Don't Ask Don't Tell

by Ms_Chunks

Summary

Uraraka and Bakugo have a secret. It’s not what their classmates think it is.

Notes

I love this pairing a lot and needed more fanfic that explores the action/quirk side of their compatibility as a vehicle for their *other* chemistry, and as is often the way ended up writing it myself.
Then I thought what better time to start posting new fanfic than a new year, and to that end, enjoy this trainwreck waiting to happen.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Establishing Safewords

The first time Ochako uses her quirk on Bakugo, he blasts himself through a building.

It happens during a multi-person sparring bout, when Bakugo’s attention is on someone else and he doesn’t see Ochako coming. She taps Bakugo midway through one of his firepowered acrobat moves, and the shift in his gravitational weight turns him from an artillery shell to a hollow bullet. He shoots wildly through the air, tearing through the nearest building by blasting walls into rubble to stop himself from being slammed at them like eggs on a front door.

It’s a move that would devastate a structure in the real world, perhaps even cause casualties. So after Bakugo takes out concrete floors like an air rifle takes out a doll house, the whole class exercise stalls for a moment, student and teacher alike staring in ‘did that just happen’ silence at the hole Bakugo left behind.

“Uh… release.”

A chunk of concrete drops from the entry point, thumping onto the edge of a shattered wall, then drops several floors and breaks into two smaller hunks on impact with the ground. Ochako feels the static in the air as the entire class, herself included, stares goggle-eyed after Bakugo with fearful surprise. Even Aizawa seems slightly more awake than usual.

When Bakugo comes back, the surly stomping of combat boots one after another as he returns by foot a distance he crossed in a matter of seconds in the air, Ochako thinks, for a moment, that this might be how she dies. It’s not a totally rational thought, but there is an air around Bakugo that snaps like flammable gas about to ignite. It makes anything feel possible in the heat of the moment – and boy, does Bakugo give off heat.

“Hey, dude, are you-” Kirishima doesn’t get any further through the tentative inquiry, as Bakugo strides straight past him and stops what feels like an inch in front of Ochako.

Bakugo’s not the tallest in their class, but he’s certainly wide enough on top to make Ochako feel sufficiently small. Especially when he just stands there, dead in front of her, with a sooty layer of exploded-building dust coating him and an utterly unreadable glare.

“Uh… sorry?” Ochako tries on a hunch, in the unlikely case that’s what Bakugo is looking for. It isn’t.

Bakugo’s nose wrinkles, red eyes shuttered until they’re almost slits. “What?” His mouth remains open after he speaks, pulled into something not quite a snarl. He’s – and Ochako could be wrong, but this is the voice that comes straight from her gut – she thinks he’s confused.

“Because…” is as far as Ochako gets in saying something that would have probably ended, “I just made you blow yourself through a building like a human cannonball,” but Bakugo knows what he did.

In the middle of an increasingly awkward pause, Aizawa decides to take back the reins of his class. “Focus is key to retaining control in the field, especially during battles with multiple opponents and allies, where you are required to be aware of everyone in the combat zone whether you’re engaged with them or not-”

Ochako jumps on the opportunity to tag herself out of the conversation, staring at Aizawa with a look of cartoonish studiousness until Bakugo begrudgingly takes a step back.
Though Aizawa has eyed Bakugo for injuries and fires Ochako a ‘you know what you did’ look when their eyes meet during the lesson, their teacher doesn’t actually say anything, merely continues the class as if nothing has happened. It would have been nothing, if not for Bakugo becoming newly devoted to the cause of fixing a heat-lamp stare on Ochako for the entire rest of the class.

It doesn’t take long for their classmates to pick up on the one-way staring match, and Ochako actually starts blushing when one particularly inescapable gaze hits the two-minute mark. This is why she has a hot “take a picture, it’ll last longer,” sitting on the tip on her tongue, or some other aside to get him to stop looking at her like when the lesson finally draws to a close, and yes, Bakugo is still staring at Ochako like he’s never seen a girl before.

Pretty much as expected, Bakugo returns to being a wall constructed suddenly and very directly in front of Ochako. Their classmates pretend not to watch and do a very poor job of it.

“Hey,” Bakugo says like he starts conversations with Ochako all the time. Which, given how often she’s in the vicinity of Deku is – not a lot. “Can you do that again?”

All of the responses Ochako had prepared for Bakugo speedily eject out the side of her head, leaving her without filters in place for what she says next. “Do what?”

“Use your quirk on me.” On the full spectrum of disgruntled Baku-emotions, Bakugo seems to be hanging around impatience more than outright irritation. As if he can’t get what’s so difficult for Ochako to understand about this.

“You want me to use my quirk on you?”

He shifts a point closer to annoyance. “What did I just say?”

“No! I– sure I can.” Ochako’s hands wave in front of her like an attempt to assuage the temper of a lion with a leg of lamb. “You mean, like, right now?”

A look flashes across Bakugo’s face like he’s thinking this was all a terrible idea. Ochako doesn’t blame him. “Not now,” he snaps, eyes darting for a moment to the cluster of familiar suspects waiting around for Bakugo before heading to the next lesson. “You really are an airhead.”

“Hey!” Ochako zips up a hand to point scoldingly in Bakugo’s face, her arms moving before her airhead brain can advise her that it’s a poor idea. Not that she’s really scared of Bakugo. Ochako knows he wouldn’t hurt someone purely out of anger – he’s better than that. But knowing the cranky doberman wouldn’t bite didn’t mean it was a smart idea to get into its face and start barking. Ochako forgets what she's about to scold Bakugo for when the full intensity of his stare zones in on her alone. She has never met anyone with such a stone cold look at any distance. Bakugo could glare at a national level. However, after enough exposure, Ochako has figured out some of the nuances. Bakugo’s default scowl could be applied to anything from a line at the water fountain to a broken pencil lead, but the one he levels at her right now is different. It’s not resentful, just… frustrated?

Bakugo also doesn’t like to be kept waiting, so when he snaps, “Just meet me here after school, okay?” Ochako treats it as more normal than it is.

“Oh! Sure, okay,” she replies on auto-pilot, some little Ochako in her head merrily slamming buttons with the heartfelt belief that a new friend was going to be made.

Lil’ Ochako has nice dreams, but they’re probably a long way off going by the way Bakugo snorts, a derisive ‘ich’ sound before walking away.
It’s only after he’s gone that Ochako realises she agreed to meet up with Bakugo after school because *he asked* and she said yes. She checks up at the sky, just in case there are any flocks of pigs flying by, then gives a shrug and catches up with the class.

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The peculiarity of the arrangement Ochako has made with the most volatile member of her class grows on her throughout the day.

It could even be said that by the end of their lessons, Ochako has come to seriously doubt herself in just about every capacity. She entertains the possibility she’s misremembered, because there’s surely no way Bakugo could want to meet *her* after school for some business about her quirk.

Yet when Ochako arrives at the training area he’s already there. She’s wearing her field uniform, not knowing what to expect but suspecting her Hero costume would be overkill. Bakugo isn’t wearing his costume either, but has found time to change into well-worn workout clothes and started without her. He’s at the warm end warming up when Ochako gets to him.

