Dearly Departed

Izuku dies before All Might can save him from the sludge villain, seemingly ending his story before it can even begin.

And yet, despite this rather unfortunate setback, Izuku somehow still manages to become a
hero.
Chapter Notes

This work will have trigger warnings for chapters that need it. If you are sensitive toward acts of violence or descriptions of blood and extreme deaths then please see trigger warnings before reading. If not, then don't feel the need to look at the warning.

Thanks!

Please click more notes to see trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The boy was dead.

Now I know what you are going to ask. Who is this boy I speak of?

I do not know. I do not know who the boy was before his death. I do not know what its name was. I do not know what kind of person it was. I do not know what its dreams or aspirations were. I do not know what its likes or dislikes were. I do not know what its personality was like or what characteristics it had. There was nothing I knew of the boy before I came upon the scene.

And I do not care who it was before death.

Honestly, the whole living aspect of life never really peaked my interest. My job does not require me to need to know things such as a person’s life. So I do not.

Besides, what is life really but the precursor to death. So why bother oneself over what once was but always ends? Life is temporary. Death is not.

That sounds really morbid, I know, but I cannot help it. All I have ever witnessed is death.

And this boy, no matter who it was before, is dead.

Its heartbeat has gone silent. The electrical currents in its neural passageways of its brain have stopped firing. Its diaphragm no longer contracts to force air into its lungs which were starved of oxygen long ago. Where blood once flowed freely through the veins and arteries, now a viscous slime invades and clogs up every crevice in the boy’s body.

Yes. This child is most definitely, very obviously, and quite assuredly dead. I see its soul glowing above its body. It has already fled its physical vessel.

The soul is a gentle, green, glowing sphere of soft light that is unwavering despite its fragile appearance. A single white string keeps it tethered to the body, the last anchor this boy has with the physical world.

I step forward, quickly and efficiently sever the thin string. The soul is free. Now it is time to bring it to its last resting place. I call the soul to me. I have done this countless times and will continue to do it until all life ceases and death becomes obsolete. Every move I make is memorised, practiced, and familiar.
That is why I am a bit surprised when the soul refuses to answer my call. It stubbornly remains in its place no matter how I try to coax it to me.

But this is nothing new, even if I was not expecting it. I have encountered many such souls who tarried after their strings had been cut.

Looking at the scene before me I realise I should have expected it. In my experience it is always those souls which had an especially painful death that give me the most trouble. So strong was their last emotion that it carries over to death and lingers even after I cut them off from the world.

From the looks of the body I can see that this child had just been murdered by another of its own kind, one whose dark and muddied soul resides within a liquid slime form. The experience was probably very traumatic as I see signs of a struggle, suggesting that this death had been drawn out and therefore painful. It makes sense, therefore, that the boy’s soul would hold some negative emotion to keep itself from finding peace right away.

Now that I have deduced the cause for the soul’s hesitation to relinquish itself to me, I wait. It will not take long. Whatever emotion the child had felt in its last moment (anger, fear, regret) will run its course quickly enough and fizzle out. Then I will be able to finish my job and go to my next appointment.

But as I wait the soul does nothing. The glowing sphere of green does not shrink within itself in fear. It does not soak and drip in grief. It does not thicken and sink down in guilt. It does not burn and rage in anger. It does nothing but float calmly and gently before me, giving every appearance of a soul at peace, ready for me to take into my embrace.

I must admit that I feel impatient at this point. My next appointment is coming quickly and if I do not make it then one of others will have to fill in for me. I hate owing any of the others favours. The others feel the same way. Having to return favours can be very annoying, especially when the debt could potentially interfere with one’s schedule. I have everything planned out perfectly for the next millennia. Imagine how just one favour could ruin my whole schedule? I would have to rework everything to make it all fit again.

So no, missing an appointment is not an option.

That is why I decide to reach out to the soul. In my experience this is always an unwise move. The moment I come in contact with these lingering souls they always lash out at me. Sometimes, like now, it is necessary as touching them causes them to burn up their emotion faster- even if it is painful and makes the rest of the journey uncomfortable for us both.

I used to wonder why human souls reacted to my presence like this. From my long experience and having witnessed many humans deaths I have come to the conclusion that humans think that I am death.

I am not death. I am just the janitor that has to clean up after life.

And now, I need to focus on my job.

The moment I touch the soul I know that I have woefully misunderstood this entire situation. Instead of burning me with anger or attempting to drown me with its despair, the soul flashes white and then morphs and stretches before me until it has taken on a form not unlike the boy’s earthly vessel.

Its hair is wild and unkempt. Freckles speckle across its pale cheeks and the bridge of its nose. The child’s stature is small and frame thin while its hands and feet seem a bit too large for its petite frame,
something common in adolescents as I have come to notice. But what draws my attention immediately are its eyes. They are impossibly large.

Its new form is faded, dim and almost transparent. But the eyes are not. They are impossibly huge and its pupils glow brightly like two green flames flickering with life.

Which is impossible. It is dead. There should be no imitation of life in those eyes.

This has never happened before.

I am so utterly at a loss for what to do.

I feel myself panicking. If I do not figure this out soon I am going to miss my appointment. Everything is unraveling before me. I will have to let the others know and then all of my careful planning and scheduling will be undone.

Why is this happening to me?

“Who are you?” The boy asks.

Once again I have no idea what to do. I have never had to tell anyone who I was before. The dead are not usually this alive to ask me that and the living never notice me, too focused on the presence of death to pay attention to a humble errand boy.

Before I can come up with an answer the boy seems to have noticed the commotion going on below it. I look as well. It is a grisly scene. The slime human has almost completely taken over the boy’s old body. Sludge oozing inside and around the small rigid frame in a grotesque manner.

The boy gasps and tries to move toward its empty body. I assume it wanted to stop the monster, though I do not know how it could have achieved that when it had no power to stop this sludge human even when alive. The boy is surprised and distressed when it passes right through the physical bodies of both living and dead humans.

It turns to me now- eyes wide and full of desperation. At least I think it is desperation. I have only ever payed attention to what emotions look like on the souls I collect. So seeing desperation in its eyes is different than seeing it play out on a soul. I do recognise the way the emotion makes the green in its pupils glint and skip about frantically just as its soul would have if it were still in its spherical form.

And yet, mixed in with that desperation is something lighter, brighter, and uncomfortably still. It’s an emotion I do not recognise. I feel a weight come to rest over me as if the boy had just given me something precious and now it is my responsibility to keep it safe and alive.

I am going to fail. I just know it.

“P-please, can y-you help me?” The boy speaks in a voice that sounds so broken and scared.

“No.” I answer. “I cannot.”

“W-why?” Its voice is dripping with too many emotions for me to identify.

“You are already dead.” I say.

And with that the bright spark it had entrusted to me winks out and I am surprised at how much I miss it. No one has ever directed such a positive emotion at me before. A part of me wishes I knew
what name humans call it. I want to see it again.

Now, though, the boy’s eyes have been dampened by grief and the inner light dimmed by cold resignation. It begins to cry and I sense its grief. The child’s eyes are literally dripping, a shining clear substance leaking from them as it sobs.

I think this is what most humans do when they see the body of a soul I just reaped. I always assumed the leaking was because of some failed function in the souls chosen vessel. Now I see that such leaking is because of the soul itself and was never the fault of a broken body.

Who knew souls could cry.

“I’m s-s-s-so sorry mama.” The boy says between its sobs. “P-please don’t be too s-sad.”

The child’s mother is not here so I do not know who it is talking to.

It is at this moment that another human being appears, stepping out of a whole in the ground with a flash of light and a bright smile. This human has a strong and powerful soul- yet I can feel how weak its remaining life force is. It will not be long for this world. Who knows, it just might be one of the souls assigned to me. I do not make it a point to know which souls are on my list. I just know where and at what time I need to be to collect them.

I hope I will not have to reap this man’s soul. I do not like to know what souls where like before they lost their physical connections to the world.

The human is smiling and declaring in a loud voice that everything is alright now, “Why? Because I am…”

I do not get to hear the rest of the sentence because the man stops when it sees the cold and stiff body that once belonged to the boy. The slime human has nearly hidden all of itself within the small frame and perhaps if given a few more minutes it would have been able to successfully hide within the dead body and get away from this bright human. But slime still covers the outside of the boy’s old vessel and there is no mistaking the human’s escape attempt, or the boy’s death.

Next there is anger. Boiling, raging, righteous anger. There is a fight in which the man quickly, efficiently, and mercilessly defeats the slime human. Then there is guilt and tears and sobbing as the powerful and bright man cries and apologises over and over for not getting there in time, for not saving the boy.

This is a scene I am more familiar with. I do not see it all the time, but it happens enough that I am no longer interested in watching it play out again. I do not understand why humans are always so grieved by death. Do they not know that this is a completely normal outcome? Everything alive dies.

The boy watches the whole thing play out, though. And when the man begins to cry, it rushes to the man’s side. I note that it seems to have figured out how to move around now.

“How’s it’s not your f-fault All Might.” The boy tries to comfort the man. Its hand goes right through the man who promptly shivers as if a chilly wind had just passed by. Besides that the man is completely ignorant of the child it is grieving for.

“You tried to s-save me!” The boy continues to try and comfort this ‘All Might. Does it not realise yet it cannot be heard? “You tried a-and that means a lot to me, really! Please don’t b-blame yourself. I-if anyone is to blame it’s me. I wasn’t able to hold on long enough… or do anything. I… I couldn’t even save myself. This is all my fault.”
Then, in a quieter tone I am barely able to pick up, it whispers. “I really am a worthless Deku.”

While all of this is interesting to watch - I have never witnessed the dead try and comfort their own mourners - time for me has run out. I have to go now. If I do not solve this issue right now I will miss my appointment. But what do I do? Should I just leave? Abandon this job only half done? It is tempting. Leave now and forget about this boy. No one can say I did not try to finish my job. It is not like I could just take the fully formed soul with me.

Or could I?

Why not? It would actually be the perfect solution. I could continue on with my work while also keeping the boy close so that when the soul is ready and has lost this awareness it seems to have I can finish my job and bring it to its final resting place.

Who knows. Maybe this is what I am supposed to do.

Decision made I move forward and touch the boy’s shoulder. Huge, piercing green eyes look up at me and I am startled at how the dripping liquid pooling in its eyes just makes them shine brighter.

“Is it time?” The child asks, hand wiping across its eyes in what I guess is an attempt to wipe away the tears.

I am not quite sure what it means, but I answer anyway. “Yes.” It is time for my next appointment, though I doubt that is what the boy meant.

“Okay,” the boy’s voice shudders even as it draws itself up to its full height (which isn’t much, especially in comparison to my own towering size) and squares its shoulders. “I-I think I’m ready.”

Is it? Has its soul run through the course of whatever leftover emotions carried through from life? A bit relieved, I call the soul. The light of its eyes flashes, but otherwise there is no other response. The soul does not come to me.

So it is not ready then. I am a bit disappointed, but this does not change my previous plan.

I reach out and take the boy’s hand. Then we are gone.

It was time for my next appointment.

Chapter End Notes

**Trigger Warning: Mention of death by suffocation.**

The first step to becoming a hero after death is to defy all expectations.

Anyway, heres a fun fact. I’m not the talented or brilliant Kōhei Horikoshi and do not own Boku no Hero Academia.

Yeah, not really that fun of a fact, but still necessary.

Also, in case you want to know the other part to this series (Those that Remain) is interconnected with this one. You don’t have to read them together, but I think its more fun that way.
II

Chapter Summary

It’s Bring-Your-Ghost-Child-To-Work Day!

Also, Izuku tries to get answers… Key word being tries.

Chapter Notes

Wow guys! All of your comments have been so amazing and have really encouraged me. Seriously, you guys are the best!

I am super happy that you all are enjoying my work so far.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Why is her s-soul yellow?”

The question tumbles out of the boy’s mouth the moment we arrive in a crowded hospital room where a bright yellow sunburst of a soul hovers over the body of an old woman.

It had not taken me very long to learn that the boy never seemed to stop asking questions.

“I do not know.” I quickly take in the large group of teary eyed people, the cards and flowers decorating the room, and the gentle smile that graces the now empty body. This woman had a peaceful death so I do not have to worry about any negative emotions.

I have been particularly anxious about that ever since the boy. It turns out having a human soul tag along with me wherever I go is very distracting, especially when it will not stop talking. I do not want to add on anymore. One is already too much.

“I thought at first that it m-might represent a person’s eye colour.” The boy starts talking again, floating closer to the yellow soul to inspect it. “Mine is green and you said b-before that my soul had been green, r-right? But her eyes” it points to a picture by her bed, “were blue. So souls aren’t represented by eye colour. Perhaps then th-the colour represents a person’s quirk! I didn’t have one so does that mean that green represents quirkless souls? Of course, the colour of a soul could have to do with a person’s character. Or is it more about what they were feeling right before they died? With all of her family around and how much they all seem to care about her, Ithinksheprobablydiedhappynowingsheswasloved.Andyellowissuchabrightlyhappycolour.Nottomentionthesh

I am not actually sure what all it is saying. The boy tends to mumble a lot.

It is all so different from before where I just stepped in, did my job, and stepped out and onto my next appointment. Now every job becomes a chore as the boy somehow manages to find more questions to ask. You would think it would run out of questions or things to say, but a week (according to the boy. It keeps track of the days. I have never had need to pay attention to human’s
passage of time) has already passed and I see no end to its talking.

I come up to the soul and snap its last tether, the white string flashing in the setting sun shining through the window behind us before it disappeared. I begin to call to the soul.

“I n-noticed that you always start singing right before you absorb the souls. What are y-you singing? Is it an incantation? I don’t think it is because it d-doesn’t sound like you are using words. It’s more like a melody. My guess is that you have to sing in order to absorb the souls, but why? Why singing? Also, if singing is supposed to accomplish the same thing every time why is the tune always different? It would make sense if the song was different because each soul different. That would mean only certain songs would work on certain souls. Or perhaps it is more like each soul has it’s own song. If that is the case then how do you know each soul’s song? Is there a way to tell? Maybe it has to do with their colo-”

I am only half listening to the boy. My main focus is the soul which I am pleased to see response immediately to my call and comes to me. Once that is done I turn to the boy and interrupt its mumbling before it gets unintelligible. “I am calling to them, not singing.”

“It always s-sounds like you’re singing.” The boy remarks.

“I do not know what singing is. I am calling them. When they respond they come to me.”

“O-oh, okay.” The boy’s face scrunches up as it takes in this new information. I do not think it finds my answers very satisfactory. “But then w-why is your call d-different every time?”

I think about this for a moment, then nod to the boy. “You were right before in your string of words.” The child’s cheeks take on a red hue. “Each soul has only one call it will resonate to. I must use their call in order for them to respond.”

“How do you know which call is the soul’s?” It asks.

“I just do.”

I know my answer does not satisfy the boy, but it stops asking questions so I think I did well enough. The child now turns its attention to the hospital room, mumbling about everything it notices.

I appreciate hospitals. It makes my job easier when most of my appointments are in the same building. Sadly I only have one appointment in this hospital today and the next is rather far away. That means I will have to drop this soul off before my next appointment.

“It is time to go.” I tell the boy.

“Yeah, o-okay.” It nods and begins to move back toward me, but hesitates. It looks wistfully back into the sunlit room where humans are still crying.

“I-I know it’s sad.” The boy says in a soft tone. “But I can’t help a-and think how b-beautiful this moment is for everyone. You can just tell that they all love her s-so much. The fact that everyone gathered to say goodbye is wonderful. Her children and grandchildren, her whole legacy was here to send her off. I think it’s poetic, you know? None of them would exist without her so it’s only right that they are here to honor her last moments. And even though everyone is sad there is a kind of peace in the room as if no one feels regret or guilt.”

I look at the people around the empty body and notice that the boy is right about everything. They are all related to the woman who now peacefully floats in my grasp. They all are feeling sadness, but there is peace and tranquility nestled in their souls.
I can see their souls. The boy, as far as I can tell, cannot. It only seems to see souls once they have left their vessel. So I find it impressive that it managed to garner all that information just by noticing the outer appearance of the humans here. I am coming to learn that the boy is very observant and keen on seeing detail.

I allow us to wait a moment more so the boy can soak up the serenity of the room. Liquid is already misting its eyes and a tentative smile wobbles on its face.

In my line of work I come across few of these scenes. This, I am discovering, is a bad thing now that I have the boy. It is so very susceptible to other people’s emotions and I know that many of my appointments put heavy strain on the child. It hates seeing others suffering. Unfortunately, that is what I see all the time.

I wonder if it is possible for a soul to break after death? I have reaped many souls broken from life, and those shattered pieces always reform into something twisted, ugly, or damaged beyond repair. But those souls all broke during their time alive. Would it be worse if it happened after death?

I do not know. But I suppose I might find out in the future.

Time is up. I have already warned the boy that we were going and it had stopped, so now I just wrap myself around it and step into the In-between (again, named by the boy. I find that the child has a strange need to give a name to everything). The boy gives a surprised squeak and flails for a moment, but goes still the moment it feels the shift from its world to the In-between.

The first time I stepped into the In-between with the boy I discovered that this place is actually harmful to human spirits. I am near positive that I almost lost the boy that first time. Even now as I use my body to shield it from the destructive atmosphere of this place, I feel the child flicker momentarily and hiss in pain. I wrap myself more tightly around it. We are almost there.

A moment later I step out. Now I stand in a place devoid of anything. It is dark, but not the kind that blinds your sight. Far ahead of us is a great white light, a beacon of huge proportions. That is my destination. The boy calls this Soul Station and the light it calls Portal of Lights.

I unfold myself from around the child who immediately shoots out and away from me to then turn around and scowl.

“Ichijorei-sama!” The boy whines (I have never had a name before, but of course the boy felt I needed one). “You know I d-don’t like it when you grab me without warning. It’s kind of scary.”

I suppose it might be.

“I did give you a warning before you stopped to watch the crying people.”

“W-w-what?! No, that doesn’t count!” The boy shakes its head vehemently and then settles into a pout, slinking behind me. I have little doubt it would have said more, but we have drawn closer to the beam which also means we are closer to others. The boy always gets quiet and nervous whenever we are around any of the others. It draws closer to me, using my huge size as a hiding place. Its form also instinctively dims until it is completely transparent beside me. I can still perceive where its soul is, so it is not completely hidden from me or the others, but for the most part this is effective as very few ever seem to notice its presence.

Those few that do take note of it just stare curiously for a moment before returning to their job. The others and I are, of course, like minded. The job is important and anything not pertaining to it matters little to us. So really the boy has no need to be anxious around any of the others.
But I do not discourage its behavior toward them either. In truth, I am nervous. I do not know if taking the boy with me had been the right choice. The surprise and confusion a few of the others have exhibited when they spot the boy worries me. The fact that none of them have shown recognition or understanding when they see the boy is bad. Maybe this truly is the first time this has happened and I made the wrong choice.

I have never made a mistake in my existence, nor have I heard of any of the others ever messing up. Before that fated appointment under the bridge, I never considered it would be possible for my kind to make a mistake.

Now it seems all too possible.

I fear that the boy might be my first mistake.

Does that mean I am capable of making more?

I do not want to display my mistake, if it is one, for the others to see. So it is better for everyone if the boy draws as little attention to itself as possible.

At this point I, with the boy hiding beside me, have reached the Portal of Lights. Reaching into my pocket dimension, I take out the shining yellow human soul and place it directly into the light. The moment I release it the soul begins to slowly float upward. Around us others are doing the same thing.

The boy releases its anxious grip on me and floats forward, staring in reverent awe as the yellow soul and a hundred others all slowly rise within the white light. Looking down I can see the wonder sparkle in the boy’s eyes (an emotion I have recently learned existed). I know what is going through its mind, it has told me before what it thinks of the Portal of Lights. It is beautiful, according to it. The white light streaming upward in darkness, filled with dancing colours like fairy lights. It says it looks magical.

