying the empty, dockside streets from the driver’s seat of her sedan for anything of note before addressing the other agents. “If all goes well, it will be quick. This is just a cursory, fact-finding meeting. Our primary mission is to identify the goal of the Eight Precepts, and if at all possible, their Quirks. Anything else is secondary.” She carefully checks her pistol and holsters it at her belt and then turned to the others. “Giran’s information wasn’t as complete as Apollo had hoped, but it’ll have to do. We’re likely looking at ‘Chronostasis’ and ‘Tengai’ as bodyguards, if ‘Overhaul’ keeps to the rules and meets us three on three but be prepared for the unexpected.”

Phobos hands Hisashi a standard issue sidearm, and a few loaded magazines, who dutifully stows them away. “We’re packing for a meeting, so only the Sig Sauer for firepower, and knives for melee. Prometheus, you brought your specialty stuff?” He asks as he slips a bowler hat on his head.

“Oh yes. Nonlethal and containment mostly though.” Prometheus pats the bandolier around his waist, laden with various grenades all labelled with different names. “What do we know about Quirks of those three?”

“Tengai has a Barrier Quirk of some kind, which would make him an ideal body guard for Overhaul. Chronostasis is almost always by Overhaul’s side, but we have no knowledge on his power outside of his name - expect something to do with hindering you, so keep your distance. Overhaul’s Quirk is touch based, but we don’t have any other details. No contact, unless absolutely necessary. Ready? Then we move out. Remember. Let me handle the talking.”

They pile out of the car, and assume a vanguard position, Mnemosyne in front in all her intimidating glory, with Phobos and Prometheus flanking her in their mixed-amounts-of-intimidating-glory.

Prometheus dusts his suit off a little to make sure he was impeccable as they confidently stride towards the ‘empty’ warehouse. First impressions were everything after all.

Standing in the rough middle of the warehouse were their ‘targets’, and just as the rules dictated, there were only three of them and all three wore masks reminiscent of a plague doctor’s. Neither of the two attaches had been ones they’d predicted. The one on the left was a tall, muscular man with a ragged looking mask and a long mane of blonde hair, his fists bound up in heavy plating identifying him as likely being the Bodyguard. ‘Tengai’ was noted as wearing a priest’s attire, but this man was wearing a black cloak, hat and sneakers of all things. Well. Hisashi could appreciate wearing something just because it was comfortable. The Helper? The Assistant? Perhaps Chronostasis was busy.

In the middle though, the man known as ‘Overhaul’ was undeniable, from his short black hair,
intense eyes, and fur-collared jacket.

“Overhaul,” Mnemosyne says calmly, “I am Mnemosyne, and we are ‘Olympus’. It is a pleasure to
meet you. I understand that the Boss is currently ill. My condolences.”

Overhaul reaches up to scratch the side of his mask with a finger, flicking his gaze from
Mnemosyne’s stony expression, Phobos’ mangled visage, and Prometheus’ lazy stare. “Noted,” He
says quietly, his voice carrying significantly well in the warehouse. “I understand you have had prior
dealings with our organisation and wish to continue.”

“That is correct,” Mnemosyne says, nodding slightly, “Our dealings were few and far between, but
we valued them regardless. It is our intention to continue this business relationship into the future,
that we may continue to work together when our goals align.” She pauses. “There is an impression in
the Underworld that you are taking the group in a new direction. If possible, we would like to
continue to work together as I said but that is only possible provided we have similar goals.”

Overhaul nods quietly, and flicks his gaze over to the black-clothed man beside him, who takes a
step forward. Deferring to a subordinate? Odd.

“What goals does Olympus have?”

“The goals of Taskforce: OLYMPUS are numerous,” Mnemosyne says calmly, although her eyes
are widening slightly. “Funding research and development. Rehabilitating villains. Solving crises
without public knowledge to prevent panic. All to preserve the stability of the global order, both on
the Surface and in the Underworld.” She blinks, and her eyes narrow dangerously. “You… what did
you...”

Prometheus may not have fully read the mission briefing, but he’s quite sure that wasn’t supposed to
be her answer.

“Taskforce? So you’re affiliated with the Government but still work with Yakuza?” The man
continues, blithely ignoring the intense sense of aggression that’s suddenly emanating from Olympus.

“Yes. In order to achieve its goals, the Taskforce is willing to work with and even employ known
criminals to—”

Having heard enough, Phobos steps forward, and activates his Quirk, ‘Bogeyman’, with an angry
snarl. Prometheus knew enough not to look directly at him as he activated it - anyone who did would
be struck with an intense, overwhelming and unexplained sense of dread, ideal for controlling a
crowd of people or disabling enemies.

There was a unique problem to a Quirk like ‘Bogeyman’ though, and it was -

“ORAAAAA!”

- that everyone reacts to fear differently.
The Bodyguard rushes forward in the blink of an eye and shoots his fist out like a missile. Phobos has enough time to hastily block with his own arm, but the nanoweave fiber is no protection against a club let alone Quirk-enhanced punches. There's a horrible moment where Prometheus can see Phobos' radius and ulna shattering, arm twisting sickeningly as the scarred agent is blown back by the impact, bouncing off the ground with a muffled cry of pain.

Prometheus didn’t have to be a doctor to tell that he wasn’t going to be using that arm any time soon.

“WHITE OUT!” He calls, slipping a thin, cylindrical grenade out from his coat and hurling it at Overhaul and the others. Instead of detonating and releasing its payload as it should have, it seemed to flicker before vanishing completely from sight. The sound of it going off was undeniable though, however distant, and he flicks his gaze up to the roof where a large white glob was suddenly present among the rafters and the vague shape of an arm could be seen sticking out. Idly, he notes that whoever had did that had to have been extremely loyal to Overhaul to just teleport an unknown grenade to themselves.

But fortunately for them, Prometheus always packed a plan B.

He hurls a set of black little balls to the ground just in front of him as quickly as he can, intently aware that if the Bodyguard reacts fast enough, it's already over. The balls burst into clouds of thick, choking smoke, covering him and hopefully giving the Yakuza pause before they swoop in and finish them off. Swiftly, he pulls out two more White-Out grenades and bounces them along the ground, one towards Overhaul and the other towards where the Bodyguard was.

The moment they disappear into the smoke, gunshots ring out alongside the soft 'POP' of the grenades detonating and Prometheus is thrown back as several rounds find their mark at his solar plexus - this, the nanofiber weave can protect him against, but it still hurts. “Augh, right in the ten zone,” He groans, arching his back a little before rolling over and reaching into his coat to pull out a round metal orb, covered in patches of sticky resin. He presses it down against the ground and thumbs the activation switch, staggering to his feet and heading over to where Mnemosyne is helping Phobos to his feet.

"Holding them off?" Mnemosyne hisses, as Phobos does his best to haul himself up with her help - he can’t quite hang off her shoulder, given their height difference, so she just picks him up in a princess carry.

Prometheus reaches up to adjust his mask a little, covering his ears and pressing down, sparing a moment to give her a nod. "Mandrake down. Should keep them off of us."

Mnemosyne mimics the adjustment, and Phobos follows suit weakly with his good arm.

The three of them barge out of the warehouse as a horrible ear shredding shriek is emitted from behind them, shattering the warehouse glass as they flee. They rush towards the Sedan before any potential reinforcements Overhaul had in reserve decided to pursue and turn a bad situation into a critically bad one. With Phobos carefully secured in the backseat, still gritting his teeth in agony, Mnemosyne gunning the engine as hard as she could, Prometheus felt he was free to let out a breath and pull his mask off, and Mnemosyne, similarly, releases the sound cancellation.

Prometheus stretches before he looks back through the rear windscreen and nearly chokes.
Standing in the open doors, unharmed and unfettered, Overhaul watches them drive away with a dispassionate look.

"Mnemosyne?" Prometheus mutters quietly, reaching for his side arm, "Floor it, before Overhaul goes full Terminator on us and latches onto this car."

She glances in the rear view mirror to see what he's talking about and swears colourfully in several languages (Prometheus picks out Arabic and Polish before the engine drowns her out). She accelerates as hard as she can, tires screeching angrily as the car ramps up even faster.

Fortunately for them, Overhaul is content to watch them go without doggedly pursuing them, which is just as well because Prometheus isn't actually sure they could stop him if he shrugged off everything he threw at him so far. The White-Out might have missed him, but the Mandrake should've destroyed his inner ear. There was no way he should've been able to stay upright, let alone casually walk out after them. What sort of monster is he?

Only when they're safely an hour away and Mnemosyne has a satellite phone out to contact one of Olympus' healers does Prometheus slump back in his seat and relax - or at least, relax as much as someone like him can. There's a painful bruise already blooming on his chest that he's going to feel for the next few days (he should probably get checked out, make sure his ribs didn't crack or anything), he's down four grenades and they barely got anything out of the meeting except that it was generally a mistake and Overhaul was apparently a Terminator.

"Well. That didn't go to plan at all."

There are a few saving graces to the disastrous outcome. Phobos will get some new scars from the surgery to repair his arm. Mnemosyne did manage to learn some information about the Eight Precepts.

And Hisashi still made it to the dinner date with his wife.
For his part, Katsuki is waiting as patiently as Katsuki ever does, which means he’s tapping a foot against the ground and scowling fiercely.

Fortunately for him, Izuku does the unveiling in short order. “Tadaaaa!” He cries, pulling the cloth back. “It’s an upgrade to your Hero costume! A breastplate for protection,” and he raps his knuckle against the metal for emphasis, before pointing at the other two parts in order, “A visor, and the new Grenadier Bracers Mk II.” Without waiting for Katsuki to react, Izuku reaches over to grab the visor from where it’s sitting on it’s stand and toss it over at him. “Try it out!”

Katsuki frowns at it momentarily, turning it over in his hands as Hitoshi and Mashirao peer a little closer (at a safe distance to avoid setting Katsuki off). “What’s it do?” He mutters, slipping it onto his head and letting the bands click into place. A snug fit, as expected.

“Press the switch on the side.”

There’s a small ‘click’ as Katsuki does exactly that, and suddenly the visor lights up, eliciting a small noise of surprise. “Shots loaded… six left, six right? What the fuck does that mean? Wait. Targeting reticules?”

Izuku is beaming again, and he lifts up one of the bracers and presses down on one of the panels. Another small ‘click’ can be heard, as a panel near the front of the bracer tilts open to reveal a small opening. “Beanbag rounds! They’re in each bracer, and you can load up to six at a time. The targeting reticule helps you aim. When you’ve got them active, it uses an infrared laser to… well, it figures out where you’re pointing it, and tells you through the heads up display. Accurate up to about fifty feet, but maximum range is something around eighty.” Izuku pauses to amp up his beaming by a few megawatts. “Sooooo, what do you think?”

“Dude. Awesome.” Mashirao is in total and complete awe of Izuku’s creations, turning the other bracer over in his hands. A little part of him wanted to ask Izuku to make him something like this, but it didn’t feel right to impose on his friend.

(But maybe on his birthday, he’d be getting something just as incredible)

Hitoshi lets out a low whistle, but he’s not admiring the bracers like Mashirao is - his eyes are on Katsuki. “I think you broke him,” He says quietly, tilting his head to the side to get a better perspective.

He looks like he’s caught between declaring his undying love for Izuku and attempting to maintain his standoffish, aggressive nature.

Hitoshi is very tempted to take a picture right then and there, have it framed and put it in a gallery as ‘The Duality of Man’.

Eventually though, Katsuki’s gratitude wins out over his desire to keep up his appearances to at least Hitoshi and Mashirao and he wraps his arms around Izuku in a bone crushing hug.
“I fucking love it.”

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be dedicated entirely to the Sports Festival. Isn't that exciting?

I think I once mentioned that Taskforce OLYMPUS's purpose is to give a global perspective, but part of it is also because I started imagining what would happen to institutions like the CIA or Interpol when Quirks start to get involved. A secret international group of literal super spies was a fun idea that I liked.

I might use it as a basis for other things later. Who knows? Maybe Izuku will end up in Olympus anyway (potentially as 'Hephaestus' or possibly 'Astraeus').

The Scrabble scene is also a reference to the old Dilbert cartoon, much like the NetMaster. *It's even from the same scene actually.* This is because I have secretly been writing a BNHA x Dilbert Crossover and now I'm unveiling my secret master plan.

I'm joking, but honestly *'The Knack'* scene is just... Young!Starchild!Izuku all over.
Total Eclipse of the Sun

Chapter Summary

The Sports Festival is here, and it's time for the background players to take centre stage. The Sun has had its time for too long, and now the Moon dominates the sky.

Chapter Notes

Woof, this took a while. A large, large portion of that time has been dedicated purely to figuring out cavalry battle teams and thus, which students even made it through the Obstacle Course.

I decided to split the Sports Festival into parts, because it's going to be Big(tm). The Cavalry Battle itself will likely take up an entire chapter (don't hold me to that), and that's not even getting into the hot-blooded tournament.

I'd like to throw a random shoutout to anakinwhyyoupanakin because every time I see that username I bust out laughing. Seriously, what a great name. I wish I thought of it.

Also, I'm going to shamelessly plug my other BNHA fic, 'Death and Taxes'. It's kind of like AIHEAG's opposite in mood and atmosphere, at least somewhat. You can check it out on my page, and decide if it's for you after reading all the archive warnings because hoo boy, it is going to be Dark. I kind of started writing it so I wouldn't be tempted to insert Dark things into AIHEAG (of which I had a few concepts - without spoiling anything, someone suggested that Izuku might learn to harness his inner plasma; there's a way I thought of and it was Not Pretty). If you like Dark fics, philosophical rambling, and an Immortal!Izuku, check it out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chemicals had never been Izuku’s strong point. They weren’t very useful with his quirk (although he could still consume them all the same), they were finicky and volatile, and they smelled just awful. Still, he had to admit, watching Shoutan Shin’ya work had something vaguely magical to it. He knew enough about chemistry to identify the basic principles, but what he was actually doing was far beyond him - it may as well have been wizardry, really.

Shin’ya stops just as he was about to pour something clear and cyan into an erlenmeyer flask already filled with something murky green, and his gas-mask-covered face turns to look at Izuku. “You’ve been staring at me for ten minutes and twenty three seconds. Do you require my assistance, Midoriya?”

“Oh.” He hadn’t realised he’d been staring for that long, but he puts on a bright smile regardless. “I was originally going to ask something, but I got distracted watching what you were doing! What are you making?”

The impassive, undefinable stare continues for a few more moments before he turns back to his
work, carefully pouring it into the flask. “I am making nothing. I am merely distilling and isolating the chemicals produced by my Quirk.” He places the flask on a stand above a bunsen burner and watches as it begins to slowly boil.

“Oh. Are they useful?” Izuku can’t help but being a little curious, and as long as Shin’ya is answering his questions, he’ll keep asking them.

“No.” The answer is flat and blank. “I am merely attempting to gain a better understanding of my Quirk.” The murky blue-green solution evaporated slowly to leave behind translucent little crystals, like salt. “I would avoid interacting with them if I were you. Please wear safety goggles if you wish to approach any closer, for your own safety.”

Now Izuku is really curious. He approaches casually, after snapping some goggles onto his face and leaning far too close to the flask to be considered safe. “Neat!” He chirps, squinting at the crystals. They have a faint cloudiness to them, but Shin’ya empties the flask into a petri dish regardless and seals it shut with a ‘click’. “Does your Quirk produce a lot of different chemicals?”

“It is very messy actually,” He says, in that bland tone of his as he holds the petri dish up, letting the light catch the trapped crystals. “I have isolated thirty three unique products of ‘Biohazard’, and will likely learn of more with continued testing. With practice, I am able to regulate what I produce, but I am unable to cease production. Thus, I must understand what I am capable of producing.”

Izuku snaps his fingers, eyes lighting up. “That’s what I was going to ask! Mei wants the class to team up for the Sports Festival, and I was curious if you were willing to join?” He says it as though the topic had reminded him, but really, they weren’t even mildly related.

Shin’ya freezes, his otherwise steady gloved hands twitching just a little. He nearly drops the petri-dish he was holding, but thankfully, he sets it down safely. “... No,” He says stoically, turning to regard Izuku properly again, “I am not. The activities of the Sports Festival are liable to cause damage to my isolation suit. That would be inadvisable.”

“Really?” Izuku says, only vaguely aware that he doesn’t actually know what the U.A Sports Festival entails. He just kind of assumed it would be like the Sports Festivals he participated in Primary and Middle School, but really, that was a silly assumption wasn’t it? What part of U.A was like ‘normal’ schools? “I suppose that’s a good point. I didn’t think of that!”

There’s a brief silence as they stare at each other, Izuku’s bright grin against the unreadable gas-mask. Then Shin’ya turns back to his flasks and chemistry. “I will cheer for any of us who participate, as is appropriate for a classmate.” Pause. “Good luck, Midoriya, if you intend to compete.”

Izuku beams back at him, gently placing a hand on the suit shoulder (not that he was really sure Shin’ya could even feel it through the thick rubber). “I do, and thanks!”
Of course, Izuku isn’t going to join forces with Mei, regardless of the power of such a union. If he’s going to join forces, there’s only one person he’d ever do it with.

“Your corporate box, ladies and gentleman,” The Attendant says with a small flourish. “Please enjoy the Sports Festival.”

Olympus’ Corporate Box (well, technically it was Six Seeds AgriCorp’s, but they were technically Olympus anyway so) was a lavish thing, with a single row of felted, cushioned seats, a bar well stocked with drinks and snacks, and most importantly as far as Hisashi was concerned, high quality air conditioning.

“Wow,” Midoriya Inko murmurs, taking in every detail, from the immaculate and soft carpet to the delicately cut crystal lights hanging from the roof. “And your company pays for this?”

Oh she was just too adorable, Hisashi thinks. He feels a little bad that she’d never experienced this kind of luxury when he was almost accustomed to it (he was just as accustomed to living in literal caves though, so it sort of balanced out), but he beams at her all the same. “Yup! Six Seeds is a part of the umbrella corporation, so you can have access freely. It’s only U.A though; they don’t have boxes for the other stadiums or shows unfortunately.” He strolls over to the bar and pours himself a few fingers of brandy. “Want a drink, ‘Kurobi’?”

Mnemosyne smiles back at Hisashi, brushing a lock of white hair from her face. “A glass of the apple-mango juice, please. I haven’t had a drink of alcohol since I was a teenager.” She turns her attention to Inko, a charming smile on her face as she bows politely. “It is truly a pleasure to finally meet you, Inko-san. Hisashi-kun never fails to talk about you,” She says smoothly, glancing at Hisashi with a vague sense of amusement, “Even when it is not appropriate to do so.”

Inko titters a little, a slight flush to her cheeks. “Oh, goodness. It’s a pleasure to meet you too, Kurobi-san. Thank you for taking care of my husband,” She says, ignoring Hisashi’s melodramatic crying in the background.

“It’s nothing,” Mnemosyne replies, giving Hisashi an amused look. “I am used to working with colourful characters like your husband.”

“Is the ceremony starting?” Hisashi says ‘cheerfully’, “I think it’s starting. Here’s your juice, Kurobi.” He thrusts the glass at her pointedly, and she takes it with a twinkle in her eyes.

“I suppose we’d better settle in. Hate to miss a thing.”
“Sure you won’t change your mind Izuku?” Mei says, face right up against Izuku’s. “Think of the team we could make if we worked together! The Support Companies will all be watching! As students of the Support Department, don’t we owe it to them to create an unforgettable show?!”

Izuku laughs lightly, but he does take a small step back away from Mei. “We will! It’ll be more impressive if our babies fight for supremacy, isn’t it?”

That gets her attention, which is exactly what Izuku calculated it to do. He carefully extricates himself from the situation as she gets lost in fantasies of technological supremacy so that he can check in with the rest of 1-F.

Somehow, Mei managed to badger everyone in the class into participating with the exception of Shin’ya who abstained due to safety concerns. Even Ogata, who had explicitly claimed he would rather die than participate in anything with the word ‘Sport’ in it’s name, was here, although he certainly looked like he would much rather be dead as he talked to Chizuru.

He strides over to where Makino is checking her equipment and beams at her. “Excited?”

She glances up, blowing a loose strand of hair from her face. Grumbling, she tucks it behind an ear when it simply falls back into her face with little fanfare. “I guess. It’s a good chance to make a name for ourselves, but it’s our first year. There’ll be two more festivals. Festivals I’ll have more time to prepare for.”

“It’ll be fun, you know?” Izuku says, rocking back on his feet, “We’ll only be competing against other first years.”

“Yeah. From the Heroics Department. This is classic Jock vs Nerds.” As if to answer that very statement, the muffled sound of a roaring crowd could be heard. Her expression twitched a little. “You know, it’s not too late. If you snap my neck now, even if I’m still alive, I won’t have to participate.”

Izuku laughs it off, the way he laughs off a lot of things. “Come on, it won’t be that bad. I’m sure you’ll do great!”

An alarm buzzes, and the class of 1-F collectively wrap up whatever it is they were doing at the moment to file out in an orderly fashion.

“... and here’s Classes F, G, H of the Support Department! IF YA FEELIN IT, SHOUT IT OUT!”

The roar of the crowd wasn’t as deafening as the one they heard earlier, but there was still a level of excitement to it. Izuku himself had never seen so many people all in one space (well, maybe at the Mall but he doesn’t like to think about that). Somewhere in the crowd are his parents, but he has no idea where they’d be. Silently, he wondered what it must be like for Mei, but when he looks over at her...

“Ah. There they are. Judging from the lanyards... Hamashita Support Agency, huh? Oooh, and over there’s the Yamatsu Group...”
… well, she doesn’t seem like she’s particularly concerned if her parents are watching.

“Will the Player Representative, Bakugou Katsuki of 1-A, please step up?” The Freshman Referee, Midnight, calls as she dramatically cracks her whip.

Izuku brightens a little as he watches Katsuki come forward, oozing composure to the point of arrogance with his slouched, casual stride. He’s not even scowling - his expression has a more determined frame to it. Izuku’s glad to know that Katsuki is taking this seriously enough to feel challenged. He’d hate to think he was stagnating in U.A of all places.

“Any words, Bakugou?”

Katsuki turns around to the face the rest of the other classes. For a moment, his eyes meet Izuku’s. Izuku beams back, and Katsuki lets the tiniest smirk onto his face. “Yeah,” He says into the microphone Midnight was holding out to him, “I’m going to place first.”

There’s a collective uproar from the gathered students, but all Izuku lets out is a small laugh.

“That’s the guy we made the bracers for right?” Mei asks, narrowing her eyes as she presumably examines him in great detail with her Quirk. “Impressive confidence. He’s not bluffing. Interesting! Doesn’t mean we’re just going to let him have his way, are we Maki-chan?”

“I don’t remember agreeing to this.” Despite her words, Makino’s expression is one of resignation. “I’m going to generously assume he painted that target on himself intentionally?” That part is directed at Izuku, the only person amongst 1-F who was familiar enough with Katsuki to answer such a question.

“Oh yeah,” He says cheerfully, rolling his shoulders in anticipation, “Kacchan wants them to come for him with everything. If they don’t, he can’t call it a true victory.”

Makino makes a face. “Great. Why is everyone in this school insane? Is there no such thing as a normal person?” She shakes her head. “He’d better be careful making claims like that. There are a lot of people who won’t take a claim like that lying down.”

Any further discussion was cut off by Midnight’s next announcement. “THE FIRST ROUND… AN OBSTACLE RACE!”

“Over there. 1-F. My, what an eclectic little gang. Goodness. You didn’t tell me Hatsume Mei was in the same class as your son, Hisashi,” Mnemosyne murmurs, adjusting her binoculars.

Hisashi frowned. “That’s because I don’t know why that’s important. Besides. I only knew her vaguely as ‘Mei’,” He murmurs back, glancing over to where Inko was pouring herself a glass of juice before the race began proper. He didn’t like talking business with his wife so close.
“Hatsume Mei is brilliant. We’ve had an eye on her since her fifth grade science fair project was in the local news. A rocket-powered skateboard, you would’ve liked it. She’s a potential candidate for the Muses Division.”

“Muses?” Inko says inquisitively, right behind Hisashi.

You’d think with a decade or two of experience under his belt, he’d hear his wife sneaking up on him like that, but even after years apart, his finely honed senses still just registered her as non-threatening. Like a rabbit. A very cute rabbit.

“The Muses,” Mnemosyne says smoothly, ignoring the glare Hisashi shoots her, “are what we call our R&D division. Students from the Support Department often display the ingenuity and engineering we seek in candidates.”

“The race is starting,” Hisashi says in a clipped tone, changing the topic with his usual levels of subtlety and deftness.

The crushing press at the start of the race is not what Izuku considers a ‘good time’. His saving grace is that it is so very temporary, for the moment the signal goes off, everyone rushes out and it’s the perfect opportunity for him to break away from the crowd.

Or rather, he thinks as he presses his left thumb to his left pinky finger, for the crowd to break away from him.

Immediately, he’s surrounded by a corona of electricity, sparking off him and lancing out like a crackling cloud and shocking everyone in his immediate vicinity. “Sorry!” He calls out, already feeling like he can breathe again, “I’m sure Recovery Girl will fix anything!” It’s nowhere near enough to seriously hurt anyone, and given the distributed nature of it, it’s not enough to bring down most of the people around him. There’s still something to be said about a sudden and unexpected electric shock, which much like a cattle prod, has the desired effect of getting everyone to scatter away from him.

“A SHOCKING DEVELOPMENT FROM ONE OF THE SUPPORT STUDENTS, BUT WHAT’S THIS? HE MIGHT JUST GET FROZEN IN HIS TRACKS!”

Ice is spreading along the ground and Izuku can see the back of one of the other students (from 1-A, he thinks? He recognises the red-white hair) running ahead and leaving frost in his wake. He’s tempted to see how everyone else is dealing with it, but he doesn’t have time to consider people who
aren’t him, so he does the first thing he can think of.

He whips the shield from his back, unfolds his staff, and uses it as a toboggan, skidding across the ice in a barely-controlled manner. The staff has been improved even further from its original design, broken up into folding sections that click together for easy storage and transport, and the smooth finish of the shield is perfect for gliding along the slick ice. All in all, he’s turned this particular player-made obstacle into an advantage, although he can see several other students pulling up ahead of him easily.

“Nice trick Izuku! But you’ll have to do better to beat US!” Mei calls from his left.

‘Us’ is apparently Mei, Makino and Makino’s brother, Shironaki. Somehow, Shironaki has found the time to shed both his shirt and his shoes, sprinting across the ice as though it were ground as sure and stable as concrete. Mei is riding on his shoulders like it’s the most natural thing in the world and Makino is clinging to his waist, feet sliding along the ice and an expression of utmost defeat on her face. She looks Izuku straight in his eyes, and mouths ‘You could’ve prevented this’ to him.

He beams back at her.

Mei bares her teeth in what is probably supposed to be a grin but just sort of terrifies normal people. “Rockets! ACTIVATE!” She declares, hunching over a little in preparation.

Without missing a beat, Shironaki stops sprinting and starts sliding, lowering himself a little for stability as Mei activates a miniature jet engine strapped to her back, propelling them even faster along the ice. “See you later, Midoriya,” Shironaki says breezily, completely at ease with everything that’s going on.

“See ya!” Izuku replies, just sort of happy to be here.

(Someone cries out that teaming up should be illegal, but ultimately, just about anything goes - cooperative or competitive)

The sound of explosions lets him know that Katsuki is hard at work being Katsuki, and he manages a jaunty wave to him as he passes by but he doesn’t think Katsuki noticed. He’s fine with that - he’s always been the kind of person who only has eyes for the prize in competitions or contests.

At some point though, the ‘Ice Road’ as he began to think of it comes to an end, and when it does, it’s rather conveniently at the next phase of the Obstacle Race. Rather than convenient, Izuku thinks it’s probably just the natural result of things. It’s not as though that guy could continue just… making ice all the way without at least taking the time and focus to tackle the obstacles.

Had this been any other time, Izuku would’ve been gushing over the sight of massive robots barring his way. As it is, he doesn’t really have time to sit down and wonder how they work (well, maybe a LITTLE… no, no bad thoughts, don’t get distracted), so he focuses instead on trying to figure out what to do about them.

If he were Katsuki he’d… no, he wouldn’t smash through them. Katsuki liked destroying things, but he liked winning even better. He’d probably just try to go over them - a path Izuku could not use. Or could he? Unbidden, a memory of his lessons with Master Wukong floats to the top of his mind.
“Remember, Midoriya! When fighting an enemy, a clever monkey relies on the jungle to provide! What Jungle? The Urban Jungle! Buildings, Sign Posts, Vehicles, even your Enemies! Master the art of using these tools! Improvise!”

Improvise. Well, he didn’t necessarily have to improvise, not when he had just the perfect tool for this. Up his sleeve too, which was just perfect for commentary purposes. Not that there was anyone listening. He could tell Mashirao about it later, he’d appreciate it.

He holds his arm out and launches a thin needle-like grappling hook from a contraption hidden in his sleeve, aiming for the head of one of the massive machines bearing down on him. The moment it make contact and he feels the engine in his Utility Pack (he thought about making a belt, but he couldn’t fit everything he wanted in it) start to reel him in, he kicks off the ground, wraps the cable around his hand as best he can, and swings himself up into the air.

He can see a few other students employing similar tactics with their individual Quirks, and he lets a small smile spread across his face. Those Quirks were very impressive, sure. But his Utility Pack could not be matched.

He jerks a cord, and a pair of wings unfolded, the thin fabric membrane catching the air as he begins to descend and leaving him to glide over the rest of the machines, as the grappling cable retracts into his sleeve, it’s task done. But he’s not satisfied with just gliding - and who would be? No, these wings had thrusters to really get him going.

“AMAAAazing! One of the Support Students, Midoriya Izuku, has created wings! What an incredible sight!”

“Are those ion thrusters? Why? I mean, sure they’re efficient but they’re so boring, where’s the roar of fire? With a little polynitrovitapane, you can really get-”

“Sashi-kun? Shush.”

The Half-n-Half bastard he could understand. The asshole’s personality left much to be desired in Katsuki’s opinion but the fact that he was the biggest threat to him in 1-A was undeniable. That they were neck and neck was something he’d expected, but he was still determined to pull ahead. The four-eyed nerd-jock he could’ve understood as well; this was a race and that fucker’s entire thing was going fast.

“HAHAHAHAHAAHAHAHA! Don’t wait up for me, boys, I’ll be on you in a moment!”

But this? What the fuck was this? How the hell was this weird no-name background character
keeping pace with him? He was pretty sure they weren’t even from 1-B, which meant they were either from the Support Department or the Gen Ed, which just made this even worse. But given the weird devices they were sporting, smart money was on the Support Department.

They were still behind both him and Half-n-Half, but they were steadily gaining on them. The weird, pink-haired girl was zooming along on a power of rocket powered skates of all things, arms held out to keep her balance as she rocketed along, cackling all the while.

If they got close enough, Katsuki might be able to try and blast them but he couldn’t do it on a whim. His entire strategy relied on using explosions as propulsion, something he was very experienced with. If he tried to blast them without getting a proper angle, he’d only send himself off course, wasting time and falling behind Half-n-Half. Half-n-Half himself had attempted to freeze them a few times, but Rocket-Girl was surprisingly good at dodging in those things.

There was nothing for it but to wait for them to catch up and then just make sure they didn’t overtake them.

“WHAT’S THIS? THE NEXT OBSTACLE IS NONE OTHER THAN A MINEFIELD, STRAIGHT OUT OF RAMBO!”

Explosions? Perfect. Katsuki’s Quirk meant he was all but immune to the effects of explosions - they’d still throw him about, but the heat wasn’t anything to be worried about.

“ALRIGHT BABIES, TIME TO SHINE!”

He spared a glance for whatever the weird girl and Half-n-Half was doing and he nearly choked on his own tongue. The Weird Girl was propelling herself along not with the rocket skates she had on earlier, but… some weird hydraulic piston contraption strapped to her back? It was giving her a real ‘spider’ vibe, with each spike propelling her forward like weird hydraulic legs. It neatly avoided striking the landmines, but the fact that she had to be careful was still slowing her down, and Katsuki?

Katsuki could just keep blasting himself through the air, no need to slow down for a second.

Even that damn Half-n-Half had to be more careful. Of course, that didn’t stop Half-n-half from reaching out and trying to slow him down, like a little ice was enough to keep Bakugou Katsuki down.

Absolutely nothing and nobody was keeping Bakugou Katsuki down.

He was meters from the finishing line now, and that fucking asshole Half-n-Half had refused to let go of his arm even though the attempt to slow him down was achieving very little. He was ahead by mere millimeters, and it could change at a moment he knew.

“INCOMING!” called a familiar voice and Katsuki nearly stumbled because how was the idiot
airborne and actually, he didn’t want to know the answer to that particular question. Thinking about it would just give him a headache, and he needed to focus on getting across that line.

Not looking up proved to be a mistake however, as very soon a heavy, warm weight collided with both of them.

“Ah. I see he’s discovered Icarus’ Law of Flight.”

“I’m not familiar with the term, Hisashi. Explain for the class?”

“Flying is easy. Landing? That’s the hard part.”

“Deku,” Katsuki growled quietly, jabbing a finger at Izuku’s completely unrepentant expression, “What in the actual fuck was that supposed to be?”

“I said ‘Incoming’,” Izuku says breezily, because that naturally absolves him of all consequences. Katsuki, he knows from experience, is fine (this isn’t the first time Izuku has landed on top of him, and despite all promises made to the contrary, they both know it’s not going to be the last) but the other boy, Todoroki he thinks his name is, might not be so sturdy. He’s from the Heroics Department, so he’s probably fine, but Izuku checks anyway. “Sorry about that! I didn’t expect to get so much airtime, but wow, it really helped. I didn’t even have to worry the tiniest bit about that canyon obstacle. Are you okay?”

Todoroki Shouto for his part, seems to have taken being landed on in stride, although it’s certainly muddled up the judging of who actually crossed the finish line first. “... It’s fine,” He mutters, because he knows who Izuku is. He’s all the rest of the class could talk about for at least a day after he strolled in and casually destroyed all known facts about Bakugou Katsuki. Todoroki for his part hadn’t been that intrigued by the whole thing, but there was apparently more to the curly-haired, bright-eyed boy than just managing to be friends with the human equivalent of a raised middle finger.

“Great! It’s a shame we landed on that one landmine though, because I don’t think the wings survived. I’ll need a different alloy I think, maybe trade notes with Mei, something stronger but it can’t be much heavier than this or I’ll have to generate even more lift, but...”

Todoroki isn’t sure what to do about the rambling, but he decides to take a cue from Katsuki, who seems very familiar with the boy, and just ignore it for the most part.

“Mei. She wasn’t the crazy girl with the hydraulic spider thing was she?” Katsuki’s using a familiar tone that suggests he already knows the answer, but he’s desperately hoping Izuku will say the
opposite of what he expects.

Izuku’s not sure why he uses that tone so much, because it has never been anything but what Katsuki has already expected. He doesn’t get a chance to answer Katsuki because Mei does it for him.

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE ENTRANCE! Absolutely beautiful!” Mei is right in front of Katsuki, leering at him with an expression that promises an interesting life. “You must be ‘Kacchan’!” There’s a subtle twitch to Katsuki’s brow that she doesn’t notice (or doesn’t care about), because she’s a lot closer than she was a second ago and Katsuki’s not sure he even saw her move. “Ohhhh, yes I can definitely see what Izuku was talking about! Those explosions! Those eyes!” She’s even closer now, and for a moment Katsuki’s pretty sure their eyes are going to physically meet. She has strange, crosshair-like pupils, and there’s something… odd about the way they make him feel. Like a deer caught in the headlights, or a target in the sights of a gun, no escape, no retreat, helpless before the predator.

She’s apparently Izuku’s friend, so Katsuki very politely (by his standards) does not immediately attempt to blow her to tiny pieces, but roughly shoves her back with one hand. This proves to be a mistake, because she seizes his wrist and immediately starts inspecting his hands.

“Aha! Yes, I see! Ohhhh, that’s incredible! With a sample, I might even be able to replicate it! Efficient and organic!”

Ah. That’s why she seems faintly familiar to him. Worse than the possibility of Izuku having family like him out there in the world, there’s the daunting and all too real possibility that there are more people like him and they just happen to exist normally.

Izuku’s not a weird anomaly. He’s part of a phenomenon.

“... I think you broke him,” Izuku says quietly, tilting Katsuki’s head back and forth with a hand on his chin. His eyes have gone wide, and despite the fact that Mei is right back in his personal space again, there’s no reaction. Normally, Katsuki would be flipping out right now. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen him do this before.”

Mei for her part just stands back, a triumphant look on her face. “Of course! He’s probably just processing my majesty! An appropriate reaction!”

“Totally. That's what he's doing,” comes the perpetually resigned and defeated voice of Makino. After Mei broke off, she had apparently been allowed to climb on her brother's shoulders as he faced the rest of the obstacle course and has remained there, even now.

Shironaki for his part seems as unbothered by that as ever. He, at least, has broken out into a sweat, and is carefully controlling his breathing to hide the fact that he's panting. There’s something about his demeanour that’s different though, but Izuku doesn’t know him that well to get a true reading. He almost seems... colder.

“Ah! Maki-chan and Naki-chan!” Mei crows, slinging an arm around Shironaki's shoulders (and Makino's hips by proxy), “You made it!”