“Took you long enough,” Bakugo grumbles, folded over with his right hand on his left leg and twisting to look at her like he’s striking some bizarre intimidation tactic.

“If you’re going to be fussy right off the bat then I’ll just go.” Ochako surprises herself a little with just how bold she comes off, but it feels necessary.

Bakugo is fogged with that air of unapproachability, but when Ochako looks closely most of what she sees is no more than what he is. There’s no shortage on hot-headed, moody teenagers even among the ranks of UA’s Hero programme. Even if Bakugo is a particularly exceptional example, he is – in a fashion – exactly what he says on the tin. A tin that is currently glaring at her for waving around a can opener.

“Don’t.” One word is enough to quash any thoughts Ochako has about walking away. Bakugo mirrors the stretch on the other side, facing away. “But you don’t have to be a bitch about it.”

This too, is a grumble, and one that might have bothered Ochako on another occasion. But right now she feels it’s Bakugo compensating for the fact that he’s as good as admitted that he wants her to be here. It’s enough to stay just to witness anyone as accomplished as Bakugo openly wanting something from a classmate so profoundly average by comparison. Ochako is dying to know what the fire and fury juggernaut could have come up with that he wants *her* for.

“You’re the one who invited me.” Ochako pops her hands on her hips and gives back to Bakugo as good as she gets, not to be deterred by his garden variety attitude problem. “So what is it you want with my quirk?”

Bakugo straightens up and shakes out his arms out of the stretch. He’s never had a tone of voice that harks to anything lighthearted or even neutral, but even this sounds more serious than usual. “I want you to make me fly.”

Not doing the best at seeming a reliable person to work with, Ochako’s response is a bemused, “What?”

“That’s what you do, isn’t it?” Bakugo spits. “You sent me through that fucking building because I went from having to account for my weight to having none.” His narrow, sunset eyes slip down over her face. “I want you to do it again.”

Still about ten paces behind her more put-together and ordered of thoughts, Ochako gives a distinctly
chirpy, “Really?”

Bakugo rolls his eyes, which in the context of his micro-range of expressions constitutes a rather overdramatic gesture. “Forget it.”

“No! Wait! I can-” Ochako lunges forward with a hand outstretched, only for Bakugo to pull away like a cat determined not to be pet.

“When I’m ready!” he snaps. “Not whenever you goddam feel like.” The first – and only– time Ochako used her quirk on Bakugo was luck more than skill, though she’s still counting it among her successes.

“Oops, sorry.” Ochako whips her hand up to the back of her head. “Guess I got overexcited.”

“You’re such a weirdo,” Bakugo says with the complete and utter confidence that he says most things. Ochako finds herself oddly compelled to agree with him on that basis alone.

“Then I guess you’re someone who wants to hang out with a weirdo.” Ochako would wonder what on earth she was thinking given time to reflect on this line of reasoning, but in the moment it feels like an uncontested victory by merit of the provable truth that Bakugo is still here.

“This is training, not hanging out,” Bakugo says with the gentleness of a long ride down a rocky hill in a car with no suspension.

“Wh- really?” Ochako hears herself doing the chirpy thing again, but seems powerless to stop it.

Bakugo gives her what might be the most annoyed and cross look yet, a proverbial ‘I can’t believe this’ glare-scowl that unconsciously tilts his head a little to one side. “Are you for real?”

“Well… to what do I owe the honour?” Ochako sounds a little more sarcastic than a sensible person would be around Bakugo, but he doesn’t train with just anyone.

In fact Bakugo makes rather a point of telling anyone he thinks is a waste of time to train with exactly that, usually to their face and in front of a group of their peers, so Ochako is pretty surprised to find she’s getting the other side of the record. It’s not that she doubts herself or anything, but there are still just a handful of people Bakugo would make time for like this.

Whether Bakugo realises that or not is unclear, because all he says is a muted, “Piss off.”

“Look, do you want my help or not?” Ochako isn’t quite petulant, but comes off stubborn at least. Bakugo doesn’t deal with subtleties, so Ochako feels she must abandon them at the door too.

Bakugo’s eyes have settled on a point at the ground in front of Ochako’s shoes, like he can turn it into magma with a hard enough stare. “Yeah.”

Ochako knows what an achievement this is – for Bakugo to be able to admit, to someone, there is something he wants from them and can’t do for himself. Granted, use of her quirk is a relatively easy thing to fess up to, but Ochako is sure that a year ago, even six months ago, Bakugo would have probably rather bitten off his tongue. Too bad it isn’t enough.

“Then you’re going to have to talk to me in full sentences,” Ochako challenges, and watches the scowl twisting Bakugo’s face. Not for anything personal, or at least Ochako doesn’t think so. Bakugo just really hates being told what to do.

“I want you to use your quirk on me again, so I can do what happened earlier today on purpose.”
When Bakugo sticks out a hand, Ochako can see the sheen of explosive sweat in the deeper lines of his palm. “So quit your yapping and do it already.”

“Ohay.” Ochako’s fingers stop barely a centimeter above Bakugo’s, hesitating like a stuck pulley. “Wait… are you sure this is okay?” Bakugo makes a frustrated sound, too hoarse to be anything verbal. “I mean with the teachers!” Ochako’s voice pitches up again. “Are we even allowed to be here? I don’t wanna get in trouble!”

“Neither do I!” Bakugo’s voice takes on that familiar rasp as his temper sparks. But sparks are nothing special, and quickly he settles again. “Aizawa told me it was fine.”

“He did?” When she thinks about it, Ochako can imagine reasons why their teacher might give Bakugo permission for something like this. For a student frequently at the top of the class, if not not the entire year, Bakugo doesn’t exactly fall over himself to work with others. Ochako might still have to pinch herself to be sure she’s really who he picked.

Bakugo might be questioning that decision himself right now, annoyance flowing out of him like an angry container of dry ice. “You’re doing my head in here, round-face.”

“I just have one more question.” Bakugo doesn’t say anything, but he doesn’t need to. An irritated sound tears out of the back of his throat like a rusty saw through lumber, and it conveys his opinion of Ochako’s stalling just fine. “Well, how are you going to get back down?”

Now Bakugo’s frustration takes the form of words again – or just about, with a guttural noise that comes out sounding something like, “What?”

“My quirk lets you go up,” she goes quickly, not needing to patronise Bakugo and happening to know it’s a very good idea not to, “but until I release it there’s no coming back down.”

“I’ll handle it,” Bakugo replies, and coaxes his open fingers. “Hurry up.”

“No.” Only after she says it does Ochako realise how much force has slipped into her tone. It feels necessary, when dealing with Bakugo, to be as plain and direct as possible. And he glares at her, sure, but he’s also waiting for her to finish. “We should agree on a signal for when you want me to release you.”

The corner of Bakugo’s upper lip lifts in a really awful attempt at a smile, or a passable one at a snarl. “How about, put me down before I kill you?”

Ochako sets a finger to her lips thoughtfully, then shakes her head. “No, that’s far too long.”