I do not know what fairy lights or magical are.

I have seen this Portal of Lights all of my existence so it does not please me the way it does the boy. I ponder for a moment if I had shown such wonder when I beheld the portal for the first time. I do not remember. It was so long ago.

We watch at the Portal of Lights for a few more moments. The boy soaks the sight in as if it was going to be its last time. I watch the boy’s face, bathed in white light with a colourful glow flicking past now and again. I decide to appreciate this moment. Each time I look at the boy its expression and the glow of its eyes is always slightly different. It is so interesting.

In time I do not doubt that such a sight will lose its effect on me and become as uninteresting as the Portal of Lights. Not to mention I believe its soul will eventually answer my call and I can place it in the Portal of Lights, so it will not be by my side forever.

None of this will last. So for now I will make this count so that I can remember this feeling (which I cannot find a name for) when it is gone. Is it possible for me to forget the boy as well? I certainly do not remember any of the souls I have reaped in my existence, so it is possible.

I call to the boy’s soul again, but once more the only response is a flash of its eyes. It is still not ready. I consider trying to just put it in the portal despite being fully formed, but I already tried that. The Portal had actually rejected the boy, pushing its soul out of the light. That had been annoying.

“Ichijorei-sama?” The boy’s voice calls my attention to it. It is looking up at me, its eyes incredibly
huge. “Where do you think the souls go?”

The first time I took the boy here it had asked me this question. I said I did not know.

I am about to give it the same response until I realise that it is not asking me what I know but rather what I think. So I think for a moment.

“Judgement, I suppose.” I remember once being told that all the souls we gathered are judged. So it does not seem that far fetched to assume that the portal would be taking them there.

“How do you know how they are judged?”

“No.”

“How do you know who judges them?”

“Yes.”

The boy must not have been expecting that answer because its eyes light up and it gets excited. “Who?!”

“The Judge.” I say.

The boy’s expression falls. “But who is the Judge?”

“The Judge is the judge.”

“Okay, but do they have a name?”

“Yes.”

“What is it?” The excitement is in its voice again, though it looks a little more guarded. I think it must like the word yes more than no.

“The Judge.” I answer.

“Do they go by any other names?” The boy asks- no, more like pleads.

I pause to think for a moment, then say “Yes.”

“What is it?!” It is excited again. I have a feeling my next words will just disappoint it once more.

“I do not know. I only heard the other names once and it was long ago. It does not affect my work, so I did not care about the names.”

The boy sighed. “You never care about anything outside of your work.”

“Yes.” I agree.

The boy turns around now, watching the Portal of Lights with a critical eye and mumbling again. It is trying to deduce the Judge’s other names on its own. I consider listening in but in that moment I become aware that I am being watched.

Others are watching us. Nearly all of them here have noticed the boy. It is, after all floating uncloaked in front of the largest, and only, light source in the Soul Station.

We have gathered too much attention.
I tap the boy’s shoulder. It turns around and grins up at me, a question balanced on the tip of its tongue.

“We must go.” I say before it can speak.

I must have sounded urgent because the boy becomes alert and worry permeates its green orbs.

Then it notices all of the *others* looking at it. The boy’s eyes widen, its cheeks turn bright red, and it squeaks in surprise before turning invisible almost instantly... Not that it matters since their attention is already on it.

The boy presses itself close and I feel its hands clutching me. Embarrassment and insecurity bubble out of it causing the *others* to twitch as they sense its change of emotions.

I begin to move away from the Portal of Lights. Many have already returned to their business, but there are a few *others* who still watch me and the soul hovering by my side. No one comes forward to tell me the boy was a mistake. I am relieved.

At the same time, no one comes forward to say that I have made the right choice. Or that this strange circumstance has ever happened before. That does not relieve me.

Once far enough away from the portal I gather the boy in my embrace, covering it completely, before stepping back into the *In-between*.

We both sigh in relief when the howling desolate atmosphere of the *In-between* cuts off the many stares from the *others*. I am eager to begin my next appointment, and for the first time I believe the boy is as well.

Chapter End Notes

Ichijorei-sama:

The kanji of the narrator’s name is 一助 (Ichijo) and 霊 (Rei).

一助 is a noun which means help, assistance. 霊 means spirit. The 霊 kanji is usually used for positive spirits such as yūrei 幽霊 (common term for spirit or ghosts), sorei 祖霊 (deeply honoured ancestral spirit. Think of the Mulan movie), and eirei 英霊 (spirit of a war hero).

So basically Izuku calls the narrator Helper Spirit. This is because Izuku sees the narrator not as an unfriendly spirit such as an onryō (vengeful spirit), akuryō (evil spirit), or yuki (demon spirit) but rather a helpful one whose job it is to assist the newly departed souls and ferry them to where they need to go.

Sama is an honorific that shows high respect. It is used for royalty, gods, deities, or spirits. It can also be used as flattery or an insult (depending on the context), but it’s pretty safe to assume that Izuku isn’t trying to be insulting.

On another note- MERRY CHRISTMAS! HAPPY HOLIDAYS! And may you all have a VERY MERRY and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!
I love this holiday so much! ^w^
Chapter Summary

Ichijorei misplaces his ghost boy.

Chapter Notes

Please click more notes to see trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 86-”

The moment we step into the physical world, we both are accosted by bright flashing lights. Red. Blue. Red. Blue. Red. Blue.

The boy’s counting halts and I think for a moment the boy has finally given up on its weird game. It has been doing it since we left the last appointment.

The child rushes past me and straight into the crowd of spectators who have gathered at the edge of the flashing lights. I watch it bobbing through the mass of living humans before crying “A-ha!” and disappearing.

I consider the boy’s antics for a moment- but its weird actions slips from my mind easily as I turn to do my job.

Before me is a mess of twisted metal, shattered glass, and the thick smell of leaking gasoline. My next three appointments are buried somewhere in the mess and I need to find them. Already I see that humans are being dragged out and others in blue are rushing their twisted bodies into ambulances. I do not want my appointments being carried away by one of those white vehicles. It is extremely hard to reap a soul when the body which it is still attached to is in constant motion- a problem I do not usually have to deal with since empty human vessels tend not to move.

I have found my first soul and cut its last tie to this world when the boy is back by my side. The child takes a moment to give a small bow to the soul I am reaping in what I assume is a show of respect. It seems to do this with nearly every soul I reap.

Now I move to find the next soul. The boy trailing behind me.

“So I was counting.” The boy says. “A-and I figured out that no time passes when we leave here. We were in the In-between and S-soul Station for 14 minutes and 48 seconds. But when I just checked the time from someone’s phone it showed the exact same time as when we left. They only had a clock that showed hours and minutes so I don’t know if maybe a few seconds passed- but it was still the same minute from when we left. That means we- er, or you- can teleport; traveling from one distance to another without any time passing. That could be a really useful quirk for a hero. Of course I know it’s not really a quirk- but if it were then I could finally be useful. Although, I guess I
wouldn’t be the one who is useful since you’re the one who is actually teleporting and not me. Imagine how many people you could help, though!… If you weren’t, you know, you... and were incorperial. Although, being incorperial could help too when fighting villain’s or performing rescues- if you could choose when you could phase through things and when not to.”

Ah, quirks… and heroes. Besides the boy’s constant questions and mumbling, I have discovered that it also loves talking about quirks and heroes. I myself do not much care about either. They mean nothing to me… well, that is not completely true.

There is one quirk I sometimes concern myself with. It is one I have heard about from the others. They have said that it keeps its bearer’s body from decaying. This only prolongs the inevitable, however. Those who have seen it in passing can tell that the soul is being stretched thin and will not last forever. One day it will give out despite the longevity of the body. Souls were not made to last in the physical world. The others and I all wonder who will be the one to reap that strange soul.

I hope it will not be me. That kind of soul would never have a peaceful death and I can only imagine what troubles it would cause me. Just think of all the resentment and anger that would be boil within that soul when life finally succeeded in ending it.

But when compared to the boy I doubt any person could match it with emotions. Even now the boy is looking around us at the traffic accident with so many different emotions flowing out of it that it would have made any of the others dizzy. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I am used to the flurry of feelings that always surrounds the child. Three months have passed (the boy has been keeping count) and the boy is still running strong on whatever emotional excess it had when it died. I am quite sure I have somehow stumbled upon the most emotional human being ever to be created.

My wandering thoughts are halted when I find my next soul. It is a small soul, so light and feathery that I know immediately it is a very young. It is still alive though, tucked gently inside the frail little body of a tiny girl in pigtails. It appears I am early, an uncommon occurrence but still one I am used too.

A mother is calling to her child even as a rescue hero (having just arrived) pulls her out of the metal death trap which humans call cars. The child does not answer because it is unconcious. The hero turns to get the child next.

And that is when I no longer have to wait. The car explodes, fire taking it up in an instant. I step into the burning light, the roaring nearly drowning out the scream of despair and anguish that rips itself from the mother’s throat.

The soul comes to me easily and I am moving on to find my last soul. The mother falls to her knees in defeat and rages. It is angry at death, furious and out of control. I have seen this reaction many times from the living, though I do not get it. Why are they always so angry at death? Life is the one that did this- that keeps killing everyone. After all, no one survives life.

I have just come upon my final soul which lies in the heart of the whole mess. I assume based on the rott of the soul and strange costume of the body (villain, I think). Perhaps the boy knows the name of the villain. After all, it has a great treasury of knowledge when considering the topic of heroes and villains.

Except that the boy is gone.

When did that happen?

I should have realised it sooner. It would have been trying to comfort that mother back there or been crying over the death of the little girl.
It isn’t, though, and I have no idea when it left me… or why.

I turn to gaze around me, searching the wreckage and crowd. I cannot feel its soul nearby, neither can I see the light green glow of its aura.

My first thought is to search harder for it. But that is quickly banished when I remember the last soul I must reap. For a second I am full of indecision on whether to find the child first or finish my work here. Every moment that passes is another moment the boy can wander farther away. Then again, I need to complete this job as well.

I try to finish this appointment quickly, but the soul does not heed my call. It shakes and wriths in rage instead.

This is bad. I have limited time to try and wrangle this stubborn soul in and find the boy. The emotion in the soul is weak, though, so I know that the rage should quickly dissipate.

Time slips past.

The soul is not being quick enough, not for me at least. Without another thought I reach out and grasp it. The anger courses through me and I feel intimately the hate this soul has for the world. I am uncomfortable feeling such emotion.

Then the emotions winks out immediately and I easily reap the soul.

Though the negative human emotions are gone, I can still taste the bitter and stinging emotion ghosting through me like an unpleasant echo. There is no time for this, however, and I shake the effects off of me as best I can so I may focus. I need to find the boy before my next appointment.

Thankfully, I do have time. Having finished three appointments in one trip I have a few minutes to spare. If I had not then I know I would have had to leave without him, probably to never come across the green little soul again. I have no idea what the soul would do if left. I would hope that when the soul is ready I might feel the pull and have a second appointment to fully reap it. But there is just as big a chance that there is no second appointment. Can one soul have another appointment if it is already dead? What might happen to a soul if it is never reaped.

I believe I was told this once, though I am unsure. There was something about no final rest, no judgement, just wandering forever and ever until it rips apart or dissipates. I think that such a fate would be cruel. I am glad I have time.

Taking a moment to gather myself, I clear everything from my senses- focusing hard on feeling for only one thing: souls.

I have never done this before. I have never had the need to. I am always able to pick out those souls I am appointed to reap. They pull at my senses and catch my sight like a beacon. But the boy is not like all the other souls. From the moment I touched it and witnessed the soul take shape- that beacon snuffed out.

This means I must search out the child’s soul personally…. which might be impossible were I not so keenly familiar with its wavelengths. I am loath to admit that I really have spent much time with the boy.

At first I feel myself overwhelmed as all the souls in the vicinity bombard my senses. Normally I can feel them all like static at the back of my senses, but now that I am focusing on that static it washes over me like a flood.
I begin to sift through the souls, picking them out and organising them. Things become clearer and not so difficult. My senses reach farther, processing faster as I touch and then discard soul after soul until I find it. I just barely brush over it, but I know immediately that it is the boy.

I am about to move toward the boy when I remember what it had been saying before leaving me. Being free of the laws of the human world I can travel fast across land and through air- but using the *In-between* just might be faster. I decide to try out the boy’s ‘teleportation’ theory.

Taking note of where the soul is, I step into the *In-between* and move forward before stepping out again.

The boy squeaks at my sudden appearance and I am about to pull him to me so that we may leave when I notice the soul right beside him.

There are two other souls, actually, in the room I have just stepped into. One is a powerful and bright orange soul that spits sparks. It is housed in the body of a middle aged woman with platinum blonde hair. Despite its strength the soul seems sad and compassionate, but more than that I can feel the anger radiating off of it- anger directed at me. Or more accurately, death- but I am almost certain that for a moment the women’s eyes glare straight at me.

The other soul is very familiar and it takes me less than a moment to realise why. It is nearly identical to the boy’s soul. Green- though darker. Gentle and soft. The only major difference is how much weaker the women’s soul is.

That is not to say its soul is weak. Both women's souls are full of inner strength of will.

But thinking back to the boy’s soul I marvel at just how much stronger it was. Few souls have ever seemed so determined. Perhaps it really should not be a surprise that it has managed to persist this long.

The green women’s soul is brimming with so many emotions it is nearly distracting. Most of them, those I can pick out anyway, are different forms of sadness. And defeated.

That is when I notice the way the boy is trying to hug this women despite its intangible form. It is also crying.

“She’s m-my mom.” The boy says to me as it sniffs and wipes the back of its hand across its eyes. “I-I never got to say goodbye… and when I recognised where we were b-back there, I knew I h-had to ch-check up on her… just to- you know- make sure sh-she’s doing okay.”

“And is your mother doing okay?” I ask.

The boy heaves in a breath. “Y-yeah… no. No, not really. She- she’s moving because she can’t b-bare to l-live among all the memor- memories. This is her last day here.”

I notice now that the room is rather barren. A few boxes sit near the doorway but everything seems to have already been packed up and taken out.

“She’s leaving because of me.” The boy sniffs. “All of her friends, her work, Oba-chan and Oji-san… everything. And it’s my fault.”

The two women are embracing now and there is an overflow of emotions- grief, pain, fondness, love, regret, and sadness. The boy must feel them too, because it cannot stop its tears from gushing out now.

“It is not your fault.” I say, touching its shoulder gently but firmly to let it feel my presence. I do not
know if this helps, but the boy seems to lean into the touch— even if it does shiver a little.

“But if I hadn’t died—”

“It cannot be your fault.” I say, interrupting it with a little more force than before. “You have no control when your life ends. No human does. None of this can actually be your fault. You are dead. Everyone dies eventually.”

I think for a moment that my words might have the opposite effect of what I want, but the child seems to calm down a little at my words.

The two women begin to leave, taking up the remainder boxes and exiting the building. I and the boy are now left in an empty house. The child leans closer to me. I stay still.

“.... I just wish things were different.” It finally says, voice barely above a whisper.

“Many do.” I say. We stand a moment more in the silence.

“It is time to go.” I finally say. I spread myself wide, ready to fold the boy up in my presence and protect it from the harsh atmosphere of the In-between. Without a word the boy steps into my grasp. I am startled, however, when the child reaches its arms around me and buries its face into me, hugging me as it might another human.
I stiffen for a moment, unsure what to do. The boy squeezes me tighter. A part of me realises that it is seeking comfort from me. I am not sure I am capable of giving such a thing.

I fold myself around it, holding the child tightly before stepping out of the empty room and into the barren In-between.

My next few appointments go by quietly. The boy does not let go of me for a while. I must be succeeding in this comfort thing.

Chapter End Notes

**Trigger Warning: Multiple deaths through car collisions. Child dying in explosion.**

Oba-chan Ochi-san:

Given that Izuku’s mother is close friends with Mitsuki Bakugou I figured that Izuku would call the Bakugou couple aunt and uncle.

I also considered how in the anime/manga Izuku still calls Katsuki ‘Kacchan’ despite what a major jerk he is to Izuku. Therefore, I didn’t think it that far off for him to use an informal and sweat honorific for Mitsuki who is decidedly not so ruff with him (cause she’s a mature adult who knows not to bully). I would have liked to use the informal and endearing kun for Masura as well, but kun is only used between peers and rarely tacked on to grown men as it is too cute. So a kid using kun with a man would just be insulting. And Izuku is not one to make insults.
IV

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a bad day at work. Ichijorei still has no idea how to handle any of this.

Chapter Notes

Please click more notes to see trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The boy and I stare at the crumpled body in front of us. The middle school courtyard is disturbingly still and quiet. Long shadows streak across the yellow painted ground as the sun sinks lower into the west. We are the first ones on the scene and will probably be the only ones to know of this person’s death until morning comes again.

Unless the cleaning crew decides to use the front entrance.

The body is twisted and mangled on the pavement, features smashed beyond recognition against the cold hard ground. Blood pools around the still body, soaking into the person’s white uniformed shirt, staining it red. A soul, small and fragile looking, barely hovers a few inches above the body. It is a light blue colour, one of the more cleaner hues I have seen. But it is hard to notice the pleasant quality of the colour over the souls fractured and flaking appearance. Hardly any light seeps from it and it seems to be deteriorating in front of us. I am actually surprised the soul managed to hold out for so long before giving up and ending its life.

The boy shakes behind me. It has gone very, very silent.

Its silence worries me.

I used to enjoy these suicide souls. They were almost always the easiest to call and responded to me the fastest. There were the few suicide cases where a soul resisted me because, at the last minute, they had been filled with a desperate want to live even though they had already taken that final step. Those souls always fought so hard, screaming and slicing at me in their desperation to survive- even though it was too late.

Those were rare cases, though. Most of the souls that had killed themselves were all too eager to come to me.

Recently, however, I have found myself hoping they will not show up on my roster.

I have a pretty good idea why I feel this sudden change.

I look back at the boy. All colour and light has leached from its body so that it is dim and grey. Only the eyes are still green. They shine brighter than normal, burning with an intensity I would not have thought possible.
Already liquid is filling up its eyes. But it does not make a sound.

I wish it would. Then I would know it was alright.

I look back at the soul waiting for me, trying to puzzle out why suicides seem to affect the boy so badly. It hates suffering. I know this about it after four months of it following me everywhere. It is also incredibly empathetic and will cry if someone else so much as sheds a tear.

In fact, the boy sobs at nearly every appointment, sometimes with the people still alive who miss the deceased and sometimes for the dead soul who left this world in a painful way. It is too emotional, in my opinion (then again, I find all humans too emotional). Despite this, however, the boy always seems to try and look for a bright side in every situation.

Which is utterly ridiculous and should be impossible.

Apparently, though, it is not.

There is a horrible car accident in the city with three collisions, ten injured, and two deaths. The boy is thankful so many people made it out okay. A husband dies of cancer leaving behind a family. It is thankful that the mother and children still have one another for comfort. A baby dies in its sleep. It is glad they did not feel any pain before passing. Mob on mob violence kills three people. The boy hopes that the deaths might encourage the survivors to give up their criminal ways and live a better safer life.

Death after death and still it always manages to find a bright side.

Except for suicides. It has never found anything to be thankful or hopeful for in a suicide. It never even speaks during these appointments.

I did not realise how used to the boy’s chatter I had become. Now the silence feels wrong. It is wrong for it to be so silent and still, I am sure of it.

“Why do you think he died?” I hear the boy say in a quiet voice.

I feel myself sigh in relief. Good, it is talking. Perhaps the boy will not be so silent after this. Perhaps the child will go back to how it usually acts. Really, was there anything for me to worry about in the first place? How silly I am sometimes.