Makino huffs, and jabs a finger at Mei. Izuku gets a faint sense of deja vu. “Yeah, no thanks to you. You left us at the canyon Mei. You know I'm afraid of heights.”
“Eh? I knew you’d be safe in Naki-chan’s hands!” Mei cries, waving her hands. Makino isn’t having it though and she starts laying into Mei, so Izuku turns to see if anyone else he knows made it.

“Senpai! Hitoshi!”

Hitoshi seems completely unfazed by the course, and Izuku wonders if he even ran at all. He’s not even sweating. Mashirao, for his part, is breathing pretty heavily as he waves at Izuku.

“Sup ‘zuku,” He says inbetween pants, “Looks like, you beat us.”

“Nice wings,” Hitoshi says, smirking a little. “Even better landing.”

Izuku beamed at both of them. “Thanks! You guys did great as well. How’d you even get here without breaking a sweat?”

Hitoshi shrugged. “I had help,” He says and Izuku can guess what that means. Well. If Todoroki was allowed to freeze the path behind him… “Have they figured out who came first?”

“They’re going to announce it with the results. What do you think the next challenge will be?”

Mashirao straightened himself, strerching his arms. “Obstacle race to begin with… maybe some kind of direct competition like… uh. Dodge ball? Tug-of-war?”

“Direct competition sounds right. But I don't know about those.”

“ATTENTION EVEEEEEERYONE!” blared the speakers, Present Mic’s boisterous voice echoing around them, “IT’S TIME TO ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS! PLEASE TURN YOUR EYEBALLS TO THE BOARD!”

1st Place: Midoriya Izuku, 1-F
1st Place: Todoroki Shouto, 1-A
1st Place: Kastuki Bakugou, 1-A
4th Place: Hatsume Mei, 1-F
5th Place: Ibara Shiozaki, 1-B
6th Place: Juzo Honenuki, 1-B
7th Place: Tenya Iida, 1-A
8th Place: Fumikage Tokoyami, 1-A
9th Place: Hanta Sero, 1-A
10th Place: Eijiro Kirishima, 1-A
11th Place: Tetsutetsu Tetsutetsu, 1-B
12th Place: Mashirao Ojiro, 1-A
13th Place: Kouta Shironaki, 1-C
14th Place: Kouta Makino, 1-F
15th Place: Mezo Shoji, 1-A
16th Place: Rikido Sato, 1-A
17th Place: Ochaco Uraraka, 1-A
18th Place: Momo Yaoyorozu, 1-A
19th Place: Tsuyu Asui, 1-A
20th Place: Mina Ashido, 1-A
21st Place: Shinsou Hitoshi, 1-A
22nd Place: Kyoka Jiro, 1-A
23rd Place: Harishima Chizuru, 1-F
24th Place: Kosei Tsuburaba, 1-B
25th Place: Denki Kaminari, 1-A
26th Place: Kojiro Bondo, 1-B
27th Place: Reiko Yanagi, 1-B
28th Place: Yosetsu Awase, 1-B
29th Place: Itsuka Kendo, 1-B
30th Place: Sen Kaibara, 1-B
31st Place: Joketsu Nanafu, 1-G
32nd Place: Shihai Kuroiro, 1-B
33rd Place: Yui Kodai, 1-B
34th Place: Goshima Haruka, 1-G
35th Place: Toriko Nametsu, 1-G
36th Place: Kinoko Komori, 1-B
37th Place: Togaru Kamakiri, 1-B
38th Place: Neito Monoma, 1-B
39th Place: Pony Tsunotori, 1-B
40th Place: Toru Hagakure, 1-A
41st Place: Setsuna Tokage, 1-B
42nd Place: Manga Fukidashi, 1-B

Chapter End Notes

If you want to compare the list of winners from AIHEAG to the canonical ones, [here](#). Keep in mind that anyone NOT from 1-A or 1-B is an Original Character, who has been inserted into the Cavalry Battle for the purposes of mixing things up/characterisation (1-G, for example, exists to be a foil to 1-F). I played with the order a little bit as well (Mei, for example, canonically comes pretty close to last but here she's ridden Naki's shoulders to 4th place).

I'm still (STILL) finalising the cavalry battle teams, but here's a sneak peak at some of the teams I know for a fact will be there:

Team Midoriya - Izuku, Mashirao, Hitoshi, Katsuki (who would've guessed?)
Team Hatsume - Mei, Makino, Chizuru, Shironaki
Team Todoroki - As Canon so Todoroki, Kaminari, Yaoyorozu, Iida
Team 1-G - Joketsu Nanafu, Goshima Haruka, Toriko Nametsu

Any other teams I'll let you speculate. Feel free to suggest team match ups, although admittedly I'm only REALLY concerned about the remaining 1-A students for the most part. But who knows? Maybe there'll be an upset during the Cavalry Battle and the 1-B students will make it through. Lord knows I love exploring background characters.
Izuku studied the crowd of other students, watching them gather into groups, broker alliances and team ups (or fail to and leave awkwardly). Their team was forged the moment they all made it through the obstacle race - Izuku wasn’t going to take ‘No’ for an answer from any of them. What was important was who else was going to team up.

Each player was assigned points based on the outcome of the race. First place carried with it a grand total of ten million points, but having three people tied for it was unprecedented. At least there was a precedent set for two people tieing for it, and they ultimately went with that - split the points up evenly. Three million, three hundred and thirty three thousand and three hundred and thirty three points each, with the remainder just being discarded because really, the whole point was to paint a massive target on the back of the leader. Given that Katsuki and he were joining forces, that just made it worse.

Well, Izuku couldn’t say he wasn’t having fun.

Studying the groups wasn’t helping too much though - he didn’t know enough about… well, anyone. He could see Mei teaming up with Harishima, Makino and Shironaki, which he’d mostly expected. Shironaki’s eyes met his for a brief moment, and the other boy mouthed ‘Good luck’ to Izuku as he climbed onto their shoulders.

Right. They needed to figure out their formation.

“Kacchan on top,” Izuku says the moment he turns around. “And no, I’m not just saying that for
favouritism. He can’t use ‘Explosion’ properly if he has to hold one of us up.”

“That’s fair, I guess,” Mashirao mutters, although he does sound a little put out by it. “We’re going to have a hell of a target on us, thanks to Big Mouth Explody Boy here.”

Izuku puts a restraining hand on Katsuki’s shoulder before he can retaliate for the nickname. “How are the teams looking? I don’t really know anyone outside of 1-F, so…”

Hitoshi cranes his neck. “Looks like everyone’s sticking to class lines. 1-A with 1-A, 1-B with 1-B. I think. I wouldn’t know if they mixed up either, but it’s not like there’s much to mix up with. Something like ninety percent of the students here are from the Heroics Department. Figures.” He looks back to the rest of them, eyeing Katsuki briefly. “Our best bet is to go on the defense. If we make it to the end without losing our headband, we win by default.”

“Fuck off with that weak shit,” Katsuki snarls (perhaps a little predictably), “I didn’t come here to win by default. I came here to crush these fuckers.”

“Dude, we can’t focus on offense and defense,” Mashirao says, holding his hands up, “Every team out there is going to be aiming for either us or Todoroki’s group. As good as we are and as… ugh, incredible as you are,” Mashirao seems like just saying that left a bad taste in his mouth, but Katsuki puffs his chest out all the same, “That’s still way too many for us to handle.”

“They’re right Kacchan. We need to focus on defense.” Izuku straightens his back, and there’s an almost commanding air to him now as he begins to focus. He’s studied their Quirks for the past month, built up notes to how to best exploit and enhance their capabilities. Now it was time for it to pay off. “Mashirao-senpai take rear guard, so you can use your tail as much as possible to fend people off. Hitoshi, vanguard. Focus on diverting attention from us - get people as shields, get them to fight each other, it doesn’t matter. I’ll take vanguard as well. Agreed?”

They shared a look. “Yeah. Agreed.”

“All teams please assemble in the arena! It’s TIIIIIIIME!”

“Goodness. Your son is going to have his work cut out for him.”

“Come now. He’s a Midoriya. He’ll do just fine.”

“Twelve teams… if we ignore Todoroki’s team, that still leaves ten other teams to fend off.” Izuku had to admit, it didn’t look good for them on the onset. “This is going to be fun!” Of course, that wasn’t necessarily a bad thing as far as he was concerned.

“Remember. Defense,” Hitoshi drawls, eyeing the nearest teams from his position at the front left of the ‘horse’. “HEY! YOU’RE ALL FROM 1-B AREN’T YA?” He calls out, channeling Katsuki as
best he can. He even mimics his voice a little. “READY TO GET DUMPSTERED YOU PACK OF BACKGROUND EXTRAS?!” The slew of angry reactions draws a smirk on his face, although someone calls out ‘DON’T RESPOND TO HIM’, which is, ironically, a response in itself. “Zombies primed and ready to go.”

“Great. We’ll try to keep our distance, but human shields will be great, and any distraction will be helpful. Ready, Kacchan?”

Katsuki snorted. “I was born fucking ready.”

Present Mic’s voice cut through the tension in the air like a cleaver. “CAVALRY BATTLE STAAAAAART!”

And then it was on.

“BACKGROUND EXTRAS, IGNORE US AND GO FOR EACH OTHER’S HEADBANDS!” Hitsoshi shouts, lacing his voice with his Quirk. Whole teams suddenly begin fighting each other, although quite a few participants are left shouting at their horses or riders. “It’s only a matter of time until some of them snap out of it, but that probably bought us a few minutes.”

“Where should we move?” Izuku says, glancing around as best he can. Todoroki’s team has backed off a bit, seemingly using a similar strategy to them as he forms a wall of ice to fend off an assault by a team from 1-A. He’s not super sure about names, but the bird-headed boy in the back launches a dark shadow thing at the ice wall to begin cracking it. “We can’t afford to be boxed in and-Three o’clock!”

Izuku’s not sure what to make of the team rushing towards them. It is a team, right? It just looks like one guy with a weird, fleshy growth on his back which he assumes is Quirk-related. Like a pyramid of flesh with… eyes along the sides, and a small opening in the front and is that a tongue coming for them?

It zooms towards Katsuki, who only turns around and snarls, flinging a hand towards it and firing off an explosion. Given that Izuku can’t feel any recoil, it wasn’t a particularly powerful one but it’s enough to fend off the tongue apparently.

“You can fuck right off, Toady!” Katsuki roars, hands sparking.

“I’m a frog,” comes a voice from inside the flesh-pyramid and Izuku can’t see them but he can only imagine them frowning. Whoever they are.

“SHOW ME WHERE I FUCKING ASKED!”

There’s a shift behind them, and then Mashirao grunts. “Focus! We’ve got a team coming in from the back!”

They turn around surprisingly efficiently, just in time for Izuku to see something bright flying towards his face. Purely instinctively he opened his mouth to catch it. Whatever it was, it was small, metal and tasted electronic.
“Not bad. Could’ve used a little more iron.”

“Wh-WHAT THE HELL?! DID YOU JUST EAT MY TASER DART?” squawks the rider of the other team - a heavyset girl with her hair in pigtails. “Hrrrr! You damn 1-F Students!” She hefts up her arm, a complex looking wrist-mounted launcher now aimed directly at Izuku. “I’ll show you! I’LL SHOW YOU ALL!”

A tall, gangly boy (tall and gangly enough that even obviously supporting her from behind, he’s still capable of peering over her shoulder) huffs. “Nana, rant later, shoot now. Aim for the rider.”

“Kacchan! Shield!”

Katsuki narrows his eyes, but does as Izuku warns him to, pulling the ‘Dekushield’ from it’s place on his back and swinging it around just in time for three more sparking darts to collide with it.

“You think your shield will protect you from the unmitigated GENIUS of 1-G?! HARUKA! THE FETCHER!”

The Gangly Boy (Haruka it seemed) rolls his eyes, and a long, spindly arm comes out around his shoulder holding a rod. “Here, ‘Mistress’,” He says wryly. ‘The Fetcher’ looks like a… fishing rod. Made entirely out of metal, with a steel cable for a line but still mostly a fishing rod - instead of a hook, it ends in a weird little grabber. Almost like a crane game, actually.

Which is all the more obvious when she casts it right at Katsuki’s head.

“How about fuck off instead?” Katsuki growls, batting it away with the shield. ‘Nana’ responds by casting it again, and Katsuki bats it away once more.

Haruka frowns, responding to the situation much more calmly than ‘Nana’. “This isn’t getting anywhere. Nametsu, distraction.”

‘Nametsu’ was Haruka’s complete opposite, almost to the point of comedy. Short and squat where Haruka was tall and gangly; their face was hidden by a curtain of hair, where Haruka’s was cropped short. There was just the softest noise from under the curtain of hair in response, that might have been a grunt or a ‘Yes’ or even just humming.

And then the bolas wrapped around Izuku’s legs.

There was enough force behind them to nearly make Izuku stumble, so he unfolded his staff to keep his balance, jamming it against the ground with one hand. At that point, the bolas sparked, and for a brief moment, Izuku was a corona of electricity again, this time against his will.

Fortunately, the staff served as an easy grounding device, and what electricity did travel to the others was only enough to jolt them.

“CONFEND YOU, 1-F!” Nana cries, raising her wrist launcher again. “I WON’T-WHAT THE?!”
A reel of tape darted down from above and attached to her headband before yanking it straight up into…

“How the fuck are they flying?” Katsuki growls, watching as Shouji Mezo crashes down to the ground, guiding himself with his tentacles, the tape reeling into the dark shadows of his flesh-pyramid.

Mashirao winces a little at the sound of the landing, but Shouji takes it in stride. “Guess it was more ‘jumping’ than flying.”

“Damn it all! Haruka! Nametsu! AFTER THEM! WE CAN DEAL WITH THE OTHERS LATER! THIS INSULT WILL NOT STAAAAAAAAND!”

They charge after the human-battle-tank formation, Izuku tilting his head to the side a little as he watches them go. “Is anyone going to tell them I’m the only person from 1-F?”

“Not our problem,” Hitoshi mutters, glancing around to survey the field. “Looks like Todoroki has his hands full.”

They just kept coming. No matter how much ice he built up, no matter how many walls, nothing seemed to hold them off for long.

Ashido’s acid, Tokoyami’s ‘Dark Shadow’, that girl’s vine-hair, the weird inky blackness of another student. Every time Todoroki thought he’d bought a few seconds, another attack was coming. When the ground beneath them turned soft and they started to sink, Yaoyorozu pulls them out with the help of his ice, and Iida’s engines. When a weird, candle-looking guy fires what might be glue at them, Todoroki stops it with a wall of ice.

He hadn’t had a single moment to think this entire time, to plan any kind of counter attack. They were stuck on the defensive, and that wasn’t necessarily a bad thing. They didn’t have to go on the offensive to win, after all, but it was… strange. He knew they had over three million points on a single headband, a prize that would guarantee a team’s continuation into the next round - but why didn’t they turn on each other? Surely at some stage they’d find an opportunity to try and steal someone else’s?

He gets his answer in a moment when he forms a large ring of ice, just long enough to give him a handful of seconds reprieve.

They don’t have any headbands.

There’s five teams aiming for them, nearly half the players and there’s no headband between them.

“Iida,” He says, voice low, “Have you been able to see who’s been taking the headbands?” It’s true
that Todoroki has the best vantage point, but his attention has been entirely on fending off the variety of ranged attacks being thrown at them. Nobody has gotten close enough to really engage them in melee, which is fortunate because he’s not sure how many times Kaminari can discharge. It’s an ace in the hole he doesn’t want to use unless they have to.

“Not yet. I can’t see clearly past everyone. Speaking of, Tokoyami, two o’clock!”

Todoroki curses silently, raising another wall of ice to keep his ‘Dark Shadow’ at bay. Kirishima collides with it face first, but with his Hardening active, already cracking it.

“I see him,” Yaoyorozu mutters, holding a spyglass to her eye. “In the back. That shirtless guy from the obstacle race. There.” She points, and Todoroki spares a glance.

There, riding on the shoulders of three students he doesn’t recognise (he remembers seeing that pink-haired girl talking to Bakugou though), is a student who looks like some sort of mummy. He has all the headbands wrapped around his face so the only thing visible is the eyes. Eyes which were staring right at Todoroki. No. Not staring. Glaring. He looked like Todoroki had personally killed his entire family, burnt down the family home, and then kicked his dog into a well for good measure. There was murder in those eyes.

Todoroki puts it out of his mind for now. “That answers one question. Why aren’t they trying to get them back?”

“Who knows? We’ve only got four minutes left, so if we can hold out for then, it won’t matter.” Yaoyorozu says, eyes narrowing. “Shit. I think they’re preparing to attack in unison.”

It seemed likely. The Five Teams they were contending with had all paused attacking, and there was a definite unspoken sentiment of a united attack, if only just this once.


“Wow,” Izuku mumbles, looking at the other teams before straightening a little. “We’ve got to be more careful. We’ve got five minutes left and-on our five!”

Mushrooms had begun to sprout in a path leading up to that flank, and none of them were in any mood to find out what they did.

“Hey! What do you think you’re doing? We might be fungi’s, but there’s already not mushroom here!” Hitoshi calls out, but the all-girl team from 1-B wasn’t falling for it. Well, he tried.

The rider, a girl with auburn hair in a side-tail, cocked a fist back and let it grow to the size of her torso as they suddenly charged towards them.

“You want a fucking go?! BRING IT BITCHES!” Katsuki roars, leaning forward as his team grudgingly answered their challenge.

“Yanagi, Tokage! Now!” Fist-Girl cries.
That was when the severed arm flew at them.

There wasn’t any blood, but the girl with long green hair had very clearly pulled her arm off like a lizard’s tail and then something had hurled it at them. None of them were particularly prepared for this, which was why the the arm was currently pulling Katsuki’s hair and wrapping around his neck.

Katsuki grabs at it, already firing off small explosions to try and get it loose, glaring vehemently at the girls the entire time.

The mushrooms were spreading closer. Fist-Girl was almost in range. If they didn’t act soon, they were going to lose their headband.

Mashirao pushes up against Katsuki briefly before releasing him entirely. “I’m going in!” He shouts, darting between his teammates towards the incoming team, leaving Hitoshi and Izuku to rapidly try and brace Katsuki on their shoulders.

“SENSATIONAL! OJIRO MASHIRAO OF 1-A HAS SPLIT FROM HIS TEAM! IS THIS EVEN IN THE RULES?! IT IS?! AMAAAAAAAAZING!”

The mushrooms explode into spores the moment Mashirao steps on one, but he was already moving too fast, leaping into the air and spinning. His tail collides with her fist, and the built up momentum is enough to win out, sending her back and off balance as her ‘horses’ try to skid to a stop lest she fall off.

This was dangerous, Mashirao knew. Leaving his team like this left them vulnerable. A moment’s opening and it could be over.

As if answering that very thought, there was a whirl-click-whir through the air, and Katsuki is forced to fend off the insidious claw of The Fetcher.

“CURSES!” Nanafu cries, reeling it back in for a second pass. “BRING ME CLOSER! I WANT TO HIT THEM WITH MY ROD!”

Well this wasn’t good.

“YOU WANT SOME TOO? LINE THE FUCK UP, ASSHOLES, CHEF KATSUKI IS SERVING UP TODAY’S SPECIAL: ASS WHOOPINGS WITH A SIDE OF GET FUCKED!” Katsuki roars, fending off another swing from The Fetcher.

It’s hard to balance like this, Izuku thinks. If someone were to charge them into melee, they’d almost definitely get...

“Oh fucking hell. Incoming!” Hitoshi shouts, as a two-man team from 1-B composed of a girl with long spiralling horns and a guy with pincers on his mouth charges straight at them.
They can’t dodge fast enough like this. Maybe if Mashirao was still with them, but not like this. There’s only one thing for it. Thinking fast, Izuku throws Katsuki into the air. “FLY!” He shouts.

It’s a testament to Katsuki’s reflexes that after floundering in mid-air for a millisecond, he starts propelling himself higher into the air with explosions, just like he did in the Obstacle Course. “WARN ME NEXT TIME, DAMN IT!” He shouts back.

With Katsuki safely in the air, Izuku and Hitoshi are both free to split, narrowly avoiding the cavalry charge.

“INCREDIBLE! ABSURD! IS THIS EVEN A CAVALRY BATTLE?! TEAM BAKUGOU HAS COMPLETELY SPLIT UP!”

“Two minutes! If we can hold out until then, we win!” Izuku calls out, unfolding his staff again. “Here!” He hurls it at Hitoshi who manages to catch it with a dumbfounded look.

He looks at the staff and then looks back to Izuku. “Izuku,” He calls, managing to sound like he’s talking to a toddler even though he’s basically shouting, “I have no idea what to do with this.”

“Just hit people! It’s a stick!” Izuku can’t spare much more attention to Hitoshi, because Katsuki is going to have to come down soon. He might be able to keep himself airborne, but there’s a chance that if they don’t come back together to form a team by the end, they’ll be disqualified.

He’s going to have to get the timing just right.

“Now!”

The moment Todoroki gives the command, each of them performs their role to perfection. Kaminari discharges all of his electricity indiscriminately. Todoroki already has the insulator sheet around them. Yaoyorozu has the grounding rod down to siphon off the excess.

The effect is instantaneous, paralyzing the surrounding teams long enough for Todoroki to follow it up with a wave of ice, solidly containing everyone as Iida guns his engines and pulls them away.

“Perfect,” Todoroki says, a hint of pride in his voice (even as Kaminari looks up at him with his stupid, short-circuited expression).


When it happens, it’s too late for Todoroki to react. A dark, clawed hand snags his headband and pulls it in.
“Nice work, Dark Shadow,” Tokoyami murmurs to his ‘companion’, handing the headband up to a beaming Uraraka as they soar through the air, “Bring us in for landing.”

“Aye aye!”

Todoroki curses loudly. They don’t have any way to get into the air, not reliably. He could make ice, but it wouldn’t be fast or accurate enough, and there’s no way for their team to get up it.

“We do not have much time. Brace yourselves,” Iida says lowly, revving his engines a little. “When they land, I’m moving. We get one shot.”

“Right.”

They were just about to make landfall. The moment Tokoyami and Kirishima’s feet touched the ground, Iida activated whatever technique he had in reserve. It was a good thing Yaoyorozu had made them roller skates, because Todoroki was pretty sure they would’ve all fallen apart if she didn’t.

“RECIPRO BURST!”

They only had a handful of seconds. Hitoshi had rejoined Izuku, Mashirao had just kicked off from where he was keeping the other team busy. That just left one person. Katsuki had stopped blasting through the air, only about thirty feet above them.

Izuku had a second, maybe two, to position himself properly before he fell. Ideally, he would’ve landed right in the middle of their formation, but things were rarely as ideal as that.

So when Katsuki came down to earth, he’d just have to deal with landing right in Izuku’s arms.

“CAVALRY BATTLE! OOOOOOOOOO0O0OVER!”

Surveying over their team, Izuku couldn’t stop a bright laugh from bubbling up in his chest. “Hahahaaaa! We did it!” He cheers, slinging an arm around Hitoshi and Katsuki. He’d get Mashirao as well, but his arms only extended so far.
“That was fucking close, jeez,” Mashirao mutters, but he joins the group celebration regardless, a wide grin on his face. “We lasted all fifteen minutes.”

The good cheer was infectious, and soon even Katsuki and Hitoshi were grinning, although both of them looked slightly... deranged.

Of course, not every team was celebrating. Of the twelve teams that had made it this far, only five of them even had headbands.

“C... confound it! You win this round 1-F!” Nana cries, pointing an accusing finger at Katsuki of all people. “There’ll be other competitions! Just you wait! I’LL SHOW YOU! I’LL SHOW EVERYONE!”

“Go ahead!” Katsuki calls back, “Try as hard as you fucking like! You’ll never make it as a lead character, two bit extra!”

Izuku took this time to look over the other teams, to see who else has made it. Predictably, Mei’s team has made it, the mass of headbands still wrapped around Shironaki’s face like he was a burn victim. His eyes meet Izuku’s, and he gives him a small wave, releasing his Quirk suddenly to let all the headbands fall off his face at once. He's smirking in a satisfied manner that reminds Izuku of a well-fed cat.

His Quirk would’ve made something like this ridiculously easy, Izuku thinks - once he’s attached the headbands to his skin, the only way you’d get them back is if something tore. You'd be all but forced to try and get a different one.

He sees Todoroki, the other boy who had tied for first place, and he’s looking down at a headband with a shocked expression. Did he lose his original one and grab the wrong one back? Izuku’s not sure. His entire team looks pretty despondent though, so it probably didn’t go well for them.

There are two other teams who look happy enough to be celebrating a victory. A round-faced girl is being tossed into the air by a very boisterous looking redhead as the bird-headed boy looks on and says something, and there’s that weird flesh-pyramid human-tank team.

The ‘Tank’ is unfolding his fleshy-wings, revealing a wide-eyed girl with long dark hair, and a plain-faced boy with strange-looking elbows. Around his neck is a few headbands - one of which he must’ve nabbed from the 1-G students.

Hitoshi steps up next to him, scanning the crowds as well. “Huh. Looks like nobody from 1-B made it. That’s gotta sting.”

“Probably,” Izuku says breezily, “It was a great contest though! Everyone did really well.”

“WE NOW CUT TO AN HOUR BREAK! REST UP CHAMPIONS, CUZ YA’LL GONNA NEED IT!”
Izuku brightens up immediately. “Come on! Let’s get something to drink!” He says, dragging Hitoshi off.

Todoroki had lost. The thought still left a bitter taste in his mouth, but he couldn’t call the result unfair. Uraraka’s team had done their best, and Iida had given them one last hurrah. He’d grabbed the wrong headband, and that was that. An easy mistake to make. He couldn’t see which was which, and he only had a moment to judge where Uraraka would’ve swapped them or not. She hadn’t.

He knew how his father was going to take this. He wasn’t going to hear the end of it, angry lectures and ‘lessons’ about how if he’d just embraced his gift (his curse his fucking curse) then he would’ve won. But there was just one thing he wanted to know.

“You,” He declares coldly, staring down at the lazily smirking face of what he could only describe as a self-appointed nemesis.

“Me,” says the boy with the ponytail and the lazy smirk of triumph. At least he’s wearing a shirt.

Todoroki wants to ask him a lot of things. He also wants to punch that smug expression right off his face. But instead, all he says is “Why?”

The boy hums thoughtfully, and then he smiles again. It’s not a friendly smile. “Because I don’t like you,” He says casually, leaning back in his chair. “But you probably want to know why I don’t like you.”

Silence hangs in the air for a long minute.

“Well?” Todoroki says coldly.

The boy blinks. “Well, what?”

“Aren’t you going to tell me why you don’t like me?”

He laughs, carefree but just as freezing as Todoroki. “Aren’t you going to ask?” The smile slowly slips off his face, and then he’s just as serious as Todoroki is. “Don’t bother. You’re Endeavor’s son, right?”

He bristles immediately, ice forming on his skin. “I am not my-”

“I never said you were,” The boy says, cutting him off with a sharp wave of his hand, “Thanks for cooling my drink by the way.” He swirls the little bit of ice that’s formed in his glass of coke a little and laughs humorlessly. “My mother was Police Sergeant Kouta Shiohaki. We get to meet a lot of Heroes. All Might’s my favourite, but hey, All Might’s everyone’s favourite. That’s what you want to be, right? Everyone’s Favourite Hero?”

Something about the way the boy says it makes it sound like an insult, and Todoroki frowns harder.
“Is it wrong of me to want to help people?”

The glass shatters in his hand, the shards sticking to his skin as coke and blood drips down to the ground. “You don’t want to help people,” Kouta snarls, no longer casual and cold, now burning and furious. “I watched you through the Obstacle Race, or did you forget who was behind you for so long? Ice all the way. It got me curious. It got me thinking. Why is the son of the Flame Hero, Endeavour, using so much Ice?” He was right up in front of Todoroki’s face now, eyes so furious they could’ve set him aflame, “Then you came first. I thought maybe you just didn’t need it. But what was it you said, during the team up phase? ‘While in combat, I’ll never ever use my heat side’?”

The room was rapidly beginning to reach freezing temperatures, and Todoroki narrows his eyes dangerously. “How I use my Quirk is none of your concern so-” A hand slams him up against the wall hard enough to wind him.

“You come in here, and declare your intent to be a Hero with such half-baked determination,” The boy hisses, and for a moment, Todoroki is aware of the danger of the calloused, powerful hand pressing up against him even as it begins freezing over, “You think being a Hero is a fucking game? You think you can just make it harder for yourself and everything will be fine?! What happens when you fuck up and fail because you refuse to get a grip? Do you know who pays the price? It’s not you.” Half of the boy’s hand is covered in ice but he doesn’t let go. “Because of ‘Heroes’ like you-”

“... Shiro?” A similar looking girl is standing in the hallway looking at them, confusion in her eyes.

‘Shiro’ falls dead silent for a long moment before he wrenches his hand away from Todoroki, ignoring the skin that doesn’t go with it. “You want to know the difference between you and your father?” He spits out the words, dripping with venom as he stalks over to the girl who is probably his sister, “If your father had competed, he would’ve won by using everything he had. That’s what Heroes do.”

The girl gives Todoroki a glance, a mix of worry and confusion as she takes ‘Shiro’ by the arm and leads him off, muttering something about ‘not getting into fights’.

Just as though he thinks it can’t get any worse, his father arrives, already glowering. “Are you done playing, boy?”

“Midoriya!” calls a semi-familiar voice, and when Izuku turns around, he feels something hard and wooden thwack him on the head. “Ha! Made you look!”

Sun Wukong (the Third) grins at him, twirling a bamboo rattan in his hands. “You’ve grown, boyo. Not a little tamarin anymore - you’re a real mandrill now!”
“Master!” Izuku cries, brightening up like an overcharged lightbulb and flinging himself at the elderly man, “You came to watch us?”

Wukong let him hug him briefly, before gently pushing him away. “I’d have to be a baboon’s ass to miss this! Two of my most prized students, at U.A? You bet I’d be here to gibbon my support! MAHAHAHAHAH!” He snapped out of his laughter with the usual swiftness, looking side to side. “Where’s Ojiro gotten off to?”

“I dunno. I think he went to see Recovery Girl to get his injuries checked out.” It’s not like Ojiro had a lot of them, but it was good to be fresh for whatever came next.

“Eh? Chiyo-chan’s still around? Rhesus pieces, she’s almost as old as I am.” He takes a deep inhale of his novelty electronic cigar, and shuffles over to a bench. “Figures she wouldn’t retire though. Doctors rest when they’re dead. Final round of the Sports Festival, huh? Gonna win it?”

Izuku scratches his cheek. “Uh… probably not?” He offers, half expecting another hit. It doesn’t come, so he continues. “I’ll give it my best, but… well, I can never beat Mashirao-senpai in a spar as it is. I don’t think I stand a chance against anyone else from the Heroics Department.”

Wukong nods seriously. “Good,” He says gruffly, “A wise monkey knows their limits. Foolish monkeys leap for branches they can’t reach - and then they fall. There’s no shame in admitting when you’re outmatched. Now. Tell me, boyo, how are you doing?”

“Well, so far....”

“LAAAAAAAAAAADIES, GENTLEMEN AND ESTEEMED GUESTS! IT’S TIME FOR THE FINAL ROUND! THE ROUND EVERYONE’S BEEN WAITING FOR!” Present Mic shouts, his already booming and loud voice amplified by the microphone. “FOUR TEAMS! FOURTEEN INDIVIDUALS! THESE BRAVE SOULS MADE IT THROUGH! BUT THERE WAS ROOM FOR TWO MORE, AND AFTER CAREFUL CONSULTATION BY THE JUDGES, THIS IS THE FINAL SELECTION! CAN I GET A HELL YEAH?!?”

A series of names went up on the board, in what appeared to be a random order.

“But it’s our final round of the freshman sports festival! Show ‘em what they’ve got MIDNIIIIIGHT!”

Midnight coughs silently in the middle of the freshly-constructed arena. “Right,” She says, “The Final Round of the Sports Festival will be a Tournament! Sixteen finalists will fight a series of battles until only one winner remains!”

Suddenly, lines appear next to the names, demonstrating the order of battle and pairs. But this is no simple tournament of one-on-ones. This is U.A
The first rounds are tag team matches.

FIRST ROUND MATCH UPS

SHINSOU HITOSHI & IIDA TENYA VERSUS SHOUJI MEZO & OJIRO MASHIRAO
KOUTA SHIRONAKI & BAKUGOU KATSUKI VERSUS KOUTA MAKINO & KIRISHIMA EIIRO
HANTA SERO & URARAKA OCHAKO VERSUS MIDORIYA IZUKU & HATSUME MEI
TOKYOAMI FUMIKAGE & YAOYOROZU MOMO VERSUS ASUI TSUYU & HARISHIMA CHIZURU

Chapter End Notes

You know, I figured why stop at changing the contestants? Why not change the structure of the Tournament as well? You'll never guess what I have planned for the final round of the tournament.

I spent a long time agonising over who got to make it to the Tournament, I really did. I knew from the start that Da Boyz were going to make it, and Team Hatsume as well, and then I spent the rest of my time changing my mind between the various teams. I wanted to include some 1-B students (Team Kendou or Team Monoma) but then I also wanted to include 1-A students who didn't make it in canon (Shouji and Asui) and then eventually I did this.

Why didn't the judges select Todoroki even though he's a front runner? Well, that's something that Todoroki will find out when he asks. I'm sure you can guess why though.

In other news, my new favourite out of context quote from this story is "Kacchan on top" :^)
Baby I'm A Neutron Star

Chapter Summary

Alone, a Neutron Star drifts through space and does little. But its force of gravity is powerful, and if it absorbs another celestial object, it may collapse into a blackhole. For this reason, shooting stars would do well to avoid them.

Chapter Notes

Wew. I think I underestimated how long this arc would take to cover, but I'm plodding along, chapter by chapter, fight by fight. There are only two (TWO) fight scenes in this chapter, covering the first two rounds.

Over six thousand words and we're not even close to reaching the end of the tournament. Whew. Lot of fun things happening in this chapter though - more Tenya and Hitoshi 'bonding', the boys being Good Friends. Really, a lot of relationship building/establishing even with all the fighting and competing.

And of course, plenty of my dumb jokes.

In any case, this is out earlier than I originally estimated, but please enjoy Chapter 13: Baby I'm A Neutron Star!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Standing on an arena stage in front of an enthusiastic audience - it was the kind of thing Shinsou Hitoshi had only dreamed about in bygone days. It was the kind of far out fantasy he'd relegated to the back of mind under 'Extremely Improbable', alongside other ones like being the lead singer of a hit band or becoming a famous artist. Really, it was an exhilarating thrill just being here.

Even sharing the stage with Iida Tenya did nothing to dampen his feelings.

Well, that's kind of cruel to Iida, he thinks. It's not as though he thinks badly of Iida - his serious, humourless nature was kind of disappointing but it did make him the perfect tsukkomi. It might be selfish of him to decide it on his own, but after graduating, he's going to form a duo with Iida. It's just too much fun playing with him.

"Does that smirk on your face mean you have some kind of actual plan, or are you just thinking of new ways to be a menace?" Case in point, that entire sentence.

Hitoshi rolls his eyes in a manner so large and dramatic, he expects even the audience members in the back seats can see it. "Of course I have a plan," He says airily, waving a hand in the general direction of Shouji and Mashirao. "There is only one step and it is win."
"That’s not a plan at all!" Iida splutters, pointing an accusing finger at him.

Ah. The gift that just keeps giving. “Really? I thought it was pretty good. As long as we follow the steps, we’re bound to succeed.” He lets the smirk fade off his face, adopting a more serious demeanour. Joking around and playing with Iida is fun, but he does want to win. “Of course, following that step is going to be hard.”

Iida seems somewhat mollified by his new serious demeanour. “You are friends with Ojiro-san correct?”

“Yeah, but I don’t have any great insights. His Quirk is a ‘Tail’. It’s simple as that, no special weakness or strength.” … maybe… “WEEEELL, there is one weakness.” Iida perks up. “He’s kind of ticklish near the base.”

“That’s not a weakness at all!” Iida shouts, shaking him back and forth. Even when he’s trying to be serious, he still hits Iida’s Tsukkomi buttons. They really are perfect for each other.

Hitoshi rolls his eyes again, a little less melodramatically. “Sure it is, if you’re creative enough. It’s also the best intel I’ve got so we’ll just have to make do.”

“Hm. How confident are you in close quarters?” Iida asks, turning to look over at where Ojiro and Shouji are conferring.

“Good but not great,” Hitoshi replies, wringing his hands a little, “Which is to say that I don’t stand a chance against either of them in a hand to hand fight. Seriously, why’d we have to go up against two physical powerhouses?” Really, the more Hitoshi thinks about it, the more it seems like everyone in this tournament is going to be a nightmare for him to fight. “There’s one thing you should know about my Quirk if we’re going to team up again.”

Iida turns to give him his full attention, completely serious. Then Present Mic’s voice cuts through the air.

"BATTLE START!"

Hitoshi wants to finish his sentence because it’s a very important sentence and he needs to say it but Shouji is literally bowling Mashirao towards them and it is simultaneously incredibly impressive and so very terrifying to witness.

They scatter to either side as Mashirao flicks his tail out to brake like a really aggressive pangolin (or was he thinking of armadillos?), bursting out and whipping around to launch himself at Iida.