This seems to perplex Bakugo more than it should, but Ochako has a hunch he’s puzzled by her lack of response to his school-yard antagonism. Most students at UA are smart enough to avoid the intimidating pressure of the ever-raging Baku-aura, but all the narrowing of Bakugo’s eyes at Ochako achieves is making her wonder why he’s so committed to keeping people away.

“Fine.” Bakugo’s mouth is a tight line, and he’s withdrawn his hand to ball them both into fists, all the muscles – and there’s a lot of muscles – in his arms tensing and untensing on a loop. “I’ll tell you to drop it.” He unclenches his fist again. “How’s that?”

“Much better.” Ochako smiles at Bakugo, but his stonefaced expression gently reminds her what happens to people who test his patience. She holds out her hand flat to him, palm-up with her fingers spread loosely. “Ready when you are.”

Bakugo lays his hand in Ochako’s with a strange amount of gravitas, making sure to touch all the
pads on her fingers. For a moment the weight of Bakugo’s hand on top of hers is all Ochako can focus on. Then she remembers who she’s with and for what purpose. So without further delay Ochako activates her quirk, and watches as Bakugo slowly starts to lift from the ground.

Bakugo gives Ochako a solid piece of advice the moment before it’s too late. “Get out of the way.”
Bakugo loses his pants

Chapter Summary

Bakugo thinks he's onto something, while Ochako does her best to hang on.

Chapter Notes

Loving the responses to this fic so far, so much that the update schedule is going to be more 'when I feel like it' than 'strict schedule' frequency. Luckily for readers at this stage that's more likely to be sooner rather than later, as I have some backlog in the tank.

It's surprising there aren't more fics out there that look at the quirk chemistry aspect of this pairing; they have so much potential and it creates the perfect circumstances for SO MUCH SHIPPY NONSENSE that I've been having a total blast with it.

So to that end, enjoy the next installation, there's plenty more where it came from.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Get out of the way.”

Ochako only just avoids tripping over her own feet as she hastily backpedals away from Bakugo, who's newly alleviated of his gravitational pull and poised to do something that feels dangerous.

Drifting a short distance from the ground, Bakugo splays his hands wide and then a second later goes off like a bottle rocket. Bakugo’s always been fast, but one moment he’s there, and the next an ascending comet. Currently hurtling for a wrought-iron bridge between building husks in this cityscapesque training area, as it happens.

Bakugo slams into the crudely fashioned structure and rebounds not like a tennis ball off the top of a net, but the way a grenade hits another grenade. He’s going fast enough that simply stopping doesn’t seem to be an option, and though Bakugo does change direction as he blasts off the structure, it’s with an explosion that blows the metal walkway to pieces.

Now Bakugo’s going even faster, and for a moment Ochako wonders if this is how he dies – before writing off such an unlikely notion.

“Release!” Ochako picks a moment when Bakugo is relatively close to the ground to return his weight, and not expecting it he almost falls, but being Bakugo manages to blast himself into a somersault, landing heavily but most surely on his feet.

“I wasn’t finished!” he roars across the barren stretch of concrete between himself and Ochako, stomping back up with an utterly peeved look. “Don’t make me give you a safeword and fucking ignore it!”

“But you were going so fast, I thought you’d lost control,” Ochako unloads in an equally ungainly
and concerned rush, trying not to think about whether that’s exactly the right use of the term Bakugo choose. Not that he cares.

“Don’t question my control!” Bakugo snarls like a dog presiding over a very juicy bone, and sticks out his hand once more. “Do it again!”

Once more, Ochako’s fingers hesitate just before making contact, so with an impatient huff Bakugo moves his hand to press against hers. His palm is even hotter than Ochako’s speculation, and when he pushes insistently against her fingertips she activates her quirk almost on reflex.

Bakugo begins to float, hand leaving a chemically film on Ochako’s skin after he pulls it back. With a push he lifts off the ground and goes up like a scowling hot air balloon, hands sticking out like fins while Ochako dashes out of range in anticipation of what comes next.

This time it seems like the explosions Bakugo uses to propel himself are a little smaller – he barked at her, but it still looks to Uraraka like a struggle for control.

Bakugo soars high enough for Ochako to be inescapably worried, standing on the ground putting a crick in her neck watching him shoot from spot to spot like a self-propelling slingshot pellet. Bakugo has something that most people don’t, which is a means to propel himself in the air even when he’s weightless. Not even Ochako has that, and being in the air is nauseating enough without moving through it. Just watching Bakugo turns her stomach enough to regret not wearing her costume, inbuilt with its tricks to keep her from hurling chunks at inopportune moments.

Even for a skilled airborne combatant like Bakugo, it’s clearly not easy for him to keep control without his weight. Spinning on-end and blowing things up as a means of landing on them, Ochako does a few dainty dances between bits of falling debris trying to give chase on the ground while Bakugo shoots around like a one-man game of live-grenade tennis.

But there’s also the fact that Ochako isn’t really doing anything, other than standing around with her quirk engaged. As much as she wants to be here – out of curiosity if nothing else – there are probably more productive uses for her time.

So Ochako reverts to the familiar habit of making the best of the situation, and starts doing some physical exercises, seeing as she’s apparently not got anything else better to do. A few sets later she’s getting into some of Battle Gun’s favourite combat drills when she hears a distant cry. Ochako looks up and spots Bakugo hanging off the outside of a building a fair way away.

Bakugo at least five floors up on said building, so when Ochako hears him clearly yell, “Drop it!” across the open space, she has to question his judgement for a second. Then she remembers this is Bakugo, so with unplaceable faith touches her fingers together.

“Release!”

Bakugo blasts off just before Ochako lets him go, weight changing his trajectory as it returns. Ochako watches the graceful arc for a moment before she realises, another precious moment later, that Bakugo’s coming straight for her.

Latent programming takes over, and Ochako reacts to Bakugo coming towards the ground too fast just as she would anyone, leaping like a goalie as he’s about to shoot past her. Bakugo kicks like a horse and twists in the air, but Ochako manages to grab hold of him by the fabric of his sweatpants and activates her quirk.

What Ochako doesn’t account for is Bakugo using his quirk to try and maneuver out of her way, and
ends up being dragged off her feet like a child hanging onto a kite on a particularly blustery day. Ochako feels the fabric she’s holding start to move. Except it doesn’t go in the direction Bakugo does, and as she regains her footing Ochako comes to a couple of shocking realisations. One, she’s holding Bakugo’s pants. Two, he isn’t in them.

When she can finally move her terrified eyes further afield, Ochako sees Bakugo hanging from a beam of a mock electricity pylon nearby. His loose – evidently way too loose – sweatpants ripple like a strange banner from Ochako’s fingertips, which she lets go of to whip her hands together without a second thought. “Release!”

Ochako realises the moment after she does it that Bakugo hadn’t asked her to release him, but that doesn’t seem to be their biggest problem right now. Thankfully the fake-pylon Bakugo’s hanging from isn’t that high off the ground, and he swings off the pole into a flip, landing in a deep squat a few metres from Ochako.