But before I can feel completely relieved I need to make sure the boy continues talking. I can start that by answering its question. That should initiate more talking, and at this point I do not care if the child goes into a mumbling tangent or question frenzy. Anything will do over this silence.

“When the human hit the pavement it crushed the skull, destroying its brain. The kid also has three broken ribs that pierced the left and right lung. If the skull had not cracked then the human would have suffocated from the pooling of blood in the lungs. It has also has lost four pints of blood. So if the ribs and skull injuries had not killed the kid, blood loss would have.”

The boy chokes and I turn around to see that it is shaking. Huge droplets of water stream down his cheeks and the boy is now completely white- even its eyes have lost their colour.

Oh great, I broke it. I suspect I did not give it the right answer.

“N-n-no.” The boy struggles to speak past all the emotion clogging up its voice. “Th-that’s no- that’s not wh-what I-”
It says nothing further to me. I wonder what it had meant by its question. I wonder if I would have been able to answer it. I wonder what makes this suicide different from the others that it is actually crying now instead of shutting down like usual.

Time is ticking and the shadows are growing longer. The sun has cast the boy and I in dark shadow. The broken body is still basking in warm light.

I need to get my job done. Perhaps finishing this as quickly as possible is best for the boy.

But before I can move the child says something. Not to me, I know this immediately. The child is speaking to the suicide soul.

I can barely pick out the words mixed in with its sobbing. I still try and listen though.

“I-I’m so-o-o-rry. I’m s-s-sorry you felt l-like th-this w-was your only o-option. It wasn’t i-it shouldn’t h-have b-b-been. I-I’m so sorry.”

I look back at the body. It looks so small out there in the middle of the empty courtyard with the school building towering over it. The soul sinks ever lower as it waits for me to take it. But I do not yet, because something is bothering me.

The ruby puddle that is ever expanding around the body shimmers in the last rays of the day. It coats the white pavement and the bodies clothes and skin.

I must get my job done.

The boy continues to cry behind me. It sounds so wretched. I want to fix this.

But my job must come first.

… Right?

I look one more time at the soul, then turn around and move toward the boy. This cannot continue.

I hunch over the boy and touch it to let it know I am here by its side. The boy looks up at me and I see in its eyes the same look it had when we first met. Desperation, fear, sadness, but also something brighter. I remember this emotion. I saw it when I first met the child. When he asked me to save him.

The child is entrusting me again with this precious emotion I have no name for. I feel the responsibility weigh down on me. I failed last time. I will not fail this time.

So I speak. “I have a job for you.”

The sobs stutter and it blinks at me in shock. I myself am just as shocked. Exactly what job do I have for it? What is there that it can do which I might need help with?

I look back at the soul still waiting over the crumpled body.

No wait, this is perfect. A job is exactly what it needs. All this time the boy has been doing nothing. It has no job. No purpose. I try to imagine what I would do without my job and suddenly I am impressed that the boy has held out for so long.

“I need you to help that soul. Keep it from falling apart anyfurther.” That is a safe request. The soul cannot fall apart anymore now that it is dead. I think it is probably important to try and set the boy up for success. Honestly, though, I have no idea what I am doing.
“H-how?” The boy asks. It is still oh so broken up, but that precious light in its eyes is growing stronger. I can see the flickering green glimmer, waiting for me to fan it into a flame. At least I know I am doing something right so far.

“Talk to the soul.” I say, because that is something I know the boy can do. It is also something I think it should do. I hate its silence.

The boy looks doubtful, but I push it ahead anyway.

Hesitantly it approaches the body. The boy stops in front of it, eyes trained on the tiny blue soul floating before us.

“H-hi.” The boy sniffs. The soul does nothing. But that is to be expected. I would be worried if the soul did respond.

The boy pushes forward. “I-I, um… my name is Midoriya Izuku and… uh,” he sniffs, wiping away a huge drop of shining crystal as it trails down his cheek. “I- know you must be scared… and confused. A-and I know life wasn’t g-good for you. I mean, I don’t kn-know exactly what your l-life was like, but I-I understand a little wh...what you must have been f-feeling. And I-I’m sorry. I w-wish I could have helped you before this…”

The boy stops. The sun has left the sky completely now and it is now dark. The only light to be seen are the street lamps behind us and the faint glow from the souls of the boy and the suicide kid. The colour has began returning to the boy as it speaks.

Good. So far everything seems to be working splendidly. I am quite proud of myself. Soon the boy will be back to normal and everything will be right again.

The child takes a deep breath, then continues. Its voice sounds more sure now. “B-but I’m here now. And even if it- it doesn’t matter much after the fact… I want to help you.”

Then the boy reaches out to the soul and before I can do anything it cups the soul in its hands.

Everything had been going so well too.

Light explodes between them, the whole courtyard is bathed in white and for a moment I can just barely see their two souls, blue and green, shining among the bright backdrop of white that consumes everything else.

The white light disappears as suddenly and quickly as it had appeared. But the courtyard is not recast in darkness. The boy and the suicide soul are still glowing brightly.

I can feel their emotions saturating the earth and sky around them. It spills out in waves, crashing and soaking everything. It is overwhelming to me.

Because of this I feel deep within my core what the two human souls are feeling. There is grief and despair and oh so much hurt that makes me want to just stop existing. I am shaking, sobbing. I did not know I could cry. I do not think I can take this. Please stop it! It is too much! It is ripping a whole inside of me. Tearing, biting, hollowing me out until there is nothing but emptiness. It hurts so much! It drags me down until I am drowning. No one is there. No one cares. The emptiness is crushes me. I am suffocating. I cannot find relief. I am drowning and no one is noticing. No one is noticing. Help please! Someone! I am drowning. No one notices. No one cares. I cannot take it any longer. It would have been so much better if I was never born.

No… wait. I was never born. Only physical beings can be born, like humans. I am not a human.
This is not me. These emotions are not mine.

But they are still drowning me.

Or at least, they were. Now, though, I can think again. I can feel myself again. And yet emotions are still welling up inside of me. But they are calm, they are comforting. They reassure me that I am not alone. That I am not drowning anymore. That someone cares. Izuku cares.

The boy, I can feel him. So pure, so bright. He warms me, fills the whole inside and banishes the biting and tearing and crushing and emptiness that was consuming me. I smile, I may not have been able to help this soul while he was alive. But I can help him now. And that is all I have… all he has ever wanted to do. Help people.

I- he is calm. The boy is filled with peace and even joy as I- he continues to fill up the soul’s hungering emptiness with the simple reassurance that finally, finally someone sees me- them. Someone understands them. Someone is helping them.

The emotions begins to recede, pulling back into the two souls. They leave me and I am left stunned. I am positive I am not made to feel so much at one time. This is by far the worst human emotion backlash I have ever experienced. And yet it does not leave me aching or itching like usual.

Instead I feel at ease. I am even a bit empty, like it is weird not to be filled with emotions. I think this must be because of the boy.

The bright glow fades between the two human souls until they are back to normal… which is wrong. Not for the boy, of course. He’s supposed to glow strong, soft, and bright. What is wrong is the suicide soul which still sits in the boy’s hand. It is brighter than before and it is no longer flaking. It is still too small and still bares cracks like scars, but it does not look as if it might disintegrate on the wind.

It looks… healed.

I do not know what to do.

This has never happened before.

The boy turns to me and I see a wobbly smile on his face. His eyes are shining like stars. That precious emotion, the one of brightness and lightness and unwavering calm is dancing in his eyes. “Ichijorei-sama, Shimizu Kaito-san is ready.”

Wordlessly I step forward and cut the soul’s last tether to earth and call it to me. Nothing more is said between the boy and I as I wrap him safely in my embrace. Holding the boy I can get a taste of his human emotions which feels right. I never realised how empty I was before.

We head for Soul Station. I let the boy take the soul and put it in the portal when we get there. He looks so at peace as he watches the blue soul drift up into the light.

I call his soul while he is looking at the light. Perhaps after that huge emotional release the boy is ready. His soul still does not respond.

That is alright though. I do not know if I actually want to reap his soul anymore. I have discovered something important today about the boy. Something important.

Others watch us as we leave. They notice us all the time now. But I am not bothered by it this time. I
do not feel so much that he was a mistake anymore.

I feel instead that I did the right thing.

Chapter End Notes

**Trigger Warning: Suicide. Blood. Description of smashed body.**

Shiminzu Kaito:

The kanji for the last name is 清 (shi) which stands for "clear, pure, clean" and 水 (mizu) meaning "water". I chose this surname because the original form of Kaito’s soul before he became depressed would have looked more like a glowing sphere of light blue, clear water- untarnished and pure.

The first name kanji are 海 (kai) which means "sea, ocean" and 翔 (to) meaning "soar, fly".
I chose 海 because of Kaito’s own struggle with feeling drowned and isolated. This creates for me the image of finding oneself drifting, sinking in the middle of the ocean. There is not another soul in sight and all you see is blue, blue, blue.
But there is hope and Kaito’s story, though bitter, does have a happy ending. That is why I chose the last part of his name, 翔. In the end, with Izuku’s help, Kaito is able to rise above his great sadness and find peace.
“You don’t have to be afraid anymore Sasai-san,” the boy says in a calm voice as he reaches out for the volatile purple soul.

The soul seems to get more frantic the moment the boy touches it. I notice how the boy flinches and screws up his face as he is flooded with the negative emotions from the soul. He does not give in, though, and begins to comfort the soul. I think he is very good at this. Not that I can compare him to anyone. I do not exactly know very many dead humans.

The boy is confident with the soul he handles. He has, after all, had much practice.

“You’re family is safe.” The boy says aloud to the soul. “I promise. The heroes came just in time… though they wouldn’t have had you not done what you did. Because of you they are going to be okay. You- you’re a hero, Sasai-san. You saved them.”

At first the soul keeps fighting, keeps trying to protect those still alive. Then there is doubt and confusion for a moment. Finally I watch as the souls emotions change into something brighter and tentatively calm the longer the boy holds the soul. He continues to reassure the soul until it has stopped shaking and is now rests peacefully in his cupped hands. It is relaxed and so very thankful. More than that, though, the emotion which I still have no name for, the one that continues to show itself with nearly every soul I have the boy touch, is now unwavering and I know that it is ready for me to call.

The boy senses it too and withdraws his hands from the soul so that I may release it from its last anchor. The thread is cut and the soul comes when I call, then we are both on our way.

As we place the soul into the portal I take a moment to look at the boy. He is watching the soul join the other souls which all gently float upward in the beam of light. There is a soft smile on the boy’s face and such joy and peace in his eyes. I catch a glimpse of the unnamed emotion glinting in his emerald gaze.

“What is that?” I ask.

The boy is startled and turns to me with wide eyes. I do not blame him. I am startled as well. It is usually he who asks the questions, not me.
“Uh… what?” The boy asks, tilting his head to the side.

“That emotion. The one that soul just felt. The one you just felt. You feel it a lot, actually”

“I- um. I’m sorry. I don’t know which one you’re talking about.”

How frustrating. I suppose I must describe it now. I will probably fail. “The one that is fragile and unwavering. It is bright and light and calm and peaceful.”

The boy is thinking hard. His head rests in his fist and a finger rubs absentmindedly across his chin. “Hmm- bright and light. When you say light, do you mean the colour or weight density? And how would that translate into emotions? Bright obviously means lit and I have noticed that the souls that were good honest people tend to be bright. So when you say bright emotion you must mean that it is a good or positive emotion. As for light, I don’t think you mean colour since souls don’t generally change colour with their emotion- perhaps a shade or two of their primary colour, but nothing too substantial. That means you are referring to its weight. Souls that are depressed or sad are heavier while ones that are full of hope and joy are lighter. Could you mean happiness? Or thankfulness? Sasai-san was extremely grateful and happy when I told him his family was safe.”

“No.” I say. “Those were not it.”

I have seen the living be thankful that they were not the soul to die that day. I have seen a humans gentle happiness that their loved one had a good life and a peaceful end. I have seen a happiness that is twisted and dark coming from humans that bask in their murderous deeds. I have recently become familiar with a more peaceful and oh so warm happiness from the boy as he revels in helping distressed souls find peace.

Joy, which he mentioned, is much like happiness except that it tends to be more overpowering. Until the boy came along I did not have a positive opinion of joy. I only ever saw it on villains and it was a very dark malicious emotion. Apparently, however, that is only one form of joy. The boy has since shown me a more powerful, pure joy that is bright and energetic. I see it most when he talks with me about heroes and quirks.

As for hope… Actually, I do not know that one.

“How,” I say, interrupting the boy who is mumbling about what emotion could be fragile and unwavering at the same time. “What is that? I am unfamiliar with it.”

The boy stares at me a moment, as if in aw. Then a smile breaks across his face and I feel the sweet and warm happiness exuding from him. “Hope! That must be it. Of course you wouldn’t know what hope is. I can imagine that not many people are feeling very hopeful when they die.”

I think about his explanation of hope, then I make an observation. “Yes. Hope. What is it?”

“Well, hope is… It’s when people have something they are looking toward to or believe in. It’s the faith that despite everything, things will get better or that their dreams can come true. Hope helps people to not give up no matter what. Sasai-san kept fighting me at first because a part of him hoped he could still protect his family. When he finally understood that his family made it out his hope that they would be safe came true and he was grateful and happy.”

I think about his explanation of hope, then I make an observation. “You are hope.”

“W-what?!?” The boy looks startled. He is blushing.

“You are nearly always filled with hope.” I say. “It shines in your eyes.”
The boy mumbles a few words but otherwise says nothing, his head cast down as he refuses to look in my eyes. I know he is not upset, though. The emotions I am reading off of him are all positive. He is hesitantly pleased at my words. Flustered and embarrassed, but overall happy.

I smile to myself, glade that the child took my words as a complement, as I take the boy into the In-between and back to the physical world. The boy does not mind being surrounded by my presence anymore. In fact, I have noticed that the boy seems to find comfort in those moment where I must protect him.

I do not know what this means, but it makes me a little happy nonetheless.

All positive emotions flee from the boy, however, the moment the physical world materializes around us. Our sights are immediately drawn to a broken and bleeding form before us.

There is not much else to see. We are standing in a dark alleyway. The only bright colour is red. Red lake glistening under the body. Red paint smeared and splattered across the walls. Red hair disheveled and slick as it sticks to skin- hiding most of the face which is smashed into the cement.

An auburn red soul, tinted with violet, flickers above the human’s broken vessel. The chest is still rising and falling. Lungs still breathing. Heart still pumping. It would be a mercy if they were not.

Life is not so merciful.

“Flawless!” The boy gasps beside me and rushes forward. He stutters to a stop, though, when the bodies eyes snap open and the head turns toward us. Blue eyes look directly at us, first flicking to me and then zeroing in on the boy.

Sometimes, when I arrive too early like now I will see a human in the process of dying. Even more rarely will the human, not fully gone yet, see me. I do not know why this happens or how it is possible. I assume it is because they are wavering at the edge of life and death, caught between two worlds which somehow let them interact with both sides.

The boy has never seen this happen before. I never warned him that it could happen. That could turn out to have been a mistake on my part.

I sense a sudden spike of fear from the boy. I myself am worried. Souls like this which stand on the edge of life and death tend to react violently toward me. I fear the violence may extend to the boy for being with me.

It turns out I have no need to worry though.

The man and the boy stare at one another for a moment. Then the man looks one more time at me before sighing, a smile ghosting across his beaten face. The flickering soul becomes more visible—there are only four white strings anchoring it to the broken body.

This seems to push the boy into action.

“No!” He cries, rushing forward. “Y-you can’t! Just- just hold on! Please! Help will come.”

The man gives a breathy laugh, choking on the blood pooling in his left lung. “Isn’t it your… job to….. to take me?”

The boy stutters. “I-I’m not- It’s not my job. I’m like you. E-except you have to keep fighting. You can’t give up. You c-cant!”
The man studies the boy for a moment, then smiles. “No… You aren’t… like me…… You shouldn’t have died.”

The boy shakes his head before looking desperately around for another living soul. There is only he and I here with the dying man, and we are not living.

No help is coming.

The boy starts crying as realisation dawns on him. He crashes to his knees before the body, kneeling over it with a bowed head.

“I-h-how?” The boy chokes out. “You’re quirk. It sh-should have kept you safe! I-It should have warned y-you of danger. Five to six seconds, right? Y-you can predict any h-harmful action t-taken against y-y-you withi-in f-five to s-six se-”

“Kid.” The man says, in a voice too powerful for the dying body. The boy freezes up, eyes wide and terrified. “It’s okay. You don’t need to be sad. I’m fine now. I’m at peace……

He looks at me. “I’m ready.”

The boy hiccups as he tries to grip the man’s hand. Somehow, he does.

The soul is staying longer, flickering less. Fewer and fewer white threads hold the soul to its body. It is nearly time.

“N-no…. this isn’t right. Who- who could have d-done this?”

“Does it…. matter?” The man asks. Out of the three of us, only the boy seems to think it does.

“What’s done… is done…… Thanks though… for caring…… You’re a good kid.”

The man squeezes the boy’s hand once, then it drops like led through his fingers.

The soul has now fully materialised.

The boy cries harder. I consider taking the soul, but stop. It is calm and peaceful, as ready for me to call it as any soul could be.

But the boy is not ready.

I lean over him and press gently down on his shoulder to get his attention. The boy refuses to look at me and continues to cry. Gently I take hold of his chin and guide his head upward. For a moment, the boy resist, eyes still looking away from me.

“Izuku.”

Immediately his eye’s snaps upward, wide green gaze filled with tears look at me startled and shocked. Behind the surprise I see wretched despair and grief. But there is hope still flickering in the center of his emerald gaze.

He stares up at me expectantly. I realise he has placed his hope in me. That I will somehow fix this, that something I might say or do will heal them both.

It is a lot of responsibility. I hope I do not fail.

I say nothing more to the boy, instead I direct his hand toward the red soul. The boy hesitates and
looks to me one more time. Then I watch his eyes harden with determination and he gently but firmly takes the soul into his cupped palms.

The soul must recognise his touch, because it immediately responds by enveloping the boy with its calm presence, reassuring and comforting the boy. How strange to see the roles reversed. I think it is a good thing.

Finally the boy is no longer broken and is even smiling a little. It is a sad smile, but content at the same time. He hugs the soul close to his chest and whispers to it, “You are a true hero,” before releasing the soul and stepping back so that I could do my job.

I finish my work and take the boy and the soul away, looking back only once at the dark alleyway painted in red. I see the glimpse of a word smeared across the brick in blood. I had overlooked it before. So did the boy apparently. I whisk us away before he can see it. I can still see the letters though, glowing before me like a warning.

S T A I N

Chapter End Notes

**Trigger Warning: Blood. Description of a body stabbed multiple times.**

Sasai
(The father Izuku comforted in the beginning.)
This name was taken in honour of Shingo Sasai who is one of the assistants that helps Kohei Horikoshi (the creator of Boku no Hero Academia) in the creation of his amazing series.
VI

Chapter Summary

When one’s job revolves around death, it is highly likely that you will bump into a villain now and again... or step right into their lair.

Chapter Notes

Please click more notes to see trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The moment I see the surroundings of this new appointment I am worried. All the souls around us are dark, greasy, infected, and twisted from where they broke and never managed to fix themselves. As if to reflect these horrible souls that reside here the place is dark, cold, and bare of anything that might give one a feeling of warmth.

We are in a villain lair.

I consider for a moment ditching this appointment…. Because the boy does not need to see this. But I cannot. Even the thought is painful to me and goes against all of my instincts.

Still, it would be nice if I could actually pick and choose the souls I reap.

The boy seems to have picked up on the dark mood (how could one not) and shrinks in close to me. I can feel his fear strongly rolling and twisting within him.

Determined to get this job done with as soon as possible I search around for the soul I am to reap. I find it. Surprisingly it is not dead… even more surprising is the fact that it was just a second ago.