“What are you, Sonic the Hedgehog?” Hitoshi calls, not really expecting an answer. This is bad - he’s at a clear disadvantage. He hasn’t been able to tell Iida his weakness, and he can’t exactly do that with the enemies so close. There’s a chance Mashirao already knows, but it’s not a chance he’s willing to gamble on.

A dark shadow passing above is all the warning Hitoshi gets before Shouji is dropping out of the sky like a bomb. He scrambles out of the way, painfully aware that the momentum has been seized and it’s not going to be easy getting it back. “Shouji my man, this isn’t very tentacool of you!” He gets a
tentacle dangerously close to his face for his troubles. Rude.

Iida, for his part, is holding his own against Mashirao, but Hitoshi expected as much. Iida’s ‘Engine’ makes him a lot more suited for this kind of hands on combat than Hitoshi is. Sure, he practiced but practicing isn’t going to make him sprout new arms the way Shouji does. All he has are his words.

Well. You know what they say about words. Sticks, stones, breaking hearts. Hitoshi doesn’t want to break any hearts though - he wants to win but he doesn’t want to do it by digging up Mashirao or Shouji’s most sensitive parts and stabbing them with the verbal equivalent of harpoons like he’s Ahab hunting the white whale. So he’s left with quips and jokes. Mashirao is pretty immune to most of his puns but maybe he can get Shouji.

Or maybe Shouji will just punch him right off the edge. That’s looking more likely.

“Hey, Shouji. I have a question.” He ducks under a series of left straights, backpedalling as fast as he can without falling over. “You can make like, any organ on those arms of yours right?”

Shouji, of course, does not respond but Hitoshi doesn’t need him to. Silence works just as well for the build up - works better even. If he told him no now, it’d ruin the momentum. He just has to avoid getting punched, which is pretty hard when he has like six fists to do it with. But looking at Shouji’s tentacles has given him an idea...

Hitoshi goes in for the kill, lining up his shot and striking just the right vocal tone. “So have you like, you know? Just to see what it was like?”

Huh. Apparently when Shouji makes little parts of his face on his tentacles, they blush just as much as his actual face does. “WH-WHAT?!” says five mouths all at once.

Move over Ahab, Hitoshi will show you how to snag the white whale of victory. “Run off the edge now. And no hard feelings?”

Shouji breaks off into a sprint immediately, eyes glazed over as he makes a beeline for the edge of the arena, leaving Hitoshi to breathe a sigh of relief. With any luck, they’ll be able to laugh it off later. With Shouji down, they can focus on Mashirao.

Mashirao who is running towards Shouji intently and very likely knows Hitoshi’s weakness. Shit.

“IIDA! STOP HIM! IF HE HITS HIM, IT’LL SNAP HIM OUT OF IT!”

Ever attentive, Iida rushes to obey, launching himself into a flying kick directly at Mashirao as Hitoshi rushes in himself to try and help.

And that’s when Mashirao plays them like a fiddle.

He ducks under Iida’s flying kick, rolling smoothly out of the way with the sort of practiced agility and grace that comes out of years of training and then before Hitoshi can even process that he’s made a mistake, he’s already being slammed by the thick, powerful tail of his friend and sent bouncing
along the ground like they’re playing skittles.

Right into Shouji who, rather appropriately, goes down just like a set of pins.

Hitoshi feels six hands clamp down on various parts of his body - one on each arm, shoulder and side - before he’s being hoisted into the air and calmly walked to the edge of the arena.

“I suppose it’s too late to start telling knock knock jokes?” He offers.

Shouji does not respond, and a little part of him hopes it’s only because of the Quirk and not because he’s angry at him. And then he’s dropped onto the soft, yielding ground just outside the arena.

“AMAAAAAAAAAZING! AFTER A SERIES OF MASTERFUL PLAYS AND COUNTER-PLAYS, SHINSOU HITOSHI HAS BEEN ELIMINATED! CAN HIS PARTNER, IIDA TENYA MAKE DO WITHOUT HIM?!"

Hitoshi slumps back against the ground, sighing a little. Is he disappointed? Of course. But he can’t be too disappointed in himself. He tried his best, even got Shouji for a bit. If it hadn’t been Mashirao… he might’ve made it.

“RECIPIO BURST!”

And then Shouji lands next to him, looking decidedly winded.

“INCREDIBLE! IT’S NOW DOWN TO A ONE ON ONE MATCH! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE MOVE BY IIDA!”

“... No hard feelings?”

“... None.”

Ah. That’s good.

He’d witnessed Iida use this technique back in the cavalry battle, using it to gain a momentary and intense burst of speed and power. He’d also seen the way Iida frowned at his legs afterwards. So Mashirao knew this wasn’t the kind of technique Iida could use lightly.

Not that it helped him much, given that even if Iida had a time limit on it, Mashirao wasn’t sure he could handle even a few more seconds of this.

His reactions were stressed to their limit trying to avoid Iida’s kicks, and his only saving grace was that he had enough time to get to the center of the arena after he saw Shouji get blasted off with a single blow. With the advantage that being in the center provided him, however briefly, it allowed him to… absorb a blow or two, per se. Which was to say that Iida had kicked him twice now, and both times Mashirao had narrowly avoided falling out of bounds by thumping his tail.
Iida rushes forward for a third time, engines roaring as he charges forward.

Left or right? Will it be the left or the right? The wrong choice could see Mashirao’s hopes for advancing crushed, but the right choice would… he’s not sure. Buy him a few more seconds, maybe? How long can he even last like this? If Iida could use it for longer, than he would’ve done so at the beginning. Using it has to be risky in some way. And the only way Mashirao was going to find out how was if he managed to survive. He lets his instincts decide which way to dodge.

Iida’s right leg swings at him just as Mashirao’s tail thumps the ground hard, propelling him to the left with a sudden bound. The tip of Iida’s foot swings right past Mashirao’s face, close enough that he can feel the rushing wind ruffling his short hair.

Mashirao rolls across the ground, springing to his feet and preparing to dodge again when he sees Iida standing there, engines… sputtering and stalling. The time limit! He’d made it!

“What’s this? Iida Tenya’s Engines have stalled! Did he run out of fuel?”

He doesn’t waste any time and darts forward, pressing Iida back with a series of combination attacks, punches kicks and tail sweeps blending together into a tornado of limbs, light and fast enough to make him retreat.

Iida fights back as best he can, but without the use of his Engines, his kicks are nowhere near as effective and his speed is drastically reduced. Which is not to say that he isn’t fast, but it’s definitely more within a range that Mashirao can deal with.

He doesn’t know how long it takes for Iida’s Engine to recover, so he needs to finish this now. When he sees an opening, he seizes it with both hands. He lowers himself, braced and ready before his tail strikes the ground and sends him forward.

“Tail Cannon!”

His head collides with Iida’s stomach, sending him forcefully back and just over the edge of the arena. The audience lets out a deafening roar.

“What an incredible match! Ojiro Mashirao is the last man standing, so this means… Ojiro and Shouji are the winners!”

“That was incredible, Hitoshi!” are the first words he hears when he makes it back to where the rest of the contestants are waiting. It’s the only warning he gets before Izuku seizes him by the shoulders, eyes softly glowing as he beams at him.

He’s gotten more accustomed to this kind of thing from Izuku, but it still felt weird (in a pleasant sort of way) to have someone so enthusiastically happy for him. “Yeah, but I still lost,” He mumbles, feeling a mild blush colour his cheeks.
Mashirao slaps him on the back from behind. “You did great! Just kind of a bad matchup for you.” He gives Hitoshi an encouraging grin that he returns (albeit less a grin and more awkward smile).

Slowly, as if by some unspoken agreement, they turn to look at Katsuki one by one, an almost expectant look on their faces.

Katsuki stares back defiantly until Izuku frowns just a little, and then he palms his face, groaning. “Okay, fine. Fuck. You did alright, Zombie. Are you fucking happy, asshole?”

Hitoshi can’t stop himself from laughing when Izuku starts beaming again.

“WILL THE NEXT CONTESTANTS ASSEMBLE IN THE ARENA?”

Katsuki ‘grins’, all teeth and promises of violence. “Now watch and fucking learn how it’s fucking done,” He declares stalking towards the stairs.

Mashirao and Hitoshi roll their eyes in complete synchronisation.

"Come on, monkey boy. Let's grab a drink whilst Prince Murderdeath gets into position."

“Bakugou Katsuki, in the flesh. I almost feel like I should be kneeling.”

Katsuki doesn’t know what to make of his impromptu and unwanted team mate. If he was going to team up with anyone, it’d be Deku, or very grudgingly, one of those other two idiots, not some weird no-name background character from the Gen Ed department of all things. Still. He saw the scoreboard after the Cavalry Battle.

Whoever this no-name background character was, he has to at least have something going for him.

“Fuck off,” He says briskly, and Shironaki’s lazy smile twitches a little, “You can fucking kneel once I’ve won.”

Shironaki smooths his smile out and tugs his shirt up and over his head, revealing a wiry, muscled form as he tosses his shirt away carelessly. “You really are something, aren’t you?” He drawls, in a tone that suggests he’s teasing him about… something.

Katsuki glares heatedly. “Why the fuck are you stripping? This is a fight, not a fucking dance contest.” At least he looks vaguely impressive without a shirt on - if he'd been some kind of reedy nerd, then Katsuki would have just told him to sit down and fucking watch.

“For my Quirk,” He says simply, gesturing lazily at his bare chest, “It’s called ‘Grip’. I can hold onto anything that touches my skin, so the more skin, the more gripping. Don’t bother explaining your Quirk, everyone knows what it does now.”
He snorts, turning his glare back onto their opponents - a girl from the Support Department and that dumbass red-head. “Real fucking neato,” He mutters, trying to remember as much as he could about both of them. Hair-for-brains was going to be annoying with his 'Hardening' but the girl...

“I don’t know what Red over there does, but I’ll tell you now that the girl is my sister. You shouldn’t let her touch you. Teleporting an object from one hand to the other doesn’t sound scary until suddenly you’re upside down and about to be slam dunked and you have no idea how that happened,” He says, rolling his shoulders, “If I'm perfectly honest, in a one-on-one fight, she usually beats me.”

“You’re not going to fucking go soft on her are you?” Katsuki snarls, snapping around to glare at him.

Shironaki laughs, easy and smokey. “Don’t you worry a thing about that.” He drawls. “Worry more about winning, Mr Number One.” Yeah. He was definitely teasing him about something.

“BATTLE START!” And so it begins.

Katsuki puts the words out of his mind, and goes on the immediate defensive. He doesn’t rush forward as he’d usually like to, because the girl is from the Support Department and he knows enough by now to realise that she could have anything up her sleeves.

It proves relatively prudent when a series of small metal orbs float out of her backpack, little rotary engines spinning to keep them airborne.

“Alright Calvin Klein, she’s your sister. What the fuck are those?”

If Shironaki’s bothered by the nickname, he doesn’t show it. “Drones, obviously. Don’t ask me what they do though. Maki built them specifically for the Sports Festival, and she didn’t want me to know what they did. You know. In case this happened.” Right, so he’s fucking useless then. Hair-for-brains isn’t rushing either. If anything, he seems to be waiting on her.

“We need to move,” Katsuki declares like an angry officer directing his soldiers and charges forward suddenly, “Whatever she’s doing she might be setting some fucking thing up!”

“Roger, roger,” replies Shironaki, lazily saluting and jogging after Katsuki like the world’s worst henchman.

Kirishima moves to intercept Katsuki, his flesh already taking on the shade and pattern of his Quirk. “Not so fast, dude! I ain’t lettin’ you past that easily!”

Even with Kirishima baring the way, Katsuki doesn’t even bat an eye. “Good thing I don’t give a fuck about what you want, fuckboy!” He launches himself into the air, palm downwards to begin propelling himself over Kirishima and towards Makino like a rocket fueled with rage.

“Hey! GET BACK HERE!” Kirishima squawks, spinning around to try and chase after him (as though he could actually catch up to Katsuki), but a deceptively light hand rests on his shoulder.

“Hi,” says a very cheery voice from behind Kirishima. He starts to turn around to look just before
he’s thrown back with an off-handed gesture normally reserved for tossing away a piece of rubbish. “Sorry, could you wait a little bit?”

Katsuki continues rushing towards Makino as Kirishima’s kept busy, mere seconds from being upon her. She looks up from her pack, halfway to retrieving something when Katsuki goes in for the first blow.

She smirks, and whips out a complicated looking glove. “Formation Sigma!” Immediately, the drones that were hovering about her, zip into some sort of shape around her.

And then she’s surrounded by a familiar corona of electricity.

Fortunately for Katsuki, he’s not so close that he can’t suddenly brake with a blast. A little electricity arcs along his arm, just enough to make him recoil and hiss in pain. “What the fuck is with you nerds and fucking electricity?” He snarls, eyeing the drones as they break their formation to return to lazily rotating around their master.

Makino shrugs, fiddling with an array of buttons on her gloves in a way that does not inspire confidence in Katsuki. “It was that or fire, and trying to get little fuel tanks on these guys was throwing out the balance.” She points the gloved hand at Katsuki, finger and thumb poised like a gun.

Not a good sign.

“But these little guys do more than just that! Formation Theta!” The nine drones form a triangular prism, crackling with electricity and aimed directly at Katsuki as she reaches into her pocket for something.

Katsuki holds up his own hands. “If you fucking think I’m going to sit here with my thumbs up my fucking ass and see what this does, you can go fuck yourself with a rake,” He growls, forming a ball of light in between his hands just as Makino reveals a small iron pellet in her hand.

(Up in the stands, Hisashi cackles and starts clapping)

“STUN GRENADE!”

“RAILGUN SHOT!”

The two attacks go off simultaneously. Katsuki’s ball of light detonating with predictable consequences just as Makino unleashes the pellet into her impromptu railgun. The flash of the stun grenade causes Makino to recoil slightly and the improvised railgun shifts with her movements, sending the shot wildly off course. It safely impacts against the walls of the arena, bouncing off and falling to the ground with little fanfare.

Makino curses, stumbling back and pressing a hand up against her eyes. “Formation Sigma!” She calls out, and the drones break their current formation to move back into a more defensive one.
Of course, Katsuki’s having none of it.

The moment their attacks go off, he’s already capitalising on it, blasting forward with a spin to gather more air and momentum. It’s not enough to truly be a move on it’s own (not without more air), but he’s not trying to bring down anything massive - just her drones. “EAT SHIT!” He roars, as the explosions consume them.

Despite his attack, four of the drones manage to escape in a functioning state, the rest destroyed or clattering to the ground. However, with only four, the corona doesn’t form and she’s wide open to an attack. Before Katsuki can capitalize on this new opportunity as well, something (or rather, someone) hard and heavy collides with him from behind. “WHAT IN THE SHIT?!”

“What’s this? Class 1-C’s Kouta Shironaki has thrown Kirishima Eijirou right into Bakugou Katsuki, his own teammate! Is there a breakdown in teamwork?!”

Kirishima doesn’t look like he had expected to end up in this situation anymore than Katsuki does, but that doesn’t stop him from attempting to lock Katsuki into a grapple, flesh Hardened against his already furiously exploding hands.

Shironaki, for his part, has a completely unapologetic look on his face, hands in his pockets as he stands there. “Whoops. Didn’t see you there,” He drawls, smirking a little as Katsuki struggles against Kirishima’s grip.

Katsuki manages to get Kirishima off of him and slam him onto the ground with enough force to crack the concrete, blasting him with both hands just for good measure. “FUCK OFF YOU DIDN’T, CHUMBUCKET!” He roars, already creating some distance between himself and the slightly dazed Kirishima. “You fucking did that on purpose! Are you throwing this fucking match just because she’s your sister asshole?!”

He seems to mull it over in his head, before laughing, hands held up in a gesture of ‘What can you do?’ “Nope!” He says cheerfully, even though none of the humour reaches his eyes. “Don’t get me wrong. I don’t care about winning this tournament at all.”

Despite all evidence to the contrary, Katsuki has never actually literally exploded with rage. He is looking dangerously close to it at this very moment though.

Rather than being worried, Shironaki only seems amused by this. “That’s a good face you’re making,” He says, a sly smirk on his face, “I’ll be honest, Bakugou-kun. At the start, I didn’t like you. Your arrogant attitude is exactly the kind of thing I hate the most and when you stood up on that platform and declared you were going to win without fail… all I could think about was dragging you down just to spite you.”

And then Katsuki really does explode. “WELL FUCKING COME AT ME THEN, I DON’T FUCKING CARE I’LL TAKE ALL THREE OF YOU ON!”

Shironaki waves a hand through the air lightly. “Like I said, that was at the start and I’m being
honest here, y’know. Now?” His smirk widens just a little, growing slyer by the second, “Now I can see what Midoriya likes so much about you. Don’t get me wrong, I’m still going to do everything I can to drag you down within the confines of the rules.” He pauses. “Like distracting you whilst my sister sets up an attack.”

That brief warning was all Katsuki needed to blast out of the way of a burst of electricity, the bolt of lightning (and really, that’s what it was) striking the ground he was just standing at harmlessly.

“Whose side are you even on, Shiro?” Makino gripes, although she doesn’t sound too put out by it, directing the remaining four drones into a loose diamond in front of her.

“My own!” He declares cheerfully before switching gears into a more serious expression, “It’s selfish of me, but I want to see you defy the odds and win. ‘Plus Ultra!’ and all that.” He drawls, striking a brief cheerleading pose (complete with peppy cry for the motto) before returning to his lazy, cheerful demeanour with the speed of an actor changing masks, “But I’ve interfered enough, I think. So if anyone needs me, I’ll be walking off the edge now.”

“INCREDIBLE! KOUTA SHIRONAKI IS... HE’S LEAVING THE ARENA! BUT WAIT! HE’S GOING TO BE STOPPED?!”

Kirishima bars his path, arms held out. “Dude! Not cool! You can’t just abandon your team mate like that!” He points a finger at the increasingly bemused looking Shironaki, “If you’re a real man then stand and fight!”

“... No?” He offers, staring at the accusing finger like it’s the strangest thing he’s ever seen. “How exactly do you intend to make me do that? I’m surrendering. If you fight me, you’re just beating up a guy who won’t fight back.”

Kirishima opens his mouth to retort and then closes it, slowly lowering his arm. He does it a few more times, slowly frowning more and more as he tries to figure out how to respond to this before Shironaki just brushes past him calmly.

“If you want to have a proper match some time, I’m sure we can figure something out if you really want.” He calls over his shoulder just as he reaches the edge. He spins around, fingers held in v’s as he strikes a ‘cute’ pose with a sardonic expression. “Ganbatte, Bakugou-kun!” And then he casually falls backwards with a muted ‘thump’.

“KOUTA SHIRONAKI IS... OUT! WHAT AN ANTICLIMATIC WAY TO BE ELIMINATED! WHAT IS EVEN GOING ON DOWN THERE?”

As her brother exits the arena, Makino isn’t given any time to spare it much thought as she’s forced to fend off Katsuki’s relentless attacks. With five of her drones down, she can’t muster defense well enough or fast enough to protect against his unpredictable angles of attack.

Worse than that she realises - if she’s not careful, his explosions will consume more of her drones. If all of them go down, she doesn’t have much to fall back on, and certainly nothing he’d let her get out of her bag of tricks. She knows she’s losing, and losing badly, but it only drives her on.
“Drones! Formation Delta!” She called, pointing a finger at Katsuki. All four remaining drones immediately stopped what they were doing and rushed towards him, sparking dangerously. She knew Katsuki was just going to blow them all away with a single attack, but there was an obvious drawback to his explosions.

Each one of them created a large burst of smoke and ash, temporarily blocking his vision of her, and vice versa.

She didn’t have time to draw any of her other weapons (although she had so many she wanted to use), and she knew she didn’t stand a chance in hand-to-hand against a Quirk like his but she had the element of surprise and she was going to abuse it. She tears the glove off her hand as quickly as she can to keep it free, and grabs onto Katsuki’s left wrist with her left hand, right hand raised up in the sky.

She activates ‘Left to Right’, and suddenly instead of being on the stable ground, Bakugou Katsuki was upside down in the air and she was holding onto his left wrist with her right hand - and currently swinging him down against the ground hard.

Her triumph is short lived though, for Katsuki rapidly responds with a double handed blast directly at her. Her hasty defense is nowhere near enough to withstand the force, and she stumbles backwards, falling onto her ass. She isn’t going to be able to take much more of that.

Fortunately for her, Kirishima is there to block the second double-blast, his hardened flesh more than capable of enduring the force. “Dude! You okay?” He shouts, genuine worry in his voice.

“I’m fine,” Makino says, staggering to her feet. Her drones are down, but now that her team-mate’s back, she might actually get a chance to unveil something else. “Can you keep him off me? I might have something for this.”

Kirishima gives her a bright grin and a matching thumbs up. “Leave it to me!” He declares, rushing towards Katsuki with a decidedly manly battle cry.

“Boys,” Makino mutters to herself, but she wastes no time in rummaging through her pack. Her specialty was coding in general, but she had a real passion for robotics. Unfortunately for her, robotics didn’t translate very well to a contest like this - not without enough time to build something big. And even then, they probably wouldn’t let her enter something like that. Of course, robotics knowledge translates itself to other things as well.

Like the power gloves she was putting on.

Originally designed as prosthetics, she’d altered the basic design to boost the strength and allow her to use them without actually having to replace her forearms. With them, she could throw a punch maybe twice as strong as she could without them - nothing earth shattering, but enough to maybe put her on equal footing against someone like Bakugou Katsuki.

She felt a little cartoony with her now-oversized fists, but she put it out of her mind before rushing towards where the other two were still fighting, letting out a battle cry of her own.
Katsuki, for his part, was torn between being frustrated and exhilarated. Kirishima’s Hardening was proving an ample defense and he was almost wholly unused to an opponent who could stand there and take so many of his blasts point blank. But if he wasn’t wrong, Kirishima was weakening. There was a limit to his defense, and he was going to blast through it.

He was almost on the cusp of doing just that when Makino re-enters the fray, slamming a heavy armored fist into the ground he was just standing at, leaving a dangerous looking set of cracks.

Okay, so maybe she needed to calibrate them a little.

Between the two of them though, things were looking increasingly difficult for Katsuki. He was forced to almost dedicate a hand each to fending them off, each of their defenses more than adequate against his infrequent explosions. Whenever one of them was beginning to flag, they just backed out a bit and let the other one take over until they were ready to go back in. For an impromptu team up, it was quite impressive.

That didn’t mean Katsuki was going to let them win by any means. He had no intention of losing to anyone in this tournament, no matter what happened, and Shironaki’s sardonic encouragement only made him even more determined. That fucker wanted to see him defy the odds? Then he’d better not take his fucking eyes off him.

In order to defeat both Kirishima and Makino, he’d need to overwhelm them all at once. Their defensive capabilities were simply too much for him to win a battle of attrition, not against both of them at once. He blasts off into the air, silently glad that neither of them seem to have any ability to go airborne either, and then he starts to spin.

Neither of them know for sure what’s coming, but both of them are sharp enough to recognise a wind up to a powerful attack when they see one. Makino slams her gauntlets together and activates their ‘Shield’ mode, locking them in place and extending metal fans to give her better defense. Kirishima does much the same with his arms, heightening his Hardening as far as he can take it in his current state.

It was going to be the last attack - either their defenses held up and they’d win, or Katsuki would blow them both away.

Katsuki finished his spin, the gathered air rushing between his fingers as he focused and aimed. “HOWITZER IMPACT!”

“INCREDIBLE! AMAZING! WHAT A DISPLAY! THIS IS THE RAW INCREDIBLE POWER OF BAKUGOU KATSUKI’S ‘EXPLOSION’ QUIRK!”

The entire arena was engulfed in smoke and ash, winds whipping through the air with the force of the explosion. It was less like a bomb and more like a missile, and for some in the audience, there was a question of whether there’d even be anything left of the other two.

There was. Kirishima stood resolute, Hardened skin cracking and leaking blood, positioned to shield Makino from the worst of the blast. He’d done an admirable job, given that she too is still standing,
but taking the brunt of Katsuki’s attack soon proved to be too much for him, and he pitches forward, already unconscious before he even hits the ground.

Makino, for her part, isn’t holding up that much better. Her gauntlets are half-destroyed by the residual explosions, and she herself is barely standing. She gave Katsuki a brief look of defiance and tried to take a step forward before stumbling.

“Tch. Colour me fucking impressed,” He grumbles, stalking forward slowly, hands held at his side with the clear intent to finish this. “Hair-for-brains I expected, but you’re a lot more stubborn than I thought you’d be.”

She checks her gauntlets briefly - they’re not ruined beyond repair, but they’re definitely ruined beyond field-repair-with-the-enemy-advancing. At best, they’re a hammer she can use to attempt to beat him with, but she knows without the enhanced strength, this is a fight she can’t hope to win.

“You nerds are supposed to be pretty fucking smart, so do the smart thing and surrender.” He’s only a few feet away now, and still advancing. His palms are already sparking with small explosions as well, the unspoken threat of what will happen to her if she doesn’t comply.

She looses a quiet breath. “... Damn it all,” She mutters, holding her head up high as she calls out "I FORFEIT!"

“AND WE HAVE OUR WINNERS! BAKUGOU KATSUKI & KOUTA SHIRONAKI HAVE WON!”

There’s an air of almost quiet awe when Katsuki returns to the contestant’s room. The sheer destructive force of his newest technique was undeniable, and every other person in the room had begun to question if they’d even stand a chance against it if he used it in the coming rounds. Well, almost everyone.

“That was so cool Kacchan!” Izuku gushes, eyes twinkling as he rushes to fawn over his best friend, “I mean, it was a little much, but-”

Katsuki responds to this by just putting his hand over Izuku’s mouth. “As nice as it is to hear you reaffirm how fucking awesome I am,” He says with only a little irony, “I need to get a fucking drink right now and... did you just grab that in preparation?”

Izuku is holding up a bottle of sports drink in offering, and says something in response. Given Katsuki is still muffling him with his hand, he can’t quite make it out but given the way his eyes are twinkling, he’s going to assume it was a ‘Yes’ of some kind.

“Dork,” He mutters, almost fondly (anyone accusing him of such is going to be treated to a second Howitzer Impact) but he accepts the drink nonetheless. “Shouldn’t you be getting ready for your match?”

“I am!” He says cheerfully, “But Mei is busy choosing which of her babies to bring in.”
Katsuki spares a glance over Izuku’s shoulder, where the pink-haired girl is hunkered over a bench, cackling madly to herself as she rummages through a duffel bag. He catches the words ‘reverse polarity’ and ‘resonance’ before deciding he doesn’t actually want to know (and probably wouldn’t be able to really).

“Congratulations on your dynamite victory Bakugou-kun!” comes the overly-familiar sardonic voice that he is beginning to really hate. When he turns around, twitching a little with the need to just explode, Shironaki is standing there grinning lazily at him (with his shirt back on at least). “You really don’t hold back anything do you? I can’t say I hate that, though.”

“Shouldn’t you be with your fucking sister or something?” Katsuki snarls, doing his damn best to set him on fire with his glare alone.

“Who do you think carried her to the infirmary? Well, her and Kirishima-kun. You really did a number on him, by the way,” Shironaki says breezily, tilting his head to the side. “Hey Midoriya,” He adds after a moment, inclining his head lightly and completely ignoring Katsuki. “You’re up next right? Good luck with your match.”

Izuku returns the nod, grinning brightly. “Thanks!”

“WILL THE NEXT CONTESTANTS PLEASE ASSEMBLE?”

“That’s my cue!” Izuku zips over to his pack before rushing out the gates. “Wish me luck!”

This leaves Shironaki and Katsuki (relatively) alone together, Katsuki glaring furiously at him, and Shironaki lazily smirking right back. “Do you want to grab something to eat? I could really go for a burger right now.”

Katsuki intensifies his glare several times over. “Why, in the everloving fuck, would I do that?” He growls, flexing his fingers.

“Because it’s my treat,” Shironaki says without missing a beat. He waves a roll of bills around for added emphasis.

He goes to tell him to fuck off when his stomach chooses the most inopportune time to rumble and undermine his entire persona. “... I’m going to buy the most expensive thing on the menu,” Katsuki mutters darkly, still glaring viciously at him.

Shironaki laughs. “I wouldn’t have it any other way!”

Chapter End Notes
Shironaki is a sardonic asshole. I'm not going to lie, he's totally blackflirting with Katsuki.

Makino's Drone-Railgun probably does not actually work conceptually but in my defense, I am not a physicist. Her Quirk is a lot of fun to think about in a physical fight, because it has a lot of potential to horribly disorient and mess with people. It's also a natural sort of counter to her brother's Quirk in combat, because her ability to teleport him from hand to hand overrides his ability to just hold onto her. Alas, I pitted her up against Bakugou Fucking Katsuki.

Well. I can't pity her too much. Everyone else is going to be pitted against Bakugou Fucking Katsuki eventually.
A chain reaction is set off. The first rounds of the Tournament are over.

Boy, did this take a while. Nearly six thousand words of just two fights. Past Me was so adorably optimistic about how long the Sports Festival would take to write.

In between all the action, I'm trying to sow some foreshadowing seeds so I can have a bumper harvest of Plot later.

I hope the Mei & Izuku vs Uraraka & Sero fight lives up to everybody's expectations. I had a pretty clear idea of how the fight would go from the beginning.

This is also the first time we get a look at Chizuru's character and what she's like.

They stood on each side of the arena, the eyes of countless people upon them not only from within the heavily packed stands but, with the help of camera crews and a few satellites, across the nation itself. There was a sense of pressure on them, the expectations of an entire nation eager to see what they’d do. But if he’s honest, Izuku’s only mildly aware of it. The only pressure he feels is from the knowledge that his parents are watching.

To contrast, Mei seems to be drinking it up like a traveller in the desert who just came across an oasis. She seems like she’s born for this moment, that her entire life has been leading up to this - waving at the cheering crowds with a manic grin on her face, every inch the performer. She has an earpiece set up, a throat mic taped to her neck. Her eyes meet Izuku’s, and they share a smile. Hers bursting with energy, his quiet and serene.

He doesn’t know much about their opponents, and he forgot to ask Mashirao or Hitoshi if they had any information. He’s seen the boy (Panto Cera?) in action. Something about tape and his elbows? Possibly tricky. The girl was a mystery though, but he didn't think too much of it.

“BATTLE START!”

A mystery to contemplate another time.

Unlike the other matches so far, nobody is in any rush to make the first move - perhaps because this is the first match where both sides are wholly unfamiliar with each other? Well, that’s not why Izuku isn’t doing anything. He’s just waiting for his cue.
Mei flashes him an eager grin. There it is.

A quick flick of a switch to engage the exoskeleton frame he had equipped over his gym clothes, and then he was rushing towards their suddenly alarmed opponents.

“WOOOW!” Mei cries, her already loud and bombastic voice amplified many times by a set of speakers strategically set up, “WHAT INCREDIBLE ACCELERATION AND POWER! IT MUST FEEL GREAT, IZU-KUN!”

“It certainly does, Mei-chan!” Izuku is almost upon the other two when the girl (Uraraka?) quickly taps the boy’s elbow, causing him to begin… drifting into the air? Honestly, Izuku has so many questions about that, but he has a script he needs to follow right now, albeit with a little improvisation. “This Mobility Exoskeleton you developed is fantastic!” He calls, crouching low before he launches himself into the air. The ground cracks from the sheer force as Izuku rockets up towards the floating boy faster than even Bakugou could manage.

The boy has an expression of complete shock for a few seconds, but to his credit, he recovers fairly quickly, shooting tape to his left and reeling it in to swing himself out of the way.

Ah. Izuku understands now. A clever combination of the levitation(?) and his tape, allowing him to remain airborne and maneuverable without risk of accidentally drifting off. For Izuku’s part, he has to descend now, as the cruel tyrant of gravity attempts to reassert its dominance over him, and he lands with enough force to crack the concrete once again, no worse for wear. “Whoa! I’m really putting these Shock Absorber boots through their paces but it’s like I’m walking on clouds!”

“Another Hatsume Mei Original!”

Sero reels himself in close to Uraraka, releasing the tape the moment she cancels her Quirk. “Are… is this a battle?” He mutters, frowning a little as he watches Izuku get into a sprinter’s ready position.

Uraraka giggles a little, getting behind him. “Honestly? I don’t know. But if he’s going to charge again, let’s get ready.”

They work surprisingly quickly, Sero shooting out a few feet of tape, cutting it and letting Uraraka tag it as it comes out. Part of it sticks to the ground, but the rest tries to drift upwards. Izuku rushes forward, exoskeleton hissing and groaning as it powers him on forward, but he’s soon forced to slam the quite literal brakes when the trap becomes more obvious.

It’s like a little forest of floating strands of tape, the sticky stretches drifting lazily about and threatening to entangle any rushing fool.

“What incredible teamwork!” Present Mic declares, “As expected of students taught by the amazing Eraserhead!”

“Don’t say unnecessary things.” The quiet, irritated voice of Eraserhead makes itself known very briefly before it’s soon drowned about by a different speaker.

“Behold one of my greatest creations!” Mei shouts, suspended in the air by her Hydraulic Support Pack. She’s not referring to that though, for in her hands is a familiar launcher.
The NetMaster 9000, the bulkier cousin of the NetMaster 6000. Compared to the frankly compact 6000 model, the 9000 is heavy enough that Mei has to brace it on her shoulder to fire it, and a third hydraulic support shoots out to stabilize herself.

Uraraka wisely decides to tag Sero so they can scatter more effectively, but in the moments they prepare to dart in different directions, Mei is already pulling the trigger. She doesn’t need to line up the shot, not anymore.

“BEHOLD THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF GENIUS!” She cries, the payload shooting for about five feet before it bursts open, revealing the widest and largest net Izuku has ever seen in his life, rotating wildly through the air. It looks like the kind of net you’d use to capture an elephant. “WITH LIGHTWEIGHT BUT STRONG MATERIALS CREATED BY MY PARTNER, MIDORIYA IZUKU, AND A POWERFUL PROPULSION SYSTEM CREATED BY YOURS TRULY, A TRUE NO-FAIL CAPTURE DEVICE IS BORN!”

The silvery net is wide enough to catch both the levitating Sero and the landbound Uraraka. As it collides with them, the still-spinning net begins to wind and wrap around them. Or it would have, had it not been caught up by the Forest of Tape already created earlier, limiting its momentum and movement enough that instead of cocooning Sero and Uraraka, it only loosely entangles them, an opportunity they’re wise enough not to miss as Uraraka goes to levitate it as well.

Izuku knows when he’s supposed to take over, and casually jogs over to where the net still sparkles, although most of it seems to have faded. “Wow! What an incredible device! You really built that using my metals Mei-chan?” He calls up, smiling beatifically at his friend.

“I SURE DID!” Mei begins to lower herself down, the supports retracting into her pack alarmingly quickly. Thankfully, she too is equipped with her patented Shock Absorber boots, and lands without a single pink lock out of place. “We killed it, Izuku!” She cries, off the mic, “I can see the Support companies eating it up! It’s perfect! And with this victory, we’ll-”

Tape shoots out and grabs her by the shoulder, reeling her backwards into the suddenly levitating net.

A very frazzled looking Uraraka and Sero are staggering to their feet, teeth gritted. “Whose victory?” Uraraka calls out, a grin on her face that’s somewhere between determined and bloodthirsty. “Don’t underestimate us!”

“ACK! THE VOLTAGE! WE MISCALIBRATED!” Mei shouts, swiftly activating her supports. They pull her out of the net in short order, narrowly avoiding becoming entangled in her own creation.

“AMAZING! IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF A REVERSAL?!” Present Mic’s voice booms around them, at odds with the sudden tense stand off they seem to be in now.
It’s not looking good for them, Izuku notes. Well, it looked good for them for a good chunk of the match up until now, and the Support Companies seem to have picked up what Mei was putting down, so as far as he’s concerned, this has already been a Victory for Friendship. That doesn’t mean he’s going to just walk off now like Shironaki did, though. He’d never be able to look Kacchan in the face if he just gave up. Besides. He’s having a lot of fun.

“You guys are pretty cool!” He calls out, smiling gently, “Our mistake with the voltage. Should’ve known spread out across the net like that the current wouldn’t be enough to bring you down. But hey! You withstood it pretty well. Don’t worry. We won’t underestimate you anymore.” Up until now he’s been using Mei’s inventions, mostly because she asked him to. Really, he only brought one with him. His Utility Staff.

Uraraka huffs. “Thanks, I guess? But you’re out of tricks now.” She waves a hand in Mei’s direction. “That big net thing only has one shot, right?”

Mei lowers herself down next to Izuku. “Damn. She’s good,” She mumbles.

“... Mei, that thing is the size of your torso. Where would you have any extra shots?” Izuku mutters, uncharacteristically reasonable. “So?” He calls back out to Uraraka, “We’re not one trick ponies you know! We’re multi trick ponies! This pony show isn’t over yet!”

There’s a brief moment where Uraraka tries to figure out why he’s calling himself a pony before she brushes it aside and braces herself for the next attack. Sero, for his part, is already beginning to levitate again after a quick tag from Uraraka, although a set of tape keeps him somewhat grounded.