Not that she sees much, because Ochako turns around as soon as she clocks that Bakugo is in his underwear. There are literally no good things that could come from facing the other way, and Ochako can already feel a nervous laugh tickling the back of her throat like bubbles in soda.

“Sorry!” Ochako’s voice is firmly in the bird range again, and she even totters a little as she skitters quickly away from where Bakugo’s sweatpants landed in front of her. Somehow, not looking only makes the urge to laugh stronger, and Ochako wills herself not to start giggling as Bakugo’s footsteps thump up behind her. The rage aura is a warming force on Ochako’s back.

“What did you do that for?” Bakugo grunts.

“I didn’t do it on purpose!” One advantage of not facing Bakugo, Ochako suddenly realises, is that he can’t see her head turning into a cherry with the intensity of her blush.

“Using your quirk, idiot.” Ochako could be wrong – it’s hardly unusual – but that voice in her gut is telling her there’s something in Bakugo’s tone that makes her think that not only can Bakugo not see her blushing, but the reverse is also true. Ochako resists the temptation to peek and find out. “I was about to land.”

“I know, sorry,” Ochako blurts. “You were coming at me so fast that I just… reacted.”

“Well cut it out.” Bakugo is annoyed, obviously, but he’s not totally livid. It’s more of a relief than Ochako expects.

“It would help if you tell me what you’re trying to do,” Ochako finds herself saying with utter forthrightness. She usually speaks her mind, but there’s something about Bakugo that seems to draw it out of her right from the source.

“I explained already.”

“When?” Ochako shoots scathingly. “When you said you wanted to fly? It’s nice that you asked me to come here and train, but if you leave me out of the loop then I’m just standing around here being… used.” It feels harsh when the words come out, but Ochako feels just as strongly that they’re true. And Bakugo is never going to realise something like this without being told, so it’s put up with the crap or tell him how things are.

Bakugo is quiet at first, and Ochako senses a blunt end to this session. A write-off for being too much work.

“I can use your quirk to go crazy fast, but only in a straight line, and you were right about not being
able to get down being a challenge.” Bakugo unloads this like a chunk out of some conversation he’s been having with himself all this time, and Ochako blinks, double-taking when she registers him saying something about her being right. “Can you only cancel part of my weight?”

“Uh.” Ochako is admittedly, a little overwhelmed to have asked for an explanation and ended up with a bulldozer strapped with questions in return. “I can try.”

Bakugo’s eyebrows twist above accusatory eyes. “Try?”

“I haven’t done it a lot, and only with small weights,” Ochako explains. “But I’m happy to give it a shot.”

Bakugo makes another of those ‘tch’ sounds but doesn’t offer further comment. It’s not like he has anyone else he can go to for this experiment, so he has to like it or lump it – if he’s not going to leave. Which Ochako doesn’t have a feeling Bakugo will, confirmed when he barks, “You can turn around already.”

Ochako whips around to face a thankfully fully dressed Bakugo, who has his hand sticking out at her again and maybe a flush of colour in his cheeks. He has been blasting himself around between buildings though, so Ochako tries not to read into it. “Try to half it.”

Ochako’s fingers stretch out above Bakugo’s, but before she can press her fingertips to his palm she draws them back. “Wait.”

“What now?” Bakugo sounds just about as annoyed and impatient as Ochako should expect, but it hasn’t stopped her before.

“Well, am I supposed to hang around twiddling my thumbs waiting for you?” Ochako’s resolve hardens. “If you wanna train together, you have to do something for me.”

“Piss off if you don’t want to be here,” Bakugo growls. “I’m not making you stay.”

“That’s not it,” Ochako replies more argumentatively than most people would be around Bakugo. “Just… fight me a little.”

Bakugo is clearly unimpressed. “What?”

“It’s what you do best, isn’t it?!” Ochako doesn’t mean to sound like she’s defending herself or accusing Bakugo – or both at the same time – but she kind of does. “I know it’s kind of a big deal you want to train with me at all, but we should both get something out of it, so if you’re going to help me, that’s how I want you do to it.”

Bakugo, uncharacteristically, doesn’t seem outright angry about this reasoning. In fact, one of his eyebrows lifts. “You sure about that?”

“Yes.” Bakugo doesn’t let any doubt seep into her tone, and holds Bakugo’s gaze straight on for a second. He doesn’t deal in doubts. “Just sparring, without quirks,” she specifies on the off-chance he’s going to take her seriously.

Ochako trains in combat whenever she gets a chance, but it can be tricky finding partners, or the time between everything else in school and personal lives. Ochako’s friends are strangely reluctant to punch her, even when she asks them nicely. Maybe especially then.

“Fine,” Bakugo says when Ochako is absolutely not expecting it. “But you’ll have to do better than those shitty moves you were practicing.” Of course, Ochako rationalises, of course Bakugo could do
whatever he was doing and also have time to disapprove of her form.

“I’m working on it, okay?” Ochako retorts, and is a little put out by the scoff from Bakugo when she raises her fists at him.

Ochako has rarely pushed herself as hard as when she first fought Bakugo. It was almost a disappointment when they didn’t match up again at their second Sports Festival, though Ochako lost to the winner just the same as the year before.

“Not now,” Bakugo decrees, arms weaving together to rest like a barrier over his chest. “You help me first, then I’ll fight you at the end.”

“Why do you get to pick the order?” Ochako knows she sounds a little demanding – to be generous – but not even Bakugo can boss her around endlessly and expect to get away with it. Especially not Bakugo, as it happens.

Ochako is uniquely and quite suddenly disarmed by the discovery that Bakugo appears to be smiling at her. The way a thief grins at a baby right before taking away its candy. “Because after I knock you on your ass you won’t wanna get back up.”

To others, this might have felt like a threat, but to Ochako it’s a promise. The whole point of Bakugo is that he doesn’t hold back. Bakugo is agreeing to spar with Ochako, properly, and she knows he’ll push her more than anyone else.

“Okay.” Ochako sticks out her hand as if to shake Bakugo’s, though it’s not the intended output of the gesture. “It’s a deal.”

Bakugo just lays his hand against hers, the pads on her fingertips pressing against the clammy heat of his skin. His palms are surprisingly soft. It’s not a terrible feeling, but Ochako is very aware of the raw power that comes out of those hands.

Chapter End Notes

Pssssssych it’s a Bakugo-and-Uraraka sparring together fic too! You want tropes, we got’em all. No pants no regrets.

As the first chapter commenters learned, I am a responder and love nothing more than talking shop about ships, so don’t be afraid to hit me up down below because I just love these dumb children so much.
Chapter Summary

Ochako starts slow. Bakugo starts at insanely fast and works up.

Chapter Notes

I'm thoroughly enjoying 'whenever the hell I feel like' updating thus far, mha is more active than the fandom of my last running multi-chap story (and is a popular ship instead of literal flagship rarepair) so I'm extremely chuffed with the warm reception this story has been getting :3 Y’all are great.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Usually, Ochako’s quirk is so second nature she barely even thinks of it. A world where everything is a button that she can press without hesitation. But this time is with Bakugo, and so inevitably this time is different. Ochako has to root through her instincts and do things the hard way.