The body the soul was housed in is being reformed in front of us. White strings materializing from thin air and anchor to the soul, pulling it down back into the body as it reforms. The moment the lungs have been properly reformed the soul lets the world know the excruciating pain it is going through with a bleeding scream. Limbs reform, muscle appears and wraps around bone, then skin stretches across body.

The air is heavily scented with blood.

The boy takes a step forward, hand reaching out as if meaning to help in some way. But he cannot help, and neither can I. The soul has already been bound back to its body.

My appointment is cancelled. Someone has interfered. I am furious.

I see the bed of metal. The cuffs holding it down. The chains and blood stains on the wall. This isn’t just a lair…. It’s a torture chamber.

The body has reformed and one of the villains lifts his hand away from the screaming human. I
narrow my sight onto this human and see that this is the one who has just taken away my
appointment. The human plays with its quirk, rebuilding and taring down again the soul I was
supposed to reap.

I want to destroy this miserable being. I want to erase that quirk which has
gotten in my way.

But I cannot touch it. It is alive and its soul is firmly anchored to its mortal coil. I hate quirks. Such
troubling things giving people like this scum so much power.

The villains soul is placid, smooth and glimmering on the surface. Below, however, there is a storm
churning. Deep purple twists with hints of blood red as it seems to suck all light and hope away like
a black hole.

(I have never been to space. There is little reason to since I do not have jurisdiction outside of earth.
But Izuku has explained in depth to me what space is, stars, novas, moons. I think I might like to go
there one day).

Instinctively I pull the boy closer to me, draping myself around him so that he is almost completely
hidden. I do not want this wicked, life-eating soul to go near my boy.

Surprisingly the boy pushes away from me, fighting to get toward the villain and the writhing man
being torchard.

“We have to help him!”

I hold him back. “We cannot.”

“What? Why?” There is no disappointment or accusation in his voice, just confusion… and is that
determination? Ah, he wishes to change my mind.

“My appointment is over.” I say. “The soul was brought back and now alive. I cannot do anything.”

The boy slumps and seems defeated, but there is still hope shining in his eyes. He has not given up.

His brow wrinkles together as he stares at the scene before him, thinking hard. I can hear him
mumbling under his breath.

The villain does not seem pleased with his victim as he disintegrates the its side, the soul flickering
above the man once more, white strings snapping and disappearing so that the soul becomes more
free, floating higher above the body. But before the man can fully die the body is reformed and the
soul disappears again.

The screaming will not stop.

Something must click because the boy looks up to me in his mind. He looks up at me, face set with
fierce resolve. “Th-the threads! You said that they are anchors that keep the soul tethered to its body,
right?”

“Yes.”

“Well, all the souls you reap always have one of those threads still attached. You cut it before
reaping them. Could you- could you perhaps do that with this soul… except instead of just getting rid
of one anchor you get rid of them all? Would that work?”
“I cannot take a soul that is alive.” I say.

“No! Y-you don’t have to! But that villain,” there is such furry in his voice, “he keeps disintegrating the guy to- what I assume is- a molecular level, bringing the man to a state where he cannot possibly be alive anymore. Th-that’s why the soul keeps flickering to view. And if the soul is appearing, no matter how fleeting, doesn’t that mean the person is either dead or close to death? Couldn’t you try to cut at it?”

I think. I would have to be fast and cut all the strings before it quivers back into the body. The downside is that I would probably miss my next appointment. Who knows when I will get another clean shot.

…

The boy is shaking. His eyes are wide with terror, an overflow of tears spilling down his cheeks. But despite the fear there is a green fire burning within. A righteous rage and desperate need to protect is filling him with steely determination.

His emotions are so strong. If I deny him here, will he break?

But I cannot miss my next appointment! I must… No. The end of the world would not come if I missed one appointment. This is more important. The boy is more important.

When did he become so important to me?

“Yes.” I say. I do not regret my decision when I see hope in the boy’s eyes brighten.

The man screams again as the villain’s quirk takes apart the man’s hand. The boy winces… closing his eyes tight, his hands clasping into fists.

“But you have to leave.”


“I will take you to the Soul Station. I will retrieve you once I have the soul.”

The boy bites his lip a little. “Wh-why do I have t-to go?”

“That is my deal.” I say. “I will retrieve this soul if you leave.”

He does not want to be left alone with all of the others. I see it in his expression. But I also can see that he is willing to make that sacrifice for the soul if necessary.

“But if you wish you may choose to wander away from here while I work instead of going to the Soul Station.”

Of course this means more work for me later when I have to locate him. I am becoming such a softy.

The boy looks relieved as he gives me a curt nod, before turning around and phasing through the concrete walls of this prison chamber. He looks back and smiles hopefully at me before disappearing.

Worth it.

Once he is gone I step into the In-between and then to the Soul Station. It is not long before I find an other who will take care of my next two appointment. The other is older than me and has known me all of my existence. I often go to this other when I am in need of assistance… although, perhaps
often is not the right word. I have not sought out help from the other since the first milenia of my existence. I wish to be dependent.

“This is not like you,” the other says. “Tell me, is something the matter?”

“No.” I answer. “I merely need more time at one appointment.”

“Ahh…” the other nods knowingly. “The others are also experiencing trouble with many souls that resist. It is this hero villain era which is creating such a numerous amount of emotional souls.”

Yes, the boy is filled with emotions- although I know that is not the type of soul the other is referring to.

I thank the other (who looks at me in confusion at my words. It appears I am picking up some interesting habits from the boy) and leave. Stepping back into the physical world, I am immediately reminded of what unpleasant work lies ahead of me as I catch my appointment in mid scream.

Patiently I wait, but am displeased to see that the villain seems to be taking its time and keeps disintegrating and remaking parts of the body that are not life threatening should they suddenly disappear.

Time ticks and I am getting annoyed. I regret sending the boy away as I already miss his presence.

Then, the screaming halts as the villain chooses to disintegrate the head of my client. The soul wavers into view, white strings shining even as half of them snap away. I dive forward and lash out faster than the speed of light (or perhaps as fast, it is hard to tell sometimes).

The soul immediately solidifies into view. I barely have to call to it before it answers. It still has an emotion trapped within it, but I am willing to bear the feeling as the emotion is not negative.

Its relief.

Surprisingly, I feel some pleasure to see the villain puzzling over why its victim is dead even though it has reformed the body. It is rather put out. I grin.

I now turn my attention to locating the boy and am pleased to find he is close. Or perhaps I should be displeased. I sent him away because I did not want him distressed by these villains. Yet he is still within their lair.

No matter, I must away and get him. This job took longer then I would have wished even when I did make extra time for it. I am glad I had the other take care of my next two appointments or else I would not have had time to get the boy.

In an instant I am there. I want to take the boy up and leave immediately, but stop when I see the boy and who he is with.

A child. There is a child in a physically brightly lit white room as cold and full of darkness as the torture chamber. The little girl has wavy unkempt white hair and a little horn peaking out at the side of its head. The soul that is nestled in its body is grey and fluttery. Golden flecks appear and fade from the center like phantoms. The soul is already cracked.

It is a large crack. I should have noticed it first with how grievous the wound is. But for some reason the ugly gash within the soul seems to be hiding itself… or perhaps, mending? Trying to at least.

What is stranger about this child and what is keeping me rooted in my place is the fact that the boy is
holding- hugging the little human.

The soul is alive. It does not stand at the pinnacle between death and life. It is healthy.

That should not be possible.

The boy looks up at me and smiles. So warm. So bright. Yet I see sadness in his smile as well.

“Ichijorei-sama!” The boy greets me. The girl turns to look where the boy is. It does not see me.

“This is Eri-chan! I’m her new friend.”

Chapter End Notes

**Trigger Warnings: Torture through disintegration. Death through disintegration**

520 Five hundred and twenty kudos!
Ninety five bookmarks!
And seven thousand, six hundred and fifty hits!!!

Wow! I just can't believe it! You guys have been so supportive and great! I am so blessed. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you! ^_^
Chapter Summary

Ichijorei and Izuku discover what ghosts are.

Chapter Notes

I’m excited for this chapter! Are you excited?! I’m excited.
Oh wait, already said that. Heh heh. Sorry. I’m just... excited.

“I don’t get it!” The boy cried in exasperation, throwing his hands into the air.

“Neither do I.” I say. There is a lot I do not understand about the boy.

A boyfriend is crying over his newly departed sweetheart whose soul I have just reaped. Izuku is trying to comfort the man, but like always no one can see him. Or hear him. Or even feel him since he keeps going straight through them everytime he tries to reach out.

The boy is getting frustrated.

We have spent enough time dawdling at this appointment and it I have to leave. The boy doesn’t complain as I take us away from the scene without warning him first. He is too busy mumbling to himself to seem to notice his surroundings anyway.

“It wasn’t just a fluke, we know that. I’ve visited Eri-chan several times already and she usually notices me fairly quickly. It could be her quirk, but Eri-chan seemed really sure her quirk couldn’t affect me. Not that she’s told me what her quirk is. She’s so afraid of it which just isn’t right. I bet her quirk is really cool. Anyway, even if Eri-chan hasn’t told me about her quirk, she was rather insistent that it has nothing to do with making things tangible. And since she cannot see you I know her quirk doesn’t let her interact with the supernatural. So that means that I must be the one doing this. But what am I doing? What’s different that allows me to interact with Eri-chan but no one else? At first I thought it might be emotion activated since emotions seem to play a huge part whenever I interact with dead souls, but that doesn’t seem to be working. There must be something I’m missing- some clue I don’t understand yet.”

I myself have given up trying to understand any of this. It should not be possible for dead souls to interact with the living. Then again, everything about the boy is impossible.

Thus why I have given up trying to comprehend anything the boy does.

The boy is still mumbling to himself as I deposit the most recent soul into the Portal of Lights and then pull the child along with me toward my next appointment (he just floats along as I tug at his arm, completely unaware) when an other stops me. Ah, it is the one I sought help from before. Time to repay my debt no doubt.
… Great.

“I have two souls I would like you to take care of for me.” The other says. Two souls, how will I ever get both done as well as my own workload? This is really annoying.

“One is going to be a murder,” the other continues talking. “While the second is a suicide. Based on the events of their death I predict that they will be rather difficult to call which is why I am giving them to you.”

And it gets worse.

“How do you know?”

The other and I both start in surprise, before turning to look where the boy is hovering beside me. The boy blushes at the sudden attention, but is too curious to back down.

“I-I don’t mean to be rude, but i-i-it’s just that Ichijorei-sama never knows beforehand the deaths of the souls we have an appointment with… or even what the souls will be like. So how can y-you predict the way the souls will react after their death or e-even how they die?”

The other stares mutely at the boy in what I presume must be shock. So I am the one to speak up.

“It is not that I cannot know all of these details beforehand,” I explain to the boy. “Rather, I choose not to. It is how I prefer to work. There are many other who choose to remember small details like the souls type of death so that they can attempt to predict how much time they may need to give for each appointment.”

The boy’s eyes widen in surprise. “Wait! If you can do that, why don’t you? It seems so much more efficient to give each soul their own time frame depending on the appointment.”

“But because humans are hard to predict.” I make sure to give the boy a pointed look. He has the decency to smile sheepishly at me. “And even the oldest of us are often caught off guard when a soul which should have come easily puts up resistance. That is why I much prefer giving all of my appointments buffer room so that if one runs longer then expected I will not necessarily be late for the next.”

Understanding lights in the boy’s eyes and he smiles as he prepares to say something else. He is cut off, however, by the other who seems to have recovered from the shock of having a dead soul talk. What the other says, however, is not directed at the boy but at me.

“How did you come to be haunted by a ghost?”

…. Ghost?

“What is ghost?” I ask. The boy himself seems just as surprised as me, though he is also eager. He leans forward excitedly, floating closer to the other and drifting a bit away from me. The look in his eyes is hungry, no doubt ready to devour whatever new information the other might give him. “Does that mean there are others like me? Have you seen them? Do you have any information about what limitations or advantages I might have in this form?”

The other pointedly looks away from the boy, focusing instead on me. “No one has ever told you?”

The boy shrinks back a bit at being so ignored and dismissed by the other. I am a bit irked by the other’s behavior, but decide to let the matter slide.
“No. I have never heard of what a ghost is,” I answer.

“It is a surprise that you have not stumbled upon one before this.” The other says. “Even more so that the phenomenon has not been explained to you before now. There is little knowledge to understand about ghosts. But what there is I will share with you. They are human souls that do not move on after death. While most of human souls that resist our call are powered by a single emotion, ghosts are powered by a deep wish or desire. When any other attempts to reap them, the soul takes form. The ghosts which I have met all were driven by a desire for revenge. There was one that wished to protect its living child. It is common for ghosts to attach itselfs to living souls and haunt whether to seek revenge or to protect according to the wish which it had made before dying. It is important to note that those that do latch on to the living last longer, but all eventually either move on of their own choice and become reaped, or eventually. According to my knowledge, never has a ghost latched onto an other. I must ask, what did you do to make a ghost haunt you?

“N-no,” the boy chokes. “I-I’m not haunting Ichijorei-sama! I don’t want revenge or anything like that!”

“Then what is your wish?” I ask. “What is your desire? Is there someone you wish to protect?”

“No… I mean, maybe? I don’t know! I don’t remember making any wish when I died. I mean, I regret that my death meant my mom suffered, but if that is why I turned into a ghost wouldn’t I be… you know… h-haunting her?”

The boy’s question is aimed at the other, but the other is still ignoring him.

“Do you know anymore about haunting or how it works?” I ask the other.

“No.” The other says. “As I have said, there is little to known about ghosts and how they work. Perhaps if you tell me how the ghost died I may help you. Once we find out the ghost’s wish then you may find a way to fulfill it and it will stop haunting you.”

I am uncomfortable with the way that the other is talking about the boy.

“W-well,” The boy begins to explain, his hands rubbing the back of his head fingers tugging at his hair nervously. “I was walking home from school when this villain attacked me. He… he used his quirk to try and take over my body and… and s-suffocated me. Before I… before I d-died I remember being really scared and knowing that I wasn’t going t-t-to make it. I hated… hate myself for not being able to do anything. I c-couldn’t even s-save myself. I was useless…. like usual.”

By the end the boy is speaking in a whisper. He seems to have shrunk into himself and refuses to look at me directly. He doesn’t finish and I do not want him to. It is obvious talking about his death is painful to him, so I decide that I should be the one to do it to keep my boy from feeling anymore hurt.

“When I called to him, he did not respond. So I touched his soul and he took form. Since then I have been bringing him around with me to my appointments.”

“Wait.” The other’s word snaps through the air harshly. “Am I correct in that you said that you have been bringing the ghost along with you? Has not the ghost been following you?”

“Well, yes?” I am not sure of my answer.

“And the ghost stays close to you no matter how you have tried to lose it?”

“Lose it? I haven’t tried to-”
“I can leave his side,” the boy pipes up. “A while ago I left to check up on my mom when I recognised where I was. Oh, and I met Eri-chan while exploring a villain base.”

The other frowns. “That is not possible. When a ghost haunts something, it teathers its soul to that thing and cannot stray from its side. Therefore, this ghost is not haunting you. IBut now I am only further confused. Why does it follow you and why do you let it?”

I think I am beginning to see where I may have gone wrong with this. “Well… I suppose he is not following me, as you say. I am the one bringing him with me. When he first became a ghost, I chose to keep him close for when he might answer my call.”

The other seems shocked. “You did not leave it? Why? That is what we all do when our appointment turns into a ghost. Did you not sense the beacon end, no longer drawing you to the soul? You should have known that meant your appointment was over and the soul was no longer your responsibility.”

I was wrong… All of this time I had been afraid that I made a mistake and now I see that I had. Apparently it would have been fine- right even to leave the boy and go on to my other appointments.

The boy looks up at me with wide eyes, tears already glistening- threatening to spill down. “So… you were supposed to… to leave me…. all alone?”

No. That is wrong. This is wrong. They are wrong.

What if I am not the one who made the mistake? What if it is all of the others who are mistaken? It does not feel like a mistake to have not left the boy alone to wander endlessly. Having the boy beside me seems right. It feels right.

Did it always feel so right?

I pull my boy closer to comfort him. He hugs me and I feel the disquiet, fear, and sadness which was fluctuating around him melt away. The boy smiles up at me and we are both content… well, I am content with our situation. My boy is happy.

I turn my attention back to the other who is staring curiously at us. I may disagree on what the other has said, but there is still more information I can gain from this conversation.

“What else is there that you know about ghosts?”

“They are incorpreal and invisible to living souls similar to us. Unlike us, however, they cannot interact with other souls whatsoever. There are a few I have heard of that have managed at times to influence inanimate objects and even elements such as wind or fire, but that is rare.”

“W-what about souls that have passed?” The boy asks. “Can they- I mean, can I interact with those?”

“No.” The other says frankly. “No ghost can interact with any soul, living or dead.”

The other sounds so sure about this, like it is an undeniable truth. And it is. I feel its truth inside of me. It is a law woven into the constructs of our world. There is no denying now that it has been spoken that only others can interact with souls of the dead. It is the way things should be.
It is not, however, the way things are.

“But…” the boy speaks hesitantly. “I can.”

I nod my head in agreement.

The other considered the boy for a moment, studying him. “Then you are an impossibility.”

I already knew that.
Chapter Summary

Ichijorei is faced with some problems. Meanwhile Izuku helps. Ichijorei does not appreciate it.

Chapter Notes

So just letting all of you who’ve been following this story for a while know that from now on I will be adding trigger warnings to chapters that need it. This chapter won’t need any, but I’ve gone back and put warnings on previous ones. You can probably guess which chapters. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A few moments in and the job is already done.

…

That is nice.

The murder which the other had assigned me was actually rather mundane when considering murders. Some human tried to rob some building and killed some other human to prove a point. Simple.

The now departed soul did not have any time to feel anything substantial that might cause the soul to linger (or turn into a ghost). I do not even need the boy’s help as the soul comes to me the moment I call… which is good because I was not sure if I remembered the song correctly. It is so much harder working with other’s appointments. You do not get the beacon that calls to you and the song doesn’t just come to you naturally. You have to memories the song and be told the time and place of the reaping. It gets especially muddy when there is more than one soul to be reaped at a single place.

There was this one time where I had agreed to help out an other which I immediately regretted when I came upon the scene to discover myself in the middle of a battlefield. I attempted to find all the souls I could and thought I had succeeded. Apparently, though I missed one by accidently and by the time my mistake was realised and we went back to retrieve the soul, it had already dissipated. That particular other has not spoken to me since. Not that I blame the other. I would have been furious as well.

Messing up our own job is unacceptable. Messing up someone else's is interference of the worst degree and absolutely unforgivable.

Thankfully this job was clear cut with only one obvious dead person laying right out there on the floor.

“I see what you mean.” The boy says to me after I have finished calling the soul. Heroes have
already subdued the murderer so the boy is more relaxed and able to focus on his own wonderings (I think it might be a favourite past time of his) rather than the scene before us. He hates it when villains seem to be getting away with any crime.

“There’s no need to worry,” I tell him. “They won’t escape.”

“About what?” I ask in return.

“Well, Kowaikaorei-san gave us this job thinking it would be difficult based on the fact that it was a murder. But it wasn’t at all.”

While it is nice to be recognised for being right I am more focused on the fact that the boy just gave the other a name. I am a little perturbed. I know that humans (or maybe it is just a habit of the boy. I am not sure yet) like naming everything, but until now I have been the only other to have a name.

Now ‘Kowaikaoreisan’ has a name too.

Huffing (did I actually just huff?) I scoop the boy up and whisk us off to two of my own appointments. They go by fast as well (it helps when I have the boy around to soothe any distressed souls) and I am pleased to realise I will not have to rework my schedule at all. We are making incredible time.