“I’m going in. If you’ve got anything else up your sleeves, use them when you see an opportunity to.” Izuku clicks his staff together and rushes forward, his usual bright smile on his face. He’s seen enough of their Quirks in action to have a pretty good picture of what he’s facing. Tape-Boy’s is pretty self explanatory: his elbows dispense tape, and it’s sticky and sturdy. A perfect capture weapon well suited to Heroics. Float-Girl’s Quirk lets her levitate things but it requires physical contact. Every time she’s levitated Tape-Boy, it’s always been skin contact, and when she got the pieces of tape to float, it was with her hands as well.

So he just has to not get touched at all.

The staff is perfect for this purpose, because even if Gravity-Girl makes it float, it’s still in Izuku’s hands and he won’t be thrown off by it. The big weakness is Tape-Boy - tape would be the perfect tool to ensnare his weapon, and so he must be on guard constantly. But if he can take out Gravity-Girl… it’s their victory.

Gravity-Girl is a skilled opponent though, even without a weapon. She seems to recognise the futility of tagging his weapon, and she’s even appropriately wary of it. Izuku’s pretty sure he hasn’t shown anyone but Ojiro the electroshock function, but really, given everything else, it’s only pragmatic not to touch the weapon.

He’s forced to dodge a surge of tape, narrowly avoiding being entangled but a second shot snags the tip of his staff. He flicks the taser switch, but the electricity doesn’t rush up to the floating Tape-Boy. It had been a gamble, so he can’t be too disappointed at it’s failure. The tape starts to reel in, but Izuku isn’t budging from his position willingly, and so Tape-Boy starts rocketing towards him.
Bold, he thinks, and a mistake. Close quarters is Izuku’s specialty, and if he gets close than he can-

Uraraka’s fingers swipe across the back of his neck. The effect is immediate, and Izuku begins to ascend into space, slowly but surely. It’s a victory for Uraraka and Sero, but Izuku can’t think about that. Izuku can’t think about anything right now.

Gravity is unbound from his form, and the stars are singing to him in such beautiful harmonies, that faint music that haunts his dreams is crystal in his mind now, and the universe is unfolding in such terrible clarity until he understands, but what he understands he cannot put into words, he cannot even begin to describe, his mind expanding and contracting like glass lenses swapped in and out until he can feel every nanoangstrom and yet witness the shape of the universe. It’s so awfully beautiful he weeps-

And then gravity reasserts its tyrannical control, and when Izuku lands on the ground, it’s not in the arena anymore, but the soft grass outside of it.

“MIDORIYA IZUKU IS... OUUUUUUT!”

Everything was going so well, but it just goes to show that one little mistake is all it takes for the best laid plans to go awry. A miscalibration in the voltage (they’d erred on the side of safety for... well, safety reasons) and their certain victory was looking more like a probable defeat.

Well, Mei can’t say she hasn’t achieved her objectives in this singular fight, so even if they were to leave, she can hold her head high.

“IZUKU! SNAP OUT OF IT MAN!” She calls to her teammate, who is still sort of floating up into the air like a blowup doll inflated with helium. There’s something... off about him now, and she’s not just talking about the casual disregard for a fundamental force of the universe. He’s not moving at all, and she’s ninety percent sure that’s not an effect of Uraraka’s Quirk.

She narrows her eyes briefly, activating her ‘Zoom’ to get a closer look at his face and-

His eyes are glowing, soft and incandescent, and there’s just the faintest tug on her mind like an eager child whispering I have so many things to show you and the world is fading away and she knows she knows

Then Izuku falls to the ground, and Mei’s mind snaps out of it’s reverie, all of her wondrous ideas shattering like glass until all she’s left with is the beautiful shimmering dust. She almost wants to cry or scream, she was so close but...

What was she close to? She can’t remember. It’s on the tip of her tongue, but it’s glued there and it won’t move at all. She’s almost about to try and rip it off when something snags her arm. Tape...?

Oh. Right! The battle. She’d almost completely forgotten about it with all the weirdness and okay yeah, it was swinging her towards the edge. She planted her feet on the ground, skidding along before she flicked a switch on her belt to activate the suction. Inspired partly by Naki-chan’s Quirk, the boots utilised powerful suction to stick to the ground and arrest her momentum. A little sudden and a little whiplash-y, but effective. A quick press on a bracer, and a small utility knife sprang forth,
allowing herself to cut the tape off.

“Is… is that a hidden knife?” One of her opponents call, sounding incredulous. “What are you, an assassin?!”

An assassin? How ludicrous! “It’s for utility purposes!” Mei shouts, hands on her hips (with the knife retracted), “I don’t just have hidden knives! Observe the magic of my genius!” A few other taps, and the bracer flicks out several other tools - a screwdriver, wrench, allen key, lockpicks, tape measure, even a very teeny and cute plasma-torch (well, Mei thought it was cute but Maki-chan had repeatedly stressed that what Mei thought was ‘cute’ did not align with contemporary values of ‘cuteness’). “A true genius would never allow themselves to be without their tools! For if something were to break, where would I be?”

The round-faced girl pauses, putting a thoughtful finger to her chin. “... Something like this?” In her hand was the NetMaster’s payload, still floating. And then the boy with the tape tagged it with a reel of tape and suddenly Mei knew exactly where this was going.

“Using my own babies against me?!” She squawks, watching as the heavy metal net is flung towards her. "That's cruel you know!" She’d designed that net to be nearly inescapable when properly used. Tight mesh, large enough for a limb at best so it could entangle them. Conductive material that dispersed electricity or heat, and extremely shear resistant. They don’t have enough force to really entangle her, but she knows that doesn’t need to happen. Once it’s on her, it’ll be child’s play to tape her down. She lets a hiss out between clenched teeth, and sags. “Guess this is as far as I go, huh?”

The net lands on her, pinning her down and it’s soon followed by strings of sticky tape, pinning both her and the net down.

“HATSUME MEI IS DISABLED! URARAKA OCHAKO AND HANTA SERO ARE THE WIIIIINNERS!” Present Mic’s declaration is met with thunderous applause.

“You seem troubled by your defeat,” comes a familiar bland voice to Izuku's right.

Izuku snaps his gaze up from staring at his hands to see the familiar all-encompassing rubber suit of Shoutan Shin’ya… with added accessories. Over the containment suit, he was wearing a bright red happi coat and a matching hachimaki headband around his head, both bearing the words ‘DO YOUR BEST 1-F’, an inspirational slogan likewise written across the rolled up banner he was holding. When he said he’d be there to cheer them on, he really meant it.

Shin’ya continues in his bland, emotionless tone. “You shouldn’t take your loss too hard, Midoriya. Your performance was exemplary in all aspects.”

“Thanks, Shin’ya-san,” He says, flashing him a smile as he leans back on the bench, “But it’s not the defeat that I’m thinking about.”
The bench creaks a little as Shin’ya sits down next him, turning the glassy eyes of the face mask to look at him. Possibly. Izuku can’t actually see his eyes past the opaque smoky surface. “I see. May I inquire as to the source of your consternation then?”

Izuku looks down at his hands again, flexing his fingers. They’re shaking. “I… I don’t know how to put it into words,” He admits quietly. He can still feel the music in his bones, already faded to the point where he can barely make out the melodies. “But it’s like… I feel like I’m on the edge of something?” He could still hear some of the notes, maybe a stanza. His mind had been swimming in so many ideas, and it was taking nearly everything he had just to cling to one of them before it could dissolve away back into the dark recesses of his mind. “I need to… I need to build.” Whilst the idea’s there. Whilst he can still understand.

There’s a slight creak as Shin’ya shifts. “Ah. I understand,” He says quietly, glassy-eyed mask turned away. “Working clears the mind as much as it focuses it.”

“But I can’t,” Izuku groans, gnawing on his lip as his fingers curl into tightly clenched fists. “There’s no classes because of the Sports Festival, and my equipment at home isn’t good enough but it’s—”

“I have a key.”

Izuku trails off, teeth clicking shut momentarily as he turns to look at Shin’ya properly.

“I asked Setsuna-sensei for access after school. She gave me a spare key and asked me ‘not to make too much of a mess’. I believe she was just joking though, given her hair was turning orange and that I have never made a mess in the workshop.” Shin’ya tilts his head to the side slightly, the rubber of the suit surprisingly accommodating of the gesture. “If you feel it is urgent, we could go now.”

He doesn’t even ponder it for a second before he’s taking Shin’ya’s hand and dragging him towards the exit.

Mei’s at the vending machines, just grabbing a drink when she turns around and bumps directly into someone tall and wiry. “Ah! Sorry!” She says, looking up into a… surprisingly familiar-looking face, complete with surprisingly familiar-looking eyes the colour of molten metal.

The man’s face twists into a familiar looking smile. “It’s okay!” He says cheerfully, “My fault for being so close.”

Mei doesn’t respond at first, trying to place how she knows him. Does she know him? She doesn’t actually know for sure. “You’re… Izuku’s father, right?” She says after moment, face twisting into a manic grin at his surprised face. “Ha! I knew it! You’ve got the same eyes!”

He blinks. “We… do, don’t we?” He says, and something about the way he says it makes Mei think it’s important somehow. “You’re Hatsume Mei right? Hell of a show you put on.”

She starts beaming instinctively, but a quick up-and-down glance at him makes her stand a little straighter. He’s wearing a clean, pressed business suit, and if she’s right…
“Those inventions of yours were really something. I was hoping to talk to Izuku, tell him how proud we are of him, but meeting you is just as good actually.” Her suspicions are confirmed when he reaches into his coat to withdraw a single, bone white business card.

It takes everything she has not to start vibrating into another plane of existence, and internally she’s screaming delightedly. A business card! A business card!

“My organisation is very interested in your talents, Miss Hatsume. If it’s not too much trouble, please accept this card.” He holds it out to her with both hands, and she reverently takes it with her own. Embossed in tasteful black lettering are the words ‘THE MUSES INITIATIVE’, followed by… nothing? That’s all it says. No contact details at all, not even a name.

She looks up at Izuku’s Father, who smiles warmly at her. There has to be more to it than this, she thinks, and she turns it over. Nothing. Just the same, elegant black border. “… This is a test, isn’t it?” She murmurs, flicking her gaze back up to his. There’s a flicker of flame in his stare, almost mesmerising but mostly welcoming - like a gentle campfire.

“Yup!” He says cheerfully, eyes crinkling in an odd expression, like he was smiling with the entirety of his face and not just his mouth, “Whilst we’re very impressed with your performance during the Sports Festival, we also believe in recruiting nothing but the best. Determination, skill, creativity, these are the qualities the Muses Initiative wants in it’s candidates and we recruit from any source we think is suitable - doctors, engineers, lawyers, mechanics, businessmen, students. Some of our candidates we accept straight out of High School! Our only requirement is that you're able to solve our tests.”

Mei really starts to examine the card, studying it for every little detail to see if she can pick up on what’s hidden (or how it’s hidden). “Very secretive,” She says, only half-accusing. If she’s honest, and she always is, she’s already sold.

Izuku’s Father laughs. “Think of this as the beginning of the interview process!” He declares, still bright and cheery, “But if it helps, the Muses Initiative is a thinktank. Best and brightest, as I said, all dedicated to creating solutions to tough problems. Sometimes those problems are ‘How do we limit the dangers of a pandemic?’, and sometimes those problems are ‘How do we colonise space?’ Sound like fun?”

Mei didn’t respond. It was very, very faint, but if she zoomed in, she could juuuust make out a series of dots and dashes, and she was already translating the morse code in her head into a… URL? Definitely a URL.

Hisashi watches her for a few more moments, before shrugging when it’s clear she’s in her own world. His job here was done. Onto his second high priority task.

Getting some sushi because he was starving.
Harishima Chizuru did not sign up for this. She got dragged into the Sports Festival because Hatsume had a way with words (and by way with words, she meant ‘the ability to steamroll over any and all objections’, seriously that was *scary*, she even got Ogata to participate). She’d gotten herself this far somehow (she’d went into the Obstacle Race thinking she may as well give it her all and that turned out to be pretty good), and after getting dragged into Mei’s Cavalry team, she’d somehow managed to make it to the final rounds.

That was great, except the idea of performing in front of literal millions of people is terrifying beyond belief how does anyone do this. She should’ve pulled an Ogata and quietly lost the Obstacle Race.

Curse her stupid attitude towards competitions!

“Nervous?” Her companion asks (Asui, her name was), her wide, black eyes starring at Chizuru far too bluntly. “It’s understandable if you are. Yaoyorozu and Tokoyami are some of the best. It’s going to be a tough fight.”

“Great. Thank you for the encouraging words,” Chizuru mumbles, dragging a hand down her face.

“It wasn’t meant to be encouraging,” Asui says, just as blunt as her stare. “It’s the truth.”

Well, Chizuru can get behind that kind of attitude, she thinks. “If you’re hoping I’m a Super Genius full of amazing gadgets, I’m sorry to disappoint you. Midoriya and Hatsume are outliers that should not be counted.”

Asui blinks, and then turns her stare onto their opponents. “I’m a little disappointed,” She admits. “Not even a single thing?

Chizuru frowns. “Well… I do have something. But it’s not going to be very useful if I’m perfectly honest.” Her hands reach behind her into her pack, and withdraw… a paintball gun.

“… Why did you bring a paintball gun?” To be fair to Asui it’s a very valid question given the circumstances but Chizuru is still a little defensive. “Unless you’re hoping to… blind them with paint? I think that’s fairly dangerous actually.”

“No, actually. I… wasn’t sure what the tournament would involve and I figured hey! Here’s the only thing I have that fits in a backpack!” She rubs the back of her head with a floating hand. “I specialise in vehicular engineering. The only other thing I could’ve brought is a hoverboard which I, stupidly, did not bring with me. Would’ve reaaaaally helped in the Obstacle Course.”

Asui hums thoughtfully to herself and nods. “Well, what’s done is done, I guess. Is it just an ordinary paintball gun or does it like, home in?”

Chizuru stares at her blankly. “… Yes, it’s an ordinary paintball gun? Why would it not be?” She pauses, and then shakes her head. “Look, I have it because I was working with paints. Trying to make some interesting stuff.”

“Did you make any interesting stuff?” Asui asks, stretching in preparation. Chizuru goes to answer but-
“BATTLE START!”

-she’s interrupted. Their opponents go on the offensive immediately, Tokoyami rushing forward with his shadowy-accomplice-thing surging out already. Yaoyorozu seems to be hanging back and making… something. It’s emerging from her skin rather quickly, and she can’t see it very clearly. Asui lashes out with her tongue of all things, but Tokoyami is quick to dodge.

“I do have a few things!” Chizuru calls out, loading the gun with a set of green paintballs from her backpack. She’d enlisted Shoutan’s help with the paints, as chemical engineering was more his forte, and he’d come up with several varieties. Just a teeny weeny problem.

Chizuru had little to no part in actually formulating the paintballs and thus, she has no idea what any of them do.

They were all labelled though, and she really should’ve gone over the labels earlier but now was not the time to sit down and puzzle out which was which. The green ones had been labelled with the kanji for ‘Dream’… or ‘Vision’ or ‘Illusion’. She hoped it meant they’d be put to sleep.

Tokoyami dodges the first shot, and uses his shadow-friend to block the next three, so Chizuru turns her crosshairs on Yaoyorozu, who rapidly forms a shield to protect herself. Damn it all.

Asui seems to see her frustration, and switches targets from Tokoyami to Yaoyorozu, tongue lashing out to grab her shield and jerk it. It’s all the opportunity Chizuru needs to nail her shoulder with a shot of green paint.

It doesn’t seem to put her to sleep as she’d hoped, so she shoots her once in the leg and tries to see if she can find a different canister.

Tokoyami doesn’t seem to want to let her continue though, and is almost upon her just as she clicks a bunch of white balls into place and fires wildly in his direction. Dark Shadow moves into place to protect him and the balls explode against the darkness, forming streaks of incandescent white paint, practically glowing.

“Damn it, man! Why would you label these ‘Flash’?!” She cries, mostly to herself. Tokoyami seems somewhat alarmed by this despite the relative uselessness of brightly glowing paint in a combat situation and it takes Chizuru a second to realise why. His Quirk was some sort of… shadow thing, wasn’t it? And what are shadows weak against?

Light.

“Okay, I take it back. Shin’ya, I could kiss you.” At least, she would if it wasn’t for the whole… toxic thing. “Eat Light, Polly!”

Tokoyami flings himself back with the help of a somewhat diminished Dark Shadow, avoiding a hail of scarily accurate paintballs. The brightly glowing paint isn’t something he can get on Dark Shadow, not if he wants to remain effective on such a bright, sunny day. “… I’m not a parrot.”

“Fine! Nevermore, Quoth the Raven, whatever, I don’t care!”
To say that things were going… weirdly for Yaoyorozu Momo was putting it lightly.

She didn’t know what was in those green paintballs that had struck her, but boy, was she feeling the effects. And seeing the effects. And hearing, tasting and generally just *experiencing* whatever was in those.

The world was heaving back and forth, colours blurring and slurring together like Picasso was trying to paint with Jackson Pollock, and everything seemed to be moving so slowly yet so quickly. She’d managed to form a basic rod to fend Asui off, but she couldn’t tell if it was staff-length or just… half of it, and it kept shifting back and forth in her vision. Everything was being distorted and warped - sound, touch, sight, *everything*.

Suffice to say, she is pretty sure she’s just been tagged with some kind of hallucinogenic.

As nonlethal subdual techniques went it had merit. It was extremely hard to focus and convince herself that none of what was happening was real, especially when Asui hops towards her, briefly shaping into a screaming demon and then her tongue stretches on and on. Momo wonders if it’s ever going to reach her and then all of a sudden, it does and she’s being thrown off her feet. Stupid... whatever it was that’s got her.

She goes to shout to Tokoyami not to get hit by the balls, but the words don’t seem to leave her mouth. She can’t open her mouth at all because her muscles refuse to respond, she can’t move she’s frozen to the spot and Asui is coming right at her why can’t she move *why can’t she*

And then she’s scrambling along the ground all of a sudden, moving like the fear of God was just driven into her. Well. It’s not as though she was ever going to use drugs to begin with, but after this? Doubly so. Triply, even.

Tsuyu, for her part, can tell that something’s wrong with Yaoyorozu. It’s fairly obvious all things considered, but what’s less obvious is exactly what’s going on with her. Not to be uncharitable though, but Tsuyu isn’t too concerned. This is a contest after all, and she has every intention of winning.

She shoots her tongue out like a missile, striking Yaoyorozu in the shoulder and sending her skittering across the ground. In her disoriented state, she’s an easy target to hit, and getting her out of bounds is easily the easiest way for Tsuyu to win.

Except there’s something *tingly* on Tsuyu’s tongue and she realises belatedly that she’s made a grave mistake. She’s just licked whatever it was that made Yaoyorozu all disoriented and wobbly.

And now she’s going to be all wobbly too.
Tokoyami is a very hard target to hit, Chizuru finds. He’s deceptively mobile, and even with Dark Shadow slightly diminished, he has very little trouble avoiding her shots despite her best attempts.

Chizuru’s never had so much trouble tagging someone. Paintball is one of her favourite hobbies, and she considers herself something of a marksman. Admittedly, most of her practice comes against people who can’t throw themselves around with the help of a shadowy apparition so it’s probably not too fair to beat herself up over her failure to hit Tokoyami again.

The problem though, is that she’s running out of ‘Flash’ balls. They just happened to be an effective weapon, and who knows what the others will do. Worse than that, she can only assume Tokoyami knows. It’d be foolish for him not to realise. She’s trying to be conservative, but sooner or later, she’s going to run out of shots and if she hasn’t weakened his Quirk enough, she might not even get enough time to load the next canister. She certainly isn’t going to get enough time to sit down and read the damn labels.

She takes a chance. She fires one last shot to distract Tokoyami, and then tries to reload as quickly as she can. Her hands are shaking and fumbling as she reaches back in her pack (thankfully, with her Quirk, she doesn’t have to take it off to reach back there), but Tokoyami is already rushing towards her, and he’s surprisingly fast.

He’s upon her just as she finishes clicking a canister of yellow balls into place, and she fires a single shot directly into his chest just as Dark Shadow sweeps out and rips the gun out of her fingers.

It stinks. The mustard yellow paint is so awfully pungent that Chizuru thinks she’s going to start choking then and there. It can only be worse for Tokoyami, she thinks, but somehow, he doesn’t seem as bothered by the scent as she is. Maybe it’s the bird head? Or maybe he’s just tougher. Either or.

She doesn’t have her gun, but she still has her fists. Admittedly, they’re probably not going to be very good against someone from the Heroics Department, but her lack of arms makes it harder to read her hands, especially given her free range of movement.

Of course, any advantage her Quirk gives her is nothing compared to the advantage Tokoyami’s has in close quarters, and it’s something she’s rapidly made aware of as they clash.

Chizuru does her best, but she knew from the beginning that fighting like this wasn’t something she was cut out for. When Dark Shadow wraps around her torso and squeezes, she doesn’t hesitate to hold her hands up, palms flat. “Alright! I surrender!”

“AN INCREDIBLE DEVELOPMENT! HARISHIMA CHIZURU HAS JUST SURRENDERED! AND JUST NOW, YES, IT SEEMS LIKE ASUI TSUYU MIGHT... AND THERE SHE GOES OFF THE EDGE! THE WINNERS ARE YAOYOROZU MOMO AND TOKOYAMI FUMIKAGE!”

Tokoyami cranes his head around in a distinctly bird-like manner to see how Momo had won only to find her... laying on the ground, hands spread out and attempting to grip onto the arena floor as hard
as possible. He can’t see Asui at first, but then she jumps up into view, twisting around in midair before falling back down to earth with her tongue lolling out behind her. Suddenly, he's aware that he has absolutely no idea what has happened between them. He's not sure he wants to know.

He paces over to Momo, Dark Shadow peering at her inquisitively with it’s beady eyes. “... Are… are you okay?”

Yaoyorozu doesn’t look at him, but she seems to be sweating extensively, and her face is pinched in an incredibly determined and focused expression. None of this reassures Tokoyami at all. “Has time stopped?” She mumbles, “Tell me it hasn’t stopped. I don’t want to be frozen in time.”

Slowly, he glances at Dark Shadow, who can only return the incredulous look. “… Uh. No. No it hasn’t. I’m… I’m going to take you to Recovery Girl now. Is that okay?”

“... Please do.”

Chapter End Notes

Canonically speaking, I think Mei spends like ten minutes just straight selling her stuff before she walks off the arena having achieved her objectives? But ain't nobody got time for that and I didn't want to implement the brief little skip-over-that they did in canon, so Mei doesn't have as MUCH to sell here unfortunately.

Momo’s experiences with the 'Dream' ball are modeled after that one time I tried LSD. It wasn't good. Drugs are bad kids.
Chapter Summary

The Tournament edges towards completion, and one by one the stars fall down. But some of them won't go without a bang.

Chapter Notes

Whoosh! After a week, Chapter 15 is here!

I don't have much to say right now. I'm progressively getting slightly busier but that's mostly because I'm going for my provisional license today (Wish me luck!) and I'm a giant ball of nerves despite several days of practicing. My potential employment may or may not be hanging on the results of this test. And boy, do I need the money.

I'm aiming to wrap up the tournament within the next few chapters.

But without further ado, Chapter 15: Shit Let's Go Nova is here!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Laaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaadies, gentlemen and everyone both between and outside of that spectrum, may I have your attention please? The Tag Team Battles have concluded, and so it is time to progress to the next round of the Tournament! Those bonds that have just been forged in the fires of competition must now be broken! THAT'S RIGHT! THE FORMER TAG TEAMS THAT HAVE WON THE PREVIOUS ROUND MUST NOW FIGHT AGAINST EACH OTHER TO SEE WHO PROGRESSES TO THE FINAL ROUNDS! FOR THOSE OF WHO YOU HAVE BEEN ASLEEP - AND HOW YOU MANAGED THAT IS BEYOND ANYONE - HERE ARE THE MATCH UPS!"

SECOND ROUND MATCH UPS

Ojiro Mashirao vs Shouji Mezo

Kouta Shironaki vs Bakugou Katsuki

Hanta Sero vs Uraraka Ochako

Tokoyami Fumikage vs Yaoyorozu Momo

“Hey, you guys seen Izuku around?” Mashirao’s a little concerned, but only a little. Izuku should’ve
been joining them after his round, and he’d already gone ahead and bought him a sports drink (Aquarius Oasis, Izuku’s preference since they were both students at the dojo), but this was Midoriya Izuku he was talking about and there was a significant chance he’d just gotten sidetracked by something.

Hitoshi shrugs quietly, and Katsuki just makes an angry-dismissive noise, so they’re both useless in this endeavour. Hm. Who else might have… Maybe Uraraka and Sero? No, Izuku would’ve left before them after he got sent out of bounds. Izuku’s friend Hatsume might have seen him, but she wasn’t around either (which lent credence to the idea that Izuku had gotten sidetracked, possibly by her). Who else…

He jogs over to the pair of twins - he doesn’t really know either of them, beyond the fact that the girl is a friend of Izuku’s and from the same class, and the guy, (Shironaki was his name, wasn’t it?) was Katsuki’s ‘partner’ for the tag team matches and… kind of weird? Although it’s not like Mashirao could talk. “Hey! Have you guys seen Izuku?”

Both of them pause their conversation and turn to face him with unreadable expressions in unison, and the fact that their faces are so similar just gives it the creepiest vibe he’s ever felt.

“Yes,” says the boy, airy and detached, “Several times actually.”

“For once in your life, don’t be a smartass, brother,” says the girl as she reaches over to cuff her brother on the back of the head, “We haven’t seen him since the match if that’s what you’re asking.”

“I was just answering the question honestly, there’s no need to- ow! Sis, violence is not the- ow!”

Mashirao isn’t sure what to make of their dynamic, but he feels it’s unfair to judge them given the way their own group functions. He settles for just nodding reasonably. “Sorry for bothering you,” He says and tries not to look like he’s running away as he goes off to see who else might have seen his wayward friend.

“Hey! Asui-san! Have you seen my friend, Izuku? Green hair, freckles, was in the match against Uraraka and Sero?”

She blinks at him slowly, one eye lagging just a second behind the other, and puts a finger to her chin. “The cute guy who looks like he’s just here to have a good time? Also, call me Tsuyu.”

“Oh. That’s one way to describe him, yes.” Izuku does have a sort of innocent cuteness about him, but for Mashirao it’s mostly offset by the fact that he knows for a fact that Izuku could suplex him into the ground without any trouble. “Have you seen him, Tsuyu?”

She thinks it over for a few moments. “I think I saw him earlier, when I was heading down to get ready. He was on a bench, talking to someone in a rubber suit.”

Rubber… suit?

His confusion must be very obvious because As-Tsuyu elaborates. “Like a hazmat suit thing,” She adds, gaze trailing upwards in thought. “They didn’t look very… tall? Maybe there were a student. I don’t know.”

Hm. “Thanks Tsuyu,” He says in passing as he starts to walk off on autopilot.

“Don’t be a stranger! And good luck with your fight!” She calls to his retreating back.

He doesn’t really feel… worried at this information. It’s Izuku. He can take care of himself, and now
that Tsuyu’s mentioned it, he thinks he’s seen someone in a rubber suit around U.A a few times? Well, he doesn’t really think he has much time to worry about it regardless.

It’s almost time for his fight with Shouji to start.

“Sooooo, who do you think will win?” comes an annoyingly familiar drawl to Katsuki’s right, and it takes every ounce of willpower he’s willing to spare not to turn around and blast the speaker into tiny pieces.

He turns around regardless though, and the faint hints of amusement in the lazy smile plastered on Kouta Shironaki’s face is almost enough to drive him just that little bit further towards blasting him. Almost. “Why the fuck are you bothering me, Limpet? Don’t you have other unfortunate fucks to annoy?”

Katsuki’s righteous irritation only seems to flame the fires of his amusement further, and a hint of something genuine spreads into his smile. “Don’t be so harsh, Bakugou-kun!” He cries in a falsetto whine that is completely incongruous with the lazy expression that hasn’t shifted a bit, “Just consider it a gesture of friendship. You ARE capable of friendship, aren’t you?”

Why isn’t he just blowing him up right now? It’s a question he asks about a lot of people, but it’s so very pertinent now. It’s probably because Deku would be mad at him. And the teachers too, probably.

“... Monkey will, obviously,” He grumbles, silently hoping that if he just… gives him what he wants he’ll leave him alone. “Tentacles’ strong, but Monkey’s strong, fast and skilled.”

Living true to his contrarian nature, Shironaki sees exactly what Katsuki is trying to do and ‘rewards’ him by doing the exact opposite by slinging an arm around Katsuki’s shoulder. “Aw, you really are friends!” He exclaims.

Okay, that’s far enough, Katsuki thinks. With surprising calm and tranquility, he reaches up and puts a hand on Shironaki’s face. He’s a second off annihilating that lazy smile that’s still plastered on his face when he hears a cough from behind him.

“Don’t. He’s trying to get you disqualified by fighting him now,” Todoroki Shouto warns quietly, locking eyes with a still-smiling Shironaki. “Am I right?”

Shironaki’s smile does grow a little bit more genuine at that. His eyes don’t leave Todoroki’s, but when he speaks, his words are directed entirely to Katsuki. “You have good friends, Bakugou-kun, to be so concerned about you,” He drawls, “But don’t misunderstand my feelings. I wouldn’t lure you into so weak a trap - I respect you too much for that.”

Todoroki’s warning is a thin little line inside Katsuki that’s holding back the tide of explode-y death right now, but a part of him wants to blow Half-n-Half up just as badly as he wants to blow the
Limpet-fucker up. His fingers twitch in their position right over Shironaki’s face before he slowly pulls them away. For a moment, his fingers are stuck to the spots on the Limpet’s face they were touching but they’re released soon enough. “Get the fuck off me,” He snarls, and there’s the unspoken promise that if he doesn’t, Katsuki will unleash hell on him consequences be damned.

Gratifyingly, Shironaki does exactly that, although he holds his hands up in an exaggerated gesture of carefree innocence that’s about as sincere as the smile on his face.

“I don’t know what you’re planning, but I’m not going to let you have your way,” Todoroki declares coldly, narrowed eyes still focused entirely on the completely laissez-faire Shironaki.

He lets out a quiet laugh, as sarcastically cheerful as the rest of him, “Don’t project, Todoroki-kun~!” He says in a sing song voice, “Your own shortcomings are your own, y’know?” The cheerful persona’s dropped, shattering on the ground like a mask spun from glass and sarcasm, leaving a deathly serious expression in it’s place. “If you lost, it’s because you weren’t good enough. That’s aaaaaall there is to it.”

If Katsuki were the person to make insightful remarks, he might have said something about the fact that they were the ones about to get into a fight now, by the look of things. But he’s not, so what he says instead is “How about both of you fuck off and leave me alone? Doesn’t that sound like fun?”

“Aw, Bakugou-kun, I’m positively wounded.” He says in a tone that is far too chipper to be anything but mocking, “I guess we’ll see each other in the arena then?”

Todoroki sighs, turning away to walk off (and presumably sulk in a corner as far as Katsuki’s aware), but he does have a few parting words for him as well. “Be careful, Bakugou.”

“Show me where I asked for the advice of somebody who lost, Half-n-Half,” He growls, before turning to give Shironaki his full attention (however briefly). “I look forward to pounding you into the fucking dust, asshole.”

The way he seems to just light up at that, like Christmas came early and Katsuki’s playing the role of Santa coming down the chimney with a sack full of presents, is entirely disturbing. “Looking forward to it~!” He sings, practically skipping away.

God. What a fucking weirdo. At least now Katsuki can actually focus on watching the fight.

For Ojiro Mashirao, fighting Shouji Mezo has been an exercise in endurance. In terms of raw physical capability, Shouji has an edge. Mashirao skews more towards speed and agility and Shouji skews more towards raw power but there was no denying the advantage of that strength. It was the kind of strength that could end this in a single moment - all it would take is a just one mistake.

If Shouji got a grip on him, he didn’t think he’d be able to break out of it, and so Mashirao has been doing his best to keep Shouji on the defensive, utilising quick rapid attacks without any break in between to wear him down.

That’s not to say that he hasn’t been hitting him hard when he can though. At every opportunity he gets, he lashes out hard and heavy, but Shouji has been living up to his ‘Human Battletank’ epithet
from the previous round and every strong attack Ojiro throws at him, strong enough to knock Izuku flat on his back, just makes him stumble a little.

He needs to think, but he’s not getting much of an opportunity. Cast his mind back to his training, to all the practice and sparring. What had Master Wukong said…?

‘It takes many strikes to fell the great trees,’ whispers his personal manifestation of his former sensei. Okay, not very helpful. He was already doing that. ‘Idiot!’ exclaims the imaginary version of the Third Monkey King, ‘When you cut down a tree, do you just strike anywhere? No! You strike the same place every time! As it is for giants!’ On one hand, that was actually the kind of helpful advice Mashirao needed. On the other… was he talking to himself? ‘DON’T GET DISTRACTED IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT FOOL!’

He lets out a yelp of surprise and ducks a haymaker that could’ve brought his aspirations to an end. “Alright, alright!” He mumbles, rolling back and away from Shouji, “There’s no need to shout.”

A single eye blinks at him from the end of one of Shouji’s replica-arms. “... I didn’t say anything?” says a newly formed mouth, frowning in confusion.

“Not you,” He says off-handedly, “The voice of my old teacher in my head.”

Shouji straightens himself up, and more of his repli-eyes are staring at him now. “... Are… are you okay, Ojiro? I haven’t hit you in the head but…”

The momentary concern is all he needs, darting forward with a practiced movement. A quick spin slams his tail into Shouji’s knee hard enough to make him grunt, and by the time Shouji has attempted a retaliatory swing, Mashirao’s already several feet away. “Worry about yourself!” He calls out, already winding up a second attack.

When it comes to physical weaknesses, Shouji has few - his arms are flexible in size and shape, and he can attack anything nearby within a certain radius of his shoulders. Trying to hurt those arms was basically impossible for him and trying to hit most of his upper body was somewhere between risky and certain-to-fail. So that left the legs.

In the interest of disabling Shouji, his target was the knees. He knew from experience that knee injuries were painful, but he was confident that Recovery Girl could patch up any damage. It was outside of Shouji’s ‘Easy To Defend’ range, and not as durable as his arms. To fell this giant tree, it was probably his best bet.

Of course, Shouji wasn’t just going to let him have his way. After about the fourth strike against his knee, he seems to pick up on Mashirao’s strategy and hunkers down lower, his winged-tentacle-arms providing a perfect shield.

That’s okay too, Mashirao thinks, because despite his flexibility, Shouji can’t protect his head and his knees. Not unless he wants to literally curl up in a ball and do nothing but defend, and if he does that, then Mashirao will just start rolling him along the ground like one. And maybe make a quip about bowling balls or something. Strike, you’re out? No, that was kind of… baseball-y. He’ll see.

Shouji seems like he’s slowly moving towards the ‘Curl up in a ball’ scenario, getting lower and more defensive with each successive blow. Little eyes form and unform occasionally to keep an eye on what Mashirao’s doing as he darts around him, occasionally delivering a kick or a tailslap.
“Come on Shouji! Slow and steady might win the race, but it’s not going to win this fight!”

A mouth forms on one of the hands. “Taunting won’t work, Ojiro,” says Shouji, a pair of off-center eyes forming to stare at him. “I’ll take my time and win this race, Mr. Hare.”

Mashirao huffs quietly, backing away a little bit as Shouji hunkers down even further. Really, it’s amazing he hasn’t sprouted roots or something ridiculous. He knows he said he was going to roll Shouji like a ball if he did this, but saying it was one thing and doing it was another, especially given that Shouji was so… big. Well. Bigger they are, harder they fall, right? ‘Just like trees’!

He just needs the right angle. Shouji’s tentacle arms are fairly close to the ground but… yeah, he can do this. He sweeps in low a few times, making quick jabs and light strikes to get Shouji accustomed to the idea before he goes in for the surprise tailsweep. It comes in low and fast, but the moment he feels contact he jerks upwards. “FORE!” Golf quip’s worked here as well, didn’t they?

The maneuver goes off better than he could’ve expected, and the Shouji-Ball (really more of a… weird egg-shape) goes rolling along the ground for a few feet before he splits open, surprised and confused and continuing to tumble just a little bit more.

He can’t afford to miss this opportunity, so Mashirao charges forward again and before Shouji can even finish getting up on his feet, he’s getting hit by a “TAIL CANNON!” Mashirao doesn’t stick the landing as well as he’d like, falling face first on the ground instead of on all fours as he’d intended, but when he stands up, he can see the fruit of his labours.

Shouji teeters on the edge of the arena briefly, his arm-wings stretched out. For a moment, it looks like he’s about to regain his balance by pumping the wings and forcing the air back, but the moment he brings the wings forward in preparation, he slips with a gentle, muted ‘thud’.

“SHOUJI MEZO IS OUT OF BOUNDS! THAT MEANS… OJIRO MASHIRAO IS THE WINNER!”

Kouta Shironaki calmly finishes folding his shirt up and setting it aside next to his discarded shoes before he steps into the arena. If he’s perfectly honest, and he so rarely is, he’s a little disappointed right now - he’s been having much more fun than he expected going into the Sports Festival, but it’s time for it end now.

He never had any intention or desire for the ultimate victory, it’s true, but he had no desire either to simply roll over and surrender despite his actions in the previous fight. He thought he’d just see where the cards fall, see what happened. And fall they did! This Festival had gone much better than he’d expected. He’d heard about him from Midoriya, but Bakugou Katsuki just exceeded his expectations.