Ochako reaches into her quirk, stretching like a muscle but not fully, bottlenecking the ability as it activates. Slowly Ochako inflates her power, taking much longer than the on-off way she normally tags people. When she finally feels she can tie off the end of the balloon she lets go, and only then does Ochako take her hand off Bakugo’s clammy, smelling-salts palm.

“That should do it,” Ochako says more to fill the silence than tell Bakugo something he’s surely worked out for himself already.

Rather than blast off, Bakugo jumps into the air. Ochako is relieved when he soars much higher than someone under the full effects of gravity would do, and comes down nearby in a graceful moon jump that for some reason makes Ochako think it would be a lot of fun at parties. If she went to parties. Accidental sleepovers in Tsu’s room are about as good as Ochako gets, but she counts them anyway.

“Hey, it worked!” she chirps as Bakugo bounces down into an easy landing. Though he's too far away for Ochako to make it out, she can easily imagine the sceptical look Bakugo makes at Ochako's surprise with her own abilities.

Bakugo uses a blast to return and moves much faster through the air, pinwheeling like a flaming juggling torch in a way that turns Ochako’s stomach just to watch. He’s slower coming down this time, at least by comparison, and makes a very soft thud of landing.

“Drop it.”

“Release.” The pair of words almost feel like they fit together.

“I wanna try something.” The only perceptible difference after Ochako releases her quirk is a ruffling of Bakugo’s hair, settling lower under the full effects of gravity. “I want you to make me float, then
release your quirk just after I blast off.”

Ochako considers just because Bakugo doesn’t like working with others doesn’t mean he can’t. Though he will avoid or make group work unenjoyable if impressed upon him against his will, this isn’t like that. Bakugo wants Ochako here, to work together with her on the ways their quirks can be turned into something greater than the sum of their parts. It’s making him practically cooperative.

Ochako takes a moment to process the fact that Bakugo is actually taking the time to lay it out to her. It’s surprisingly flattering, so she takes care to reward such efforts by giving what he says careful thought. “So, like before?”

“Yeah.” Bakugo’s eyes rest on Ochako like a weighted bar over her shoulders. It all feels very important and proper, right up until he says, “Stay outta the way and try not to pull any of my clothes off this time.”

Ochako feels herself going a much brighter shade of pink, and decides to intensely devote herself to the fine details of their training. “So you want to use the time when my quirk is active to build up speed before you’re released?”

Ochako catches the exact moment that ‘oh, she actually gets it’ dashes across Bakugo’s features like a startled flock of deer, scattering parts of his expression without any idea where they’re going. “Right.”

“Like a slingshot.” Ochako lifts her hands and mimes the action, following the imaginary pellet of Bakugo with the tip of a finger until it arcs back down onto the imaginary ground. “What about the landing?”

“That’s ground zero,” Bakugo replies in an unassuming way that’s still pretty threatening. A reminder of what he’s capable of.

Bakugo lazily raises a hand to gesture for the mid-distance, the shells of buildings designed to create as authentic a real-world sandbox for young, unstable heroes to play in. “I’ll aim over there, so if you want to stay alive long enough for me to murder you later, then you better keep away.”

“Be careful,” Ochako finds herself saying more out of habit – just to say something, to be positive and friendly in the absence of or in spite of all else. Bakugo looks at her like she just wished him Merry Christmas in the middle of Spring.

“Piss off.” Bakugo goes for Ochako like a hungry dog, eager to take a chunk out of her for the insult of daring to be concerned. “I know what I’m doing.”

“Well, obviously,” Ochako soothes less carefully than she might have advised herself, remembering too late that to Bakugo the highest form of insult is to be thought of as a cause for concern. “It’s not a reflection on you, I’m just saying… I don’t know, watch out for the unexpected.” Something Ochako’s currently working on, having spent almost half an hour one-to-one with Bakugo and still not being totally convinced it’s real.

“I didn’t ask you here to lecture me on shit I already know,” Bakugo takes about as well to Ochako’s attempt to make good as a grizzly bear to being woken by a brass band in the middle of winter. But all the same he sticks his hand out like he’s asking her to dance – not that that’s ever going to happen. “Shut up and do it already.”

Ochako considers the potential gains and losses from commenting on Bakugo’s familiar blunt instructions, that no-nonsense attitude and lack of manners. Yet she finds herself coming up against
Bakugo’s hard-driven wall of logic – the act of just getting on with it. Bakugo doesn’t wait around or waste time, and part of Ochako knows that if this collaboration between them – a big if – ever turns into something to be used out in the real world, then having manners isn’t going to be high on the protocol.

However, because this isn’t a real battle or even a lesson, and because she can’t quite let go without some nod to Bakugo’s utterly tactless attitude, Ochako replies with a mildly harangued, “All right, keep your hair on.”

Bakugo makes another of those disdain-ridden “tch,” sounds, but leaves it at that, waiting more-or-less patiently for Ochako to set her fingertips against the tingly-hot and slick surface of his palm. Ochako doesn’t contemplate it for long, because as soon as Bakugo’s weight disappears so does she, sprinting away from the newly fuelled rocket and vaulting over a low barrier to shield behind before take-off. She knows what happens next. Hearing the roar and feeling the rush of hot air from over the top of the barrier Ochako is crouching behind only affirms of her choice to take cover.

Though Ochako whips back up after Bakugo takes off, by the time she finds him in the air he’s already higher than most of the buildings in the training area. He’s at a dizzying height, and Ochako is worried enough her stomach has turned inside out, but the thought of Bakugo’s fury over not doing what he asked – and the fact that he can’t get back down unless she releases her quirk – is incentive enough for Ochako to quickly lay her fingertips to each other with a steeling breath. “Release!”

Ochako watches the change of Bakugo’s velocity in the air, the point at which gravity starts turning his almost straight shot up into the apex of a huge arc. If it were anyone else, Ochako would be absolutely freaking out, sure she was about to be responsible for making a pancake out of a person. To even greater horror, Ochako realises Bakugo is using explosions to keep building momentum as he falls, or perhaps just remain on trajectory. Fire streams out behind him like a falling star, and there’s a moment in Bakugo’s descent where Ochako gets lost in appreciation of exactly how fearless her classmate is – and why it makes him so strong.

A few buildings over from where they start, Bakugo lands like a meteor. He goes in on the top level of a warehouse-type building, a few floors of quirk-assembled concrete, and the building lights up from inside like a lantern. The boom sounds out like a thunderclap. Ochako is sure she can feel the shake of the ground underneath her feet. She pops up from behind her barrier once more and waits, staring in the direction Bakugo landed and battling herself about how long she should leave it before going to see if he’s okay, knowing how much it’ll annoy him if she seems anything less than confident of his return.

Ochako hears footsteps before seeing anything, the distinctive thud-thud that somehow manages to sound petulant in its rhythm. Bakugo has a new layer of miscellaneous building dust all over him again, giving a greyish tint to his hair. He ruffles his fingers through the thickly sprung mess, shaking out a cloud that catches the waning afternoon light as it cuts between skeletal buildings.