As we drop of the souls into the Portal of Lights, however, I must admit that I am not… truly as pleased as I am trying to make myself be. The name thing is still bothering me. And it bothers me further that it is bothering me. Plus my work does not seem to be making me feel better like it usually does, so that is bothering me too.

Maybe it does not matter if any of the others get names or not because mine is special. Ichijoreisama does sound a lot nicer than Kowaikaoreisan. And mine is shorter which probably means it is better.

Or maybe shorter is worse.

And what if Ichijoreisama only sounds nice to me. What if the boy thinks Kowaikaoreisan is a nicer sounding name. Can one switch names?

“Ichijorei-sama?” The boy’s voice calls my name and my attention is immediately drawn to him. That always happens when the boy uses my name. I wonder… Is the name attached to my focus and whoever wields the name has the ability to grab my attention no matter what I am doing?

It is rather scary now that I think about it.

“Yes.” I answer. The boy is looking at me funny.

“Are… are you okay?”

A funny look for a funny question. “Yes. I do not think it is possible for me to not be ‘okay’. Why do you ask this question?”

“Well,” the boy fiddles with his hands nervously, “it’s just that, you’ve been staring at nothing for a while now and we already dropped off the soul. Usually we’re off by now to visit the next soul.”

Oh… I guess I completely spaced out. That is… rather disconcerting. I have never been so distracted by my own thoughts before.

I try to focus back on the work at hand and where I need to go next, but I am still somewhat distracted. I just cannot stop thinking about names. What even are names? It seems to have some power over its holder, but how much and why? If the others used my name would it hold the same
power over me as it does when the boy uses it? Why do humans even feel the need to name things?
And what if Kowaikaoreisan name really is more special than mine?

There is no doubt about it. I must get answers or I will not be able to do my job properly.

I look to the boy (who seems even more worried than before. Apparently I spaced out again) and ask, “Is my name better than the other’s?”

The boy looks surprised. His eyes are wide and the green of his iris flickers. “Eh?”

“Is my name more special?” I ask.

“I… more special than what?”

“More special than Kowaikaoreisan.”

The boy’s eyes widen as his irises shrink down into pinpricks. His hands wildly flail about before deciding to take up guard over his face to hide it from the world. A stream of words erupt from him and completely bulldoze me over.

“I-I mean you’re both r-really cool and I don’t mean to be disrespectful to Kowaikaorei-san it’s just my personal opinion and Kowaikaorei-san did kind of sort of have a grim angry-ish face not that that’s bad or that it scared me although it kind of did but I know that your not supposed to judge others by their appearance and I’m not because Kowaikaorei-san didn’t seem to like me very much not that not liking me means Kowaikaorei-san is a bad person because most people don’t like me and that doesn’t make them bad anyway I’m sorry about the name I know Kowaikaorei-san is probably your friend so I’ll think of a different name I’m so sorry although I think I’ll still use san because even though you’re both um others as you call yourselves I know you better and you’ve really helped me and been nice and I don’t know what I would have done without you so I really do admire you but if you don’t feel comfortable with sama I’ll call you san too! I really, really am so sorry!”

I… am more confused than ever now, “Who is Sama?”

Now the boy looks just as confused as I feel, “N-n-no one?”

I consider him (and his previous flood of words) for a moment, then come to a decision. There was something in there about me being nice and Kowaikaosei not. “So, the name you gave me is the better name?”

“Ohm… Y-yeah.” The boy says with a rather sheepish smile. He still looks unsure and completely confused.

“Good.” I feel infinitely better now and am actually excited for the next appointment. If I remembered Kowaikaoreisan (such a silly name) instructions than the suicide soul is next. Kowaikaoreisan (my name is definitely the better one) believed that this suicide soul will be one of those that try and take back their actions at the last moment. I understand why Kowaikaoreisan (how did I ever think Kowaikaoreisan was anything special?) would give this one to me. Normally I would want to pawn this off on some other other as well. But I am confident in the boy’s ability.

Truly pleased (and I am not faking it this time) I step through to the next appointment.

My pleasure dies immediately.

The boy and I are standing here in the middle of the streat and there is not a soul around.
Did I get the directions wrong? Or the time. Am I too early? This is why I hate taking on others’ appointments.

I am about to return to the Soul Station and search for Kowaikaoreisan (it even sounds ridiculous. Not like my nice name) to ask for the details again when the boy gasps and then wizzes right past me.

I blink, then look up to see the boy’s green form flying upward like a shooting star that decided to rebel against gravity and flee from the earth rather than fall to it.

I have no idea what has gotten into the boy...Although that should not be a surprise, when have I ever understood him. I suppose I should go retrieve him so I can get to hunting down Kowaikaoreisan. I do not plan on leaving the boy behind, so that suicide soul will just have to wait a bit while I get the right coordinates.

Slipping into the *In-between* I immediately reappear within the physical world right above the boy, ready to snag him as he shoots past.

But then I see it. The falling human. A girl. Brown cropped hair, casual clothing, round face. Tears are being ripped away even as they appear, a sob breaks out, but is also torn away as the girl pullets down toward earth.

The boy is reaching out. His face is set in determination, his light shining like a beacon. The green of his eyes which normally appears like that of a polished emerald are now burning flames of acid.

Oh. I can feel his emotions even from up here. He wants to save this girl. Everything in him wants to keep her from death.

But he cannot. The only two souls he was ever able to touch belonged to the already half dead hero and that small Erichan child. Erichan was just a fluke and this girl is very much not half dead like the hero had been. I can feel the life screaming desperately for survival within it.

The boy is going to be so broken when he fails. And it will be my fault. I am the one who came to this appointment too early after all. If I had remembered the time right this could have been avoided. I feel bad for my boy.

Their hands are almost touching now. The boy desperately tries to grab ahold. I see the moment the two forms appear to touch. I brace myself for when the boy just passes through.

Except he does not.

The girl yelps and suddenly it is hanging in the air, the boy gripping it’s wrist tightly in a promise to never let go.

I can see it now. The girl is actually looking at the boy. Not through. Not past. But right into his eyes.

It can see him.

And it is very much not dead right now.

I watch as the boy pulls the other not-dead-but-is-supposed-to-be soul toward him and the girl response by desperately hugging him. The girl is shaking and sobbing. The boy is comforting it with words that I cannot make out from up here. He begins to lower them both toward the ground.
I watch, frozen in place. That… that should not have happened. That cannot happen. That soul was supposed to die today. It was supposed to be reaped. But it is alive. It is alive and breathing and still residing within a completely healthy, unharmed, and very much functional body.

The boy just interfered with life. He just stopped death. He just interfered with my job.

No one, no one must ever be allowed to do that! I MUST DESTROY - NO!

No. I-I do not have to do that. He… he did not interfere with my appointment. This soul, it was not my job. Not really. I felt no beacon. I had no claim.

I can work with this. I just have to make sure Kowaikaoreisan never finds out. I will tell the other that I messed up. I got the wrong coordinates. The soul dissipated before I could retrieve it. No one will know what really happened.

I will keep my boy safe. I must.

Chapter End Notes

Kowaikaorei (怖い顔霊)
Kowai (怖い) means scary, frightening, or eeri. Kao (顔) means face. Rei (霊) means spirit. When putting the two kenji, kowai and kao, together it actually becomes a noun which means to have a grim face or an angry look.
So, in a sense, Izuku is calling the other other Grim-Faced/Angry-Looking Spirit.

Important Note: This chapter is directly followed by a small one shot titled OTHER which I placed within this series.
Ichijorei has discovered one of the downsides to befriending a human. Now would be a good time for not to make anymore friends.

“I want to go visit Eri-chan again.” The boy says during a rather dull appointment. It is a typical death of a completely ordinary person. My favourite. They are so agreeable and easy to deal with. Unlike my boy.

He has been asking this question a lot recently and it has been trying my patience. Apparently I have that- patience. Or at least I did.

It seems to be slipping away from me now, though.

I try not to answer him, but the boy’s hope filled eyes are staring up at me. Demanding my notice as they emplore with me.

Try not to look at the boy either.

With another appointment done I move forward to envelope the ghost boy in a... what was that word he used? Ah- hug. I step forward to give the boy a hug in preparation of stepping into the In-between, but the boy evades me.

Huh… he has never done that before.

I advance again, but the ghost boy just steps backward and out of reach. He looks up at me with a challenging expression on his face. His eyes have hardened like jade, shining bright but firm as stone. I have learned this emotion is called determination. I do not think I like this emotion much.

“No.” He shakes his head, “I’m not going anywhere until you answer me.”

I could take the ghost boy by force if necessary, but I have a feeling that would greatly upset him.

I sigh, “Then I shall answer. No. You cannot go to Erichan.”

And there it is, the reason I did not want to answer him in the first place-

The boy’s shoulder and back slump forward, his face falls and there is such disappointment in those big green eyes which threaten to spill over as they become glossy and the colour wobbly that I fear something in me might break.

“But- but why?” There is something about the way the ghost boy says those words. His voice takes on a higher pitched trill and I think he must be using magic or a quirk on me because I almost give in right there and whisk him off to the little pale girl.

But no. I cannot do that because the pale girl is alive. It is alive and the ghost boy can touch the pale child. He can touch and interact with it and that should not be possible, just like it was not possible
for the boy to interfere with the heavy hand of life and halt the coming of death.

Eri-chan is a reminder of how horribly impossible my boy is... and I do not want to remind him of that. I do not want to encourage that. I do not want the boy interfering with another job again.

Because next time it may be my job he interferes with and... I am not sure how I will react. I am afraid.

But I do not tell the boy this. I have not even told him what he did was unacceptable and that he must never do it again. I have not warned him that if he were to save another soul destined for death, he would have cause to greatly fear me.

I cannot tell him these things, because after saving that falling girl he had been so happy.

The ghost boy had been elated. His whole being had glowed brighter than I had ever seen him glow before. His smile was a different kind of bright which lit up something inside of me. Greatest were his eyes that shone like supernovas. The green irises danced, flared, sparkled, and flowed with a beautiful shining light.

I have never witnessed joy so bright or hope so encompassing. I would do almost anything to get my boy to feel that intensity of happiness again.

Almost anything.

My job is more important than him though. It must be. That is what I am, what my purpose and existence is. Everything I am is for my job.

I cannot let anyone interfere... even the boy.

“Because we do not have time.” I lie to the boy. His face falls, but I see the way the color of his irise flicks and snaps minutely. He does not believe me.

“Then... then I'll go visit her while you do your work. Y-you know where I'll be so you can pick me up when you have time.” His voice is faltering, shaking a bit. His eyes hold a little fear. But they are still determined. He will do it. He will follow through with this plan. I know he will actually leave and do this even if there is doubt in him.

I am not sure what he is doubting. Does he not think I will come back for him?

... If he leaves... will I come back for him?

I... I think so.

No. I will. I am sure of it.

I look at the boy. He looks up at me, waiting to see how I will react.

I am not going to win this one, am I?

“Ichijorei-sama?”

Nope. Not winning. That boys hold over me is too strong, which is insane because he is just a human. On top of that he is apparently a quirkless human child which is the most powerless combination one could have in this existence.

That whole quirk conversation had been confusing on so many levels.
First off, he had sounded so ashamed when telling me his condition as if having an annoying troublesome quirk was something to be proud of. Quirks are the only things which can even get in the way of our work. Their constantly causing trouble and always accomplishing the impossible—wait…. Oh…. I have just come to a realisation.

The boy does not have a quirk, he is a quirk.

Is it possible to be a quirk? Admittedly I am not as knowledgeable as I used to believe. There are so many missing gaps in my mind. Things I never questioned, things I deleted, things that are just… missing. I sometimes feel that either I must be the most clueless other out there or that we other as a group are just an ignorant bunch.

The boy is still looking at me expectantly, his fingers are twitching as he worries at his bottom lip. I am doomed.

“Fine.” I tell the boy. “But I will take you there.”

The ghost boy’s face lights up which almost makes it worth it. But I am determined to remain upset about this whole debacle no matter how many of his bright smiles he uses on me.

A quick step in and out of the In-between and we have teleported to the girl’s bedroom. The pale girl is sitting on its bed as usual; body still, breath shallow, heart rate slow, ruby eyes glazed over. If I did not see the girls little soul glowing within her physical frame I would think her dead at first glance. There is nearly no life in its body.

The moment I sift off of the ghost boy the pale child’s eyes catch on him and suddenly it looks alive. The girl does not smile, but its eyes dance and sparkle. It is happy.

“Eri-chan!” The boy greets, kneeling close to the ground and opening his arms out in invitation. “I’m ba- oof!”

The girl barrels into him, burying its face into his shoulder. The pale girl’s little arms reach around and hug him as tightly as it can. The ghost boy encircles the small girl with his own embrace, gently cradling it as he laughs.

Their souls are shining as they begin chatting and I hesitate a moment to watch them further. I have witnessed their interactions several times since that first discovery. The way they are together, how their souls brighten and respond to one another… it is heartwarming.

I find myself liking the girl and the soft protective side it—she—brings out in the ghost boy. Not to mention the way in which the boy has slowly been healing her soul with every visit. I marvel at the improvement.

The crack in her soul that is so grievous has faded ever so slightly. The once dull grey has slowly turned to a light, tentative gold. The quick fluttering of her soul always changes to a swirling motion when the boy is around. It is still unsteady and hesitant, but stirs nevertheless.

If compared to other souls her’s is still dull and woefully damaged. But I know it is better. It is… she is healing. I see it especially whenever the ghost boy laughs or holds her and that little soul shines just a bit more brightly.

I also see how interacting with the white haired girl seems to help the boy. His soul is always that much more radiant after his visits with her.
I have to go. I have tarried too long. But I do feel better. Better than I have ever since the *incident*. It really was silly of me to keep the boy from the pale girl. There is no real harm in them interacting. How can there be when it always does them both such good.

The real issue is making sure the ghost boy does not get in the way of another death again. I can easily accomplish that by making sure to never arrive at an appointment too early. That had been my mistake with that falling girl. I will just make sure it does not happen again.

I smile to myself as I complete one job, than another. I do feel bad for keeping the boy from the little child for so long. Perhaps I will let them hang out a little longer.

…. No. I better go back. I did, after all, just leave the ghost boy in the center of a villain lair full of unknown but probably very bothersome quirks. After all, if the little girl, who is completely not-dead, can see my boy then what is stopping any of the villains?

I have no clue, that is the answer. I do not understand anything about anything that has to do with my boy. He definitely must be a quirk. Or at least have a quirk. A very powerful and annoying one at that. There is no way the boy is not touched by quirk with how impossible he is.

I step back into the sterile, white, and barren room which houses the body of the little pale girl. The ghost boy is sitting on her bed, holding the small child as he rocks her back and forth. Her eyes are closed and her soul has quieted so she must be in stasis… er- sleep. The boy says that when humans are like this they are sleep. I honestly learn something new everyday.

The boy has not noticed me yet. I think of letting him continue for a few more moments and just watch. Seeing those two human souls (I think they may be my favourite humans in the whole world) so at peace is really nice. Plus the noise the boy is making is calming and… and familiar… wait… No, it can’t be!

“What is that?” I demand of the boy.

The boy starts in surprise, eyes wide and a flicker of fear sparking in those green irises. But then his eyes catch my presence and he smiles, “Hi Ichijorei-sama. It’s… well, I’m humming for Eri-chan. She was tired and I thought it would be nice if I just sang her to sleep-”

“No.” I interrupt him before he can divulge into one of his murmuring tangents. “What is that song. What is it and where did you hear of it?”

The boy seems put off by my demands. I think he must sense my unease. “I-I don’t actually kn-know the name, b-b-but I heard it from you. You used to sing it a lot. Y-you don’t anymore and I’ve actually been curious to know why because I found it very comforting and nice. It just… always felt so right.”

From me… of course he heard it from me. I remember how I used to constantly try to call to his soul in an attempt to bring him to rest. I am not sure when I stopped. In all honesty I had forgotten about it. I forgot that this boy had once been an appointment of mine. That he cannot stay with me forever. ...Unless he stays a ghost forever. Unless I never call his soul. Unless I make sure that desire, that wish he made which turned him into a ghost is never fulfilled.

“Do not sing that song again.” I say.

The boy’s brow knuckles. “Why? I-is there something wrong with it?”

I nod. “It is your reaping song.”
Chapter Summary

Ooh boy…

Chapter Notes

Note: Please click more notes to see trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sometimes I get appointments that are in strange places. One time I remember a job where my client had been thrown into an active volcano by its own kind who were all dancing around and chanting like chickens with their heads cut off. Stepping out from the void of the In-between into a burning lake of lava was certainly an interesting experience.

Much more common, but certainly just as startling to the senses, are those appointments which are deep in the water. Everything looks so different under water, more warped and flued. Colours and sound all seem to be just a tad off as shadow and light dance around you. The souls, however, are not affected by the water. They always looks just the same as they would whether in water, lava, or air.

This one is no different.

The soul which I am to reap is a perfectly smooth cylinder on the outside. The colouring is a rather dull purple to make me think that nearly all of its hue has been sucked from it. The inside is another matter, however. A creeping dankness that affronts my sight in an offending way. There are jagged spikes cutting into its hollow core as if it were committing self sabotage from within.

It is not a villainous soul. But it is not entirely a pleasant one either. It is, however, young.

The soul hangs unaffected by the churning of the water around it. Red spills and spreads yet the ruddy red cannot stain the purple of soul as it does the water. Still attached to the soul through a white thread is a nearly severed body of a diminutive child in what appears to be a purple hero costume. It hangs captive within the jaws of a human that has what I assume must be a shark quirk.

I scowl. I am really starting to dislike villains. They always make such messy gruesome appointments that never fail to upset my boy terribly. Like now. I do not even have to look to know intimately that he is very much distressed. I feel his emotions roiling and churning within him in a sickening mix of grief, shock, horror, furry, despair, and -most strange of all- guilt.

To what he feels the need to be guilty about I am not sure.

The purple soul which had been floating so calmly before stutters once before collapsing from within, its response to suddenly finding its life at an end. It begins to boil and quakes violently in panicked histarics as realisation of what just happened to it dawns. It did not have a tranquil end.
I rush forward, intent on finishing this appointment as soon as possible for the sake of my boy. The moment I touch it, sheer terror driven histaria crashes through me in revolting waves that make me sick to my core. But I bare the pain of this soul’s feeling and drain away its last emotion. My boy does not need to suffer through contact with this soul. He is already so distressed. Even at the peak of this soul’s emotional wave I can still feel my boy’s churning emotions behind me.

Either that is how strongly the boy feels, or I have just become that intune with his emotions. I think it may be both.

The soul, which is actually rather pathetically small now that I think about it, easily comes to my call once its emotion has been dried out. It cannot come fast enough, however as I am eager to leave this appointment and move on. The next one is actually rather close to where we are now if I remember correctly.

…

Wait…

Oh no.

It is not just close. It is right here and about to take place at any moment.

Where is my boy?

I turn around but already I know I am too late. The boy is behind me, his emotions are still churning. But he is not looking at the body which once belonged to a purple soul. His panic stricken gaze is instead fixed upon the subject of my next appointment.

A girl with long dark green hair hangs listlessly in the water, staring with large unblinking eyes at the body of the now departed purple soul. It’s dark irises have constricted into tiny pinpricks in shock and horror at the scene it has witnessed.

Her death comes in the form of another quirked villain rushing behind the girl. The girl does not even notice its coming doom.

“Behind you!” The boy cries, shooting forward with hands reaching out to save the girl.

It is happening again. It cannot happen again. I have to stop him. N O D O N ‘ T ! !

His hand passes right through the girl. I sigh in relief at the same moment a choking gasp, drowning in horror and despair, escapes the boy’s throat as the girl is pierced.

I feel a little guilty, but this is for the best.