Which was why he was going to lose this fight.

Not on purpose - he wasn’t going to throw this fight. Shironaki wouldn’t insult him like that! He wasn’t lying when he said he respected him too much do little things like that. Sure, he was still
going to play around because that’s what he did, but he was going to play with Katsuki seriously. It still wouldn’t be enough though. Ah, he was getting giddy just thinking about it.

Katsuki is staring at him from across the field, and he gives him an enthusiastic wave that isn’t returned.

“Let’s do our best, Bakugou-kun!” He calls.

An angry glare is his response.

He chuckles lightly, winding an arm to loosen his shoulder muscles. “So cold,” He mumbles to himself, before he gets into a ready position.

“BATTLE START!”

Neither of them make a move to begin with, and Shironaki feels his lips twitch a little. “Don’t hold back on my account, Bakugou-kun!” He calls out cheerfully, “Aren’t you going to… what was the words you used? Pound me into the dust?”

Katsuki twitches a little and then he’s rushing towards him, explosions sounding off as he uses the force to drive himself faster and faster. “JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP ALREADY!” He roars, full of righteous fury.

Shironaki indulges himself with a small private smile and a whispered “Exquisite,” and then he goes to block the first of what would no doubt be many blasts with his forearms by forming a square shield in front of his decidedly more vulnerable face with his bare feet already adhering themselves to the ground.

Of course, Katsuki is better than that and instead of attacking directly, he uses one explosion to change direction and sail over the top of Shironaki before aiming a solid explosion right at his relatively unprotected rear.

His knees buckle slightly from the force, and he lets out a breath but Shironaki doesn’t stumble from the blow. He swivels around one foot at a time and he rushes towards Katsuki just as his feet reach the ground.

Another explosion is what he receives, mercilessly aimed at his face.

Again, his knees buckle slightly, but he isn’t pushed back or thrown off balance. He takes a second step forward almost experimentally before he lunges. As the smoke dissipates from his face, he grins broadly at Katsuki despite the blood that’s dripping down his face from a small tear in the skin of his forehead and trickling down the bridge of his nose. Surprise is his greatest weapon here, and in his forward rush his left hand slams into Katsuki’s chest, already gripping to whatever it touches.

His grin widens. “Tag! You’re it, Bakugou-kun!” He cries, already pushing Katsuki along with his hand towards the edge. ‘How will you escape?’ He thinks, adrenaline and excitement rushing through his thoughts, ‘Show me what you can do!’

A person’s first instinct in this situation is usually to grab the offending arm and try and wrench it away but Katsuk quite wisely doesn’t. Doing so would’ve been a mistake against Shironaki for his arm would’ve just gripped Katsuki’s hands and then there’d be no escape at all. Instead, he begins
blasting Shironaki with everything he has.

A predictable tactic, really. The explosions do slow Shironaki down though, as each one rocks through him but he is nothing if not determined. He forces himself on, step by step, carefully sealing himself against the ground each time he manages to take another one.

“LET GO OF ME YOU CRAZY ASSHOLE!” Katsuki roars, firing another double-handed blast right into Shironaki’s chest.

Shironaki spits out a glob of blood, and grins at him with bruised and busted lips dripping with blood. “Make. Me,” He growls back and takes another step forward.

They’re getting closer and closer to the edge, and Katsuki spares a moment to look back just to confirm it. Shironaki’s actually starting to lose hope that he’ll manage to escape for a few moments but then Katsuki holds his hands together right in front of his face and there’s a bright light forming.

“STUN GRENADE, BITCH!”

Shironaki has a split second to squeeze his eyes shut before it goes off, and it still sears into his eyes. He pointedly does not stumble back though, even with his ears ringing from the noise, but he can feel Katsuki doing… something and then suddenly there’s no more resistance at all to his pushing. He clenches his hand into a fist experimentally, and feels the fabric of Katsuki’s shirt crumple up in his grip - but there’s no flesh. “Brilliant,” He whispers to himself, but then he throws his head back and laughs uproariously. “Absolutely brilliant! You never fail to impress me, Bakugou-kun!”

“YEAH I JUST FUCKING LIVE TO PLEASE DON’T I?”

He can’t see Katsuki as his eyes are still full of flashing lights and blurry sights but no matter. He still has his shirt in one hand, and he grabs it with his other hand before grunting a little as he very slowly tears it apart. The material is really quite durable, he thinks, but soon enough he has a strip of fabric he can use to dramatically tie around his eyes. There. That’s a bit better. It'll do until his eyes stop hurting so badly at least.

“You can’t do that all the time, Bakugou-kun! All I have to do is catch you again!” He calls out, trying to focus his hearing. His ears are still numb and ringing, like someone used his head as a gong. That Stun Grenade of his was really something but he wasn’t satisfied yet. He had to push Katsuki harder. Further. It wouldn’t be true victory until he was broken and bloodied on the ground. He would not accept anything less.

Katsuki doesn’t respond verbally to his taunts, but in short order a burst of heat and force flares up against his left arm, and Shironaki swings himself around with a wildly grasping arm. No such luck. Another blast strikes him in the chest, and he repeats the motion, and so it goes for what feels like eternity until Shironaki’s entire body is bruised, burned and bloodied.

“You’re a real stubborn piece of shit, aren’t you?” comes a voice to his far right. Too distant for him to reach… or maybe it just sounds like that because his ears are still fuzzy? Either way, Shironaki doesn’t try to grab him.

He just tilts his head in that general direction and grins. “Is that a hint of respect I hear, Bakugou-kun? I knew you’d come around~”
“His ‘reward’ is a double-handed blast directly at his face and an angry “Fuck off!”

“Waaah, so ruthless!” He cries, laughing playfully even as his skin blisters from the heat, his smile turning decidedly sly, “But I like that part of you too, y’know.” He tries to squint at him with one eye past the fabric, but his vision is still far too blurry for him to make out anything useful.

“You should do what your sister did and surrender already. There’s no way you can fucking win like that.”

He laughs again, genuinely this time. “Win? I already told you, Bakugou-kun, I don’t care about that!” A blast scores across his back and he whirls around, and he can feel the displaced air of Katsuki dodging him against his fingertips. “The only thing I care about now is seeing how far you’ll go to win. Like a game of chicken! This doesn’t end until one of us is on the brink of death itself! So don’t stop now! Hit me harder! Let’s rush headlong towards that abyss together, Bakugou-kun!”

There’s a small, pregnant pause before Katsuki screams “ARE YOU LITERALLY FUCKING INSANE?” directly at him.

Shironaki makes a show of tilting his head to the side. “… Maybe?” He offers, still cheerful even if his grin is waning. They both fall silent for a while, and Shironaki straightens his back a little in the brief reprieve from being used as a crash test dummy.

Gingerly, he removes his impromptu blindfold, and squints. Ah. He can sort of see again. A shirtless Bakugou Katsuki is directly across from him, an expression of… something on his face. His eyesight’s still too blurry to make out actual details, which is a right pity he thinks, because he must be missing out.

His smile slips completely from his face though because Katsuki is holding back and that just won’t do at all. “Hey, hey, you aren’t giving up on me, are you Bakugou-kun?” He calls, genuine disappointment in his voice. And he was doing so well too. “Weren’t you going to be Number One? If you do, you're going to need to sharpen your resolve. Holding back? You won't reach the top like that.”

“Fuck off. You’re half-fucking dead already! Look at yourself, for fuck’s sake!” If Katsuki really did go all out, he could permanently injure him and he doesn't want that. He'd like to pound that stupid fucking smile off his face, sure, but any injuries he'd dole out in the process would be ones he could recover from.

Shironaki glances down. His pants are torn up more than he’d like, and his entire upper body is just a mess of burns, cuts and bruises. He’s pretty sure some of his ribs are cracked and there might be a hairline fracture in his left arm (and almost definitely some kind of sprain or break in his right ankle from all the shock absorbing it’s been doing to keep him stable). “And?”

Not for the first time, Katsuki wonders why everyone he meets is fucking insane. “And? AND?! IF YOU DON’T WANT TO WIN WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU GOING SO FAR TO GET IN MY WAY?!”

There’s silence for the longest time again, and when Shironaki breaks it, his words are like snow, cold and soft and gently drifting. “Did you see that story, several years ago? A woman was held hostage by a villain whilst the Heroes just stood there and watched. And after she died, they had the
gall to apologise without even having tried to save her. ‘I’m sorry, there was nothing I could do’...

those words should never be spoken by Heroes!” His voice rises sharply turning the soft and gentle
snow into a blizzard, and his face twists into the most genuine expression of anger he’s shown so far.

“Those without the determination to do whatever it takes don’t deserve to be called ‘Heroes’! You
said you wanted to be Number One didn’t you?! YOU WANT TO WIN, RIGHT?! THEN HIT
ME WITH EVERYTHING YOU HAVE! BECAUSE IF YOU DON’T, I SWEAR TO EVERY
GOD IN HEAVEN I WILL TAKE US BOTH OFF THE EDGE EVEN IF IT KILLS ME!”

“LIKE I CARE ABOUT ANY OF THAT SHIT!” Katsuki bellows, hands sparking dangerously,
“I’LL WIN THIS FUCKING MATCH HOWEVER I FUCKING WANT!” He crouches low,
hands against the ground before he launches himself towards Shironaki with a powerful blast,
propelling himself like an idiot-seeking missile with the promise of pain writ clear on his face. “I’LL
BECOME THE KIND OF HERO WHO DOESN’T HAVE TO COMPROMISE TO WIN!”

“THEN YOU DON’T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!” Shironaki shouts, bracing his arms in front
of himself with the expectation of absorbing the impact of another explosion. But nothing comes. He
lowers his arms experimentally just to see what’s happening but it proves to be something of a
mistake as it provides Katsuki the opening he wanted to punch him right in the face.

He instinctively clings to whatever contacts his skin, but he’s faintly surprised to realise that Katsuki
has wrapped his fist in a part of his discarded and torn shirt. ‘When did he pick that up?’ runs
through his mind shortly before the follow up punch slams into his face again, each one carefully and
artfully directed only to strike through the cloth and prevent Katsuki’s hands from getting gripped.
He lashes out with a hand, groping wildly but only succeeds in brushing against the tips of Katsuki’s
hair (and accidentally pulling a few with his Quirk). The shirt starts to fall off his face as he releases
it, but a mix of sweat and blood makes it just sticky enough for Katsuki to land a third punch.

And then a fourth punch. And a fifth. And a sixth. At this stage, the only reason the shirt hasn’t
fallen away from his face is because Katsuki is keeping it up entirely with his fists, hitting hard and
fast like he’s trying to imprint it into his skin. More impressive is when he kicks Shironaki straight
in the stomach, and instead of gripping onto his pants, he actually slides back.

“THIS IS SIMPLY AMAZING! KOUTA SHIRONAKI IS ACTUALLY BEING FORCED BACK! I
THINK THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IT’S HAPPENED ALL FIGHT!”

“Fucking knew it!” Katsuki crows, still pressing the offensive against the increasingly sluggish and
stumbling Shironaki, “Your shitty annoying Quirk requires concentration and focus! You think I
didn’t fucking notice how careful you were when you were moving?!” He slugs him straight in the
jaw with a particularly powerful haymaker, sending Shironaki crashing along the ground towards the
edge. “You can’t maintain your focus anymore, can you Limpet?”

He struggles up to his feet, spitting out globules of sticky black-red blood (and what might be a tooth
- or at least part of one?). “You’re right…” He mutters, finally staggering into something resembling
a fighting stance. “But… so what?” He braces himself against the ground again, stance wide and
stable. “I just… have to stay. Here.” His lips stretch in a wide, bloody grin and he beckons Katsuki
towards him. “Unstop… unstoppable force… versus… Unmovable… Unmove… Unmovable
Object…”

Katsuki stares right at him for a long and tenuous minute, and then he turns to where Midnight is
observing calmly. “This is fucking unreal. Come on! Look at the fucker!” He gestures wildly with a
hand towards Shironaki, who is slowly dripping an alarming amount of blood from various wounds.
“He can barely fucking stand!”

“Don’t you… don’t you fucking... deny me this! Don’t… don’t take the easy… the easy way out on
me!” Shironaki snarls, although the intimidating effect is significantly hindered by the fact that he can
garly get out a proper sentence without pausing to breathe.

Midnight lifts her whip up to her chin thoughtfully, mulling it over in her head. “It’s certainly true
that Kouta has taken a lot of punishment… but it’s also true that Kouta wishes to continue on and is
certainly capable of it,” She says, holding her hands up to either side and mimes weighing the issues
up. "I'm going to say this match can continue - but if this keeps up, I will call it."

“COME ON! THERE’S NO FUCKING WAY HE CAN WIN!” Katsuki shouts, jerking his arm in
his direction. He turns to continue the tirade directly at Shironaki but the movement is too late to stop
him from colliding with his chest, bare skin against bare skin.

Katsuki feels the grip almost immediately.

He curses loudly and evocatively for dropping his guard in so blatant a fashion, and digs his feet in
against the ground to slow the push. Despite looking like he’d gone through a meat grinder,
Shironaki is still strong enough to keep pushing against him, and Katsuki’s shoes don’t have the
gripping power to stop him. “What the fuck are you, a gorilla?!” Up close like this, with Shironaki
bent forward and his arms wrapped around Katsuki’s midriff, he’s uncomfortably aware of just how
muscular the other boy is. The fact that he’s now beating his fists and elbows against said muscular
back isn’t helping matters.

“I… warned… you…” He grits out, moving perhaps a foot per minute, slowly but inexorably
advancing towards the edge. “Now… we… both… lose!”

He feels his eyebrow twitch. “How about fuck off?!” snarls Katsuki, aiming his hands down at the
ground behind him. The first few explosions do nothing but crack the ground, but after five, the
concrete they were moving towards is thoroughly reduced to rubble, and Katsuki lets Shironaki push
him towards it without resistance.

The sudden compliance by Katsuki is enough for him to stumble forward in surprise before he can
stop himself and think about what’s going on. The moment his feet make contact with crumbled
concrete instead of solid ground, he realises that he’s been caught in a trap.

Katsuki wraps his arms around Shironaki’s waist and hauls him up so that his legs are in the air - and
with only crumbled concrete to cling to and nothing solid to anchor himself down, it’s almost
effortless. “TIME TO DROP THE BOMB, MOTHERFUCKER!” He roars and suplexes him
straight into the ground.

Shironaki’s body is frozen for a brief moment, but then Katsuki can feel his Quirk release and his
arms go limp. He rolls off his opponent, and stands up, panting a little as he wipes grime and sweat
from his brow. Great. Now he’s got his blood all over his chest.

Silence overtakes the stadium. And then slowly, a huge roar from the audience begins to build up
until it’s all but deafening.

“KOUTA SHIRONAKI IS UNABLE TO CONTINUE! BAKUGOU KATSUKI WINS!”
Katsuki has barely stumbled into the side rooms and is about to make his way back to the contestant’s room before he’s accosted by someone. He half-expects Deku to be standing there, brightly congratulating him on his victory or Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but it's not. It’s not even anyone from 1-A.

Kouta Makino, all bandaged up, is calmly staring at him with an expression Katsuki can’t identify. He glares half-heartedly, feeling far too exhausted to deal with... anything really. “If this is the part where you say some stupid shit like ‘I’ll avenge my brother!’’, take a step back and remember that I already beat your fucking ass.”

She stares at him for a moment longer before letting out an undignified snort. “You certainly did,” She says quietly, fiddling with her bandages almost pointedly, “But I’m not here to say anything like that. My brother’s a reckless idiot and this is what happens to reckless idiots.” She pauses, and makes uncomfortably intense eye contact with Katsuki before she does something very unexpected.

She bows right at the waist at a perfect ninety degree angle. “Thank you for holding back.”

“I… what?” Did he miss something here? He feels like he’s missing something. Fucking hell, when did everyone around him start getting infected with Deku’s bullshit, or was he just always the only sane person in existence?

She lifts her head up, but only a little bit. “I’m thanking you for holding back. I know my brother well enough to know that he is exactly the kind of stupid to play chicken with an oncoming train just to prove a point and I’ve already experienced what you can do enough to recognise you as that oncoming train.”

He’s not quite sure how to feel about being compared to an oncoming train, but he files it away as a compliment.

“That ‘Howitzer Impact’ of yours could’ve really hurt him, and that dumbass was probably deliberately baiting you into using it, wasn’t he?”

“Uh.” A small minireel of every time Shironaki had taunted him plays through his head. “Something like that.” He pauses for a moment. “... You’re fucking welcome. I guess.”

They stand together in a relatively awkward silence, as Katsuki tries to figure out what to do next. His usual response in these situations is just to tell people to fuck off, but it doesn’t feel too appropriate right now. She'd put up a pretty good showing in their fight, and she was showing the appropriate amount of gratitude and deference to his greatness. He thinks he can... maybe even enjoy her presence. "Does stubbornness run in your family, or what?"

She brushes a lock of hair out of her face with one hand and gives him a small smile. “A friendly heads up,” She says, faintly amused in a way that sets alarm bells ringing in Katsuki’s head, “I’m not sure how Shiro’s going to take this but I have a few guesses. And they all involve hounding you.” She taps a finger on her chin, and her smile widens a little, and although it seemed friendly to begin with, he’s slowly growing aware that it’s actually just her laughing at his expense. This isn’t a friendly heads up at all. It’s more like a hunter releasing a fox just so they can watch dogs chase it.
Forget enjoying her presence, she was a *monster*.

"... Motherfucker."

Chapter End Notes

Where's Izuku, you (probably) ask? Why, he's busy. We'll see the fruits of his labour next chapter (and what wonderful fruit it is).
**Piercing the Corona**

**Chapter Summary**

The Tournament enters its final stages, as does Izuku's creation.

**Chapter Notes**

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA.

Ahem. Finally done. FINALLY. As I mentioned somewhere (on tumblr, in the comments, on a different fic, I don't know anymore) I got a roight and propah 9-5 (well, 8:30-5) job as a Systems Administrator. Pay's good, work's good, only issue is I no longer have mountains of freetime to write. I'm forced to divide my freetime between all of my hobbies.

But, I'm still chugging away where I can.

I'd like to have a small shoutout to [this piece of fanart](#) by ghostlystrawhat because *hot diggity damn lookit those beautiful eyes*. I want to glue my eyeballs to this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Shoutan? What’re you doi… let me rephrase. What is Midoriya doing?”

Shin’ya slowly turns his head around, greeting Assistant Teacher Setsuna with a slight bow. The Assistant Teacher doesn’t return the gesture, too busy being transfixed by the sight of Midoriya Izuku at work. He doesn't blame her - it is a very fascinating sight. "I am afraid I have no idea what Midoriya is creating, Setsuna-sensei." He is, unfortauntely only really passingly familiar with just the tools he was using, let alone the concepts behind the work.

“… is… is that Makino’s wrist computer?” Setsuna asks, still trying to find her footing.

“Was,” Shin’ya corrects blandly, “I am afraid it has been cannibalized.”

Setsuna’s hair slowly turned a shade of red that Shin’ya might have referred to as ‘burgundy’, if it was just a shade darker but he was nothing if not precise so instead it was ‘amaranth’ in his mind. “... What else has he cannibalized?” She asks, in a tone that suggests that if Shin’ya doesn’t provide an answer she finds acceptable, he’s going to receive… something unpleasant. Probably detention, possibly worse.

“Aside from Makino’s wrist computer, he has also consumed Ogata’s omni-tool mark two, Hatsune’s ‘HyperScanner’ and I have no other way to describe this but ‘chugged’ down a flask of a solution I hesitantly refer to as 3-fluoro-1-oxypentamethyl bromide.” He counts them off on a gloved finger, each delivered with his usual flat, emotionless tone.

The amaranth bleeds slowly into a cool, aquamarine. “And you didn’t… stop him because…?”
Shin’ya blinked behind the gasmask. “... I wanted to see what would happen,” He says simply, as though it were plainly obvious. And it is. To him.

“Scientific Curiosity. I can get behind that,” She mumbles, “But you know there are rules against this for a reason?” Setsuna can already feel the paperwork straining her desk. “... is he... is that stuff glowing?” She mutters, squinting to get a better look. True enough, whatever Izuku was working with was glowing enough to cast a soft, eerie light on his face. It caught in his eyes in the most mesmerising way, and she has to blink and look away when she feels herself being drawn in.

Shin’ya tilts his head to the side, an exaggerated gesture to compensate for the way the suit hid his face. “Yes. Truly, I have no understanding of Midoriya’s activities. Some form of physics, I imagine.” Physics had never been Shin’ya’s strong point unfortunately. Biology had always been his thing, and to a lesser extent, chemistry. He wouldn’t know what to do with a power wrench if you gave it to him.

Setsuna frowns, her hair turning auburn. “Alright, as interesting as this is, I need to put a stop to it. There’s a reason anything that requires more power than a megawatt requires permission. Midoriya! Oi! MIDORIYA!”

“My apologies, Setsuna-sensei. I do not believe Midoriya is paying attention to anything outside of his work.”

“Not your fault, Shoutan,” Setsuna mumbles, “Well, it is. Kind of. But that’s not the point. Don’t worry though, there’s protocol for this kind of thing.” She cracks her knuckles and calmly approaches Midoriya. “Alright Space Cadet, drop the tools or we’re going to-”

The moment she reaches out to grab him, there’s a brief and susurrant moment of vertigo and then suddenly Setsuna is on the other side of the room, upside down. Midoriya doesn’t even look up from his work.

“My apologies, Setsuna-sensei,” Shin’ya echoes from his distant position, “I should have warned you about that.”

“Yeah, you think?” She mutters, mostly to herself as she staggers back to her feet. Right. She could deal with this. “I don’t suppose you have any tranquilizers?”

Another head tilt. “My apologies, Se-”

“Shoutan, if you apologise one more time, I’m going to slap you,” She mumbles, dragging a palm down her face. “Right, taser it is.” She withdraws a surprisingly large and bulky one from a pocket in her jumpsuit, aiming it squarely at Midoriya’s back. “I don’t know if you can hear me, Midoriya, but you brought this one on yourself.”

No response.

She pulls the trigger, darts flying towards him and embedding them straight in his back just as she had aimed. She holds the trigger down.

No response.

She checks the taser over. Everything seems to be in working order, and when she holds the trigger
down, the display lights up to demonstrate how much power it’s outputting. But still no response. Midoriya doesn’t even seem the slightest bit bothered about it.

And then Midoriya reaches around with one hand, grasps the taser wires and yanks it out of her hands towards him.

“Hey! That’s my Mjolnir! Come on, that’s a proto- oh god damn it, that was still in the testing phase!” In the span of a few seconds, it’s already disassembled and being integrated into whatever project he was working on. Setsuna lets out a long suffering sigh, and drags her hand down her face a second time.

“Should I get Maijima-sensei, Setsuna-sensei?” Shoutan offers, decidedly helpful. Really, if he wanted to be helpful, he should’ve stopped all this from happening in the first place.

“... No. No, I am not explaining any of this to him. Let’s just see where this goes.”

Uraraka Ochako takes a deep breath, steadying her nerves as she faces off against her opponent, and former teammate - Hanta Sero. As far as fights go, she’s pretty sure she has something of a disadvantage. Hanta’s Quirk is well suited for mid-to-long range and is even better at quickly and nonlethally subduing an opponent. Her own Quirk is similarly suitable for nonlethal subduing, but in order to use it she needs contact.

Her sole advantage (if it can be called as such) is that the arena is completely devoid of anything. Hanta was able to set up a variety of traps and hazards with his tape but only because she was capable of making it float. Without anything to adhere to except the ground, it limited Hanta’s options. Still, it limited her options as well. She had nothing to levitate except herself, and it’s not as though that was going to be a big help.

“BATTLE START!”

Hanta goes on the immediate offensive, shooting out a long stretch of tape from one elbow and simultaneously firing smaller stretches from his other.

She doesn’t have much time to consider what he’s planning, already breaking off into a sprint and taking evasive maneuvers. They both know her only option is to get in close, so whatever he’s doing, he’s probably trying to cut her off somehow.

He finally cuts off the first sheet of tape, leaving it to stick to the ground in a long, slightly curved line as she weaves towards him. He switches to firing both elbows at her in rapid, short-lived stretches, backpedalling somewhat as she approaches.

Just as she almost reaches him, he darts to the side, trailing a long reel of tape from his arm as he goes along, trying to sweep around her. As she freezes up to avoid getting caught, he grins in triumph. “It’s over, Uraraka!” Hanta calls, straightening up with his hands on his hips. “You’re caught in my
It takes a moment, but when she surveys her surroundings, his meaning is clear. It’s like a high stakes game of ‘The Floor is Lava’, except instead of molten rock, it’s extremely sticky tape and it is everywhere. There’s enough gaps between most of the swathes of tape that she can cross without getting stuck, but there’s enough of it everywhere that she still has to pay attention to where she’s putting her feet, and she’s rapidly losing space the longer this fight goes on.

“Surrender?” He calls, arms still held at the ready. He’s not that arrogant.

“Very generous of you,” She calls back, eyes narrowing as she takes stock of her situation. She has no intention of surrendering, not after coming so far. “And you wouldn’t offer it if you didn’t think I could win in some way!”

He snorts, winding his arm up and aiming it directly at her. She could dodge, sure, but her options are limited. “I was just tryin’ to be sportsman-like,” He retorts, firing the sheet of tape at her.

It’s an incredibly risky maneuver, but the way she sees it, it’s this or nothing. When the tape is in range, she reaches out and grabs it with one hand, and taps herself with the other. Using her Quirk on herself always makes her feel nauseous, but a little nausea is a small price to pay she thinks as she hurls herself at Hanta using the tape as leverage.

The sudden rush catches him off guard (just as she had intended), and he cuts the tape off, scrambling to try and fire separate reel that goes wide.

Cancelling her Quirk mid-flight is equally risky, but she manages to stick the landing (and by landing, she means landing on Hanta before he can get his bearings), and now they’re in Uraraka’s domain - close quarters combat.

Well, she calls it her ‘domain’, but she’s not exactly super skilled at it. She’s better than Hanta though, and it’s enough. She would just activate her Quirk and throw him off the edge, but she knows he can just keep himself in the ring with his own Quirk, so instead, she keeps tagging him and cancelling it in between a flurry of blows and blocks, keeping him off balance as she pushes him inexorably towards the edge.

And then she tags him on more time, and instead of throwing him anywhere, she just kicks his feet out from under him whilst simultaneously pushing on the side of his head. It’s a maneuver that would normally send anyone crashing head first into the ground, but lacking gravity, it only sends him spinning in place like a gyroscope. “How do you like my ‘Gyrokinetic Combat: Centrifuge Hell’, Hanta-kun?” She says, far too cheerfully as she watches him spin in place.

Instead of a verbal response, all Uraraka gets is projectile vomiting in a wide, circular cone. Slowly, she stops his rotation and cancels her Quirk. She may, or may not have, deserved that.

“What an incredible finisher! It looks like... yes, Midnight’s confirmed it, Hanta Serō can’t continue so Uraraka Ochako is the winner!”

“Oi, Monkey,” Katsuki grumbles, looking around with wide sweeping glances. “Did you find
Deku?”

Mashirao blinks, idly tossing his empty can into the waste bin. “Tsuyu said he went off with some guy in a rubber suit, why?”

It takes a few moments for Katsuki to digest that sentence, and he nods along seriously for a few moments until it finishes settling into his mind. And then he shakes Mashirao back and forth hard enough to give him vertigo. “WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU MEAN HE JUST WENT OFF WITH SOME GUY IN A RUBBER SUIT?!” He’d long since worried this moment would come - when someone would spirit Deku away and the idiot would let it happen because he had all the instincts of a particularly curious puppy.

For his part, Mashirao is seriously regretting his choice of words because ‘guy in a rubber suit’ could mean a lot of things. “It was a student! Not some random guy!”

If only Katsuki could be soothed by such assurances. It’s a miracle he doesn’t start frothing at the mouth really.

“Kacchan,” Hitoshi says in a monotone drawl, and the familiar nickname immediately snatches Katsuki’s attention.

“What?!” He half-snarls, half-shouts.

“Let Mashirao go, have a seat and hakuna your tatas a little.” Hitoshi waits for Katsuki to at least have taken a few deep breaths before releasing his Brainwashing. “Izuku’s fine. If he were in any danger, he can handle himself.”

Hitoshi still gets a serious glare from Katsuki for his troubles, but at least he’s not going to blast them all to hell and back in a blind panic. “I’m not worried about Izuku,” He mutters, even as the other two share a ‘Yeah, right’ look, “I know he’ll be fine. I’m more worried about everything around him.”

“I know he has a tendency to get into trouble,” Mashirao says, brushing himself off a little, “But come on. It can’t.” Before he can finish that thought, Katsuki slaps a hand over his mouth.

“Monkey, if you so much as think of saying ‘it can’t be that bad’, I will push you down a well and tell Lassie to fucking leave you there.”

Hitoshi calmly peels Katsuki’s hand off Mashirao’s face with a bemused expression. “Okay, I’ll bite. What is your worst case scenario?”

“Somehow, that idiot manages to open up a rift to parallel universes and starts summoning alternate versions of himself who proceed to combine their stupidity and form some sort of Council of Deku’s, take over the multiverse, and rewrite all laws of reality to fit with their stupid vision.”

The other two just stare at him silently until Mashirao finds his tongue again. “… That is… uh… very detailed. You’ve given this a lot of thought.”

Katsuki huffs. “Hey, you asked for my worst case scenario, I gave you my worst fucking case scenario.”
After conspicuously coughing into a hand, Hitoshi manages to restore some semblance of order in his mind and straightens himself back up into his usual slouch. “Not that that wasn’t… terrifying in it’s own ways, but what about a more realistic scenario?”

Resisting the urge to mutter ‘That was realistic’ under his breath, Katsuki considers it for a few moments. “He sets fire to the school or blows up a building by accident.”

“He’s ever done anything like that before?” Hitoshi continues, sounding almost disinterested. He certainly doesn’t seem to be taking this as seriously as Katsuki feels he should be.

“… No,” Katsuki grumbles. He can already see where Hitoshi’s going with this, but that doesn’t mean he can’t be annoyed about it. “Fine, I get it, he’s probably just doing… Deku things.”

Feeling brave, Hitoshi slaps him on the back and is rewarded with a half-hearted glare but no violence. “Have a little faith. He’s a smart guy. Not the wisest, but I’m sure he knows what he’s doing.”

Midoriya Izuku has no idea what he’s doing.

It sort of feels like a thousand little parts of his mind, all spinning and going their own direction have suddenly decided to head in the same way and it’s a level of focus he’s achieved only rarely, one he can only remember as a haze. A haze like the one he’s currently experiencing.

Intellectually, he knows what he’s doing. He knows why he’s welding this piece, or attaching that one, or twisting the wires just so and soldering them together in this formation. He knows what they do and why they do it, he just doesn’t know… why he wants them to do that. He’s putting together a thousand piece puzzle except all the pieces are face down so he can only see the featureless backing. He can see the way the pieces go together in a small frame - this piece with that piece and that piece with this piece and so forth but he has no idea what picture he’s actually creating. He can’t step back and see what it looks like because it’s all just… pieces. Pieces that fit together perfectly, but that’s all they are in his mind. Components of a whole he can’t seem to see.

It takes all of his attention, all of his conscious effort to just maintain this… state. Whatever it is, whatever it’s working towards, he feels like if he can ride it to the end, it’ll make sense in some way. If he can flip the puzzle back the right way when it’s done, then he’ll finally know… something. It’s on the tip of his tongue, it’s in the back of his mind, but he just… just can’t get it out. Can’t remember what it is.

He clicks some cabling into place, runs his fingers over a fibreglass plate. Whatever it is, it’s… spherical? It’s about the size of a soccer ball, and mostly metal although there’s this little fibreglass (well, not really fibreglass, it’s more like some kind of weird glass-like substance he chewed up and he says that because he remembers hitting it with a hammer and it hasn’t so much as dented) window, and the insides are very pretty and glowing and achingly familiar.

A memory flows up unbidden by any words or will of his own, an old memory from his earliest days, of looking up at a man with eyes just like the glow, and hair like a dying sun. That was… that was his Dad, wasn’t it? What a weird mem-oh.
He’s done. The Sphere of Mystery is complete, and it glows so beautifully, he’s transfixed by the light. That’s… that’s not what it is, is it? Just a very pretty light? No, he’s pretty sure it’s not. This is… this is a starting point, he knows that. A foundation. Something he can build on. He just doesn’t know how.

“I would venture a guess that he has finished his task.”

Izuku blinks, suddenly aware of how sweaty he is and the presence of two other people in the room. A bemused looking Setsuna, and the inscrutable and unreadable Shoutan.

“You back on Planet Earth, Space Cadet?” Setsuna drawls, her hair turning a light shade of pink. Izuku has no idea what pink means.

“I think?” He says, a little unsure. His hands are tired, and there’s sweat everywhere. “Yeah, I’m pretty sure I’m back.” He holds the sphere up, heavy in his hands.

Setsuna, perhaps wisely, doesn’t approach to examine it closely. “… Nice orb, but what’s it… for? You were doing some pretty funky stuff, especially with those magnets.”

Magnets? Izuku vaguely… remembers them, he thinks. He ate one, and he’s honestly not sure if that was because he was hungry or if he actually needed it for something. “I don’t know!” He declares cheerfully, tilting the orb this way and that. No sign of any… ports or anything you could plug into it. “It’s a mystery. It’s a Mystery Orb.”

“You… don’t know,” Setsuna echoes, sounding like she’s torn between being impressed and irritated, “You don’t know what it does. You ate like, half the projects here and you still don’t know what it’s for.”

“… I ate half the projects here?” Was he really that hungry? He’s pretty sure he ate breakfast and lunch...

Setsuna lets out a long suffering sigh. “… Well, at least it’s not a doomsday weapon,” She mutters, reaching out to take the Orb from Izuku.

Reflexively, he draws it back but he’s not really sure why. It’s… it’s not like an egg or anything is it? That would be very strange. He has no idea how he’d explain that to Kacchan.

“Come on, I’m just going to take a look at it,” Setsuna says, and she sounds genuine. Warily, Izuku extends the Mystery Orb to her and she obligingly doesn’t touch it, just leans in closer. “Your Quirk is… like, you’ve got plasma in your stomach or something right? Because I’m pretty sure at one stage you were vomiting.”

“I do that sometimes,” Izuku says conversationally, “To get the metal out.”

“Right. Except I’m pretty sure you were puking like, actual plasma or something because it’s all in this thing now. You ever do that before?”

He doesn’t think he has? He’s pretty sure he’d remember vomiting up actual plasma. “So this is like… an artificial star?” Hm. It… seems to mesh with what he can remember about it’s design? There was… containment and other things. He doesn’t really know why he’d make an artificial star though, or for what purpose. What would he even do with one?”

Setsuna shrugs, straightening herself up. “Honestly, I have no idea. Particle physics is not my field -
Izuku blinks. Why would he destroy the workshop?

---

The Mystery Orb is no egg, but it will hatch things all the same.

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Yaoyorozu Momo knows she has a tough fight ahead of her. Her opponent is easily one of the strongest people in 1-A, and her own Quirk, whilst versatile and useful in a wide variety of situations, doesn’t have the same combat potential. Well, if she had a lot of time and preparation, it would - but this is a tournament fight. She doesn’t have time to sit down and plan out an elaborate set of traps and constructs.

Hers is an ability that requires planning, forethought, careful analysis, and her opponent’s is… well, not that it isn’t capable of being quite useful with all of those things as well, but if Tokoyami did nothing but try to hammer her with it, it’d still be pretty effective all things considered.

If there is any advantage she has, it’s that she knows Tokoyami’s weakness. Light. The aptly named ‘Dark Shadow’ is weakened (even nullified) by strong light, and she is one of the few people in 1-A who can actually capitalise on that.

She keeps the design held in her mind, not for a flashlight or even a floodlight, but for something decidedly more… risky. Making anything like that would take a while, and she knows damn well she doesn’t have time.

“BATTLE START!”

And just like that, what little time she has is already running out. Tokoyami isn’t wasting any time and he rushes at her, Dark Shadow holding close to one side as he nears.

The weaknesses of ‘Creation’ is that large objects require more time to form; she needs to understand the design of what she’s creating; and she can’t create anything ‘organic’. The latter part is more limiting than you’d expect, but with a little scientific know how, it’s amazing what organic functions you can replicate artificially.

Such as a fluorescent paint based on the bioluminescent cells of sea life. It’s simple, it’s quick, and best of all, it’s technically very small, as she forms them in solid little balls of goo. Sticky enough that they don’t melt in her hands, but liquid enough that they still go splat.
She’ll have to thank that girl from 1-F later, for the formula.

Tokoyami, predictably, doesn’t give her time to form more than a few, but the first few tosses are enough to get him to reverse gears. She misses, but the added distance gives her time to form a simple slingshot. Ideally, she’d have some sort of launcher or cannon, but she doesn’t trust him to give her the time to form that. Of course, the slingshot has it’s own disadvantages over just pegging them at him - she can throw them almost as fast as she can make them, but taking the time to aim slows her down. At least they’re faster.

Not that she’s hitting Tokoyami at all, even with the added bonus of aiming. She makes a mental note to practice shooting. She’s been focusing on close combat with bojutsu and other weapons, so her accuracy isn’t great, especially against someone as agile as Tokoyami.