The faux-warehouse Bakugo hit is still standing in the distance, but only just. Ochako can imagine the force Bakugo must have needed to break his fall – the force needed to cancel out the power of his descent – and realises just how apt his warning was. Bakugo better than anyone understands his own destructive potential, and finding out its limits – how to handle such a force with control – is a part of what he’s at this school to learn.

“How did it go?” Ochako opts for instead of the more invasive ‘are you okay?’ that sits on the end of her tongue. She’s seen enough to know that Bakugo’s takeaway from such enquiries is rarely matched to the asker’s intention. Especially if it’s Deku asking, and Ochako isn’t Deku, but she’s
close enough by association to watch her words anyway.

“Fucking great.” Bakugo shakes like a dog, twisting a wrist until an audible click comes out of it.

It’s not what Ochako’s expecting to hear, much less the glut of something like… satisfaction pouring off Bakugo. As if he’s stumbled onto something incredible and is calling it exactly as he sees it.

Understandably, Ochako is a little bemused by the rare situation of being around Bakugo while he’s genuinely happy about something, so to her discredit says, “Really?”

Bakugo tips his head, fingers pulling at the back of his neck like he’s testing for another click of his joints. “Why’d you sound so surprised?” It’s slightly defensive at best, and coarsely delivered at worst. Ochako ends up bolting to attention with a misplaced sense of emergency.

“I’m not! Well… I am, but just because of this whole thing, you know?” Ochako bounces her forefingers together, a telling fiddle as she feels herself starting to babble. “Us – I mean, this.” Bakugo looks at her like she’s started talking another language. “It’s just… not what I expected.”

Bakugo’s eyes narrow again in that figuring-out glare that isn’t supposed to be as angry as it looks. “What did you expect?”

“I… well, I didn’t,” Ochako tries to explain while seeming to just confuse Bakugo even more. “I never expected any of it, you know? You… wanting to do this,” Ochako realises how she sounds, but somehow even that doesn’t stop her adding, “-with me.”

“Only we could do this together,” Bakugo sounds like this conversation verging too far into the realm of things he doesn’t care about, boring his limited attention span with anything not related to this dynamite he’s found with their quirks. “So I dunno why you’re acting so shocked.”

“I’m–” Ochako has a sudden stroke of realisation that perfect communication with Bakugo isn’t a realistic goal. The world isn’t perfect, and sometimes she has to swallow the loss rather than try to make someone like Bakugo understand a concept he’s clearly so unfamiliar with. Namely: himself.

Because it’s not just about their quirks, but about Bakugo being Bakugo and Ochako being Ochako and this still managing to happen. Ochako doesn’t know how to explain getting a chance – an invitation, even – to train with Bakugo is not just an everyday occurrence, not for her. Because, in plain terms, Bakugo can keep up with the pros and doesn’t know what it means to be out of the spotlight. It’s just not what he does.

Meanwhile Ochako does her best but more often than not floats (no pun intended) around the middle, no threat to the power struggle at the top. She counts herself lucky to have so many talented and brilliant friends who will help her keep apace of the lightning speed development track of their academia. However, there’s still no one who will push her like Bakugo, and Ochako is truly excited about the chance to train with him.

“Never mind. I’m just pleased you want me to be here.” The last part slips out of Ochako a little too freely, eased in by the touch of familiarity she’s drawn from this training session – as Bakugo himself has named it – and just when she’s given up on trying to explain herself.

But out of all the things she says, this is the one that sticks. Bakugo’s eyeing Ochako as warily as if she was strapped with firecrackers and asking him to hold a lighter over the fuse.

“We’ll do a few more of these,” Bakugo says with a hint of something restless in his tone. Like he doesn’t have anything to say that could fit together with Ochako’s simple expression of being happy to be included. “Then I’ll knock you around some.” Bakugo’s eyes come on and off Ochako as
quickly as bouncing off a springboard, and she has a wild thought that he’s uncomfortable. They’re certainly reaching the upper threshold of how long their conversations last without getting awkward. “Okay?”

“Okay,” Ochako echoes. “Did I release my quirk in time?”

“It was fine,” Bakugo says hurriedly, opening and closing his hand – the one she’s been touching to activate her quirk – like it’s starting to itch, needs another hit of whatever happens when he uses his quirk under the effects of Ochako’s own. Bakugo thrusts the hand out between them. “Again.”

Ochako reacts instinctively, responding to the palm presented to her by reaching out to fulfil the contract between them before Bakugo’s words even sink in.

A few hot – literally on fire – moments later Bakugo takes off. Ochako has only a moment to think before releasing her quirk to stop Bakugo from launching himself clear into space, but in that moment, she wonders if this is something she ought to get used to.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact, I didn't intend to spend the first three chapters of this story building up this whole quirk chemistry thing between them, but - like a lot of things I write - it got a little out of hand while I was in the business of writing it.

I always wanted to have Bakugo and Uraraka interacting with their quirks, because that's the tastiest evolution of the sparring-together action combo for me, but the vision of this team-up as a groundbreaking *discovery* that's blowing Bakugo's mind (hurr) has been a fun thing to run with that grew very organically. I spent a lot of time figuring out their team-up would actually work, and when the time goes in then cool stuff invariably comes out.

Holla to the commenter who pointed out that I make a thing out of Bakugo's sweaty-teen chemical-hands. As this update might indicate, I'm all about that. PLENTY MORE TO COME.
Knocking Ochako on her ass

Chapter Summary

Bakugo keeps both his word and Ochako totally utterly confused.

Chapter Notes

This chapter would have come a lot sooner if I hadn't gotten sick and also had a bunch of issues with it, but finally defeating the blight on my body and editing in one fell swoop. Trickiness aside this chap is a pretty important one for the story direction *gestures at some of the tags* and I'm fond of multiple bits in it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bakugo tries out his newly patented meteor-strike move a few more times, leaving some notable craters in the training area, but eventually he doesn’t stick his hand out to Ochako and give the same determined, “Again,” that she’s started reacting to like a dog sticking out its paw.

Instead, Bakugo is shaking out the last landing like a born hunter, spreading a cloud concrete dust that’s almost ethereal in the last light of the day. The way he starts pumping his fists sends a tingle of anticipation down Ochako’s spine, because without saying anything he’s getting ready for a fight, their fight. Ochako follows suit, stretching and even starting to bounce on the balls of her feet in anticipation.

At the start of this training session, Ochako and Bakugo agreed to a certain order of events, and though it’s evident that they both know what’s coming next, it’s still a little odd when Bakugo’s first comment on the subject is, “This won’t take long, you know.”

Though Bakugo issues this as a simple statement of fact, Ochako has a weird thought about the importance of context to a line like that. Somehow, the conclusion of her meandering journey is to reply, “Then we’ll find out how long I can last.”

There is something that sits in the corner of Bakugo’s mouth right before he launches himself at her, a curl to the corner of his mouth that’s not a snarl or scowl of any kind. It’s almost – if Ochako didn’t hesitate to apply such concepts to Bakugo – like he could be having fun at the prospect of knocking her on her ass, as he’d put it.