The girls mouth opens, a gurgling sound spilling out into the water around us. Bubbles escape its mouth as its body convulses in pain and shock. Tips of the trident’s points protrude out of her waist, shredding through muscle, skin, and material before halting their assent. Scarlet tendrils ink the world around us.

My boy screams.

If only he had made a different wish (I should have seen from the beginning. His driven desires go much further than just helping people… he wants to save) when he died. Then he would not be in so much pain right now. But there is nothing that can be done. The green girl’s soul flickers into appearance, white strings drifting away one by one from the smooth tranquil surface of the girls
naturally calm soul. Within a moment only one string shall remain, then it will be ready to reap.

The girl’s body drifts. Her eyes cloud over and the light in them flickers feebly.

The boy sobs, fingers digging into his scalp as he stutters out broken words of apology. Tears spill from his eyes, catching on the dark fringe of his lashes or falling down his cheek but refusing to mix with the water around us.

I move forward to comfort my boy.

The girl’s eyes catch my movement. It looks right at me. I freeze, dread filling me. She is in that strange between now; balanced upon the brink of death, ready to fall from life. She can see us (the boy) now.

I have a bad feeling about this.

The boy’s crying draws the nearly dead girl’s attention. It tilts its head toward him, eyes resting upon the boy’s gentle green glow. Its hand reaches out weakly toward my boy and… brushes away the tears streaming down his cheeks.

No. Not again. It cannot happen again. It cannot happen again. It cannot happen again. It cannot happen again. It cannot happen again.

The boy looks up. Their eyes meet. Hope. I see it in his eyes now. A small spark of hope alighting within those emerald depths.

He reaches up hesitantly. His hand presses against the girl, trapping the girl’s hand between his cheek and his palm. They do not phase through each other.

The boy wastes only a moment before suddenly the girl is gathered in his arms. He hugs it close to his chest, its soul cradled protectively between them. His eyes flick upward toward the light filtering through from the surface.

He is going to save her.

“No!” I call out. “Izuku!”

My voice catches the boy’s attention and he whirls around to look at me. His eyes. They are blazing white. Glowing, shining. They burn, burn, burn bright. I am struck still. My form unable to move toward him.

“You cannot save this soul, Izuku” I say. There is fury, so much fury fighting within me. If I am not careful it will consume me and my boy… I am not sure what I would do to my boy. But I am fighting my fury, I am keeping it at bay. I probably could not if there was not another emotion warring inside of me; desperation. You can hear it in my voice. So much desperation. More than there ever has been. It scratches and hurts.

“It is meant to die,” I say. “You must not interfere. You cannot interfere. Let the soul die. Let me reap it. Let it find peace, Izuku. Let it be.”

My boy hesitates. The pure light of his eyes flickers back to normal as he looks down at the girl in his arms. It is still dying, but there is more life in those dark solemn eyes than there was before. It cannot speak. Not with the water swirling around all of us. But it does not need to because the intent from its soul is loud enough.

i do not want to die
The boy’s eyes flash back to white and a wave of power and green light spreads out from him. Water abandons its natural flow and surges upward. A static noise rises in pitch until all other sound is lost to its screeching roar.

Then my boy and his stolen soul are gone, leaving behind only a booming shockwave and the ugly sound of metal being shredded and glass shattering. Light spills out from a newly made hole in a dome ceiling as glass rains down, mixing with the water of an entire lake that a moment ago had been ever rising toward the sky. Now it comes crashing down into its previous resting place with all the force and power of a tsunami.

I stare up at the now visible blue sky. It appears near identical to the bright sky which mocked me that first time the boy interfered with death to save a suicide soul.

What was it that Kowaikaoreisan had said about some ghosts having influence over inanimate objects? Did the other not also say control over the elements being even more rare?

…

This is not fair. This is nothing like what Kowaikaoreisan hinted at. This is not fair!

A moment later the beacon which had activated the moment the green girl had been stabbed goes out and I know that my boy succeeded in saving the soul.

He succeeded in interfering with my job

The fury which I had been keeping at bay breaks loose. Briefly I am aware of the way all the souls within 100 meters of me quiver, shake, recoil, and freeze because of my outburst, my power. I revel in the fact.

It is not fair. It is not fair it is not fair not fair not fair n o t f a i r n o t f a i r N O T F A I R !

DESTROY HIM BRING HIM PUNISHMENT BRING HIM PAIN EVEN RESTING PAIN HE MUST PAY HIM MUST SUFFER END HIM END HIM END HIM!!!

N O !

…


But I will. The moment I am near him, near my boy I will hurt him. I will end him. I know it. I know myself. I know what I am. I know what I will do.

I do not want this. I do not want to hurt him. Please. Please no. Please please no I cannot please I do not want to hurt him please he is my boy I do not want to end him.

Then do not.

But I will. I may not want to but when I see him I know I will lose myself to this fury this anger this instinctive drive and end him so that nothing will remain, not even his memory.

Then… do not see him. Do not go near him. Leave.

It is the only way. This is the only way to protect my boy.
I step away into the *In-between leaving my bo-*… Izuku behind.

Chapter End Notes


…
So…. yeah.

Enjoy your long weekend.
Ichijorei tries not to miss Izuku, while Izuku struggles with being left behind.

Guys! Guys! Guys! Guys! Guys! Oh My Apple Sauce!! I got fan art!!! It's so cool, I can't- I can't even. This is just so great. My heart feels so happy right now- TvT

You gotta check it out! I mean, you don't have to. Not gonna hunt you down if you don't... But if you want to then you really, really should!

**Kyotokiki**

Thanks again so much for this, Kyotokiki!

It is so quiet. Too quiet....

How had I ever existed in this barren silence? How had I found any pleasure in this hollow emptiness?

It is too quiet.
Too empty.

I miss him.

No! Do not think of him... of- of it. I must stay away from it. To protect hi... it To protect myself. This loneliness... that is its fault. This is proof of how unhealthy, how wrong I have become because of being around it.

All I must do is wait this pain out. Wait for this, phase- this momentary glitch to fade. I will return to how I once was. To how I am meant to be. Then all will be right again.

...

But... I do not want to be that again. I do not want to be what I once was. I like how- who I was with it... with him.

**I miss him.**

The darkened sky and end of day only encouraged the lights of the city and local night life to come alive.

Thousands of lights shining out from window after window of skyscraper after skyscraper thrum
with electricity and twinkle, creating the cities own version of a starry sky. Shining signs and glowing billboards created constellations for the urban dwellers to map out and follow. Red and yellow lights from cars lit up the roads and streaked across the asphalt like shooting stars.

On the streets and sidewalks, the sounds of life echoes like a chorus of nightly crickets as people passed this way and that. The sounds of shoes clicking, people chattering, voices laughing, wove together to create an intricate orchestrated piece of the normal symphony of the night.

The atmosphere was warm, busy, sparkling, and full of life.

But there was one light among the thousands which was out of place.

No one noticed the small ghost among them who's already dampened faint glow was swallowed whole by the bright spectacles around him.

Not that they would have been able to see him anyway.

The lonely little boy stood still as death in a crowd of moving breathing people full of life. No one noticed him as they walked passed -and through- the ghost. After all, he wasn’t a part of their world anymore.

A fact which the boy had known for a long time, but only now seemed to have fully grasped.

Though no one saw the boy, he saw them all. Groups of friends bumping shoulders and grinning merrily with their arms laden with brand name items, or else left swinging free as they simply wandered where they liked. Coworkers nodding to one another in salutation on their way to their little personalised corners of the world where they could relax and truly be themselves for the rest of the evening. Families out on a shopping adventure, the children cheerfully skipping along to the next thing to grab their attention while parents held tight to little hands to keep their charges from wandering into the sea of busy goers. Couples keeping close to each other’s personal space, hands interlaced and locked as starry eyes and smiling lips attested how close their hearts were bound to each other.

The more the boy looked, the more he was reminded of how alone he truly was. It hurt. It hurt so much.

A group of pre-adult girls walked through him, all shining brightly in their own way as they share companionship with one another. One, a girl with wide sparkling green eyes overflowing with energy and joy, was at the moment the center of attention as she animatedly told them a story which had them all giggling like the school girls they were.

The pain stabbed down deeper as it reminded the boy of what he never had… and now could never have. A tears of gentle glowing green flowed freely down his cheeks and dropped off into the air where it joined with the galaxy of aimlessly floating spheres which hung around the boy like planets orbiting the sun.

“Yo! Kid!” A kind, fatherly sounding voice called out from behind the boy, only heard above sounds of the night because of the owners close proximity. The boy paid it little mind as he had become accustomed to. After all, he was a ghost and no one noticed a ghost.

The girls, now a little farther ahead him, stopped at a window display to gush over the outfits on display. None of them seemed to have heard the voice call them (them being the only ‘kids’ within the area at the moment) out so when the voice called again the ghost boy was not that surprised.

Again the girls paid the person no mind, too engrossed in their own conversation as they debated
whether they should enter the rather pricey store with the “Absolutely cute top” (as the green sparkly-eyed girl had put it) was being displayed.

For a moment the ghost boy considered turning around to look at this person who was trying to get the girls attention. The voice was just so jovial and genuine, kind and friendly, understanding and strong. There was just something so inherently ‘fatherly’ about the voice that made it obvious even to him that the man was a father- and probably a good one at that. The kind of father one found in children’s books about family, the kind sad little kids wished for in the dark of night during their most lonely moments.

The kind of father the ghost boy had never known.

Well, maybe for a moment Ichijorei had been… no. The ghost boy shakes his head. His back hunched and shoulders drawn up close to his tear stained face. He had never really had a father figure in his life. And why would there be? He was not special. He was not worth it.

He was pathetic. Worthless. Useless.

Deku.

Curiosity killed by his depressing and self deprecating thoughts, the ghost boy decided to ignore the man and the girls. What did it matter to him who any of them are or what they are doing? He wasn’t a part of their world anymore. Maybe he never really had been

The boy finally moved from this spot he has been floating in. He is not sure how long he has been standing here. Was it dark out when he allowed himself to shut down in this spot? Or had the sun been out?

He does not remember. And does not care. What does it matter how long he had been standing here completely dead (in more ways than one) to the world. Time was meaningless now.

Everything was meaningless.

“Wait, are you deaf? That would be absolutely terrible- because the only sign I know is milk and there’s not a lot you can say with just milk. I didn’t even know ghosts could be deaf.”

Eyes wide, the boy spun around and found himself staring into glowing, dark magenta eyes that were looking right at him. Not past. Not through. But straight into the open windows of his soul. A soul that still overflowed with wet, dripping emotion of lonely grief and abandonment.

There was no denying it. Not when the ghost boy could feel (see/hear/smell/taste/sense) the aura of the man’s soul. Not when he saw the way the man’s entire body glowed similarly to his own (though brighter and more lively). Not when he looked into the man’s eyes and could read straight into his soul, seeing the curious spark, the excited gleam, hopeful light, and concerned shadow intricately woven in the hues of his irises.

“You… y-you’re a ghost!” The ‘Just like me’ went unsaid.

“And you’re not deaf,” The man smiled, one corner of his mouth catching upward at the corner of his mouth as straightened his stance so he was no longer leaned over and at eye level of the smaller, green ghost. “That’s a relief. It’s not often I get to meet another ghost, so that would have been a real pain if we couldn’t have talked. Never really learned any signs and such, which is just one of my many regrets if you know what I mean. Anyway- I’m guessing you’re new to all of this, right?”

The boy tried to speak. This was the first ghost he had ever met. The first being he had talked to
since… since Ichijorei had disappeared. There were so many questions he had, so many things he needed answers for. Plus, the boy just yearned to interact with someone again. For some reason, however, no words offered themselves to him and he was left barely able to nod in answer.

The other ghost did not seem bothered by the boy’s inability to speak for the moment and just smiled brighter. “Thought so. You seemed kinda lost there. Not to mention how low your glow has gotten which is something we should try to fix as soon as possible. Anyway, my name is Hughes Maes. It is a pleasure to meet you.”

The man thrust a hand forward in a western styled greeting.

“M-midoriya Izuku.” The boy offered, giving the man his hand after a moment of hesitation. Once he had spoken, however, the floodgates burst forth and everything previously trapped in his mind came tumbling out of his mouth in an overwhelming rush. “You’re a foreigner, right? You have a slight accent, plus you shake hands as a greeting which is definitely more of a western tradition. You don’t sound super American though, so maybe you’re from one of the european countries. Or Australia. To tell the truth I’m not really good at recognising accents. But I am good at analysing quirks. What is yours- or I mean was your quirk. Do quirks still work after death? I’ve been wondering about that for a while, but I haven’t really been able to test it. Although maybe I shouldn’t ask about quirks. It might be seen as kind of rude or as a touchy subject for a ghost. Would it be rude to ask him how he died? Probably. But I could ask what he is doing in Japan. Perhaps he died here? But that would suggest ghosts are tied to their place of death. Just using myself as an example proves that theory wrong since I’ve been all over Japan… Come to think of it, though, I haven’t actually traveled outside of Japan. So maybe we are stuck to the place of our death- but instead ofan exact spot it’san entire land mass. Oritcouldbebecause Ichijorei only works in Japan. Thereareother reapers soit’d makesense thattheyall could get assigned to specific regions on earth. Ijustdon’t know enough to draw any definite conclusions whichissofrustrating.

ButbasedonwhatIokaynowIwouldhavetoconclude from now that ghosts are connected to their place-

“Woah there kid, slow down.” Maes Hughes, who the Izuku had completely forgotten he was still standing right in front of him when he lapsed into his mumbling fit.

Blushing furiously with embarrassment, Izuku stuttered out an apology which Hughes accepted with what seemed his default expression- a cheerful and warm smile.

“It’s fine, really. I’m actually rather impressed. At the end there you were hitting speeds I didn’t think were possible. But that aside, it sounded like you have some questions which I would be happy to answer of course. Oh, but we’ll have to do this on the move. Looks like my daughter and her friends are moving on to the next store.”

“So I was right about him being one of their fathers” Izuku mumbles to himself, then looks intently at the girls they were now following. “I-if it’s not too personal- uh, do you mind me asking w-which one is your daughter?”

“Actually I’m glad you asked!” Hughes nearly shouted with enthusiasm, chest filling with air as he prepared for what Izuku figured would be an equally impressive gushing session to his own previous mumbling speal.

“That beautiful young lady over there, the one with the most beautiful green eyes, is my wonderful and absolutely adorable daughter Elicia! Isn’t she just perfect! I love her so much! And you wouldn’t believe how she’s grown over the years. She started out so small and cute it killed me every time just looking at that innocent sweat face of hers. Now she’s so tall and mature. I’m so proud of her! She couldn’t have turned out better. Just look at her, so sure of herself and quick to smile! She’s made so many great friends that I’ve never had to worry about her feeling too lonely with me… you know.”
He gestured to himself, the smile slipping off his face for a fraction of a moment. But then it was back again as if it had never left.

“She’s as social a butterfly as I was, but considerate and smart as a whip just like her mother. It’s no wonder everyone wants to be her friend. Unfortunately that includes boys. None of them were good enough for my dear Elicia, though, so I took care of them.”

Something dangerous flashed in the man’s eyes at those words, Izuku’s inner light paled considerably as he stared in fear up at the previously very jovial man. “W-w-what did you do to them?!”

The man grinned, a smile that a moment ago had appeared friendly now turned predatory. “Don’t worry, I didn’t hurt them. Though that was more to do with this ghost form of mine then my own good will.”

Izuku is not sure what to say after that, so he doesn’t speak. This, however, has a negative affect as the chilling sentence is now followed by an awkward silence which serves to just fill the ghost boy with more apprehension.

Just as Izuku’s anxiousness seems to reach its peak, the friendliness returned to Hughes in a blink and the fatherly man laughs goodnaturedly.

“Don’t take it so seriously, I wouldn’t have actually caused them any permanent damage if I had been alive. I used to work with law enforcement, you know. Wouldn’t do to break the law I’m supposed to be uphold. But I’m also a father and that means knowing how to be intimidating when the time calls for it. Honestly, all I did was scare the guys off. I passed through them to give them the hibigeebies, lifted some trinkets to make them look like they were floating, slammed a few doors, rattled some windows, made the light flicker. You know, the usual ghosty stuff. Guess you could say I haunted them until they left.”

“You mean you could touch inanimate objects? I’ve been able to do it before, but to know you can do it too means it’s actually a ghost thing and not… something else. Speaking of… can you use your quirk now that you’re a ghost or is that something people can only do when they have a body?”

“Yeah actually. I can still use my quirk.” The man smiled as he demonstrated for Izuku. His hand disappeared from sight for a moment as if it were slipping into a pocket. When it returned, he was holding a picture frame. Despite not getting a close look Izuku could easily guess the picture of the man’s family was the man’s.

“Wow! A pocket dimension! Imagine all you could do with that! Although, that depends on how your quirk works exactly. Can you store items in there or do you simply create whatever you want to pull out? If you are creating items do you just have to picture what you want or do you have to have seen it before? Maybe you have to know the chemical makeup of whatever item you want to pull out. Is there a limitation to what you can pull out? Like size or weight? If the dimension relies on stuff you’ve previously put in there how many items can you fit?”

Instead of answering right away, the ghost man took a moment to scrutinise the small boy floating beside him. There was approval in the man’s eyes that made Izuku stutter, his cheeks glowing a brighter green.

“That’s quite the sharp mind you have there.” Hughes finally said. Approval was evident in his voice, causing Izuku’s cheeks to glow a bright green. “The way your mind works is impressive, especially for a kid your age. You would have made a fine investigator.”
Izuku only blushed harder, voice trying to stutter out excuses. The man laughed good naturedly at the ghost boy’s attempts. “It’s okay son. Didn’t mean to embarrass you. Anyways my quirk, called Pocket Space, is literally just that. A pocket of space where I can store things for as long as I want. When I need to retrieve an item, all I have to do is think of it and then I can pull it out of my Pocket Space. The one downside is when I was younger I hadn’t gotten into the habit of noting down everything I stored away, so I was constantly forget what I’d stash in there. I’m sure there’s still stuff floating around in my Pocket Space which I have forgotten about.”

The man paused to pull out a notebook and pencil, opening it up briefly to show Izuku a list of items; some crossed out while some looked to be newly written in.

Izuku’s eyes sparkled. “That’s such a versatile quirk! Oh! What about stuff that might digrad? How long does that last in your pocket? Or is the pocket completely cut off from any outside forces?”

“Again with the good questions. I like it. You were right in your guess about outside forces. Anything I put in my Pocket Space remain in whatever condition it was in when I first placed it in there. Was really handy with my wife’s cooking. Whatever dinner Gracia made from the previous evening was always piping hot by the time my lunch break came around the next day.”

“That’s amazing!” Izuku gushed, his ghostly glow shone brightly as his enthusiasm increased. “A quirk that freezes objects in time for however long you need and safely stores them. You could potentially stop a bomb from killing thousands by taking it away to somewhere safer, or store support gear for yourself. Imagine if you paired your quirk with xxx! Wait… that does bring up another question. How many objects can you hold at a time? What about weight? Is there a limit to how heavy things have to be?”

Hughes eyes sparkled brightly showing how truly impressed and pleased he was by Izuku theorised. “No limit for amount of items, though there is – er… there was a limit to the weight. Couldn’t go over 20 pounds. Now, however, I can put anything I want in my Pocket Space.”

Izuku’s eyes widened, his fingers itched to write everything Hughes was telling him. “Really? You mean your quirk became stronger after you died? Why do you think that happened? Maybe it’s because we aren’t bound to the physical plane like we once were. That would suggest quirks are limited by our physical bodies. Imagine all the untapped potential quirks have.”

Hughes, unperturbed by Izuku’s babbling, continued smiling brightly as he replied. “I don’t know why my quirk is stronger as a ghost. Could be because of my body. Or could be this is what my quirk was always capable of if I had continued to push my boundaries. I’ll probably never know for sure.”