She needs something different, something flashier. What was the chemical formula for flashbangs again? Magnesium powder, in a casing with something to act as a fuse. Hm, contact or… shit, she can’t aim and design.

Tokoyami swoops in close and she’s forced to fire a quick shot at him to get to back off again, but he doesn’t seem as afraid of the paintballs as he was earlier. He’s learning that he can dodge them pretty easily, so she can’t keep this up.

She needs something that will ignite quickly and - Potassium Nitrate! That’s what she needs! Just gotta think about the chemical structure… whilst fending Tokoyami off.

He was almost on her, Dark Shadow swooping from side to side in erratic movements, and she was already discarding the slingshot because she got one shot at this and if she missed, the slingshot wasn’t going to help at this range anyway.

Magnesium powder and potassium nitrate in a small metal casing with a very primitive flintlock mechanism. It’s the best she can do with Tokoyami right in her face. She just hopes it’ll actually go off.

She squeezes her eyes shut.

There’s a pop, and she snaps her eyes open because it worked she did it and

Dark Shadow collides with her and sends her careening back.

“WHAT AN INCREDIBLE PLAY BY TOKOYAMI! USING HIS OWN BODY TO ABSORB WHATEVER IT WAS THAT YAOYOROZU CREATED, IS SHE OUT OF TRICKS NOW?”

Use… his own body?

True enough, there’s a slight scorch mark to his chest where the small burst of flame singed him. He smothered the light with his body. Of course he did. He knew she’d be trying to do something like that wouldn’t he?

Her heart almost falls out of the bottom of her chest but… no. She’s not willing to give up so easily. Tokoyami’s about to charge her again, but this time she charges back at him and the motion clearly makes him pause. It’s the first time she’s gone to engage him in melee, he must be thinking what’s different this time.
She couldn’t aim well enough to hit him at a distance, so she was just going to have to smear the paint on him by hand. There’s a moment’s hesitation, where he can’t decide if he should meet her where he’s strongest or do the cautious thing and retreat. It’s all she needs.

The first ball splats right on his chest. The second, his arm. The third nails Dark Shadow right in the chest and leaves him with a bright, fluorescent pink stain. She hits with him a further two before the baton is ejected from her hand instead and now they’re in melee and this time, she has the advantage. Just for good measure, she splats several more paintballs on him in the midst of the fight, until they both look like they tried to paint a house fit for a colorblind clown.

By the time she has him pinned against the ground, Dark Shadow is much diminished, a tiny little thing trying to hide behind Tokoyami’s head, about the size and danger of a particularly adorable kitten.

“Yield?” She asks, pressing the baton up against his neck.

Tokoyami cranes his neck, and looks her dead in the eye. “... I...” He says slowly, and her hackles raise instinctively, “... refuse. Dark Shadow!”

The small, diminutive little ‘demon’ tosses something directly at her and moves to cover Tokoyami’s face. It takes her a moment to realise it’s... her improvised flashbang. But didn’t it...?

Cursing, she rolls of him in a scramble and goes to cover her eyes. But the pop never comes. It takes her a moment too long to realise she’s been duped, and then she feels a heavy weight on her back, and her own baton pressing up against her neck. “Yield?” He asks, in that serious tone of his.

She briefly entertains the idea of forming a tesla coil out of her back to electrocute her, but the design would be far too complex for her to make quickly enough. “... Dirty trick,” She mumbles.

“All’s fair in love and war.” Only he could say that and make it sound so melodramatic.

“I YIELD!”

Izuku wasn’t really sure where to go after he finished making the ‘Mystery Orb’. He was tired, everything was sore somehow (how many muscles did it take to make a Mystery Orb? The answer may surprise you), and he was hungry. He was originally going to return to everyone else, but Mei had bumped into him on the way and said his father, of all people, was looking for him. And well, where his father was, his mom probably was as well right? And seeing his mom was pretty good. Of course, actually finding them was harder than it seemed, which was why he was wandering about, completely and utterly lost. Hm. Really, why hadn’t his father left directions, that would’ve been the smart thing to do right? Or maybe he had, and Mei just forgot. Equally likely.

"Oh hey! It's you!"
The vaguely unfamiliar voice catches his attention, and Izuku turns his head to come face to face with... "Oh. It's Ingenium," He says in a completely casual tone. The angular, white armor evocative of the 'Mecha' culture is practically unforgettable. "You've improved your armor."

"That's pretty impressive that you noticed," Ingenium says, rubbing an armored bracer, "Most of the new design is internal. But I suppose that's the kind of thing a Support kid would notice, huh?"

Izuku isn't really paying attention to what he's saying, too busy studying the new bracers. "It was obvious," He offers in lieu of an actual explanation, reaching out to take one of Ingenium's wrists in his hands. It was a really fascinating design, if he's honest, meant to accentuate the use of his Quirk by reducing the strain on his arms and channel the engines force more cleanly, with heatsinks to reduce overheating. "A bit clunky though," He mumbles, rapping his knuckles against it, "Could've been streamlined a bit better, maybe use a tungsten alloy instead..."

Ingenium is left standing there awkwardly as Izuku starts to ramble himself, not really sure if he should stop him. Normally, he probably would, but he's also torn between taking down notes just to see what his team thought. Eventually though, he coughs into his other hand and snaps him out of it. "That was a, uh, pretty impressive fight you had. You and Hatsume are real geniuses, you know."

Izuku nods along. "It was mostly Mei-chan's work," He says, reaching into a pocket and withdrawing a small rectangular card. "If you liked what you saw, take this."

The Turbo Hero accepts the card politely, glancing down at it. "Hatsume's Wondrous Works... Gadgets, Gizmos, and Goodies." Honestly, he's not really sure what he expected. "Good of her to uh, be proactive about it." He blinks (not that Izuku can see it behind the helmet) and reaches for a compartment on his chest. It flicks open to shoot out a crisp, bone-white card of his own. "Speaking of business cards, have one for Team Idaten. You showed some real ingenuity and creativity in the first few rounds as well, and I think you'd be a good fit for our Agency."

He takes the card as politely as Ingenium took Mei's, and carefully squirrels it away into a pocket.

"What are you doing up around here though? Aren't the contestant areas on the other side of the arena?"

Were they? They probably were. Izuku honestly can't remember, he wasn't paying attention. "I got lost," He says simply. "Seeing as I don't have to prepare for any matches, I figured I'd go find my parents. But they forgot to tell me where they were going to be."

Ingenium lets out a good natured laugh, slapping him on the back a little. "Well, I can't say I can help you too much with that. There's been a lot of people around, I don't think I could say for sure whether I saw your parents - and if I did see them, I almost definitely can't tell you where they are."

Izuku nods. That's more than understandable. "Can you tell me how to get back to the contestant area then?"

"Sure! I'll do you one better and show you. My little brother should be there actually, and I was meaning to see him."
Present Mic taps the microphone a little bit, before leaning forward with an exuberant expression on his face. "WHAT A DAY IT HAS BEEN Y'ALL," He declares, his vibrant voice echoing through the stadium like an energetic wave, "WE HAVE SEEN SOME INCREDIBLE BATTLES AND SOME INCREDIBLE CONTESTANTS! BUT THERE ARE ONLY FOUR REMAINING, AND AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, THEY ARE ALL FROM CLASS 1-A! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHIN' THESE KIDS TO MAKE 'EM SO DAMN GOOD, ERASERHEAD?"

With an expression that could curdle milk, Aizawa shoots a glare at his longtime friend and fellow announcer before reaching for his own mic. "The basics," He mutters, still trying to remember how he got caught up in this particular mess. Whose idea was it to make him an announcer? He swears to God, if it was Hizashi...

A lifetime of exposure has rendered Aizawa's potent glare into nothing more than a mild look to Hizashi. "JUST THE BASICS? THESE KIDS HAVE BEEN DOIN' A LOT MORE THAN THAT! BAKUGOU'S HOWITZER IMPACT ALONE IS INSANE! THESE KID'S HAVE BEEN PULLING OUT WHAM SHOTS FROM THE BEGINNING!"

"The basics includes Quirk Training, obviously. But any moves they came up with they did on their own."

Hizashi gasped dramatically, somehow managing to make the exhalation of air sound loud and echoing like everything else that came out of his mouth. "ISN'T IT DANGEROUS TO DO IT WITHOUT SUPERVISION?"

"I never said they weren't supervised. Don't put words in my mouth," Aizawa growls.

"IT'S A GOOD THING WE HAVE THE LOVELY MIDNIGHT TO SUPERVISE THEN," Hizashi says, continuing as though Aizawa hadn't said anything, "BECAUSE THIS NEXT ROUND IS GOING TO BE A METAPHORICAL KILLER! WE HAVE FOUR CONTESTANTS LEFT, BUT AT THE END OF THIS ROUND THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE! THAT'S RIGHT! THIS IS GOING TO BE GRAND FINALE!"

"IT'S A BATTLE ROYALE!"

Chapter End Notes

I wasn't entirely sure who I wanted to win in the final fight. Momo, Tokoyami - they're both good, and they're both strong contenders.

Also it was really hard not to make Present Mic say "I'll put something else in your mouth."

I had the idea for a battle royale finisher since the beginning of the Sports Festival arc, so choosing the final contestants was very much an attempt to create a balanced fight as much as it was going to be interesting. I believe, personally, the interplay of fighters will be enough to keep things still in the air.

Will Bakugou still claim Number One? Will it be someone else? Find out next chapter, which will hopefully be sometime before February!
Chapter Summary

There can be only one Champion.

Chapter Notes

well
i did it
i finally did it
it only took me... a whole two months longer than i thought
but i did it
six thousand words of fighting and occasional commentary
i hope it was
worth the wait (i really hope it was worth the wait)
boy am i fucking glad this arc is over though; i love the sports festival and it was fun
writing it but it took way too much time but that's more on me and not realising what an
investment it would be. i never really wanted to gloss over the fights too much but
maybe i should have? oh well.

please enjoy Chapter 17: Champion's Asteroid Belt

To describe her current state as ‘Nervous’ really wouldn’t be doing it justice, she felt. She was
definitely nervous, but also thrilled and excited in just about equal parts. She was standing on an
arena stage before countless people, one of the final contestants in the famous U.A Sports Festival,
an event so large it was televised! The very fact that she had made it this far was enough for her to
consider this a successful debut.

Of course, that didn’t mean she wasn’t going to do her best to win this. As long as she stuck to her
plan, she thought she had a pretty good chance.

“BATTLE START!”
The words go off like a gunshot in her mind, and she immediately crouches low with her arms raised and ready in case any of them launch a sudden attack... but nobody does. Her own reaction is mirrored across the others - except for Bakugou, whose only reaction is to twitch and stretch his fingers like a gunslinger seconds before high noon.

She flicks her gaze from Ojiro, to Bakugou, to Tokoyami. Nobody wants to be the one to make the first move. There’s an overwhelming pressure attached to it... to act first, to take that first step means to invite the reactions of the other three. If she goes for Bakugou, will they follow suit or will they go after her? If she tries to go for Ojiro (who is the only one who doesn’t have a natural counter to her Quirk), what will they do?

Stick to the plan, she thinks. But no plan survives contact with the enemy.

“How long are you dumbasses going to stand around with your thumbs up your asses?!” Bakugou calls in his usual brash voice, with a somewhat uncharacteristic edge to it. “What the fuck are you waiting for? A gilded invitation?” His fingers flex again, and she doesn’t have to hear what he says next to understand. A glance from Ojiro, a look from Tokoyami - they’ve all realised it too.

“COME AND FUCKING GET SOME !”

And that starts the fight true and proper as all three of them oblige.

Against her better instincts, Ochako decides to rush forward with Ojiro whilst Tokoyami hangs back. It’s a logical formation to take if they were going to cooperate, with everyone acting at the range they’re best at but she can’t shake the paranoid feeling that they’re not really cooperating at all. None of them have agreed to anything.

She pushes the thoughts to the back of her mind for the moment, throwing a chain of quick jabs at Bakugou’s head as Ojiro tries to sweep his legs out from under him - or at least, that’s what they try to do. Bakugou sways in an almost aggressively graceful movement, pulling on her wrist with one hand as he deflects Ojiro’s leg upwards with a kick.

She’s about to fall off balance, but rather than resist, she decides to lean into the pull, hands out ready to brace herself and attempt a more acrobatic recovery. It would’ve worked quite well too, except Ojiro has decided at that moment to try and spring up with his tail, and a well-placed nudge from Bakugou turns what would’ve been two perfectly fine maneuvers into a spectacular collision. Tokoyami chooses that moment to try and intercede, whether because he thought they wouldn’t get anywhere on their own or if he was just waiting for the right moment, Ochako isn’t sure. Either way, she’s grateful for his help.

Or she was, up until Bakugou throws her, not into the path of the attack but, right at its source - an alarmed looking Tokoyami.

He pulls Dark Shadow back to catch her and does it gently (Ochako isn’t sure she would’ve done the same if their positions were reversed) but the damage is already done. It takes maybe ten, fifteen seconds for Ochako and Tokoyami to regain their footing but Bakugou is nothing if ruthlessly efficient. The moment they look back and prepare themselves to launch into the fray, Ojiro skids
across the ground just to the side of them, curled up into a still-smoking ball in an attempt to protect his more vulnerable parts. He at least springs up in barely any time at all, ready to go again.

The three of them share a look, grit their teeth and launch themselves at Bakugou, fully intent on overwhelming him.

The moment Turbo Hero Ingenium steps into the room, Iida Tenya snaps to attention like a soldier saluting a general. “Brother!” He shouts with what many would consider his ‘unique brand of enthusiasm’, shooting over to greet him properly. “I wasn’t aware you were here!”

“Of course I’d be here to see my baby brother compete, Tenya,” Tensei says cheerfully, “Good to see you on your feet. That last hit seemed like a doozy.”

Tenya feels a flare of shame burn through him, and he immediately snaps into a perfect ninety degree bow. “My apologies! I failed to live up to your expectations!”

Tensei lets out an easy going laugh, brushing his brother’s concerns off with a dismissive wave. “Don’t be like that, Tenya. You did wonderfully.” A gauntleted hand comes to rest on Tenya’s shoulder in a reassuring gesture in lieu of the proud smile that’s behind Tensei’s mask. “Oh! Before I forget, have you met Midoriya? I think he’s got a bright future ahead of him.” Tensei gestures to Izuku, and gives Tenya an encouraging but very gentle push.

“I have not met him in an official capacity yet. It is a pleasure to be properly introduced to you, Midoriya-kun!” Tenya gives him a deep and proper bow as usual but Izuku...

Izuku, for his part, is still standing by Tensei’s side, and slowly panning his gaze back and forth between them. At this point, both of the Iida’s are looking at him with a mix of curiosity and confusion (more curiosity on Tensei’s part, and confusion on Tenya’s) as he continues slowly turning back and forth like an animatronic stuck on repeat.

“... Is there something wrong, Midoriya?” Tensei asks after a solid minute of observation.

Izuku tilts his head to the side. “Not much,” He says breezily, reaching up to scratch his cheek with a crooked finger, “I just thought you’d look more alike.”

Tensei’s mask of pure dumbfounded confusion is perfectly mirrored by Tenya’s, but he at least has the benefit of a mask to hide it. “How… how do you figure?” He says quietly, because a) everyone always remarks how similar the two brothers look and more importantly, b) Tensei has only ever met Izuku in his full Ingenium costume so there is absolutely no way he knows what he looks like. Unless he somehow believes that… this isn’t a costume? This is just how Ingenium looks? But surely not? He’s gotten a kind of… spacey vibe from Midoriya, like he was at risk of drifting off into the stars at any passing moment, but surely he’s not that spacey?

His question just earns him a confused blink from Musutafu’s Resident Cryptid, and a little part of
Tensei feels that it is completely unfair for Izuku to be confused. It’s a common feeling amongst people who interact with him on a regular basis, a category Tensei is slowly drifting into.

Once is coincidence, twice is getting caught into an orbit.

“What do you mean?” Izuku asks, pointing a gentle finger at Tenya. “Tenya’s obviously built more broadly than you are. Even his hands are bigger, despite being younger.”

The brothers share a look, and wordlessly hold out their hands. “Huh. Well I’ll be damned,” Tensei murmurs. Even in his gauntlet, Tenya’s fingers are just a smidgen thicker.

“Truly impressive…” Tenya says quietly, straightening up and giving Izuku an appreciative stare. “That attention to detail is to be expected of the Support Department!”

Is it? Izuku isn’t actually sure, but he just smiles and nods.

Something about the scene tickles Tensei’s funny bone, and he only barely muffles the sudden fit of laughter that threatens to overwhelm his dignity. “You’re a weird kid, Midoriya,” He says good naturedly, patting him on the back. “But a good one.” He pauses for a moment, and straightens himself up. “Alright, I gotta get back to patrolling. I’ll see you later, Tenya. Have a good day Midoriya.”

It’s only after bidding Tensei goodbye that Tenya realises there’s a question he still has left unanswered, and there’s an easy source right in front of him. “Midoriya-san… how do you know my brother?”

Izuku smiles brightly. “I gave a mugger his autograph,” He says cheerfully, before waving at one of his other friends and moving over to join them whilst Tenya stands there, still processing what he said.

A pale hand slaps on his shoulder, but Tenya still can’t bring himself to turn around see who it is. “You’ll get used to it,” comes the almost sadistically amused voice of Shinsou Hitoshi.

It’s a brazen lie, but it’s more of a white lie than anything else.

Just as Ochako goes to jab Bakugou in the kidney, he hops into the air, legs curled up against his chest to let Dark Shadow sweep through the space he was standing and crash into Ochako for what feels like the billionth time. Ojiro tries a jumping attack whilst Bakugou is airborne but a quick double-barrel explosion (directed at both Ojiro and Ochako) is enough to evade it. Then whilst they pick themselves up and get ready to try again, he’s already blasted himself to the other side of the arena without more than a handful of scratches.

“IS THAT ALL YOU GOT?!?” He hollers, arms outstretched in a taunting gesture.
Ochako grits her teeth. “All at once,” She mutters, quickly tapping Tokoyami on the shoulder and activating her Quirk on him. He can control his movement through the air with Dark Shadow, and if he attacks from above, they might be able to overwhelm Bakugou.

The three of them charge off all at once again, but this time with Tokoyami taking to the air like an actual bird (well, a bird that flings itself around with a weird sentient shadow). Ochako darts to Bakugou’s left and Ojiro takes the right, and whilst they flank him Tokoyami’s shadow drifts across from above. Surely this time, they think.

But not as long as Bakugou draws breath.

He throws a fist out to Ochako, and she knows what’s coming - an explosion. But his fist is closed and too far to affect her so-

“SHRAPNEL BLAST!” He roars, activating a small explosion in his hand just as he opens his fist revealing a small selection of small fragments of the arena he’d been collecting for the past few minutes.

Ochako squeezes her eyes shut, and holds her arms in front of her face but the explosion doesn’t give the rocks enough force to do too much. Not that it matters, because just moments after Bakugou shouts

“STUN GRENADE!”

And now she can’t even see what’s going on anymore, but she can hear grunting, and soft explosions - none of which bodes well for them. Someone or something collides with her, and they both go tumbling back. By the time she’s not seeing spots all over her vision, it’s pretty clear that Ojiro was the one thrown against her, although Tokoyami isn’t looking much better standing off to their side, his clothes badly burnt in multiple places.

“This is futile,” Tokoyami mutters, sounding as dramatic and foreboding as he usually does, “Even with our numerical advantage, he still has the upper hand.”

As if to rub that fact in their face, Bakugou doesn’t even press his advantage, scowling at them from a distance with his arms crossed.

Ojiro grits his teeth, and staggers up. “He can’t keep this up forever,” He mutters, and Ochako isn’t sure if he’s trying to convince them or himself.

Worse, she’s not sure of it herself.

Tenya’s not sure how it came to this, but for inexplicable reasons Shinsou has seen fit to involve him in his strange circle of friends. A circle that's more of a triangle at this stage given that only Midoriya
is present, which is just as well, because he’s not sure he could tolerate even an attempt at what passes for socialising with Bakugou.

He’s not sure what to make of Midoriya. He has a cheerful brightness to him that is... not quite offset but more accented by his weirdness. He’s significantly more polite than both Bakugou and Shinsou, if somewhat forward in a friendly sort of way. Not quite aggressively friendly - more like... assertively friendly. He was already referring to Tenya by his given name, and without any suffixes but he had an earnest attitude about it that sort of made him not mind too much.

Not like the way Shinsou used his given name, with that insufferable little smirk on his face that told him he knew exactly how much it irritated him which only served to irritate him further.

“What do you think, Tenya?” drawls the Devil, “Whose going to win?”

That snaps him out of his quiet musing, and he straightens up, adjusting his glasses. “I told you, at least add the -san!” He snaps, giving him a hard glare. “As for your question, it’s difficult to draw conclusions so early. Bakugou is courting danger fighting all three of them at once, but so far he seems to be managing quite well.”

Midoriya brightens just a few kilowatts at that, a wide smile on his face. “Mm! Kacchan’s really clever when he wants to be.”

“Clever? Not quite the word I’d use. Brutal is more apt,” Tenya suggests, watching Bakugou knee Ojiro in the chest at that exact moment and send the boy stumbling back. “Fighting those three at once is no easy feat.”

“Yeah, but this is the Lord of Explodomurder. I wouldn’t be surprised if he just wiped everyone out with that Howitzer Impact.” In an uncharacteristic (as far as Tenya is concerned at least) show of friendship, Shinsou offers him a can of juice which he takes, almost warily. “But I’m gonna bet on Ojiro.”

It’s not an answer Tenya expected if he’s honest. No offense to Ojiro. “Do you believe he has what it takes?” He asks, cracking the can open and going to take a gulp.

“No,” Shinsou says so casually and plainly that Tenya almost chokes on the juice (the suspicious part of his mind suggests that Shinsou gave him the juice just to set this event up), “I’m just doing it to wind Bakugou up when I tell him. Mashirao’s pretty good, but he doesn’t stand a chance.”

Right. For a moment he was actually convinced that Shinsou might have been doing it out of a genuine sense of friendship. Still, Tenya can’t fault his conclusion regarding Ojiro’s chances. He’s a skilled hand-to-hand fighter, but his opponents’ quirks make hand-to-hand the most dangerous range to fight at or just allow them to keep him at range. It’s possibly the worst possible match up for Ojiro.

“Mashirao can still win,” Midoriya says cheerfully, “It’s not likely, but he can.”

Tenya wonders if he should feel bad for Ojiro, that nobody seems to have much faith in his victory. “How would you do it then, if you were in Ojiro-san’s place?”
“I’d surrender,” He says without missing a beat. “I can’t beat Kacchan. Or Ochako. Or Fumikage.”

“He meant if you were Ojiro, Izuku,” Shinsou mutters, in the tone that suggests this is just part and parcel of communicating with Midoriya.

Midoriya tilts his head to the side. “I know. But I guess Mashirao would want to win, so he wouldn’t surrender. If surrender wasn’t an option, I’d wear Kacchan out.”

“Isn’t that… what they’re currently doing?” As if to accentuate Tenya’s words, the three combatants rush Bakugou once again. Somewhere in the chaotic melee, Ojiro ends up tailswiping Tokoyami instead of Bakugou, and Ochako receives a knee to the face, and then Bakugou is on the other side of the arena again.

Midoriya huffs, arms crossed and cheeks puffed. “They’re doing it wrong.” Is… is he actually sulking about this?

Tenya adjusts his glasses, and straightens his posture. “I’m not sure I follow, Midoriya.” Tensei suggested that Midoriya had a bright future ahead of him - he’s not sure how familiar Tensei is with him, but it’s the kind of suggestion Tenya’s curious to see for himself.

“One, not three,” Midoriya states seriously, holding up the appropriate amount of fingers, “And don’t let up.”

One not three and don’t let up… “I see!” He murmurs, impressed. Every time they rush Bakugou, he manages to push them back using their own attacks and escape whilst they recover. But if they attacked one by one, they would each get more time to recover whilst simultaneously keeping the pressure on Bakugou. Was this the kind of curriculum the Support Department covered?

“But I don’t think Mashirao is going to figure it out. If they keep at it like this, Kacchan will wait for an opportunity and take them all out.”

Ochako watches Bakugou stand back again, pose vaguely taunting and full of arrogance. Every time they rushed him, he danced around them. Stupid arrogant...

No… he’s not being arrogant. This is… She opens her mouth to share her revelation, but closes it before it’s even halfway open when a second, more sinister revelation takes place. Should I share it? This is still a competition...

What Ochako had realised, and what the other two had yet to catch on to, was the nature of Bakugou’s gambit. It was true that the three of them had a numerical advantage if they ganged up on him, but it was an advantage negated (if not outright outweighed by) the fact that the three of them were not a well coordinated team - if anything, they were the opposite. They were doing more damage to each other than Bakugou himself had done to them, and that was exactly what he wanted. He’d baited them into attacking him together because he’d successfully predicted it would backfire
on them *and* leave him looking spectacular in the process.

If they were really going to coordinate, the best thing to do would be to combine their powers - use Anti-Gravity on Ojiro and have Dark Shadow fling him at Bakugou like a cannonball, and whilst those two kept him busy, Ochako could use some of the rubble left around for an attack of her own. Except there was nothing stopping Dark Shadow from just flinging a massless Ojiro off the field, and if Ochako used the prototype technique she’d been planning to use if it came down to it, there was a significant risk of hitting the other two as well.

That was the crux of the issue. If she explained Bakugou’s gambit, it lost its power and they could work around it. The problem was the solution to the gambit was ‘Trust’ and if there wasn’t any trust, revealing the gambit would just be giving away an advantage.

It was a painful reminder that Bakugou Katsuki wasn’t just raw explosive power and aggression - he was cunning and clever too, with an instinct for fighting. But he wasn’t the only one who could be underhanded and manipulative.

It wasn’t particularly heroic, but she wanted to *win* and if winning meant throwing Ojiro and Tokoyami under the proverbial bus, then Uraraka Ochako was going to do it with a vengeance.

She needed an opportunity to strike though. Ojiro she can handle alone with a surprise attack but Dark Shadow is troubling. “You guys go ahead, I’m going to try and think of something,” She murmurs, and it’s not quite a lie. They give her the benefit of the doubt, and she mentally apologises.

Bakugou’s trail of destruction is smaller than she imagined, but there’s still enough bits and pieces to begin setting up an attack. Each chunk is no larger than her closed fist, but they’ll have to do. She doubts it’ll help much against Bakugou. Not alone at least.

The opening she’s waiting for comes with a second ‘Stun Grenade’. Ochako’s far away enough that she’s got enough time to shield her eyes, but with Tokoyami’s Dark Shadow badly hindered by the flash and Ojiro caught point blank, it’s the perfect opportunity.

She tags Ojiro as she rushes in, pushing him with the same movement so he starts hurtling towards the edge. Tokoyami goes spinning off with a similar strike, and she’s careful to make sure he is *spinning*. Dark Shadow can’t halt his movement for a handful of seconds, and she needs to make sure by the time it’s recovered, Tokoyami’s already out of the fight.

There’s a single golden moment where Bakugou is absolutely surprised and she relishes it just as much as she does the feel of her fist slamming into his jaw in the first solid blow anyone has actually landed on Bakugou. And it is *immensely* satisfying.

“What’s this? Uraraka has suddenly turned on her impromptu teammates! Ojiro Mashirao is already out of bounds and… Tokoyami manages to cling on just in time! Things are really heating up!”

Ochako curses under her breath. Great. She *had* hoped to take Tokoyami out but now that she failed, the neat little one on one she had planned is now a much messier three way.
It’s a little hard for him to admit, but Bakugou Katsuki is impressed. Of all them, he expected maybe Nevermore to get to this point but Roundface? He really has to adjust his estimate of her if she was willing to go this far. It’s not going to change anything though. Just because Uraraka has managed to find a ruthless bone in her body doesn’t mean he was going to roll over and let her win.

He wipes some blood from his mouth (she got him good with that punch), and grins. Her surprise attack failed, and there goes her advantage, and with Monkey out of the picture… there’s no reason to stay on the defensive anymore.

He directs both hands behind him, propelling him forth with the blasts, eyes locked on Uraraka with a wide, bloodthirsty grin on his face. She wasn’t expecting this result, and it’s Katsuki’s turn to take the offensive. They exchange rapidfire blows, and he’s intensely careful to avoid touching her open fingers.

Something dark and heavy wraps around his wrist and tries to yank him away. He lets off a small explosion in that hand, more light than blast, and it’s enough to make Dark Shadow let go.

Uraraka takes the opportunity to jab at his throat, and his grin spreads a few inches wider because she’s really not holding back and this is getting fun.

He lashes out with a kick and catches her in the ribs and Dark Shadow claws along his back. He stumble forward with a grunt, and Uraraka’s retaliation knee slams into his chest. It’s almost ironic, but the two of them are doing a much better job tag-teaming him than with Monkey. To be fair to the Monkey idiot, it’s a lot harder to push them into each other’s attacks when there’s only two other attacks to work with.

A foot sweeps out his ankles and padded fingertips push on his shoulder and a scenario he was trying very much to avoid is suddenly reality. A quick jerk of his arms to try and arrest his spinning whilst he still can, Uraraka strikes him on the hip and now he’s spinning in two different directions at once like a gyroscope, but he fires off the explosions anyway and soars through… the sky. That might be a good sign - or not. If he’s drifted over the edge, all she has to do is cancel her Quirk.

His momentum’s arrested by another pair of careful explosions, and he’s at least in the safe area… just as soon as Dark Shadow is wrapped around his ankle again and he went from flying away to crashing down all too soon.

Nevermore is on top of him, moments later, clad in the inky blackness of Dark Shadow - this was his special technique wasn’t it, the one with the dumb edgy name (well all of Nevermore’s techniques are dumb and edgy) and it’s damn impressive but Katsuki isn’t giving up without a fight.

He flexes his fingers experimentally but he knows there’s no way a rapid chain of smaller explosions are going to get through Dark Shadow’s armor and he doesn’t have enough time to build up a Stun Grenade. That leaves his bare hands and it’s not a situation to be envied. Dark Shadow feels like a strange cross between silk and steel, smooth and soft when you brush up against it but utterly unyielding when you try to punch it. Not that Katsuki was going to stop trying even when his knuckles are bruised and bloody and he’s half-certain he’s doing more damage to himself.
“DIVINE BOVINE, THESE KIDS AREN’T HOLDING ANYTHING BACK AT ALL! IF THEY’LL GO THIS FAR JUST TO WIN THE COMPETITION, HOW DO YOU HANDLE THEM AT EXAM TIME?”

“They’re your students as well.”

Katsuki was too focused on fending off Tokoyami to notice it at first, but when Tokoyami has both his wrists and is trying to pin him down, there’s a lull in the fight that gives him enough time to realise two separate but related things. Firstly, Uraraka hasn’t done anything since Tokoyami jumped on him. Secondly, there is a cloud of debris hovering above them.

“Motherfuck—behind you!” He snarls, struggling a lot more frantically than before. The rock’s don’t look particularly big, but they don’t have to be if they’re going to be dropped from that height.

Of course, Nevermore doesn’t believe him. “Do you really think I’m going to be deceived with such a simple gambit, Bakugou?” He growls, pushing his arms down against the ground. “I ex-”

THUD

The first rock strikes the ground inches away from both of their heads, but the second hits Tokoyami right in the small of the back. It only elicits a mild grunt from him though, the defense granted to him by Dark Shadow enough to quite literally shrug the shower of debris off - which is just as well for Katsuki who is currently pinned under him, because he has no such defenses against falling rocks.

The miniature meteor shower does present an opportunity for Katsuki though - in order to properly defend against the hail of rocks, Dark Shadow has shifted from the front to the back. He’s not merciful enough to let an opening like that slide, and he reaches out to grab the rock that had so neatly landed right by his head. Clubbing Nevermore in the face with a rock was… well, it was a touch too brutal even for him. He was going to be a Hero, not a Pit Fighter (although if Nevermore were a villain, he wouldn’t hesitate). Still, crushing the rock in his left fist with a little explosive help gave him just what he needed - a handful of blinding dust.

Nevermore makes an angry noise that is somewhere between a squawk and a snarl. It’d almost be comedic if Katsuki wasn’t so focused on driving his fist into his kidney. By the time Katsuki finally staggered to his feet, Tokoyami is only barely capable of trying to get back up. It’d be a moment of triumph for Katsuki if it weren’t for the fact that Uraraka’s still ruthlessly in it to win it and she takes the opportunity to slug him in the face with an impressive haymaker.

“AAAAAN INCREDIBLE EXCHANGE! AFTER, YES MIDNIGHT HAS JUST DECREED IT, ELIMINATING TOKOYAMI, IT’S DOWN TO THE WIRE WITH JUST BAKUGOU KATSUKI AND URARAKA OCHAKO LEFT BUT SHE’S NOT GIVING HIM ANY BREATHING ROOM!”

He’s being dragged through the air now - not against the ground but the air itself, whistling past him.
He’s been tagged again, and she’s trying to get rid of him. He waits for her to throw him (she has to let go eventually), and the moment she does he twists through the air hands splayed out and he rockets right back at her with a wild expression on his face.

Now the fight *really* begins.

Ochako knew her chances had diminished the moment her Meteor Shower hadn’t taken out both Tokoyami and Bakugou. At least it was just her and Bakugou now, for what it was worth. Not that it was worth much.

“Come on, Uraraka!” Bakugou roars, throwing a punch at her fast enough that she’s pretty sure the wind itself is at risk of cutting her. “Let’s fight! No Quirks! Man to man!” Pause. “Or woman! Whatever! It doesn’t matter!”

She darts back to create some space, eyes narrowed in caution. “... I wasn’t born yesterday, Bakugou,” She calls back, a smirk on her face slowly building up to a grin. “You’re tired, aren’t you? You’d have to be to resort to tricks like that.”

Sparks light up his left hand, and he laughs derisively. “Come try me. See how tired I am.”

She starts to circle around him slowly, gaze focused. It’s a small detail, but his explosions have been getting… smaller if not weaker. There hasn’t been as much punch to them. “... You are,” She says slowly, grinning widely now.

It’s almost unsettlingly shark-like, but Bakugou has had years of dealing with worse so it barely ruffles his feathers.

Ochako doesn’t waste any more time before she rushes in for the kill, fully intent on ending it then and there.

Bakugou, naturally, has no such intentions, and returns the rush with as much vicious vigor. He throws a left straight with added explosion, but just as Ochako surmised, the blast is… well it’s not pitiful by any means but it’s not much larger than his fist which is a far cry from his usual fare.

It only emboldens her, and she starts getting more and more aggressive, slowly forcing Bakugou onto the defense. He still throws out the occasional explosive left jab, but each successive explosion grows weaker and weaker. The moment comes. She goes for the final strike. A foot placed just so, a hand on Bakugou’s wrist, another at his shoulder. He hits the ground hard, and she follows shortly after, legs wrapped around his right arm. “Got you,” She crows, tightening the armbar a little. “I know you don’t have any explosions left in you worth a damn. Now *yield*.” If he thought she wouldn’t make good on the threat, he had another thing coming.
“WHAT AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY! IS THIS THE END? COULD WE HAVE OUR CHAMPION AT LAST?!”

He struggles briefly, and she starts to put the pressure on. “What… was that… you said, fucker?” He grunts out, managing to force something like a smirk on his face despite the obvious pain he was in. “No… more… explosions? When… have I ever... run out?” He uncurls the fingers of his right hand. The light catches on his palms, and the glinting sets warning klaxons off in her mind.

She has enough time for a last ditch attempt to stop Bakugou but it’s not enough. Her world is engulfed in fire and smoke.

Hitoshi’s not sure what to feel about the fight. On one hand it’s all very impressive. Displays of great power, cunning and technique. On the other… it’s a little terrifying. He knew Katsuki could do this kind of thing, this kind of no holds barred brawling to win but… Uraraka? He’s not super familiar with her, but looking at her, she didn’t really seem like the kind of person who had it in her. She just seemed… nice.

You really do have to look out for the nice ones, he thinks, giving the beaming Izuku a sidelong glance.

“What do you think’s going on?” He mutters, watching Midnight say… something to Katsuki and then gesture with her whip-thing. And then she thwacks him with it. He doesn’t seem pleased.

“Midnight’s calling the fight,” Izuku says cheerfully, “Before anyone gets too badly injured. Kacchan’s arm is already broken and that last explosion probably gave Ochako a concussion.” Izuku’s brazen willingness to use everyone’s first names still astounds Hitoshi.

It makes sense. Almost. “Okay, if she was going to do that, why didn’t she intervene in like, half the other fights? And by the other fights I mean literally every fight with Katsuki.”

Izuku doesn’t respond to that, just humming thoughtfully to himself.

“It is just as well that she did,” Tenya muttered, adjusting his glasses with a serious look. “I do not believe either of the contestants were willing to surrender no matter badly they were injured. It was either going to be a knock out or a decision.” That’s definitely a conclusion Hitoshi can get behind. If Katsuki had his way, he’d probably end up with all of his limbs broken and then still try and bite Uraraka into submission.

At that moment, Midnight thwaps Katsuki again and then gestures at the announcers.