Ochako knows Bakugo’s opening move-set, because who doesn’t, and dodges the infamous right hook by an absolute whisker. She gets approximately two moves further through the exchange before Bakugo steps a foot behind hers and shoves her over like they’re children in a playground. Sticking to the no quirks rule, Ochako lands less than comfortably on her butt in true fulfilment of Bakugo’s promise, but in defiance of it she gets right back up after. It’ll take more than that to keep her down.

Bakugo says nothing, but this time appears to be waiting for Ochako to move first. His hands dive into his pockets as Ochako gets to her feet, but she knows better than to doubt anything but his total
She goes in with a couple of punches, each of which Bakugo knocks away with a blow from his shoulder like colliding with a shopping cart loaded up with bricks. Bakugo isn’t the biggest or tallest in their class, but he’s got plenty of muscle and hits without paring back his strength.

So it hurts, but this is what Ochako doesn’t get enough of – being pushed to her physical limits. Fighting someone who is this much better than her without holding back is what Ochako needs to grow, gaining the experience that she’ll need to go up against villains in the real world – fights that Ochako has to be ready for.

After all, a few of Bakugo’s punches are hardly going to set her back, and Ochako falls easily into the habit set by their match in the first Sports Festival. She picks herself up and throws herself into the wall that he is again and again. The biggest difference this time is in the contact. Bakugo hadn’t allowed Ochako to touch her back then, and after today’s discovery Ochako wonders what might have happened if the compatibility of their quirks had been discovered all that time ago.

Not that Ochako is actually landing anything on Bakugo, it’s just that with use of their quirks off the table he hasn’t got to worry about letting them touch. This time Bakugo’s unhesitant in his handling of Ochako, throwing her around like a ball to play catch with.

Finally, Bakugo’s promise is paid in full when Ochako can no longer get back up. If she could then she would’ve gone again for him. It’s not all that bad, mostly exhaustion from running such a relentless barricade into fort Bakugo. She’ll be alright in a few minutes, but for now it’s quivering on the ground and frustration at the gap between where Ochako is and where she wants – needs – to be.

Then in an unexpected turn of events, Bakugo’s hand arrives in front of her face. Ochako’s first instinct is to reach out and touch her fingertips to it in order to activate her quirk, but by the time she’s lifted a trembling hand she’s recognised the gesture for what it is. Bakugo’s offering to help her up.

“You’ll never land shit if you can’t throw a punch right.” Bakugo tugs Ochako to her feet with the finesse of throwing a kit back over his shoulder, and she’s still reeling from the notion that Bakugo would actually do something as considerate as help her up.

Ochako wonders what could have possibly inspired the thought in Bakugo’s head, but then remembers the glimpses she’s caught of Bakugo with his actual friends rather than begrudging acquaintances. There are times Ochako has detected traces of a softer – no, that wasn’t right – a less… Bakugo side of Bakugo.

He has a hair trigger and a temper like a live volcano, and Ochako doesn’t think he’s terribly sociable even without the mile-deep attitude problems, but Bakugo’s not heartless. And at the end of the day, Bakugo’s also her classmate, ally in more battles than she cares to count for two years of high school, and a teenage boy to boot, so perhaps it isn’t all that strange.

Maybe the warm feeling Bakugo’s gesture gives Ochako tilts her view a bit. Or maybe it’s being hit all those times, because after Ochako takes a steeling breath and the dizzy spell has passed, she finds it terribly natural to respond to Bakugo with some straight-shooting. “Show me how, then.”

It’s more than what Ochako bargained for at the start of this – the jump from practice to coaching – but there’s not a person in their year, maybe even the entire school, who couldn’t learn a thing from Bakugo about hand to hand combat. Ochako has seen time and again that there’s nowhere else Bakugo is more at home than the midst of a fight.
Because it’s true that Heroes come in all sorts, and they’re all equally valid, but Bakugo is a kind that doesn’t come along all that often.

So it goes without saying that Ochako would be excited to learn even a little of what Bakugo has made his second nature. Whether he shares the inclination to do that is another question, and the look Bakugo gives Ochako is not especially promising. He’s scowling, which is granted, but this pouty frown topped by the sharp lines of his brow – in Ochako’s loosely-formed opinion – is merely Bakugo’s thinking face as he considers her proposition.

“Next time.”

Ochako establishes herself as a bad trope by saying, “Really?” in that happy-go-lucky way again. It’s hard not to when Bakugo surprises her at every turn.

Bakugo gives Ochako another of those accusingly puzzled looks, like it’s an insult for her to be beyond his understanding. “You got a problem about doing this again?”

“Of course not! I’d love to! I mean…” Ochako realises too late she doesn’t have anything else to say, and ends up hanging with her mouth open for a moment longer than is not awkward. Bakugo is giving her that famous intense stare, and Ochako makes an attempt at speaking rather than let the silence become crushing. “That’d be… nice.”

“You’re weird.” Bakugo uses his tone of absolutes again, such that Ochako is in no doubt whatsoever that he is exactly and completely right. “Meet me back here Sunday morning, okay?”

Bakugo doesn’t ask anything that’s unimportant to him, like whether Ochako is free or if she wants to devote their only day off to getting ordered around by him. Those considerations make no difference to him, because it’s boiled down to a simple question of whether she’ll be here or not. Nothing else matters.

“Okay,” Ochako answers like it’s more ordinary than it is, when in reality, this is all about as normal as a pack of penguins showing up to a beach bar at – but then, stranger things have happened in this quirk-filled world they can hardly keep up with.

Bakugo signals the end of their session by kicking aside some rubble to collect his things. “Y’nno,” he says casually as he’s pulling on a hoodie, as if this is a locker-room breakdown. “It’s not that big of a deal.”

Ochako trips into what is an unintentionally mimicking tilt of her head. “What isn’t?”

“Doing this together,” is Bakugo’s impressively vague answer, followed by a brisque. “So don’t disappoint me.”

It’s something Ochako wasn’t worried about until Bakugo says it, and only after he’s walked away does she realise why. Being able to disappoint Bakugo means he expects something of her.

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Ochako expects that to be the last she sees of Bakugo after he storms away, but when she reaches the exit of the training area he’s hanging back by the gate. As if he’s thought of something and waited for her. It’s predictably not what she expects.

“Hey,” Bakugo starts like he doesn’t need Ochako’s name even if he does know it. “Don’t tell anyone at school about this.” Bakugo looks so direly serious it undermines Ochako’s instinct to think she must have heard him wrong.
“Uh… really? Why?” Ochako juggles the questions as if Bakugo might like to pick and choose among them.

“I don’t want those nosey bastards snooping around while we’re still… working stuff out.” Bakugo replies with utter calm for words that might be taken a really weird way out of context. Not that it seems to bother him. “Especially not that try-hard fu-”

“You mean Deku?” Ochako hops in before Bakugo can get the words out, and he seems utterly indignant that she’s snatched the satisfaction so openly from his lips. “Why would it be a problem if people know about us… uh, doing this?”

Ochako is pretty confused as to why she’s being asked to keep secrets, but Bakugo doesn’t seem to be in the mood for explanations anymore. “Just keep your dumb mouth shut.”