Izuku nodded. It made sense. “When you were introducing yourself to me, you mentioned something about not meeting many ghosts. That means you have seen other ghosts before me, right? Could they all use their quirks too?”

Hughes eyes sparkled even brighter. “You got quite the genius under there, huh kid. Always asking the smart questions. Interestingly enough, the answer is no. As best I’ve been able to tell it depends on if the quirk interacted with the world. Obviously if the quirk affected people it won’t work anymore since we can’t interact with humans at all like this. I met this one ghost who while alive had a quirk that could put people to sleep just by looking at them. But when he turned into a ghost it didn’t work since he couldn’t interact with people anymore. My quirk only works because generally we ghosts can still affect inanimate objects if we focus hard enough. Although I have encountered a few ghosts who were strong enough to control the elements. Those usually are called poltergeists and as a general rule stay away from them. They tend to be insane and unstable. It’s more like they’ve
lost ‘control’ then gained any.”

Izuku nodded, trying to process everything this ghost was telling him. It was a lot but Izuku was beyond grateful. He had been so confused for so long, unable to get any answers about this new type of existence he found himself in. It was such a relief to finally begin to make sense of everything.

Izuku opened his mouth to ask another question when suddenly something Hughes had said put up a red flag in his mind. “Wait… you said we ghosts can’t interact with humans at all. Are… are you sure?”

Sympathy softened Hughes eyes and the man gave Izuku an understanding smile. “Yeah. I’m sure. I know there’s probably people you want to talk to at least one more time. But I think it’s for the best that we ghosts are completely cut off from humanity. Polsteridges already do terrible damage to people without ever being able to hurt them directly. Heck probably half the world’s natural disasters are caused by them. Plus most ghosts I’ve met seem hell bent on revenge. Not me of course. I’m just glad I’ve gotten this opportunity to watch my little Elicia grow up despite… well you know.” He gestured to his incorporeal form.

Izuku mentally filed this new information away (and what it could possibly mean that he could touch and talk to some people when other ghosts couldn’t) for later reflection. “It makes sense. Kowaikoarei-san did say that most of the ghosts they encountered had wished for revenge against their murderer. It seems to me that ghosts are made from terrible deaths or unsatisfactory lives. Is that true for you?... I mean- well- I don’t mean to be rude and if you don’t want to answer me you don’t have to but- uh- did- um- when you died was it- er- violent… or something like that?....”

Hughes gives him a critical look for a moment, considering carefully his words. “Yeah actually. It was… terrible the way I went. I had just uncovered some important information concerning the case I was investigating at the time. Unfortunately one of the villain’s thugs shot me before the call I was making to warn any of my colleagues could go through. I bled out slowly, every second was pure agony.”

Izuku nodded solemnly. “I was on my way home from school when a villain attacked me and choked me to death. It… I never knew how painful being suffocated could be.”

“Sorry kid. You didn’t deserve that.” Hughes fatherly voice was like a soothing balm to Izuku’s trembling spirit. The little boy hated thinking back to that day.

“Thanks. You… you too. You deserved to be saved.”

For a moment Hughes leaned forward as if he was about to enclose Izuku in a hug. But he hesitated against his fatherly instincts, and instead pulled away. Izuku tried to ignore the twinge of pain he felt at his core.

He would have welcomed physical comfort.

It had been so long since he had felt his mother’s hugs

“That’s alright,” Hughes tries to comfort the ghost boy with words instead. “I’ve made my peace with the way things turned out a long time ago. One day, you will too.”

Izuku nods, taking Hughe’s word for it. “I wish I had made your wish when I died.”

“My wish?” Hughes asks in clear confusion.

“Yeah… you’re wish. Um… ghosts are made through a wish so strong it binds them to the physical
plane somehow. Most wish to repay the person who killed them… which ends with them kinda having to follow that person around until they die. Once they die the wish is granted and the ghost is free to move on. At least, that’s how I think Kowaikaorei-san explained it. I think most ghosts bind themselves to a person- that person then serves as their anchor to the physical plane.”

Hughes was quiet for a long time, his intelligent eyes evaluating Izuku carefully.

“How do you know this ‘last wish’ deal? And how do you know mine was Elicia’s?” He asks, each word seemed to have been carefully crafted as if he had measuring their weight before speaking them. Izuku is reminded of what Hughes had said about having worked with law enforcement. Based upon what Izuku has learned and observed of the man thus far, he probably had been very good at his job.

“There… There’s a white thread between her and you,” Izuku answers, “ and no matter where she goes you’re always close behind. That’s partly why we’ve been following her this whole time as she shops with her friends. I mean, part of it probably has to do with how overprotective you are. You seem like that kind of type of father. Which isn’t a bad thing of course! I wish my father had loved me at least half as much as you love your daughter… anyway, uh- where was I? Uhm… the… the other reason we’ve been following her is because you are bound to her. The- the white thread I mentioned before? Well, it’s attached from your soul to hers. That… that why I think she was part of your final wish. She’s reason you turned into a ghost instead of moving on to the next life. Something like that. Sorry if I’m being rude. I- I don’t mean t-to overstep any- uh- any bounds.”

Hughes eyes the boy. His hands tremble slightly. “You’re right I think. I… I remember my last thoughts. There were so many. Hope that my colleagues could discover the truth before it was too late, regret that I wouldn’t ever see my sweet girls ever again, sadness that I hadn’t kissed my wife goodbye that morning like I usually did, fear that my friends might soon be joining me. But I do remember clearly thinking right before everything went black how much I regretted that I’d never be able to watch my little girl grow up. I wished… I wished to be there for her, like a father should be.”

Something stung and burned Izuku from the inside, heat pricking in the corner of his eyes. Hughes really was a great dad. Better than most children got. It isn’t fair that he had died, that he was forced to leave his daughter. That she was forced to grow up without him actively in her life.

A wish whispers in the corner of his mind; a wish to somehow go back in time and save Hughes. Give him and Elicia and Gracia a chance to be the family again. Keep him from ever having died. For a moment Izuku wished he could have been the hero Hughes (and Elicia, and Gracia) needed.

“Hey kid. You with me?” Hughes voice, now seeming so far away for some reason, calls out in a concerned tone.

“Wh-what?” Izuku eyes refocused, colour and shape coming back into detail to reconstruct the city around him and the ghost hovering beside him. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

When had he started crying?

“You with me?” Hughes asks, a kind expression on his face and his voice gentle and reassuring.

“Y-yeah, yeah. Sorry.” Izuku nods, blushing profusely as he wiped the tears away from his face.

“Good.” Hughes casual smile returned. “Because you still haven’t answered my first question. How’d you figure out how ghosts are made?”

“I- er- I d-didn’t.” Izuku stutters out. He feels grateful that Hughes had chosen not to question the
boy’s momentary disconnect. “It…. it was really Kowaikaorei-san who told me about ghosts. Plus being around Ichijorei for so long gave me great opportunity to notice things like- like the strings. I didn’t notice them at first, but now I can see them on everyone. They hold people’s souls to their body but when a person is dying those strings disappear until only one remains. That’s the one Ichijorei always cuts before reaping the soul.”

“Kowaikaorei? Who’s that? Doesn’t Kowaikoarei mean frowny-face spirit or something? Jeez, what parent named their kid that? Or am I misinterpreting the kenji here? Gotta be honest, Japanese is not my strongest language.”

Izuku blushes a bit in embarrassment, wanting to hide his face behind his hands. “N-no. You’re interpreting it r-right. Honestly i-it’s not really a-a name. It’s just one I m-made up since I’ve found that r-reapers don’t seem to have names for th-themselves.”

“Oh, so you already know what reapers are, huh. Just a heads up, stay out of their way. Not that it’ll be hard. Those things tend to leave us alone if we’re minding our own business… but I’ve seen them get nasty when another ghost messed with their soul reaping business.”

Hughes face goes very serious as he looks down at Izuku. “Promise me you won’t go near them, kay? It’s much easier to just steer clear of them all together so there’s no chance of getting on their bad side.”

Izuku blinks in surprise, confusion tinting his green glow with yellow. “What do you mean? They don’t seem that bad. I mean, they’re a bit stiff and kinda cold sometimes, but once they warm up to you they aren’t so ba…”

Izuku stops talking. Hughes has gone completely still, stiller than any living thing is capable of going. It is unsettling to see something previously so animated freeze up so entirely.

The hint of seriousness has smoothed over Maes eyes. It glides over his entire body, sending a chilly aura out all around them. The temperature drops several degrees within seconds. Worry then mixes and intertwines with the grave emotion, the air tingles and shifts under an unknown pressure as chills coarse through the boy’s body.

“Izuku, kid. I’m being serious here.” Hughes says in a solemn voice. “Almost nothing can harm you now that you’re a ghost. Not human, not nature, not other ghosts. They are the one exception. If those things want to they can unmake you.”

Hughes pauses in his words. Part of Izuku, the part not completely focused on Hughes and his warning, notices how the people around them are giving them a wide berth. The few that take a step toward them shiver minutely before changing their trajectory for reasons they probably do not know.

The silence between Izuku and Hughes continues, the man staring at Izuku as if searching for something.

He does not find it.

Hughe’s sighs, brow knitting together in worry. “You don’t believe me, not completely. Come one kid, this stuff is dangerous…. I’ve…. I’ve seen them do it, you know. It happened to this ghost I had just met…… Her name was Trisha. She had the gentlest soul you could have ever seen. She… she tried to keep a reaper from taking one of her boys… the youngest I believe. She succeeded… stopped the reaping from happening. Did it all with just her will power, no quirk. She was one of the most powerful ghosts I’ve ever met. But in the end there was a price to pay for interfering with death.
That thing ripped her soul in pieces. The suffering she felt was overwhelming, so terrible I continued to feel her phantom pains for weeks after. And the living, those boys she was protecting... they could feel it too. That... what I saw that day.... .... It was the most terrifying thing I had ever witnessed.”

“Listen to me and listen very carefully, it doesn’t just end your existence. It can make you suffer every pain known to man. Physically, mentally, emotionally. She was being attacked from all fronts. I could still hear her scream even after her soul was devoured. And after all that, there was no resting place for her. No last peace.”

Izuku’s eyes are wide, his emotions tumble over each other; glitching, combining, splitting, and shaking. He does not know what to feel, what to even think. For a moment, then another he is just frozen staring up into Hughes eyes which are filled with concern, dread, and knowledge.

He knows of what he speaks.

Finally, among all his terror, horror, confusion, confliction one word surfaces and breaks him from the icy cage his mind was trapped in.

Ichijorei.

“No... that... that can’t be right.” Izuku shakes his head, desperation in his voice. “Ichijorei... Ichijorei-sama would never, NEVER do that! They aren’t all like that! They... they can’t all be like that. Especially Ichijoreit. Ichi-chan may have left me a-alone, but I know- I know Ichi-chan wouldn’t ever hurt me. I know because I... I saved Ochaco-san. I kept her from dying, interfered with death just like your friend did. Ichi-chan didn’t hurt me then and later when I saved that girl with the frog quirk Ichi... Ichi... oh.”

Realisation dawns on Izuku and something cold and hard forms in the core of his being weighing him down. His light which had been warming up ever since meeting Hughes goes dull.

Ichijorei would never hurt him. But he did leave. And now Izuku knows why.

“I drove Ichi-chan away.” Izuku whispers, the guilt evident in his voice. All this time Izuku had thought Ichijorei had abandoned him with no reason. Now, though... now he gets it. And what is worse, he should have seen it before. He knows how much their ‘job’ matters to them. How important it is to them. It is why they exist. Why they are even alive. Their job, their purpose, is everything to them.

And Izuku completely disregarded how his heroic tendencies would have on Ichijorei. Did he seriously think there was no consequence for interfering with death?

He would not change what he did. It was the right thing to do to save Ochako. The girl who nearly lost herself in hopelessness. I girl who did not want to die, not really. She just wanted to be a hero.

Or the other girl. The one with the frog quirk and soothing green soul that Izuku had actually held for a few moments, guiding it back into her body as doctors worked frantically around her to heal her broken body. She had just wanted to save her friend, who (if he inferred anything from the clothing she was wearing) was on her way to becoming a hero. She didn’t deserve to die either.

But not being sorry for what he did will not bring Ichijorei back. Regretting his actions (if he even could) will not either.

Ichijorei is a spirit who cannot help being a reaper- an other. Just as Izuku is a human who cannot help wanting to save people- save souls.
They were never meant to be friends.

Izuku begins to shake, sobs escape his throat and bitter tears stream down his face and spill out into the night.

His hands search for comfort, fingers press into his skin, arms wrapping around himself as if to hold himself together.

“Oh kid,” a gentle voice calls to him, empathy and comfort reaching out toward him.

Izuku desperately grasps at it, pulling himself against the glowing form of the other ghost, wrapping himself and his grief in the man’s emotional comfort and physical embrace.

Hughes gasps, as if surprised. But soon arms are reaching around him, holding him tightly. It’s a comforting hug, warm and gentle. At the same time it is strong and secure, making Izuku feel safe. It reminds him of his mother whenever she’d hug him after a hard day at school. Always trying so hard to sooth his hurt with soft caresses. It reminds him of Ichijorei whenever the reaper would engulf him to keep him safe from the In-Between. So stiff and unsure of themselves, yet not any less protective.

For a while Izuku cries while the man simply offers what he can to ease the boy’s pain. Gentle words and kind touches soothe Izuku as the man’s calming aura slowly seeps over him. It is not his mother. It’s not Ichijorei. But for a moment, for this moment, it is enough.

Chapter End Notes

Just for fun, here is the last page in Maes' notebook
- Throwing knives - $300
- Shoe box - For all the pictures of my beautiful family. I'm still now.
- Funeral Rose - held by my Garcia. I'm so sorry.
- Daisy - the one Elicia held - I'm so sorry honey. Daddy's here. I promise I'm here honey.
- Camera
- Elicia's Teddy Bear. She's getting so big!
- Gun - I can still protect my family.
- Lock of Garcia's hair
- Picture Albums - 2 & 6
- Elicia's 8th grade report card
- Sunflower (for our 25 anniversary)
  - She loved them. Wish it hadn't made her cry. Get her some every anniversary.
- Elicia's 1st Driver License
- Car - never know when they might need an extra.
- Elicia's High School Diploma - Copy
- Letter Gracia wrote to me (burned a little. Saved it just in time).
Chapter Summary

Ichijorei's appointment starts off on the wrong foot.

Izuku bonds with his new friend.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I am finding myself feeling comfortable again with this existence of mine. My work has become centerpiece in the arrangement of my thoughts once more. This is... good. Yes. Things are good.

Enough pondering. I have work to do.

Shaking off any lingering doubt that shadows my thoughts, I step out of the dark void where the Portal of Lights shines behind me. The In-Between greets me, all emptiness and grey that tries to eat any scraps of energy it might from me. I feel it tugging, a tingling sensation I never noticed before having taken in the boy and discovered just how toxic this place was.

Still, though I feel it, this place cannot harm me. I am immune, as are all my brethren.

Stepping out of the In-Between as easily as one steps out from behind a curtain, I first observe my surroundings. It is a dark place, full of cages and chambers of bubbling liquid. A metal table with harsh instruments hides under a blinding light in one room where I can see a tortured soul being ripped to pieces. Other figures, dark and shadowed with ill intent and wicked centers, bustle around me. Though none dare enter the room I find myself in. They are too afraid of it, or afraid of who resides here.

The beacon of my new appointment calls to me, but I do not - dare not - cannot head it yet. My attention is captured, my spirit frozen as I stare in abject horror at what is before me.

At first, I think it is my boy. The soul shines so strongly and in a way that is so familiar. But just as quickly, I see that it is not the boy. The soul may hold similarities to my boy, but it is nothing like him. Not really. Not at all.

Where my boy is- was hope, this soul is despair. Not despair for itself, but despair for others. Where all the souls around me are dark forms of dying light, this one is a black hole. I feel its illness sucking all the light around it, consuming all that is good into its rottin center. The more I look upon the soul, the more I know wonder how I could ever have mistaken this horror of a human for my boy.

Still, I can see a familiar spark in it. The way the core form holds itself which hints at a connection to the boy.

I want to smight this soul. Destroy it for even making me think of the boy in comparison to its recess of hungry darkness. How dare it even share any similarities with my boy! He is good, he is hope, he
is light and life while this thing is the opposite.

I hate it.

But I cannot destroy it, even though I wish to. It is not my job... though that is not what stays my hand.

I am ashamed to say that what keeps me from deviating from my work is not my own good sense, but the mere fact that this soul is untouchable. I can see marks upon it where others have tried, where this soul should have died. But it still remains, no doubt the fault of its quirk.

Or more accurately, the collection of bits and snippets of quirks sewed into its soul. I had not notice at first, but where most quirks are a part of a souls being, this things quirks are welded to it like scrapwork. Cuts and scrapes have been sewn like patchwork into its form, hidden mostly by its aura of consuming darkness.

Oh. I know who this soul is now. It’s the Thief. He who steals time and life while slipping through our grips with his stolen quirks. The others speak often of this soul, cursing how often it has evaded us and cheated death. Many have spoken of wishing to be the one who finally reaps this soul.

I think I now wish the same. Such a soul should not be allowed to live.

But I cannot, even without trying I see how its multitude of stolen quirks surround it like armour, protecting the Thief from even one string being cut. This soul is out of my reach.

Cursing it I deliberately turn my back on the being as it sits in this dark room, speaking to a screen that sits before it, and focus my attention back on my appointment. The beacon calls, so I drift through wall and floor until I come to it. I am distraught. Going back to work should calm me.

I hope the sighting of the Thief does not bode ill for my upcoming appointment.

The sky was bright and clear of any troubling weather which suited everyone within the busy airport just fine. The vollum from thousands of hurried steps, rolling wheels, and restless fidgeters filled the white terminals as people hurried under bright lights, or else waited in blue seats for their flights.

A small group of young foreigners sit in front of ceiling to wall windows, chattering amiably amongst themselves and adding their conversation to the noise of the airport. Less noticeable, one might assume because of their carefully picked hiding spot between a stationary baggage tractor and a solid wall, are two figures hovering just below the other side of the window. One a man with a gentle purple glow, the other a small boy who glows similarly to his partner except his light is green.

The two figures, who are in fact ghosts, showed a certain level of closeness with one another. The man reached out every now and again for some form of contact, a friendly pat on the back, a hand ruffling up his already messy hair, a gentle nudge to the side. The boy kept close to the man and seemed to welcome the touch, despite having known this man for less than a week.

Perhaps in life such behavior would have been unacceptable for people who are not family, if not slightly acceptable for a foreigner who do not hold the same baring for personal space as those of the japanese culture do. But death brings a lot of things into perspective, especially when one’s range of social interaction and human touch has been drastically decreased to near nill.

It was no wonder that these two souls, who upon their death have become unnoticed and irrelevant to the living, might find enough common ground with each other as to form such a close bond so
quickly.

The two souls stood side by side, keeping close to the young foreigners who conversed happily above. The two ghosts paid the living world little attention at the moment. They were focus was more upon a huge picture album that the older ghost held aloft. The item, which was very much not partly transparent or glowing, was the reason for their secluded spot. The sight of a floating book, with no person nor quirk seeming responsible for the miracle, might have caused the masses unnecessary panic- an event both ghosts wished to avoid.

The man held the book up, excitedly pointing to each picture and gushing, something he had been doing for a good hour. The boy did not seem to mind, happily listening to the man express his love for his wife and daughter. But while their souls flickered with a content peace and happiness, underneath both emotions was a current of sadness. It was a common emotion, one many people are feeling at the moment as they bid their friends and family farewell in the airport terminal.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come with?” The older ghost, Maes (for at this point both ghosts were well past last name bases), actually took his attention off the album to ask the boy this question. His usual cheerful voice held a hint of melancholy as he looked down at the small ghost child before him.