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FIGHT IS OFFICIALLY OVER! THE LOVELY LADY
MIDNIGHT HAS BROUGHT AN END TO THE FIGHT AND... WHAT’S THIS? SHE’S NOT CALLING IT EITHER CONTESTANT’S FAVOUR! WE’LL HAVE TO GO TO THE JUDGES! MR ERASERHEAD, THEY’RE YOUR PROTEGES! WHO DO YOU THINK WILL TAKE HOME THE SASH? ”

“I refuse to be a part of this. ”

Hitoshi hmm’s, leaning forward on the railing. “... Wanna make a bet? Katsuki or Uraraka. Explosions or Gravity. Loser buys everyone a drink.”

“Wh-a wager?! On our own classmates?! How could you even suggest such a-” Tenya begins, spluttering already. It’s really too easy - like winding up a toy except you just have to give it like a quarter of a turn before it goes off for hours.

“I’ll go on Kacchan,” Izuku says cheerfully, interrupting Tenya’s rant without a second thought.

“I expected you’d go for that option,” Hitoshi remarks, turning to give Tenya the full force of his cheshire smirk. “Well, Tenya? What’ll it be?”

“For the last time, don’t use my name so familiarly!” Tenya snaps. Too easy. He looks between the two of them, and apparently the peer pressure is too much (or maybe it’s just the innocently expectant look on Izuku’s face) because he lets out a sigh. “Fine. Uraraka-san then. She had Bakugou in a pinning position, she’s clearly ahead in points. Not to mention she eliminated Ojiro-san.”

Hitoshi shrugs lightly. “Well, Katsuki took out Tokoyami and got her back for the arm bar. Not to mention the fact that he held all three of them off for so long.” He doesn’t really have a stake in the argument that much… except for keeping Tenya from realising that. If he’s forced to make a wager, he’ll think of something. If he gets away with it… free drink.

“Ah… they’re announcing the winners.”

Aaaand he’s made it across the finish line. Izuku, he thinks, I could kiss you.

“THANK YOU FOR WAITING EVERYONE! IT’S TIME... TO ANNOUNCE THE RANKINGS!” Present Mic seems more bombastic when you can see him, striding across the arena in front of the winner’s stands.

“OF COURSE, IN FOURTH IS OJIRO MASHIRAO! HIS FIGHTING TALENT SAW HIM THROUGH TO THE FINALE BUT IT COULDN’T OVERWHELM HIS OPPONENTS! A ROUND OF APPLAUSE! ”

Ironically, Ojiro looks the least beaten and bruised of the four but it might have more to do with the fact that he was eliminated earlier by getting out of bounds. The other three had to be beaten into position. He’s still quite proud as All Might presents him with a medal. Fourth place is still a final position.
“IN THIRD, WE HAVE THE INSCRUTABLE TOKOYAMI FUMIKAGE! HIS POWERFUL QUIRK GAVE HIM A LEG UP, AND AFTER A GRUELING FIGHT, HE WAS TAKEN OUT!”

Tokoyami, by contrast, seems more bashful and shy in the spotlight. Whether that was because he was just like that, because he only made it to third or because All Might was bestowing him with a medal is hard to say.

“IN SECOND PLACE, AFTER MUCH CONSIDERATION AND HAWWING WE HAVE… BAKUGOU KATSUKI! HIS EXPLOSIVE POWER WAS INCREDIBLE, AND THE ARC OF HIS PERFORMANCE HERE IN THE SPORTS FESTIVAL WAS ONE OF A KIND!”

Bakugou takes his loss well, all things considered. He’s still glowering like someone murdered his favourite puppy, but he doesn’t resist when All Might slips a silver medal around his neck and even manages a very brief wave to the crowds that doesn’t even end in a rude gesture.

“BUT OF COURSE THERE IS ONLY ONE WINNER AND ONLY ONE GOLD! SHE WAS SOMETHING OF A DARK HORSE IN THIS RACE, BUT SHE MADE IT TO THE FINISH LINE AND SHE EDGED ALL THE FAVOURITES! URARAKA OCHAKO EVERYONE!”

The applause from the crowd reaches truly thunderous levels, as All Might presents the champion with the gold medal. Her own face is grinning so wide it has to hurt - especially with all the burns and bruises.

“Next time, Uraraka,” Bakugou mutters, adjusting his medal with the arm that isn’t in a cast, “I’ll be the one standing in your place.”

She doesn’t let the grin slip from her face. “Just try it, Bakugou. I’ll break both your arms next time.”

“OUR CHAMPIONS EVERYBODY!”

Chapter End Notes

I was never really sure who I wanted to win the Sports Festival, but I knew early on it was either Uraraka or Bakugou. I like them both a lot, and Bakugou’s the obvious favourite but Uraraka! BUT BAKUGOU! URARAKA!

So I flipped a coin and wrote the ending based on that.
**Orbit Stabilizer**

Chapter Summary

The more things change, the more they stay the same. As the chaos and energy dissipates, life resumes its usual dynamics.

Chapter Notes

This took a pretty long time - for the longest time after writing the last chapter, I felt pretty drained in general. I reshuffled some plot arcs, went back to my outline and reworked it a bit, a lot of background stuff.

I think I've mentioned it before as well, but I've been trying to... reclaim(?) part of the atmosphere and feel that was present in early chapters that I no longer feel is present in later ones, and that's been pretty difficult all round. The curse of having a (relatively) solid plot structure is that there's less room for random moments of complete surreality. Or maybe I've lost my touch? I don't know. But I am trying to restore that as best I can.

All that said, this chapter is mostly a bridge. As is no doubt obvious, the Internship/Hero Killer Stain Arc is going to be wildly different from canon, and its going to take some building up to.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The digital watch face blinks back at him, stubbornly insisting it's 2:58 in the morning no matter how much he glares at it. “Come on, be three already,” He mutters, tearing his gaze away from it to scan the living room of his house once again. Hm. Is it really his house? It is and it isn’t, he supposes.

Midoriya Hisashi has very little claim to it, given he’s so rarely in it.

He taps a polished shoe against the ground impatiently, fiddling with the carefully tied windsor knot of his crimson silk tie. He hates leaving like this - disappearing in the middle of the night like a phantom. Like he’s some sort of fever dream, vanishing when you look away. Inko deserves something better than that, but if it were up to him, she would be Queen of the World and he imagines many people would disagree with that. Then again, that was what death rays were for.

Not that he was allowed to build those anymore.

His watch beeps just as he feels it - a cold wind that rushes through his house even though he’s quite certain all the windows are closed. “Drama queen,” He mutters under his breath, although he’s forced to squint against the biting wind as it howls around him in a silent but personalised maelstrom.
Slowly, but surely, a crack in space begins to form in front of him and then it starts to widen until he
can see directly into a terrifying space of whirling teal-black energy and what appeared to be silently
screaming faces. To anyone who wasn't familiar with it, it must've appeared terrifying, like some sort
of breach to the Hell dimension.

Hisashi rolls his eyes. “Can you quit with the theatrics, Charon? Its bad enough that you insist on
doing this at the witching hour.”

Suddenly, the whirling tear in space widens considerably faster, as though someone had just pressed
the fast forward button on a remote. Once at a sufficient size (suspiciously similar to the
measurements of the average door), the space seems to stabilise and the energy fades, leaving a
distinctly out of place opening in space that lead to an empty corridor.

Empty, save for the suited, dark-skinned figure standing in the middle of it, a faintly amused
expression visible just above a half-mask decorated with a bone motif. “Only because you asked so
nicely, Prometheus. Back to work so soon?”

“No rest for the wicked,” Hisashi answers dryly, peering into the corridor. “I don’t suppose you
know what my next assignment is?”

The operative known as Charon simply shrugged. “You’ll have to talk to Hades. Speaking of which,
he’s waiting for you.”

“Great.” Just the person he wanted to see… Hisashi takes one last look at the house. Oh, to be able
to say goodbye my love…

“Come on, get a move on. You know I can’t hold this gate open forever.”

Prometheus stuck his tongue out, not that Charon could see, before he stepped into the corridor
alongside him. The moment his heel was clear of the portal line, the tear in space snapped shut as
though it had never been there.

The only thing left was a small card on the kitchen table.

When Izuku comes down for breakfast, he’s not all that surprised to see that the table is set for one -
a solitary bowl of rice, one bowl of miso soup, one plate of grilled fish, and a small serving of
pickled vegetables. He’s not all that disappointed either, but he still calls out “Already?” in an
inquisitive voice.

Having the singular pleasure of raising Izuku, Midoriya Inko can read what Izuku means far better
than anyone and doesn’t miss a beat. ‘First thing in the morning, but he left you this card, dear.” She
sets it down on the table alongside a cup of green tea.

The front is embossed with All Might’s beaming visage, cheerfully telling him ‘NEVER FEAR!
WHY? FOR IT’S YOUR DAY TODAY!’ Inside, there is a small drawing of what Izuku can only
assume is Hisashi giving him the thumbs up, and a small message.
Hey sport,

I wanted to say goodbye in person, but we don’t always get what we want. I also wanted to write a lot more here, but I don’t really have much time so, there’s that as well.

Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do. Don’t do anything that would disappoint your mother.

Lots of love,
Your Wayward Father

He’s not really sure what he should be feeling about this information. Relief probably isn’t it, but it feels like a pressure has been lifted off of him all the same. It seemed that despite all of Izuku’s best efforts, he couldn’t see that man as his father. Well. It’s not like he hated him or anything.

Izuku has never really hated anything though. It’s just as well that he never has, for the very thought of what might be born out of Izuku’s hatred has more than once kept Katsuki awake with nightmares.

The energy in 1-F is positively frenetic, but it’s almost entirely due to Hatsume Mei, whose bombastic posturing can be heard well into the hallway. Of course, the moment Izuku steps through the door, all of that intense chaotic energy is focused on him. Everyone else is abuzz with lower levels of excitement as well, but it doesn’t escape his notice that Shin’ya isn’t present.

Although that probably has something to do with the way Makino very pointedly and loudly says “Oh hey Midoriya!” in what is blatantly an attempt at getting Mei to target someone else. Its a successful ploy, and Izuku doesn’t mind being the lightning rod.

“Are you EXCITEDIZUKU?!” She cries, leaning in so close he can almost feel her eyelashes against his. Before he can even open his mouth, she continues in a breathless rush. “This is the day we’ve all been waiting for! When all our hard work pays off! It’s finally here!”

Izuku blinks. “... Isn’t it too early to graduate?”

“What? No! Not that day! The other day!”

“... We haven’t even done final exams yet though.”

“The other other day!”

“... But we just had the-”

“INTERNSHIPS!” Makino screams, raw frustration bleeding out of her soul into the ether around her, “SHE’S TALKING ABOUT INTERNSHIPS! Sweet Athena’s grace, how can you be so smart and so dense?”
Izuku puts a finger to his chin. “I dunno,” He admits, after a moment of thought, which just draws another groan from Makino. It’s kind of funny to Izuku - Kacchan reacted the same way when he’d answered that question as well.

“But aren’t you excited Izu-kun?!” Mei cries again, now that he’s finally on the same page as her. “Internships! All those wonderful companies have watched our performance in the Sports Festival and they’re going to be asking US! I’ve already got an offer, but I can’t wait to see who else will make them!”

Makino freezes momentarily. “... You already have an offer?” She mutters, sounding disbelieving.

Really, Izuku doesn’t know what’s so surprising about that. “I’ve got one as well,” He offers helpfully, rummaging around for that business card Ingenium gave him.

This appears to be the wrong thing to say to Makino as she drops her head onto the table with a soft ‘THUD’. “Stupid of me to even try to compete with monsters…” She mumbles under her breath.

Izuku lets out a small laugh, and pats her on the back as Mei slings an arm around her shoulders. “Don’t worry Maki-chan!” She declares, “There’ll be a bright future ahead of you as part of my design team!”

“That’s exactly what I’m afraid of.”

Fortunately for Makino, any further nightmares were put to rest when Maijima burst into the room. “ALRIIIIIIGHT! EVERYONE IN YOUR SEATS!” He boomed, dropping a large stack of papers on his desk. Setsuna trailed behind him, hair a cool light teal, as she carried an even larger stack precariously in her arms before depositing alongside the first. “Everyone here…? Good! Firstly: congratulations on your performance in the Sports Festival! You kids put on an incredible performance. This was the best performance by the Support Department in years. So give yourselves a pat on the back for that. But now onto business.”

Maijima gave the class a serious look from behind his excavator-helmet. “Its time for internships. Now, some of you have gotten direct offers due to your performance in the Festival - be proud of that but don’t think that’s yer only option! We have a list of companies willin’ to take internships from the Support Department and they’re far from trash. Think long and hard about which one you choose to go with. Setsuna will hand out the lists, as well as any offers you might have received.”

Izuku takes a moment to glance over the list. There’s a lot of big name corporations on there, as well as famous support companies and heroes. None of them jump out at him as particularly interesting or ideal though, and Team Idaten’s business card almost burns in his pocket. He spares a glance over at Mei, who is gleefully going over a list at least twice as long as Izuku’s and he lets a smile spread across his face.

He thinks he knows where he wants to go.

Maijima-sensei gives him a Look when he tells him he’s interning at Team Idaten, as if to ask Izuku if he’s sure. The moment passes, and he jots the details down before. “Can I ask you a favour, Midoriya?” He asks, surprising the starry-eyed boy.
“Of course,” He replies cheerfully, because he is nothing if not helpful.

“Shoutan called in sick today. Can ya deliver his list to his quarters?” Maijima holds out some papers, somehow larger than even Mei’s even though Shin’ya hadn’t participated in the Sports Festival at all.

Izuku nods, but there’s a slight flaw in this plan. “I have no idea where he lives.”

“Easy peasy. West side of U.A, there’s a building just past the dormitories. If ya get lost, ask for directions,” Maijima replies gruffly.

Well. That’s a surprise. Izuku never realised he lived on campus… although this does make a great time to deliver something of his own.

Shinsou Hitoshi has a serious conundrum on his hands. His performance at the Sports Festival was apparently good enough that people think he’s worth mentoring. Or, more cynically, it was so awful they pitied him and want to polish him up into a presentable state. If he’s perfectly honest, he doesn’t actually care which of the two it is, because either way, he still has to choose someone to go with.

A week long internship with a Hero…

“Oi, Ojiro,” He mutters, causing the other boy to pause in the middle of inhaling his ramen. “Who are you interning with?” Maybe if he asks someone else he’ll get a better idea of what he wants to do with himself.

“Oh. Uh. The master of my old dojo - Sun Wukong (the Third).” He finishes his mouthful of noodles, and lets out a small sigh of contentment. “I didn’t realise he took internships, because he’s supposed to be retired? But I guess he still has his Hero License, and well, I’m familiar with him already so…”

Well, that doesn’t help Hitoshi at all. “Lord Explosion Murder?”

Katsuki glares half-heartedly, and Hitoshi’s surprised to find he’s a little disappointed. “I don’t know why you think I can help you Captain Smartass. I got a request from Best Jeanist and you bet your insomniac ass I’m taking it.”

Best Jeanist? “Isn’t he like, number five in the Hero Rankings?” Hitoshi’s genuinely impressed. Genuinely. It’s not like any of the Hero’s sending offers to Hitoshi are no names, either, but to get an offer from one of the top ten Heroes…

“Number Four,” Katsuki corrects with just a hint of smug.

… Now he wants to know who sent offers to Uraraka, given that she beat him. Endeavour? *All Might*?

“Why? Who are you interning with?”
Hitoshi lets out a sigh. “I have no idea,” He admits. “I don’t even know what kind of focus I want.” Should he go for a combat-oriented mentor and learn to fight? Someone more with publicity skills? … he kind of wishes Izuku was here, so he could pick his brain. He’d probably have some ideas. “Where is Izuku, anyway?”

Katsuki pauses. Normally those words would’ve filled him with a yawning pit of dread, but… well, Izuku has been out of sight of anyone before and the world hasn’t ended yet. So maybe he shouldn’t be too worried? “Dumbass probably got lost in his own head again.”

The truth is perhaps a bit more mundane than that.

Izuku’s pretty sure he’s finally found his destination (for all his many talents, reading maps is not one of them), because the first thing he sees on the building is a large warning sign informing him that the building is a biohazard area, and entry is strictly forbidden without explicit permission from staff. It’s also a stark reminder that despite considering himself Shin’ya’s friend, he doesn’t know much about the other boy.

He knows his Quirk is called Biohazard, and that its apparently dangerous enough that he wears a special suit. He knows he’s studying his own Quirk, and that he’s a brilliant chemist and biologist. But he doesn’t really know much beyond that - but this is a great opportunity to learn, and Izuku’s never shied away from such a thing, so he strides past the warning signs to the intercom.

Bzzzzzt. “… Midoriya,” comes Shin’ya’s flat, unemotional tone. It sounds vaguely hoarser though, and somewhat like he has just woken up.

“Hi Shin’ya-san!” Izuku chirps, leaning towards the intercom. There must be a camera, somewhere, although he hasn’t noticed it just-oh there it is in the corner. He waves. “Maijima-sensei asked me to drop some stuff off for you. Can I come in?”

There’s a brief silence before the static of the intercom cuts through it again. “It is currently almost the end of lunch, Midoriya. Are you not required to return to class?”

“Nope! We have a free period afterwards. I can spend it here.” Izuku beams at the camera.

After another period of silence, friendship wins out once again as sliding airlock doors hiss open.

Inside is a glaringly pristine white, and Izuku almost feels like he’s going to dirty things just by breathing on them. On hooks are a row of hazmat suits of varying sizes. What to do next is obvious and he wastes little time in shifting into one, putting his deliveries into a plastic satchel at the waist. The moment he’s finished zipping up, the doors seal shut with a small hiss, and a friendly, female voice blares to life.

“Bioscan in progress. Please standby… no biohazardous materials detected. Opening airlock.”
The doors open slowly, and Izuku holds his breath even though there’s no need. He half expects an on rush of opaque smoke or gas… but there’s nothing at all. Nothing he can detect from inside the suit at least.

The airlock opens into a wide open space, similar to the average Japanese home. There’s a small table in the center of the room, tatami mat floors, and a surprising amount of plants - pot plants are scattered around the floors, they protrude from the walls and even hang from the ceiling in some places. Many of them are currently flowering, and Izuku wishes he could smell the wonderful scents.

“Welcome to my quarters, Midoriya. I apologise for my inability to serve you refreshments. Please. Make yourself at home.” Shin’ya stood before him, dressed in a short and airy grey yukata, and it is the very first time Izuku has actually laid eyes on the person inside the suit.

He’s a little shorter than the suit (and thus, Izuku himself), but that’s to be expected. His skin is pale, somewhere between ashen and deathly, with veins faintly visible in parts. Acid green hair crowns his head in unruly tufts, almost looking like a dying plant, but perhaps what is most surprising is how… expressive his face is. It’s a complete contrast to his blank, emotionless tone. Everything from his thin, taut mouth to the rippling emerald eyes cannot seem to hide even the tiniest thing.

Izuku beams at him, and Shin’ya actually squints a little in response. “Sorry for the intrusion! I like your decorations. You really like gardening?” He steps past Shin’ya to inspect some of the nearest varieties - a vibrant looking succulent hanging off the wall catches his attention briefly, but the crawling vines hanging from a pot chained to the ceiling distracts him almost as quickly.

Shin’ya smiles, although it’s too sad and wan to be truly called a smile. “Yes. I am… fond of many varieties. It serves as a hobby outside of my research.” He watches quietly as Izuku hones in on a large group of white open flowers with yellow stamens. “Camellia taliensis,” He offers, “Its leaves can be used to make tea. I enjoy its…” He pauses for a moment, face twitching slightly before he lets out a sudden and startling sneeze. The mucus, Izuku idly notes as he wipes it off his mask, is tinged blue. “I apologise. I am, as you are no doubt aware, not entirely well today.”

A light bulb goes off in Izuku’s mind, and he remembers that he didn’t come here just to socialise. “Here,” He says cheerfully, holding up the sheaf of papers. “Should I put them on the table?”

“Yes. Thank you.” He clears a space for the papers on the table, shifting a center piece of spider lilies to create more room.

Izuku sets them down on the table (it’s a very nice table - looks like teak) before pulling his second delivery out of the plastic satchel.

Shin’ya blinks slowly, eyes wide with confusion as he stares at the item in Izuku’s hands.

Strung together on a piece of sturdy nylon thread are a collection of little glass beads, no larger than a knuckle. They range in colours of soft greens, gentle blues and smouldering oranges.

“It’s a friendship bracelet!” Izuku declares cheerfully, taking the moment to tie it around Shin’ya’s bare wrist. “I wanted to get you a thank-you gift, for helping me out during the Festival. I couldn’t have made it without you!” What ‘it’ is, he still hasn’t figured out but he knows it’s important, and so it’s important that he thank Shin’ya for making it possible.

Shin’ya, for his part, seems absolutely mesmerised by the glass beads judging by his wide-eyed expression. He says and does nothing for what must be at least a few minutes, but something translucent and green wells up in the corner of his eyes before slowly trickling along his pale cheeks and dripping onto the tatami mat floors. It makes a slight hisss as it makes contact.
“Are you okay?” Izuku asks quietly, frowning behind the plexiglass mask.

Shin’ya blinks rapidly, reaching up to wipe the tears away. “I apologise,” He says, blank tone contrasted against his bashful expression. Rather than blushing pink, his cheeks taken on an almost yellowish colour, as though jaundiced. “I am simply overcome with emotion.”

If Izuku couldn’t see his face right now, he might’ve thought he was being sarcastic. “That’s fine!” He reaches out and pats Shin’ya on the shoulder with a bright smile. “It’s always better to let things out than keep them in.”

“... Thank you,” Shin’ya mutters quietly, when it looks like he’s gotten control over himself once again. The tears aren’t coming any more, but the jaundiced look has gotten worse. Izuku isn’t sure if that’s normal or not though. “Your visit was very welcome.” He straightened his back. “Regrettfully, I believe you should leave now. I should return to resting, to recover from my illness.”

Izuku can’t help feeling a touch disappointed, but he nods all the same. He wanted to sit down and ask more about Shin’ya’s plants (and maybe about the jaundice… and were his tears acidic or alkaline?) but he should get going. He doesn’t want to miss class entirely after all.

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contests, that’s for sure.

Izuku personally thinks Katsuki has a charm all of his own (it’s a bit of an acquired taste though), but that’s not really the point he’s getting at. “Quirks and power. Best Jeanist’s way of thinking is too different. Raw, explosive power is a better fit, and if it’s Kacchan, it has to be someone near the top, right? So Endeavour.”

He’s grudgingly forced to admit that the idiot has a point. He always does. “Well. What about Edgeshot then? He’s Number Five.”

Izuku taps his chin with a finger. “Hm. Precision? Might work.” Precision is something Katsuki could benefit a lot from learning, but he’s not sure Edgeshot is the one to teach him that. Edgeshot’s Quirk is precise by nature, not by technique.

Seemingly satisfied with that answer, they fall into their usual companionable silence for a little while until Katsuki decides to ask a question of his own. “And you?” He grunts, “Where are you interning?”

“Team Idaten.”

It’s not the answer Katsuki’s expecting, but of course, if Katsuki had been aware of Izuku’s history with Ingenium, he wouldn’t have been surprised at all. Izuku has an odd sort of gravity to him, that ensures everyone who crosses his path more than once is doomed to get caught up in his orbit.

“Didn’t think they’d offer Support internships.” Then again, all he really knows about Team Idaten is that they’re a bunch of Heroes working together instead of one big name leading a bunch of sidekicks.

Izuku shrugs. “I think he liked my suggestions?” He offers, not particularly concerned with the ‘why’, before he suddenly brightens up in that particular way that suggests he’s just gotten an idea. “Let’s get udon!”

To his credit, Katsuki only allows himself to be tripped up by the ‘suggestions’ statement very briefly before he files it away in the ‘Deku’ folder. “I’m not fucking paying,” He grumbles, allowing himself to be taken by the hand and dragged.

After the (relative) weirdness of the past few days, it’s nice to feel like things are settling down again, Izuku thinks. Things are getting back to normal (well, his normal).

It, of course, doesn’t last.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was shorter than I'd like, but covers most of the details I want covered at the moment. Sun Wukong was originally meant to have faded out into the background by now, but it made sense for him to return as Ojiro's mentor (but perhaps he should be seeking broader perspectives? Oh well)

Without spoiling too much, Shin'ya's character was inspired directly by Shigaraki, although the nature of that has shifted over the course of writing AIHEAG.
On a more optimistic note, I intend to get Chapter 19 (Crescent Smile Waxing) done before the end of the year! ... That's my goal at least. Here's hoping I can stick to it.
Crescent Smile Waxing

Chapter Summary

The stage is set. The actors are in place. The curtains are about to rise.

Chapter Notes

Remember when I said I hoped to get this out before the end of the year? I remember.

Please don't hate me ;-; it's been a busy... everything

I got really distracted by side projects and stuff but I'm back on the BnHA train. After this, I hope to update DaT, then TUWS, and possibly release an omake for AIHEAG (The Deku Council).

EDIT: WHOOPS FORGOT THE TITLE

Midoriya Izuku dreams often of great swirling stars, of giants of flaming gas and dust. He sees them in his mind, holds them in his hand, tilts entire galaxies on their axes.

All of which only makes waking up in the middle of a field of daisies all the more confusing.

“Hello,” says a voice that is familiar and strange all at once, “I’ve been waiting. I have so many beautiful things to show you.”

Izuku thinks that is very kind of the familiar Stranger, to have waited what must have been eons all to show him things that are beautiful. He takes their hand and lets them pull him up from amongst the daisies.

“For you,” says the Stranger, holding out a bouquet of pansies and rhododendrons, resplendent in purple and lilac.

Very kind indeed Izuku thinks, accepting the flowers. Their scent is sweet and charming, but he cannot help but feel there is something he’s missing.

The Stranger pulls him along by the hand, and Izuku allows them. The dream around them is beautiful and natural in a way that his dreams rarely are - there are no towering stellar formations, no vast moons and twinkling constellations. Trees, flowers, grass and a yellow brick road.

“Should I read into this?” He asks, frowning as the bricks start to become clearer and more present. Is his unconscious mind attempting to tell him something or is this because he watched the Wizard of
Oz when it was playing on television a few days ago?

“Should you?” responds the Stranger, and Izuku thinks that’s a fair response. It’s not as though the Stranger is any more removed from the dream than Izuku is - any answers they have are answers Izuku has.

He nearly stumbles into them when the Stranger suddenly pauses, but he manages to catch himself in time.

“Look,” they say, pointing up at the sky, and Izuku does.

The blue sky has turned into the black of empty space, and a cascade of brightly glowing lights shimmer in place of clouds or the sun. Despite this, the light level of the dream hasn’t changed at all, but that’s not something one questions in a dream. He’s struck by his usual urge to reach out and grasp them, but the Stranger stays his hand with their own.

“Not yet. You can’t reach them yet,” says the Stranger, and there’s an almost melancholy note to their voice.

Izuku frowns. He’s definitely missing something. “If not yet, then when?”

The Stranger smiles at him softly. “We have to see the Wizard first. He’ll help you take off your spectacles.”

He reaches up with a hand to touch his face, not quite sure how surprised he should be to find that there are a pair of goggles sealed to his face. No amount of tugging or pulling will make them budge the tiniest inch. “Okay,” He says, accepting the goggles as a fact of life, “To the Wizard then. He’s behind the curtain right?”

The Stranger is smiling wider now. “That’s right. When the curtain rises, your spectacles will come off and you’ll see the man behind the curtain. Then I can show you all those wonderful things.”

Izuku quietly thinks this is a very menacing way to phrase it. There’s something he’s missing. Something *vital*. He just can’t put his finger on it…

“Aren’t you going to pull back the curtain?” The Stranger asks, and Izuku blinks.

They’re not on the Yellow Brick road anymore. They’re on a stage, and the lights are all on Izuku. In his hands is the Mystery Orb. He’s not sure where the Stranger is anymore, and he’s not sure why he doesn’t care. The Stranger is important, he thinks. He knows it. He just can’t remember why.

Why is the Orb here now? Is it just symbolic of the mystery that Izuku doesn’t even understand? Is it some repressed unconscious part of his mind? He brushes a thumb along the clear window that shows the swirling mass of plasma inside, and it almost seems to hum in response. A slow, but familiar aria. He looks up at the stage, at the empty audience seats. And then he turns around to see rippling velvet curtains.

This is important. He *knows*. He just doesn’t... know.

“Izuku,” calls a voice that seems to echo out from all around him. It’s familiar as well, but different from the Stranger. “Izuku!” calls the voice again, louder this time. The dreamworld is shaking,
curtains rippling.

The Stranger’s voice emanates again, but this time it seems to come from the Orb. “Aren’t you going to pull back the curtain?” They echo, as the music builds to a crescendo.

The curtain. Right. He’s so close now. If he just reaches out… his fingertips brush up against the fabric and-

“Izuku, wake up!”

His eyes snap open. Midoriya Inko’s concerned face dominates his vision.

“Izuku!” She exclaims, “You fell asleep at your desk. Really, you shouldn’t be working so late!”

An interminable sense of loss spreads through Izuku’s soul. He can still feel the curtain against his fingertips. He cannot remember the Stranger’s face. He knows he saw it - saw them. It’s important, so why can’t he remember? “But I needed to see the Wizard…” He mumbles, peeling off a sheet of paper that stuck to his cheek.

“Not if it means you’re sleeping at your desk honey,” Inko says in a firm tone without commenting on what had come out of his mouth. “Now come on. You’re going to be late for school if you don’t get ready soon!”

Izuku frowns, rubbing his face. The Wizard… it was important, wasn’t it? He couldn’t remember. The details were already fading from his mind, and when he stretched his arms out above his head and felt his joints make satisfying little cracks and pops, the last remnants of any memory faded away into his unconscious mind.

The early morning walk to school is a ritual Izuku and Katsuki have engaged in since they had begun walking to school. It consisted almost entirely of Izuku rambling about whatever random idea or topic had currently claimed his interest, Katsuki doing his best to keep up with whatever bullshit he was currently spewing and occasionally ensuring that Izuku didn’t walk headfirst into any kind of danger (it always happened at least once).

(Katsuki is fairly certain Izuku is perfectly aware of the dangers, he’s also just perfectly aware that Katsuki wouldn’t let him actually get hurt)

Today’s topic is their upcoming internships. In true fashion, Izuku is rambling at a mile a minute, about Team Idaten’s interesting dynamics, tactics and… well, just about every detail. Katsuki’s pretty sure if he paid enough attention, he’d eventually know everything there is to know about the entire team, down to what they have for breakfast. As it is, he can only really get every second word or so without frying his brain trying to keep up.

He knows he’ll get a play by play afterwards as well, so it’s not like he has to pay too much attention to begin with, and as long as he doesn’t have to actually really retain anything Izuku says, there’s no harm in letting him ramble.
“Ah! Good morning Midoriya-san! And… Bakugou-san.”

The familiar loud voice snaps Katsuki out of his supervisory trance, and he reflexively glares at the speaker. “Oi! What the fuck’s with that disappointed tone, Four Eyes?!” He barks out irritatedly, rubbing the back of his neck.

Iida Tenya stares back (it’s not a glare, it’s just a stern gaze of disapproval honest), adjusting his glasses with a hand and a dismissive huff. “I was hoping to talk to Midoriya-san alone, if you must know.” Tenya was not familiar enough with either of the two to be aware of the almost symbiotic dynamic between them, but he was aware that they were at least on good terms with each other. Perhaps it was a case of his own personal biases, but Midoriya seemed too bright and innocent to associate with the likes of Bakugou. Such a friendship would only bring Midoriya down.

Of course, he was entertainingly and almost ironically wrong on almost every count, but he could hardly be blamed for not being aware of that.

Katsuki glared intently, fingers twitching with the promise of explosive violence. “... Tch, whatever. I’ll see you at lunch, Deku.” And with that, he stomped off, leaving a smiling Izuku and a frowning Tenya.

“Good morning, Tenya-kun,” Izuku chirps, “What can I do for you?”

Tenya straightens up a little. “I was hoping to get to know you a little more!” He declares. “We will both be interning at Team Idaten, yes? So I thought it pertinent that we become acquainted beforehand!” And Tenya has quite a few questions for him. He’s managed to learn the story of how his brother met him, years ago, and he has no idea what to make of it. It, and apparently their second interaction, has been enough to spark Tensei’s interest in Midoriya. Tenya can’t quite blame him.

He’s only met Midoriya twice, and he’s interested in finding out more, albeit for different reasons. How can anyone be so close with Bakugou ‘How Dare You Breathe My Air’ Katsuki?

Never one to miss an opportunity to make a new friend, Izuku beams at Tenya. “Sure! What did you want to know?”

It’s only now that it dawns on Tenya that he doesn’t actually know what to ask. Getting to know Izuku is all well and good but it’s not like asking him what his favourite type of music is going to reveal some deep insight into his character. Or will it? No that was too silly to contemplate. “… Who are you hoping to study under in Team Idaten?”

Izuku pauses, tapping a finger against his chin before he smiles. “Everyone!” He says cheerfully, after only the briefest moment of thought, “I’d like to take notes and understand the breadth of support that is required of a full agency.” Truly, Izuku can’t wait to see everyone’s equipment up close. Witnessing the work of other inventors, understanding the various needs of Heroes… this is what he lives for.

“An admirable goal!” Tenya declares, nodding seriously, and also very understandable if he’s interning at Team Idaten. He doesn’t want to sound like he’s just tooting his brother’s horn (well, it’s just his own thoughts so he’s allowed) but Team Idaten has one of the most varied rosters of Heroes and Sidekicks. If your goal is to be exposed to as many different Quirks as possible, it’s definitely a good place to go. “I certainly look forward to working alongside you!”
“Mm!” And with that, Izuku officially declares Tenya a Friend. There is no longer any escape.

Tenya is suddenly overcome by a sense of horror. Rather than attribute this to his now bound fate, he realises that he’s going to be late for class (or rather, he’s going to only be a few minutes early instead of a full ten minutes). “AH! FORGIVE ME, MIDORIYA-SAN! I HAVE CAUSED US BOTH TO BE TARDY! WE MUST MAKE HASTE!”

Izuku lets out a quiet laugh, because he knows he has at least three minutes to get to class (which is only a two minute walk), but he joins Tenya in his hurried dash anyway. “Forgiven!”

It’s a relatively quiet day for 1-F. Most, if not all of them, have put in their official internship forms, and they’ve all received the rather open instructions to ‘prepare for your internships brats!’ from Maijima. For some, like Mei, this means deciding which of their ‘precious babies’ to bring with them. For others, like Chizuru, this means preparing their tools for the work to come. For Ogata, this means sleeping, face down against his workstation.

For Izuku, this means reviewing his own equipment.

Of his fellow students, he’s probably the only one with a ‘hands-on’ mindset when it comes to Support, in that he intends not only to offer his Support through the items he designs or the costumes he creates, but also through actual, physical support. He might not have the combat or rescue training that the Heroics students have, but he has his equipment. And it’s not as though he intends to be the first Hero (or Sidekick, which is basically a Hero) like this.

Masamune used to be a household name… and still kind of was? The second Masamune was a bit of a recluse though, and didn’t really do any public heroism anymore, but even using just the ‘Melding’ Quirk, the first Masamune had made an impressive career as a Pro Hero through the use of his handmade and moulded equipment, alongside the numerous things he offered. The Pro Hero Iron Warden from Europe had built a career on shielding technology and used it as part of his own costume. There were numerous other examples, but the fact remained clear.

So he could definitely make it as a Hero (or a Sidekick) on his own.

As part of that, he has his personal equipment. His shield, his staff, a breastplate… he’s a little embarrassed to admit he doesn’t have much else at the moment, but he can work on boots and bracers today and over the weekend. His staff is very much the centrepiece at the moment though.

Whilst his shield has many uses and features, at the end of the day, it’s still just a shield. It’s strong, tough, hard, it’s insulated against heat and electricity (not that Izuku is particularly at risk from either). Its design allows the force from any impact to spread across its entire shape. As protection, it was top shelf, but it was, at least for the moment, still just a shield. It did nothing but shield.
His staff, on the other hand, may as well have been an oversized swiss army knife. It separated into three parts, forming a three-section staff (or a just a two-section, if he only separated one part) for transport or combat purposes. If necessary, each part could completely detach itself although reattachment was difficult and unlikely to occur in a fight. The entire staff could act as a stun baton, channeling a handful of milliamperes to render an opponent unable to fight (as based on the statistics of the average Japanese male). A click of a button, and the last section could twist itself into a leaf-bladed spear or a broad-headed shovel.

It’s an incredibly versatile weapon and the rest of his equipment is just so simple in comparison.

“Midoriya-san.” A familiar voice gently pushes through his musings, and when he looks up, the impassive expressionless mask of Shoutan Shin’ya looks back.”I apologise for bothering you.”

“Don’t be silly!” Izuku chides gently, giving him a bright, welcoming smile. “We’re friends!”

Silence is Shin’ya’s response. “... I did not want to presume,” He says at last, after a good solid minute of stillness.

It’s at this point that Izuku notices what’s held carefully in his thickly gloved hands - a potted flower. Six petals open up from a yellow stamen, each a rich feathery pink that changes to soft white at the edges. The flowers, and there are three of them, all gently arch up towards the sky, as if gazing up at it with hopeful eyes.

Izuku thinks it’s a little silly of Shin’ya not to assume they’re friends - what other meaning does a friendship bracelet have? “Those are pretty,” He says, changing conversation topics like one might change hats.