“You could stay with me and my family,” he offered. “My wife would love to have you and my daughter absolutely adores cute things. They’d both welcome you with open arms in a heartbeat, if they could see you that is.”

The ghost winked at the boy while elbowing him playfully, his voice and actions hinted at his jovial nature.

The boy shook his head, smile hesitant and small. “No, I… I’d love to, but I have so many unanswered questions. I can’t leave Japan, yet. I feel like the answers are here, in my homeland… the place where I died. Plus there’s my mom. Even if she can’t see me, I’d like to try and find her again. I was stupid not to find out where she was moving too last time. Also there’s this girl, Eri-chan, who I promised to visit.”

“I get it champ.” Maes smiled and ruffled the boy’s hair affectionately. “You got unfinished business and all that. Go find your mom and girlfriend.”

Izuku’s hands flew up to cover the sudden bright glow of his cheeks as he stammered, “N-no it’s nothing l-l-like that! She’s just this little girl- only six! Her name’s Eri-chan. I met her before when I was with… well, before I met you. The- the problem is I don’t actually know how to find her.”

“Hey, about that,” the man tapped Izuku’s shoulder “So I was thinking and why don’t you just go to a social security office and look up the names of the people you need to find there? They would have documentation of your mom’s new address. And I bet you could probably use the girls last name to find her too.”

The little boy’s green glow brightened, the light in his eyes sparking for a moment. But then they cloud over and sadness wraps itself around Izuku once more. “It wouldn’t work for Eri-chan. I don’t actually know her last name. And besides, I’m not sure the government even knows she exists.”

Worry descended over the older ghosts features, his glow darkened and flicked in confusion. Maes crossed his arms over his chest and leaned back slightly, giving the boy a studied look. “What do you mean?”

“Well,” the boy fidgets nervously. “Her parents are- or at least her dad is… a…. a villian.”
The man’s eyes raised up in alarm, though before he could speak Izuku hurried to explain. “When I first found out I was worried too! But- but she said she was fine and that she didn’t want to leave. She said they weren’t hurting her. Although… I’ve… I’ve been thinking about her a lot, ever since- well, ever since I ended up alone. And I’m not so sure anymore. I mean, she’s always got bandages on her and she’s always in that empty white room. She also seems scared. Not of me, but just in general. And she’s so quiet. Sometimes I can get her to laugh, but then she usually stops herself and goes real tense…”

Some new understanding alights upon the boy, his glow to flaring up in concern. Just as suddenly it disappeared and all the colours drained from his wispy figure. His eyes became large and he looked up to Maes in obvious horror. “She’s in danger, isn’t she! There are so many signs. All this time and I’ve ignored them all. I… I’ve let her down! How could I have failed her!! She- she trusts me and I just left her there! Each time I just left her with villains who keep hurting her!!!”

The boy’s eyes flickered sporadically as waves of panic crash out of him. Maes cringes at the emotional onslaught. Around them conversation grows stagnant as people become anxious. Frowns replaced smiles and fearful eyes glance toward shadows and strangers, searching for danger underneath their knitted brows.

The boy was oblivious to his effect upon everyone around him, too caught up in his own panic. But Maes noticed. The man looked around him worriedly, seeing the sudden migration of security guards into the area and anxious parents hugging their children closer to them. He himself felt the need to act, to protect his little girl. Accept it wasn’t his emotions pushing him to suddenly want to protect his daughter, to scoop her up into his arms and carry her to safety.

She was safe, even if right now she and her friends all looked fearful. Everyone looked anxious. But there was no danger, only a frightened little ghost who was becoming more and more powerful the more Maes learned about the boy.

“Izuku!” The man called out, firmly grabbing hold the boy’s shoulders and holding him steady. He brought the Izuku closer so he could make eye contact, shaking the boy slightly to try and snap him out of his panic attack. “Izuku, champ! Listen to me! You need to calm down, yeah? Everything is fine. Just relax. Everything is fine. You just gotta calm down right now. Focus back on me. Alright? Can you do that for me? Calm down and focus on me. There, that’s good. You’re doing great champ. You’re doing just fine.”

Maes words seemed to have some effect on the boy. Or at least, it caught his attention enough for him to break out of his own head where he immediately focused on Maes calming and steady gaze. Still, the boy shivered as some wisps of panic had yet to release him. But Maes continued speaking words of assurance, holding the boy tightly and never breaking eye contact with him. It was comforting and just what Izuku needed, an anchor to bring him back into his own mind.

“You good now?” The man asks once Izuku’s eyes had cleared and his emotions seemed under control.

The boy nodded, breaking eye contact as he lowered his head in shame, “S-sorry.”

“It’s alright champ, really.” The man smiled, giving his arms a final squeeze before he released the boy and stepped back. “You do know its not your fault, right? You’re still just a kid, after all. And dead on top of that. It’s not your responsibility to rescue the girl. That’s up to the heroes and adults who are still alive. Got it?”

Izuku bit his lip in a worrying manner, fists clasped and unclasped repeatedly by his side. “B-but I can’t… I can’t just do nothing. It’s not right. If- if I know someone is in trouble then I have to do
what I can to help them.”

Maes was quiet for a time, studying the boy with calculating eyes. Izuku remained where he was, green eyes meeting purple. There was a request in them, a plea for the man before him to understand how the boy felt.

Finally Maes came to a decision. Face still serious, he gave a curt nod and said, “You’re right. If you can do something to help then you should. But not acting doesn’t automatically make you a bad person either. Sure it speaks about your character, but it doesn’t make you a villain. That being said, being a ghost is going to make that job harder.”

The man sighed, hand running down his face and scratching at the rough stubble on his chin. “Like I said before, we ghosts are really limited in what we can do. Most can barely pick up a chopstick, let alone wield it. I mean, I’m pretty lucky with my quirk. Once I manage to put something in my pocket dimension I can hold it just fine afterword,” without much thought the man pulled out a pen from seemingly nowhere and began twisting and twirling it between his fingers in impressive tricks of balance and skill.

“But,” Maes continued, the pen never stopping in its movement around his fingers, “If not for my quirk then this pen would have phased right through my fingers by now. I will say, though, you seem like the driven kind. I don’t doubt you could probably hold your concentration long enough to scribble an anonymous message out on some police investigator’s desk. You’d have to find out where the little girl is being held first before you try to tell anyone about her though.”

Izuku frowned. “But if- when I find her shouldn’t I just rescue her right away instead of leaving her to get help? I- uhm- was kinda actually planning on just flying her out of there.”

“Carry her? Is… is this girl a ghost?” Maes asked, obvious confusion in his voice.

“Wha-” The boy started in surprise, eyes wide and light fritzing as if hiccuping. “No! She’s- she’s not a ghost! She’s definitely alive. I could feel it. Plus when we talked last she told me to leave early because she was hungry and, according to her, that means food was coming soon. She really didn’t want anyone to ever see me. Not that they would, but considering I don’t know the what it is that allow me to be seen by some but not everyone, I guess a villain could potentially see me-”

“Wait, wait, wait!” Maes interrupts. “Are you telling me that you can not only touch phantoms and ghosts, but people too? And you’ve been able to talk to them?”

Izuku nodded.

Eyes blown wide, Maes took a step back in surprise. “Well I’ll be. You’re quirk is way more powerful than I thought if you can actually touch living people too.”

That gets Izuku’s attention like nothing else. It also shut him down the way nothing else could. His light dimmed and he visibly drew into himself, as if to make himself a smaller target or else prepare himself for the sting of rejection. Maybe both. Maes does not miss this. Mentally he takes note, putting the information inside the ever growing file of evidence that the green ghost had been sorely mistreated in life.

“I… I d-don’t have a- a q-q-quirk.” The boy stuttered out.

Maes helds his chin as he watched the boy in a considering manner. After a moment of silence in which the boy continued to look to the ground, light becoming more and more agitated with each passing second, Maes spoke up. His voice was carefully measured and considerately kind. “The
doctor who told you that you were quirkless was a quack. You have a quirk. It just isn’t obvious like most.”

Izuku’s head whipped up, face shocked and the dancing lights of his eyes freezing over. “I- w-what?!”

“Now I’m not exactly sure what your quirk is myself, but I was never a quirkologist so that’s to be expected. At first I just assumed your quirk only let you touch phantom stuff like spirits and souls. But it must be so much more than that if you can get the living to see, hear, and feel you as well.”

“But… I can’t have a quirk,” Izuku argued. “I’ve got a toe joint.”

Maes swiped a hand in the air in a dismissive manner, “That’s just an indicator that you might not have a quirk, not a definite. You have a quirk, there’s no doubt about it. I’ve met many ghost’s in my time and none have ever been able to be seen by the living.”

“I have a quirk.” The boy whispered in wonder, his eyes sparkled with a rising joy. “I have a quirk! This whole time and I had a quirk that… that….”

Izuku paused, confusion crossing his face. “What does my quirk do?”

Maes shrugged, “Not sure. Like I said, your quirk confuses me. But if we put our heads together I’m sure we could figure it out.”

Izuku nodded enthusiastically, smile wide and bright.

“Great,” the older ghost beamed, “Okay, so first is touch. You’ve already said you can touch people and we know you can touch ghosts.” As if to prove his point, Maes gave a quick side hug around Izuku’s shoulders.

Then he asked, “What about inanimate objects? Is it easier for you to hold stuff?”

“I mean… I think so. I’ve held things before. But I can still phase through things as well. It must… it must be based on intent. When I want to hold something or have something not go through me, I have to think about it. I never have to think about phasing, though. That just happens normally. Kind of like phasing is my default mode.”

Maes nodded. “Okay, so either that is part of your quirk or you’re just a ghost with a lot of determination in you. Or both, could be both. That one is kind of hard to prove either way.”

The boy frowned. “I remember you said when we first met each other that ghosts can’t touch each other. Does that mean that me being able to do this,” the boy poked Maes arm, “is another part of my quirk?”

“Yup,” the older ghost affirmed. “You took me completely by surprise with that hug. In all honesty, the last time I touched someone was when I was still alive. Same goes for all of us ghosts. Good thing we don’t seem to suffer from touch deprivation.”

“We don’t? That’s good I guess. Wow, there is just so much I don’t know about being a ghost. If ghosts cannot touch other ghosts, what about souls? After a person has died and there soul appears out of their body, I can touch them and communicate to them telepathically. Well, it’s not really telepathy. It’s more like when we touch I can feel what they are feeling and even share my own emotions with them.

Maes shook his head, laughing. “This is crazy. You can see people’s souls?”
“O-only when they leave the b-body.” Izuku stammered, face flushing in embarrassment. “So does that mean you don’t see souls?”

“N-nope. And neither can we share emotions like that- which, by the way, you seem to also be to do with living people and ghosts. When you were panicking it was as if your fears and emotions were mine. By the way the people around us reacted, I’m betting they felt it too."

Izuku’s eyes widened. “So I’ve got empath abilities too? But… how is that connected to- to- argh! How is any of this connected to each other! I can’t have more than one quirk. That’s not possible!”

“Just calm down a bit, okay. Empath, remember?” Maes tried to soothe while gesturing to the people around them.

The boy sighed, but nodded. “I just… for so long I wanted to have a quirk so I could be a hero. I studied quirks and went hero hunting. And now that I’ve actually gotten a quirk, not only am I still unable to become a hero, but my quirk doesn’t make any sense!”

“Sure it does,” Maes patted Izuku comfortingly on the back. “We are probably just not looking at it from the right angle. Let’s first try to get all the facts that we can, then start analyzing what we know, right?”

The boy took a deep breath, that he did not need anymore but still practiced, before nodding his head. “Yeah, okay. That… that sounds good. Um… so far we know that my quirk allows me to touch stuff, like ghosts, souls, and people… and maybe other objects? I can talk to people too, and they can see me… though only sometimes.”

“You don’t know what makes them able to see you?” The older ghost asked.

“No, and that’s another thing that’s been frustrating me.” Izuku threw his hands disparagingly into the air. “Sometimes people see me, but most of the time they just can’t. I’ve tried to figure it out, tested out several theories, but nothing worked.”

“That’s alright, I bet I could help you out.” Maes smiled and reached out to ruffle the boys head of wild green hair. “I was an investigator, after all. Finding answers from the smallest of details was my job. Tell me about the people who have seen you.”

Izuku, now feeling more excited, rested his chin into his hand as he began to speak, “The first time it was with the hero Flawless. He… he was dying when Ichijorei-sama brought me to him. Somebody had killed him. We talked and I held his hand. The moment he passed, though, his body slipped right through me. At the time I just thought the reason he saw me was because he was close to death. But then I met Eri-chan and I know she wasn’t- isn’t- close to death. She didn’t see me at first, not until I touched her. Then it was like a switch got flicked and she noticed me. Every time I’ve gone to her since then she’s always been able to see me. Although I have noticed she never sees me until after I’ve spoken. I tested it out once and touching is similar. She can see and feel me, but if I don’t call to her or touch her she won’t notice me.”

Maes, who had pulled out a notebook and was scribbling furiously with his pen, nodded. “So, this man Flawless? Do you remember if you called out to him or touched him before he saw you?”

“Actually, yes! I- I did call out his hero name the moment I saw him. I know he heard me because he turned his head in my direction after I yelled.”

“Okay, so now we know you have to be the one to initiate interaction with living people. I’m assuming you’ve tried to touch or call out to other people since then?”
The lightly green glowing ghost nodded, “Yes, but the only time it’s worked since then was with another person who was dying. At the time I kind of forgot I was, y-you know… dead. I just saw her falling and I couldn’t think. My body just moved. All I knew was that I had to save her. I called out to her to get her attention, which worked because she looked and saw me. We were able to grab onto each other and I stopped her from falling. Then, huh, the last person I saved was also close to dying. Er- that’s not really true. I… I think she actually did die at one point.”

Izuku took a moment to just breathe, hands fiddling nervously in front of him while he bit at his lip. “I’m n-not really sure how to explain, but… uh, but while carrying her to the hospital her soul wasn’t staying with her body. It kept trying to phase right through her. So I kinda hugged it, hoping that would keep it from breaking away. It was weird and I don’t think I’ve ever been so scared before. But she made it, or at least the doctors were saying she would pull through before I left.”

Maes stood perfectly still, the scratching sound of pen on paper having gone quiet long ago. By this point awe tinted the older ghost’s glow a brighter colour, though a wisp of jealousy clung to his shoulder. The man wished to also hold such power, to be able to speak with his little girl again, save her if (when) ever a reaper spirit comes for her.

The little boy grew nervous by his friends silence and begins to fidget, a learned reaction he picked up from life. It was his firm understanding that when silent stares follow after the boy had let out a string of mumbled words, fists and cruel laughter were sure to come next.

But Maes was not like the boy’s past classmates. An optimist would have said few people are so cruel, while a realist would counter that specimens such as them are the norm.

Whatever the case, Maes brushed the envy aside with a quick shake of his head. His eyes refocused on the boy and a sincere smile melted away any ugly emotion that might have remained.

“You are an amazing person, Izuku,” the man said, slipping into his own tongue for a moment. Remembering himself, or else seeing the confusion on the small boy’s face, he returns his speech to that of Japanese and added. “I’m glad to have met you, champ. You’ve got a heroes heart, you know that?”

The boy blushes and stutters out a stream of unintelligible mumbled words, not that translation is needed as the boy’s attempt to hide his blush behind awkward hands makes his embarrassment evident.

Maes simply laughed, reaching out a hand to ruffle the boy’s hair playfully. His grin hiked up in corner of his mouth until it morphed into a full blown smile. Izuku grinned in return, hand batting halfheartedly at the other’s arm even as the other attempted to hide his glowing cheeks. Maes pulled his hand away, momentarily beaten off by what should have been a poor defence. Though one could certainly see the promise for a return charge if they noticed the fond and mischievous glint in the man’s eyes.

“Okay, okay,” the man tries to straighten out his grin, an attempt that fails miserably. “Let’s get back to figuring out your quirk. We don’t have much time before my daughter’s flight boards and I’d hate to leave you stranded when we’re so close to figuring out this quirk of yours.”

The sobering reminder, that soon this fatherly man would have to leave, pulls Izuku’s mind back into focus.

“With this other girl you saved, the one who died, did she ever see you?”

“Yeah, she saw me. She didn’t really talk, but we didn’t need to. At that point her soul was forming...”
outside of her body so I was able to communicate empathetically with her. She… she also wasn’t forming the way souls do when they die.”

“How do souls normally die,” Maes asked curiously.

“Like- like spheres of light and colour and feeling. For her, though, it was more like a replica of her body was trying to pull away, except this replica was transparent and glowed green. Not like my green. It was a darker hue. Anyway, I… I’m not sure, but I think she was turning into a ghost.”

“So what you are saying is it’s unclear whether she saw you because of your quirk, or because she was becoming a ghost. Not that helpful, but still something to consider. Is that all?”

The boy nodded, “Yeah, that’s all the people who were able to see me.”

“Well,” Maes, having taken up his scribbling again, stopped to consider what was written on his notebook. “All but the first guy were females. All of them were in a state of dying except for Eri. And everyone responded to you after you called out to them, though it’s a tough call on whether we can count that last girl you saved. That Eri girl, what is her quirk?”

“N-not sure.” Izuku admitted sheepishly. “Eri-chan doesn’t like talking about it accept to refer to it as a curse. She refuses to explain what she means by that, not that I’ve tried to get her to explain. I don’t usually like to push the topic because of how uncomfortable it makes her feel. There’s… there’s always this look of fear and guilt whenever I try to talk about quirks. Plus, there was this one time where Eri-chan mentioned how happy she was her quirk couldn’t hurt me. That comment, plus the way she always acted, makes me think that her quirk must be dangerous to people. I have never actually seen her around other people at all. She’s always alone in her room whenever I visit her.”

The smaller ghost paused, a worried light settling over his form. “If… if her quirk is dangerous and the villains aren’t just taking care of her but… hurting her….…. Then… then that means she must be in more danger than I thought!”

Maes nodded, a severe look darkening his face. “You’re probably right. Villains usually kidnap children for their ransom, leverage out of a sticky situation, or to take advantage of their quirk. If her quirk is dangerous it would explain why this villain base is holding onto her. It also means you need to rescue her as soon as possible. She’s probably not the only one in danger. After I leave, you make sure you find her. Okay?”

Izuku, looking very determined, nodded. “I will! I promise!”

Maes was about to respond when Izuku light flickered and turned pale. An uneasy feeling from the boy washed over Maes and everyone around the ghosts. Before Maes could ask what was wrong, an align darkness clawed its way into him, causing the older ghosts own light to flicker. It cloyed through him like oily sap, invading him with horror and disgust.

“Oh no.” Maes whispered, dread dripping off of him as he wildly looked around as if there might be some monstrocity lurking in the shadows. A great wind picked up, rocking the baggage tractor they were secluded behind. The skies darkened as condensation was drawn together above them, forming dark foreboding clouds.

The ghost child reached out and gripped the other phantom being, drawing himself closer to Maes for some form of comfort. “Wh-what is… what is going on? What-”

A shriek broke through the air and shattered the windows of the airport. Screams from within rose up
as people scattered and sought sanctuary. Mini-hurricanes began to form about the many airstrips. Aircrafts in the sky struggled to keep altitude while on ground smaller vehicles were already being blown over and torn apart. Rain lashed down upon the earth and lighting cracked across the sky.

And at the center of it, all floating high above everything, was a child. Their mind and soul overcome by clinging dark tendrils of hate and pain which screamed unending into the heart of the storm.

“Wh-what is that!” Izuku could barely be heard above the destruction around them.

Maes looked up at the being with dread, his light having all but gone out.

“It’s… its a poltergeist.”

Chapter End Notes

Merry Holiday Everyone!

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