There’s an almost imperceptible shift in Shin’ya’s posture, but Izuku notices the way he straightens himself all the same. “Lilium Orientalis Stargazer. The Stargazer Lily.” He extends the potted flower towards him. “A gift.”

Izuku blinks once, twice, three times before he lets out a small laugh. “There’s no need for that, Shin’ya.”

“Nonsense. You provided me with assistance. It is only natural to repay that.”

“We’re friends,” Izuku corrects gently (although what he’s correcting isn’t clear), but he takes the flower pot regardless. The flowers shift slightly with the movement, and it almost seems as though they’re looking up at him in this moment.

“... Yes. I understand.” There’s just the tiniest shift in his posture. Izuku gets the impression that he’s embarrassed.

He decides to remedy that with a beaming smile, bright enough to burn away any misgivings.

Unfortunately, rather than make Shin’ya comfortable and at ease, it only seems to have the opposite effect. “Apologies,” He says blankly, with just the tiniest hint of fluster, “I have to go.”
“Eh? Are you still not feeling well?” Izuku peers into the expressionless lenses of the mask, hoping to catch some glint of Shin’ya inside.

The faintest little glimmers of green peer back at him. “...Yes,” Shin’ya says, after an uncharacteristically long silence. “Apologies. I must retire to my dormitory.”

“There’s no need to apologise.” Especially not twice in such a short time. “If you’re not feeling well, you’re not feeling well. Do you need me to help you back?”

Shin’ya startles, only barely visible with the suit. “Th-that won’t be necessary. Thank you.”

Izuku watches as he sort of hurriedly-not-hurriedly grabs his bag and rush-walks out of the classroom with only a brief glance from a few others. He must really not be feeling well, Izuku thinks, if he was that flustered. He glances down at the flower, as though it might hold an answer to his questions.

The flower does not, but it gives him an idea all the same.

“I understand your misgivings, Tomura, but you shouldn’t be disheartened. I believe this meeting will go much more smoothly.” The wafting black mist that makes up the form of the villain ‘Kurogiri’ gestures to the figure sitting on a stool just to his left. “They’re an old associate of Sensei - you can trust them more than someone like the Hero Killer.”

A dry hand reaches up to pick at the scabbed skin of a neck, narrow eyes glaring from behind the disembodied hand currently attached to his face. “That fucking asshole Stain is already helping, why do we need to recruit more NPCs?”

The figure lets out a small barking laugh, slapping a hand on the bar. “This is Sensei’s heir?” They taunted, cracking their fingers one-handedly. “This little brat? Did All Might give him brain damage or something?”

Shigaraki Tomura very carefully took a deep breath, counted to five… and then released. “You... what do you believe in?” He asked, quiet and dangerous. “What are you striving for?”

Kurogiri almost jumped for joy - he was learning! After the ah, fruitful meeting with the Hero Killer, Shigaraki was already learning how to recruit new individuals of strength and charisma into the League.

The figure paused. “What am I striving for?” They echo. “…Understanding.” This time when they speak, there’s something in their eyes, and Shigaraki finds himself instinctively avoiding eye contact. He doesn’t know why, but he knows that if he were to look into their eyes… nothing good would happen. “I want to know, you know? Don’t you think it’s weird?” They point an off-colored finger at the bartender, who doesn’t react. Kurogiri is well used to this. “This one is made of mist and teleports things. But why? People used to ask that, but they’ve stopped - nobody’s found an answer. I don’t want to stop. I want to keep digging. I want to keep digging where everyone else won’t!”

Shigaraki notes Kurogiri has already edged away, and decides that maybe it’s for the best if he does the same. Their guest is growing increasingly manic, gesticulating almost wildly
“They’re COWARDS! Who cares what we have to do?! What laws we have to violate, what sacrifices we have to make?! Do you think we touched the moon with such attitudes? ‘It’s too risky’, ‘it’s inhumane’, ‘you can’t do that to people’! BUT I’LL SHOW THEM! I’LL SHOW EVERYONE! I’LL LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED, NO AVENUE UNEXPLORED AND WHEN I UNDERSTAND THE SECRETS OF QUIRKS, THEY’LL RUE THE DAY THEY LAUGHED AT HOJI RYUNOSUKE!”

Silence befell the bar. Slowly, Hoji began to calm down, almost like a deflating balloon as Shigaraki and Kurogiri both watched at a safe distance.

“... so I guess I’ll help you in this endeavour, as a favor to Sensei for his help in my research. Just this once, okay? You’ll have to earn my help afterwards.”

Chapter End Notes

This might mark the beginning of a tonal shift. I spent a long time wondering whether to implement this shift, as I, on one hand, didn't want to lose the light-hearted almost 'Daily Life of Midoriya Izuku and Bakugou Katsuki' feel, but also wanted to explore deeper concepts that I had originally planned on doing. Keeping it light hearted made me feel like the earlier seeds I'd planted would be ignored (which felt like a waste).

So I'm going to try and strike a balance. Here's hoping I pull it off!
Kicking Up Stardust

Chapter Summary

The first day of Internships comes and goes.

Chapter Notes

Not quite as long as I'd like it to be, but it hits the right notes.

In other news: I should really just give up trying to set myself a schedule. I can lead myself to a chapter, but I can't make the words go on command.

I'll just have to resort to letting my muse drag me where it will.

Loom (the Webspinning Hero) was perhaps a bit more energetic than Izuku had expected based of his reputation. Not that he really had a reputation, given he was officially considered a sidekick of Ingenium. Watching each of his eight chitinous hands idly work as he lectures Izuku about the various roles and functions a Support Hero might occupy in an agency, it really seemed like he’d taken the words ‘idle hands are the devil’s play thing’ to heart.

“... of course most Agency’s rely on a Support Company, rather than an in-house Hero, but there are a lot of benefits to a much closer working relationship like this. Any ideas as to what they might be?”

Eight beady black eyes decorating the upper half of an otherwise mostly human head bore into Izuku, as a single hand smooths his neatly combed white hair back a bit.

Izuku ponders the question for the briefest of moments. “You can get feedback more easily. You’ll see the situations the Heroes have to deal with first hand. If you need to make any alterations or adjustments quickly, you’re right there. And you get to make friends with the Heroes.”

Loom blinks, which is honestly pretty strange to watch because his eyes don’t blink all at once the way Izuku’s would - rather, groups of two or three blink together in a seemingly random pattern, a process that takes only marginally longer than a second or two. “Well. You’re not wrong,” He admits, spooling thread along one clawed finger. “Can you think of any downsides?”

“Resources,” Izuku answers immediately. He tilts his head to the side before adding “Irony.”

“... Irony?”

“The Support Hero has nobody to support them,” Izuku explains “In a Company, there’ll be multiple people to split the workload and handle different tasks. Everyone can do what they’re best at. An Agency might only rely on a single Support Hero for it’s needs, so they have to be more versatile
and adaptable.”

“Good answer. In-house work isn’t for everyone, not the least because you might have to take to the field one day yourself. If your skills aren’t broad enough, you won’t be able to support a wide variety of Heroes - of course, if you work in a smaller partnership, that doesn’t matter quite as much.”

A small partnership isn’t too bad an idea, Izuku thinks, but he’s already set his sights on his dream. He’s not just going to support Heroes out in the field - he’s going to be one.

“Right! Enough theory, time for some practical.” Loom claps his hands together (all eight of them), and gestures for Izuku to follow him. “Now, for most people we’ve got around three or four copies of their costumes, plus a few extra seasonal varieties. Some people need summer versions, some people need winter versions, and some people need versions for every season or situation - I used to costumes for Evergreen before I joined Ingenium. But the main purpose of having extras is that they’re inevitably going to get damaged.” He pauses, turning to give Izuku a sly expression. “Now, according to your class work you’re quite the little smith, but if you’re going to be a Support Hero in an agency, you need to be broader. So for your week with me, I’ll mostly be teaching you needlework and tailoring as practical skills, alongside design theory.”

They arrive at a large set of double doors, and Loom throws them open, revealing a workshop. “We’ll start simple to begin with, and see how we go. I’ll demonstrate the technique, you try to imitate. So, for a basic stitch…”

Izuku follows his motions and movements with rapt attention, memorising every little detail as best he could.

“I don’t usually take applicants I haven’t nominated, but Midoriya and Ojiro vouched fer yer.” Sun Wukong (the Third) was smaller than Hitoshi had expected, but there was a sense of restrained power in the old man’s posture. “And ya put up a decent showin’ in the Festival! But I’m not entirely convinced.” He takes a long draught from the banana e-cigar, exhaling through his nostrils as he stares Hitoshi down.

Hitoshi, for his part, returns the stare with as much resolve as he can muster. The esteemed Grandmaster of the Monkey Style was an extremely powerful Hero back in his heyday, having remained in the Top Ten until his decision to retire. Admittedly, he’d been retired for longer than Hitoshi had been alive, but that didn’t mean Sun Wukong (the Third) was any less dangerous.

Wukong set an hourglass down on the table, the even halves of the glass being held up by a pair of wooden monkeys. “Monkey Business is serious business - seriously funny business. I’m gibbon you until the timer’s out. Prove to me you’re a real mandrill, or make like a banana and split.”

Hitoshi nods.

The Monkey Hero turns the timer over, and as soon as he does, the air suddenly seemed all the more
tense. His eyes were boring into Hitoshi, and it seemed like if he made one wrong move, he wouldn’t get to make another.

‘Just like you practiced,’ He thought to himself, before clearing his throat. “A monkey walks into an ice cream parlor and pays for a thousand yen sundae with a five thousand yen note.”

There’s no audible response, but Wukong’s whole body reminds him of a coiled spring. One wrong move and he doesn’t get a second.

He tries not to let his nerves show on his face. “The cashier thinks ‘It’s a monkey. What do monkey’s know about money?’ and gives the monkey a five hundred yen coin as change.”

The Monkey King springs into action, rushing at Hitoshi - but still slow enough that he could see it coming.

He sways out of the staff as it swings past, scrambling mentally to stay on track. This was all part of the test. If he wanted to, the Monkey King could have him flat on his ass before he blinked. “As he gives him the change, the cashier says ‘We don’t get a lot of monkeys.’” He’s forced to handspring away to get some space, but Sun Wukong is right there as he lands. He’s not going to get a single moment to breathe. “And the Monkey looks at the coin and says ‘I’m not surprised, with these prices!’”

No response. Sun Wukong doesn’t let up either, throwing a storm of jabs at Hitoshi.

He needs to step up his game. “There were two monkeys on a branch, and the first monkey,” He pauses for a moment to dodge away from the roundhouse kick, “Says to the second ‘I’m sick of bananas.’”

The roundhouse turns into an axe heel drop, followed by a sweeping blow from the staff.

“And the second says,” Hitoshi manages to get the words out just before he has to dive out of a rising kick. “‘Holy shit, it’s a talking monkey!’” He crosses his arms over his chest to block the palm strike, but it still sends him head over heels along the dojo floor. ‘Shit, jokes aren’t working… does he want me to fight back as well?’

It’s a bit of a long shot, he thinks, but he’s not giving up. This time, when Sun Wukong rushes him, Hitoshi rushes back. “What’s,” He ducks under the palm strike, “wrong, Furious George?” His jabs are too slow to catch the Monkey King, but at least he’s not stuck on the defensive. “I think I’m a Chimp off the old block!”

The kick lands solidly in his stomach, and he goes down hard, rolling across the mats. “BZZZT! Times up!” Sun Wukong declares, stomping over to Hitoshi’s fallen form. That last kick had really driven the breath out of him, and he was having trouble getting it back under control. “You fight like a monkey whose discovered a hammer - like everything’s a nail.”

Hitoshi let out a groan, and managed to stagger to his feet. “Gotta… use what I’ve got…” He mutters, in between gasps. He’s going to feel that kick for days.

“Your foundations are good, but you need refinement. Monkeyin’ around is different from Baboonery which is different from Chimpin’ about. There’s a time for each of these things.”
He has absolutely no idea what any of that even means, but he’s going to nod anyway.

“I won’t be able to make a monkey out of you,” He declares with the gruff finality that makes his heart sink. “… but you’ll be a Great Ape of Wrath.”

Hitoshi blinks. “You mean…” He doesn’t want to jinx it, and it almost feels like asking that question would shatter the glass mirage.

Sun Wukong (the Third) puts his banana cigar back to his lips, grinning down at Hitoshi with a look that promises great suffering in his future. “What are you langur-ing about for, boy? We’ve got a week to turn you from Boy-nobo to B-OH-NO-bo.”

Quietly, he wonders if he’s made a mistake.

“When I’m done with you, boy, you’ll be quipping in your sleep.”

Izuku walks back to the train station with Iida every day, who he finds an intriguing conversational partner. Compared to the explosively energetic Katsuki, the almost mischievously laidback Hitoshi and the easygoing go-with-the-flow Mashirao, the wound up and proper Iida is a novel change of atmosphere.

Much like Katsuki, Iida seems like he hold a conversation by himself without anyone else’s assistance, but the topics are vastly different. Where Katsuki often complains loudly about everything, Iida seems to prefer discussing the finer points of being a model hero. The finest points. Points so fine, in fact, that Izuku has rarely considered them.

“... and that is why I believe a proper breakfast should contain at least a little protein!”

Iida has very expressive hands. They slice through the air with sudden movements, but stop at their destinations with surprising stillness before bursting into the next position. Katsuki, by comparison, is just as lively at times, but his hands rarely stop moving. Is it a side effect of their personalities, or is Katsuki’s free flowing hand movements more related to his Quirk? Perhaps he should study Ingenium’s gestures as well, his Quirk’s arm-based…

“Midoriya-kun! Is there something interesting about my hands?” Iida’s inspecting them carefully, as though he’s afraid he’s got something smudged on them.

Izuku blinks. “Do you use them a lot?” He asks, deciding to directly satisfy his curiousity.

Iida, being unused to Izuku’s Everythingness, only grasps the surface of the question. “Well, of course! Why wouldn’t I?”

Izuku, being immersed in his Everythingness, takes the answer and doesn’t question it. “I thought you might’ve relied on your legs,” He says idly, but mentally notes that it would be remarkably difficult to defeat all of your enemies with kicks alone, no matter how powerful.
Iida, for his part, can only quietly question why Izuku would assume he’d rely on his legs for tasks such as eating, drinking, or even writing. He tries to imagine eating with his legs - the image is ridiculous enough that he almost chokes.

“Are you okay?” Izuku asks, completely innocent as to how he had caused the situation (albeit unintentionally).

Iida only nods, red-faced and slightly flustered. “I-I’ll be fine. Thank you for the concern, Midoriya-kun.”

As they arrive at the train station, Katsuki is there to greet them - Izuku with a ‘Yo, Deku’, and Iida with a hard stare. It’s at least not a glare anymore, but there’s still no love lost between them.

Katsuki’s presence requires a bit of work on his part, but given his presence is the only way Izuku can manage to get on a train, it’s a duty he does with solemn seriousness. As it is, Izuku still crushes his hand with his own and stares off into space with the wide-eyed stare of someone who is desperately trying not to focus on where they are and what they’re doing.

Iida, for his part, is always kind of dutifully surprised at this, even if he sees it every day of the internship.

Katsuki and Izuku get off first, managing to bid a goodbye to Iida and heading home whilst Katsuki talks Izuku's ear off about his own internship with Edgeshot, detailing the various training exercises and routines he’s had to go through to learn ‘precision’.

For Edgeshot, precision is not merely a quality to describe something - it’s a philosophy of life. Saying only what needs to be said, doing what only needs to be done. No frills, no spills. Maximum impact, minimal force.

Izuku is quietly building a theory that Quirks influence your personality, but he’s not sure if it’s a Nature or Nurture kind of deal. In any case, he should probably make himself Subject Zero based on Katsuki’s grumblings.

Although how his own Quirk has affected his personality is going to be hard to assess from the inside...

He squeezed a few drops of the almost mustard green fluid into the test tubes, repeating the process with deft practiced motions. He watched the reactions silently, and when everything settled down, he slid along the linoleum floor on his chair, skidding to a stop just in front of a computer terminal to note the results.

“Are you eating well, Shin-chan?” comes a voice from the monitor, a small window of his screen
occupied by the face of a middle-aged woman whose cheeks were so plump and prominent that it forced her into a perpetual (and almost mischievous) squint.

He pauses briefly to glance at the camera sitting atop his terminal. “Yes. I have been using the peppers you brought me earlier, although I believe I have erred in adding too much ginger to the stirfry.”

She giggles softly at him, watching as he returns to his work. “That’s okay. Ginger’s good for you, Shin-chan, it’ll boost your immune system.”

He doesn’t respond, instead beginning to clean up after his experiment. He disposes of the chemical solutions carefully, diluting several of the concoctions before pouring them down the specially marked drain.

“What’s that on your wrist?”

He freezes for a brief second. “Ah. A… friendship bracelet.” He holds it up to the camera once he’s back in front of the terminal, letting her study it. “I made a friend.”

“Oh! That’s so pretty!” She gushes, “I’m so happy for you, Shin-chan! What’s their name?”

His experiment cleaned up, he settles down in the chair in front of the terminal, adjusting his yukata a little nervously. “Midoriya… Izuku,” He mutters. He’s not entirely sure why he’s nervous, but the brightness… thinking about his fingers on his skin, gloved as they were, makes goosebumps break out all over. Even with an inch of rubber between them, he could almost feel the warmth permeating from him. It’s been so long since anyone (aside from his parents) had even tried to touch him...

(He’s almost forgotten what it’s like to touch another human being but he clings to the distant memories of his mother’s arms with everything he has)

She hums thoughtfully. “Are they from your class?”

“… Yes.” He’s silent for a moment, face scrunched up in a way that resembles hers (just without the plumpness) until he adds, apropos of nothing, “He is very… bright.”

“Bright, hm? Tell me more, Shin-chan! Spill! Spill!”

His stomach twists itself into knots. How does he put it into words? How does he distill all that Midoriya is into letters and numbers, into things he can explain? “He is… like the Sun.” Bright, almost unbearably so. Full of warmth and heat and bringing life. Shin’ya’s gaze tracks to the sunflowers sitting by his window. He’s never understood a flower more than he has now, never understood what it meant to reach for the sun. His fingers brush over the bracelet, which even now still feels interminably warm.

He tries to imagine what Izuku’s fingers would feel like, rough and calloused from work…

“Like the Sun, hmmm?” She teases, giggling a little at Shin’ya’s silent and sudden flush. “Heee! So
when do I get to meet this Midoriya, hm?”

He doesn’t really have an answer to that, and it shows clearly on his face.

She giggles again. “Hee, it’s okay, Shin-chan! We can figure it out later, hm? Mama should be going now though, got lots of work to do. I’ll pop by this weekend, drop off some curry, if that’s okay? And maybe I can meet this Midoriya-kun!”

He can’t really muster a proper response to that. “... Good night, Mama. I love you.”

“Goodnight Shin-chan! Mwah! Mwah!”

The window closes, leaving Shin’ya to stare at a desktop cluttered with documents. “... It is time for bed,” He mumbles to himself, sounding almost lost, “Dwelling on matters will not help things.” He reaches out to turn his terminal off when the sound of a notification gives him pause. “... A message? At this hour?”

Well. Being a little late to bed just because he checked a message won’t ruin anything, will it?

oddbitCollector: Hello hopefulGeraniums. I’ve read your essays on Quirkology - very thought provoking. Do you really believe you can study Quirks so definitively?

Against his better judgement, he types out a reply. Within minutes, he’s drawn into conversation.

Chapter End Notes

I quite enjoy the quiet tragedy that is Shoutan Shin’ya's existence, but I feel like a sadist for creating it.
A Mind In Parallax

Chapter Summary

And on the third day, things go wrong.

Chapter Notes

guess whoooooooooooooose baaaaaaaaack!

Been very productive recently. Churning out words like their creamy, fluffy butter.

This chapter got rewritten a lot, details changed and changed. One of the problems with serialized work is sometimes you forget what you were planning, or you just change your mind and you don't like it anymore, but I'm trying to forge on ahead regardless.

Regardless, here's 'A Mind In Parallax'

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s the third day of their internships when the world reminds them that life is never simple.

They’re riding on the train when it happens; Izuku has Katsuki’s hand in a crushing, vice-like grip and is busy humming some sort of melody under his breath in what is likely an attempt to just cope with the situation. Katsuki, for his part, is just quietly hoping he’ll still have a hand after all of this (if he doesn’t, he’ll just have to get Izuku to make him some fancy robotic hand to make up for the one he’s crushing).

He has the relative fortune of facing the window, and so he sees what happens in more detail, although even watching it happen, it still took a few moments for his brain to process it.

A bright white shape soars towards them on bat-like wings, and by the time Katsuki realises they’re about to be attacked, they are being attacked. The shape (it looks like a person - a very mutated person but still a person, and it’s not like there are weirder looking people) slams into the train, and with a heave tears the metal apart.

Up close, whoever (or whatever) they are, the wrongness is more apparent. The ‘wings’, on closer inspection, seemed more like massive webbed hands with long fingers and their stomach protrudes like an empty sack waiting to be filled. The limbs used to rip the metal apart are thick and powerful, but where there should be ‘legs’, there was only a second pair of arms, much smaller and agile, with a long, spined tail below it.

Katsuki’s already gone into combat mode, but the first thing he realises is that the environment puts him at a disadvantage. The train is an enclosed space full of civilians - reckless use of his Quirk is only going to make things worse, not to mention the effects it could have on the train’s stability.
It takes him about all of three seconds to come to this conclusion, and only a further two before he comes to a solution. The solution is ‘tackle it into the open air’ of course. He’s not going to have much time, if any at all, to equip his Hero Gear, so he’ll just have to rely on his Quirk and his training.

The creature (person?) beats its hand-wings and begins cartwheeling through the air recklessly. Katsuki had thought he’d managed a pretty good grip, but he doesn’t panic when he begins to fall - he’s had enough practice directing himself with his Quirk that a small fall like this is second nature to arrest. He’s not sure if the thing is going to follow him now that he’s attacked it, or if it’ll direct it’s attention back on the train.

It seems to settle on the latter, but before Katsuki can take to the air to try and fend it off a second time, something is shooting out of the train and tackling it back down. Or rather than something, he should say someone and the only person batshit crazy enough to follow Katsuki’s example was… “Deku! What the fuck do you think you’re doing?!”

Izuku crashes to the ground, but his fall is thankfully broken by the Bat-Thing. He almost seems surprised at the situation he’s found himself in, and not for the first time Katsuki has to quell the spike of irritation. “I don’t think I was,” Izuku explains simply.

“What the fuck do you mean you weren’t?! Thinking is all you fucking do!” One of these days, Katsuki is going to have an aneurysm or a heart attack or something and it will all be Deku’s fault, except knowing the idiot, he’d find a way to keep Katsuki alive just to prolong his suffering. “Get the fuck off that thing already! It’s dangerous!”

Izuku obliges, which only lowers Katsuki’s blood pressure a smidgen. Thankfully for both of them, the Bat-Thing doesn’t seem to be making any attempt to move… if it was still capable of it. Given it didn’t even look like it was breathing, Katsuki was beginning to wonder if Deku’s bulk had finally been good for something other than smothering him on occasion.

“So what do you—don’t fucking poke it!”

Izuku looks up from where he’s jabbing it with his staff, an innocently curious expression on his face. “I don’t know,” He admits, answering Katsuki’s unfinished question. “I’ve never really seen anything like it. Biology’s never been my strong point though…”

Given that the Bat-Thing doesn’t seem to be moving at all, Katsuki only just begins to lower his guard by increments. He’s never seen a Mutant-Type Quirk like this before, but that doesn’t mean it’s impossible. He’d hate to think they ended up seriously injuring some guy, even if they are clearly a Villain. “Figure anything out?”

“Nope!” Izuku replies cheerfully, “I’m completely out of my depth here. They’re still breathing though.” Well, there’s that at least. “The hand-wings are very interesting. Very natural-seeming, but not quite.”

Katsuki comes very close to making the amateurish mistake of asking for clarification. He may as well try to polish mud into a mirror for all the clarity he’ll get from Izuku. Natural-seeming but not quite… “They’re artificial?”

“Mm! Grafted, by the looks of things. I didn’t realise that was possible, but now that I think about it, you could use-”

“So this guy was, what, created?” It was always important to keep track of any exits you could use in a conversation before Izuku got too far off track to be salvaged.
“Created? Maybe! That’s a fascinating idea actually - you could start with cloning…” Of course, conversations were like labyrinths sometimes and any turn might just lead you back into danger.

“If it is some kind of weird surgical bullshit, then doesn’t that mean someone has to be around doing shit like that? There could be more of these fuckers all over the city.”

Izuku pauses, glancing over at Katsuki briefly. “We should leave that to the Pros.”

“Oh, so now you’re all for caution?!”

“Extenuating circumstances. This was self-defence.”

Katsuki huffs. Izuku was right, but that didn’t mean he had to like it. “Fine. But if we get attacked again, I’m not holding back.”

“That’s good,” came a voice from behind them, “but I can’t promise you it’ll help.”

Both of them whirl around in unison, and even Izuku clutches his staff a little tighter. The speaker is a short man, a few inches shorter than Izuku himself with combed back steel grey hair. A pair of thick rectangular glasses sits on the bridge of his nose, obscuring his eyes entirely with the seemingly opaque glass, and underneath a pristine white labcoat, they were wearing a t-shirt with the characters for ‘Sky of Blue’ on it, a pair of acid-washed jeans and worn sneakers. To put it bluntly, he looked like a surprisingly young college professor at first glance, but there was something distinctly unsettling about him.

“Who the fuck are you?” Katsuki snaps, already positioning himself defensively in front of Izuku. The Professor (a title Katsuki generously apellates based on appearance) makes the hairs on the back of his neck raise for reasons he mostly can’t quite articulate. The ones he can are ‘creepy bastard sneaks up on them without warning and says something ominous’.

Izuku, for his part, can only grip his staff so tightly it might warp under his fingers. “Kacchan... “ he whispers, lowering his voice until it can barely be heard, “We should go.”

The genuine fear coming from Midoriya ‘Let’s see what happens!’ Izuku is enough to make Katsuki himself begin to worry, but somehow, he knows that turning around is perhaps the worst thing he can do right now. Exposing a weakness would be fatal.

“Who am I? Are you messing with me, boy?” The Professor leans forward, eyes narrowing dangerously behind the thick rectangular glasses. “Seriously? ‘Who am I’ indeed… I know it was a bit before your time, but come on! I was all over the news! The Demon Doctor? A bit cliche as far as titles go, admittedly, but I thought it was rather fitting.” He sighs, holding his hands up into the air. “This is what I get for moving to an island - sure, there’s less hero’s sticking their nose into everything and ruining my experiments but there’s no brand recognition anymore. I guess I’ll just have to re-establish my reputation. Maybe hold the mayor hostage to start things off...”

Some small part of Katsuki is disturbed to recognise the way the Professor is drifting off topic, tapping a finger against his chin as he quietly mumbles to himself. It is, in many ways, something Izuku would do but it also means he knows well enough that this is their best chance to get away cleanly and begins quietly ushering him back. Izuku seems faintly distracted with something in his hands, but it’s not something Katsuki can think about it.
It almost works, too.

"-but where am I going to get an elephant on short… oho! Well played young padawans!"

Katsuki turns to run, urging Izuku on with him but they only made it two steps before the labcoat is fluttering down in front of them.

The Professor lands silently, the picture of sinister danger ruined only by the ridiculously casual outfit he was wearing. “An excellent attempt at a diversion but you know-”

Katsuki was not at all interested in listening to him, and cut him off with a double barreled explosion at point blank range. If the Professor wasn’t going to let them go without a fight, then the fucker was going to get one. He carries through with the momentum, swinging in a wide roundhouse blow to capitalize on the disruption but rather than soft yielding flesh, his fist strikes something like hardened iron.

“That was very rude of you.” Fingers clamps down on his fist as he tries to pull away, and the smoke begins to clear to reveal the unbothered face of the Demon Doctor. “Whatever happened to the banter? The witty back and forth? You know, Heroes used to-”

“Fuck off!” Katsuki howls, throwing a flurry of punches with his free hand but each blow is deflected with all the concern of a disaffected waiter.

“-let a man monologue for a bit and then they’d rebut with their own but no! Kids these days just want to get straight.” A foot sweeps Katsuki’s out from underneath him and the hand twists around with such force that Katsuki found himself spinning around into the ground, “-to the violence!” The hand is coming down like a spear, fingertips extended to pierce straight through his head and for one single moment Katsuki thinks he’s died.

His view is swallowed by something round and metal, and the air is filled with a sound like nails on a chalkboard and Izuku is there pushing him away with the angriest declaration he’s ever heard from him. “Get away from him!”

“Oho!” The Professor dances back a few paces, hands swaying through the air like snakes. “Now I remember where I saw you! Sports Festival, right? I was cheering for you, you know.”

Izuku finds that hard to believe given the man is actively trying to kill him. Still, there’s no need to be rude about it. “Thank you? I think.”

“You and that other student, very impressive! It’s always so nice to see the next generation pushing the boundaries.” He spins around in a graceful movement, left foot shooting out like a spear.

Izuku raises his shield just in time to catch the blow, and if he hadn’t braced with the staff, he’d be sent flying away. “Don’t worry, I’ve got plenty of other shocks up my sleeve!” He flicks a switch and discharges the power cell’s payload.

Katsuki takes the opening provided without a word, leapfrogging over Izuku’s lowered shoulders to deliver a second two-handed blast directly at the stunned Professor. Neither of them lets up, continuing the onslaught relentlessly - Izuku sweeps his legs out from under him with the staff, and Katsuki uses a small blast to propel himself into a spinning axe kick aimed squarely at his chest.
Both of them dart away in unison, watching the cloud of smoke with bated breath.

There’s no movement, not at first. But then the Professor’s voice calls out, genuinely curious. “Say, would you be open to an internship? I know it’s a bit unorthodox, but it’s so hard finding good talent on this side of the fence.”

Katsuki almost gawks, but he doesn’t want to show even that tiny bit of weakness.

“Sorry, my mom says I shouldn’t go with strangers.”

Katsuki isn’t sure what to think of that statement. On one hand, it’s exactly the kind of stupid justification Izuku would use. On the other, he’s damn sure the dumbass would go with a stranger who asked him nicely enough.

“Well, that’s easily fixed, isn’t it?” The Professor thrusts his hand out. “Doctor Hoji Ryunosuke, at your service. Now will you be my intern?”

Izuku grips his staff a little harder. “I’m already interning for someone else.” He manages to sound genuinely apologetic, and Katsuki can’t tell if it’s because he’s actually sorry.

“Oh surely there’s some way I can tempt you into it? College credits? Award wage? Co-authorship of any research papers? Glorious revenge on anyone who ever mocked you as you rule over them with an iron fist?”

For a moment, Katsuki could swear he’s hearing crickets chirp in the silence. He can’t imagine Izuku ruling over anyone with an iron fist - the closest he could get is an oven mitt.

The Professor held his hands up with a sigh. “No? Pity. Can’t blame a man for trying, but if you won’t serve as my assistant...”

Izuku raises his shield on instinct, and it proves to be the right decision because the man is right there and his hand is already scraping along the metal.

“... then you will serve as a test subject!”

The lull is over, and the combat resumes. The Professor’s hands dance between them, flickering back and forth and forcing them both on the defensive. There’s no moment to even breathe as he never seemed to stop striking, and it’s all Katsuki can do to avoid finding out what those fingers, which even now screech against the metal of Izuku’s shield, will do to human flesh.

Izuku disengages the top of his staff, dropping the weighted tip down on a long chain. With a fluid movement, he has it wrapped around one of the Professor’s arms, and before the Villain can react, Izuku shouts out “NOW!” and presses down on a switch.

Two things happen in fairly quick succession. The first is that the Professor is surrounded by a coruscating halo of blue electricity, sparking so violently he almost looks like a badly wired christmas decoration. The second is that Katsuki leaps up, spinning around as quickly as he can to build up
momentum and air. A full blown Howitzer Impact would take both too much time, and would frankly be far too excessive for Katsuki’s liking, especially with Izuku in the blast radius, but a watered down version is not only less likely to result in manslaughter, it’s significantly easier to aim. Whilst it’s nowhere near the Precision Edgeshot wants to instil in him, cupping both hands together as he completes his revolution is enough to channel the force into a rough, cone shape.

“GRENADIER SHOCK!”

It feels like a small eternity as the smoke cleared, and Katsuki waits with bated breath to see the results. Instead of a defeated Professor, what he sees is Izuku being bodily hurled towards him and he has just enough time to try and catch him but both of them end up sprawled out on the ground regardless.

“That was cute,” The Professor says dryly, stepping out of the cloud of still lingering smoke, “But you broke my glasses. I liked those, you know.” Indeed, the small, rectangular lenses were shattered, hanging awkwardly off the bridge of his nose.

Without the shielding protection of the thick glasses, Katsuki and Izuku both can see the cold, pitiless depths of his empty blue eyes, and for a brief, horrible moment, the world falls away and there’s nothing but blue sky as far as the eye can see…

Izuku snaps out of it first, forcing himself to pull away from the sensation of falling, and he finally understands why the man seemed so utterly foreboding to him - he reminded him so painfully much of his own father.

“Well, well! Aren’t you an interesting little one,” he murmurs, going to adjust his glasses before realising they’re gone with a small frown. “Well. More’s the pity you didn’t come on as an intern - it’s been so long since I’ve worked alongside another one of us.”

Izuku squints. “... Us?” Something about the way the Professor said that was… disconcerting. He certainly doesn’t want to think he has anything in common with a man like the Professor.

The Professor just stares at him blankly, sky blue eyes empty of any light. “... Goodness. I suppose it’s only to be expected you’ve yet to break through - what with your young age and all. Are you absolutely sure you won’t be my assistant? I promise I’ll keep the testing to non-invasive procedures! There’s just so much we could glean of our condition! It’s so rare to be able to see it in it’s developing stages!” He leans forward, and there’s a manic gleam that enters his eyes now. “Think of the SCIENCE!”

He holds a hand out to Izuku, grinning wildly. “Don’t you want to know? Don’t you want to see? All the things you’ve been creating, all the dreams…” His voice rises in pitch, modulating in something strangely musical to Izuku’s ears. “I can _show you_ su chw qi ger t u l _ things_?”

Izuku is reaching back before he can even think about what he’s doing, but there’s a loud bang and a flash of light before he can take a step forward.

“STUN GRENADE!”
The spell he didn’t even know he was under shatters, and Izuku feels a rough hand grabbing his own and he’s being pulled away.

“Now, we run the fuck away,” Katsuki snaps, and some tiny part of Izuku is… disappointed? He can’t quite put his finger on it, but… he shakes his head. He shouldn’t dwell on it. Although his vision isn’t back up to one hundred percent just yet, he still chances a glance back at the Professor.

The Professor blinks away the stars before he reaches up and tears his somewhat tattered labcoat off, and his t-shirt with it. Underneath was a sleeveless, backless… Izuku hesitates to call it a shirt, but it gives him an unobstructed view of more of the Professor’s body than he ever wanted. Then he moves, and Izuku snaps his face forward to witness him landing in front of them, descending like a vengeful angel of death.

Up close, Izuku can see him in greater detail. Thin, nearly invisible lines lined his flesh in intricate patterns, and Izuku’s mind quietly recognises them as surgical scars, but most jarring of all was the way the flesh at either side of him seemed to ripple and bulge. “Playtime’s over, boys.” The flesh seemed to explode, and shooting out from them were two new, gleaming sets of arms. Shiny, wet, dripping with some unidentifiable fluid and flexing with dangerous musculature. “If you come along now, I promise I won’t be too harsh on you.”

Their escape cut off, and their opponent relatively unscathed by everything they’ve thrown at him, it’s not looking good. Katsuki flexes his fingers, and he can see Izuku shifting his grip on his shield and staff. “I don’t suppose you have a master fucking plan?” He mutters.

To his mild surprise, Izuku nods.

“Are you... going to tell me what it is?”

Izuku opens his mouth to do just that, but there’s no opportunity to even finish his sentence as the Professor is forced to raise his arms to defend against a barrage composed of several attacks.

Someone shouts “Team Idaten is here!” just as Ingenium drop kicks the Professor off his feet, from out of the blue. As he lands in a picture perfect dramatic landing, engines throttling down, a whole slew of sidekicks make their own dramatic arrivals, in a formation twelve strong. Katsuki isn’t sure when he even had the chance to call for help, but damn it, if he isn’t glad he did.

A black, chitinous hand pats Izuku on the shoulder. “Get to safety,” Loom says calmly, “We’ll take it from here.”

The two of them don’t need to be told twice, and start running as quickly as they can. Izuku chances one last glance back, that small part of him interminably disappointed about… something.

Professor Hoji Ryunosuke grins back at him, six arms flexing dangerously. “We’ll meet again, Midoriya Izuku!” He calls, waving with two of his right arms, “I can’t wait to see what you create!”

Chapter End Notes

Recently, I've been thinking of creating a sideblog specifically for all my writing
bullshit. So I did!

If you want to see more of my bullshit, including random drafts of things that may never see the light of day ever again, please check it out at anoutrageousamountofwriting.tumblr.com!

Thank you everyone for reading!

Works inspired by this one

Scars and Seeds by Kaitsune

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