“In case you forgot,” Ochako starts with a blast of vindictive energy, getting a full Bakugo scowl for her trouble. “Earlier today you shot yourself through a building, spent all class staring at me, and then asked me to meet you after school in front of everyone.” Ochako sets her hands on her hips, fixing Bakugo with a beady look. “I’m going to get asked about it, so what do you expect me to say?”

“I don’t kn– whatever the fuck you want,” Bakugo snaps. “Just don’t spill what I’m trying to do with your quirk.”

Ochako feels herself frowning, not so sure this ill-fated project is going to work out in the long run. Not when it’s still what Bakugo’s doing with her, and not them, as a real partnership. “Is it really that awful to need me for something?”

“So what is?” Ochako realises too late that she’s pushing just a little bit harder than she should. This doesn’t go down well with Bakugo. Not the boy with the hair-trigger, who has gone from his regular angry to explosion murder king in the blink of an eye. Except what he bellows at Ochako is a bit off his regularly scheduled abuse.

“What we have could be incredible!” Bakugo barks like a dog guarding a well-cooked pork chop. The part of Ochako that would usually fight back is stunned mute at the nature of Bakugo’s outburst, so no flare of temper overtakes her tongue on this occasion. Instead she looks right at Bakugo, teeth clenched and glaring like he’s furious that it’s her he’s got to do this with, but he still called it incredible. “You really think so?”

Bakugo scoffs, like he can’t believe Ochako doesn’t see what he’s become so quickly fixated on. “It’s nothing right now,” he says before Ochako mistakes Bakugo for being too nice. “We need to do a lot more work before it’ll be worth shit.”

“It’s okay not to be perfect at something right away.”

“For you, maybe,” Bakugo grunts. “If you start blabbing now, everyone will get curious and expect to be impressed.” Bakugo’s looking straight at Ochako, and she tests the feel of his ever-present Baku-aura, that spiky feeling of being near him that feels like creeping past an extremely hostile animal growling in a very narrow hallway. “We can talk about it when we know what the fuck we’re doing.”

Bakugo sounds like he’s negotiating for a treaty, and Ochako doesn’t plan to test it, but she wonders what he would do if she refused the terms. She’s no want or need for a war with Bakugo, because
attitude or not they’re still on the same side.

Fingers snap in front of Ochako’s face, and she looks up to see the swirl of near-black thunderclouds in Bakugo’s when she doesn’t affirm him on his preferred timescales. Namely, right goddam now.

“Okay?”

“Okay,” Ochako agrees with a slightly put-upon sigh, just to be sure he understands she’s doing what Bakugo doesn’t – **compromising.** “If it’s that important to you.”

Bakugo makes his signature sound again, the periodic ‘*tch*’ before stomping away.

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Although Bakugo is the last person Ochako would imagine expecting something from her, much less binding her to secrecy about this supposedly incredible thing between them, it’s not a feeling she hates. Being recognised not for her personality, but because of her ability as a hero – because together they can do something Bakugo deems so valuable – makes Ochako feel worthy too.

After all, deep down Ochako figures most friends train with her because they like her company, and not because of the challenge she presents. There’s nothing wrong with that, of course, but it’s nice to feel wanted as a training partner for something else. Even – or let’s face it, especially – by Bakugo.

Though it would be easier if Bakugo didn’t want things kept secret; a problem Ochako has to start dealing with sooner rather than later. She’s barely been back at the dorms for an hour, sitting with Tsu trying to review their notes from English class and not getting all that far with it.

“By the way, *ribbet*, how’d it go with Bakugo?” Tsu slips in all too casually.

“Oh… fine,” Ochako replies lightheartedly, a feeling not shared by her aching, tired muscles.

“And?” Tsu isn’t going to be fooled. “What did he want?”

“We just uh… uh…” Ochako stalls, and then stalls some more. “Well… it’s hard to say what we did.”

Tsu looks supremely unconvinced. “It is?”

“He, I mean, Bakugo doesn’t really want me to talk about it just yet.” Ochako doesn’t mean to mumble, or sound bashful and guilty, yet she somehow manages all of them.

“That sounds pretty odd.” Tsu’s eyes narrow. “He didn’t want do anything *weird*, did he?”

“Bakugo?!” Ochako’s voice reaches alarming pitch. “No way! It’s fine, I swear!” Ochako tames her voice, but it still squeaks here and there. “Just… some totally normal stuff that I can’t talk about right now.”

“Sounds fake, but if you say so,” Tsu reverts to her steadfast deadpan. “Are you coming to Yaomomo’s study session on Sunday?!”

“Of course, I’ll…” Ochako catches herself too late. “Oh no… I can’t.” Ochako remembers her commitment just a moment too late. “It slipped my mind and I sorta… made other plans.”

“Doing what?” Tsu’s straightforwardness is a blessing – most of the time. Not this time.

“Well I’m… ah, seeing Bakugo again.” Tsu gives Ochako a ‘*are you for real?*’ look that makes already rosy cheeks flush even pinker. “He asked!” she cheeps. “What was I supposed to do, turn
him down?”

“You can do whatever you want, Ochako,” Tsu replies quite fairly. “I wasn’t judging, it’s just a little unusual because of, you know… Bakugo.”

“I know, I know,” Ochako empathises better than anyone. “It’s not like I have any more idea of what’s going on in his head.”

“I don’t know about that, ribbet.” Tsu is thoroughly distracted from homework, and Ochako’s really going to miss that study session with Yaomomo. “Sometimes I think you understand Bakugo best of all of us.”

“No way,” Ochako insists. “The only thing I know for sure about Bakugo is he finds me annoying.”

“Doesn’t Bakugo find everyone annoying?” Tsu counters. “The difference is he’s tolerating the way he’s annoyed by you.”

“Barely,” Ochako sighs. At least for now Bakugo is putting up with a hefty amount of undisguised irritation for the sake of exploring the combination of their quirks for combat – not that Ochako is allowed to talk about it. “And he calls me weird.” This is addressed more to herself, but Ochako’s companion is too sharp to miss much.

“You know,” Tsu says thoughtfully, finger propped to her jaw as she runs that direct line from her head straight through to her mouth. “If you keep hanging out with Bakugo and being all secretive about what you’re doing, people might get the wrong idea.”

It’s true that one-on-one training together is almost as good as dating for much of their student body, but Ochako tries not to think about in the same mindframe as her own perfectly legitimate one-on-one training with Bakugo.

Ochako laughs. “Yeah, right. Me and Bakugo.” She looks at Tsu to confirm she’s joking, and is a little unnerved when she isn’t. “But… it’s Bakugo! Obviously we wouldn’t… he wouldn’t, you know… but it’s Bakugo!”

“I didn’t say I believed it,” Tsu points out. “Just that it might look that way to some people.”

“Crazy people,” Ochako insists. “Besides, I’m sure Bakugo will get fed up of tolerating me before it comes to anyone thinking… that.”

“What kind of things were the of two you doing again?” Tsu teases – maybe?

“Um… you know, general… stuff,” Ochako considers as she says it that there’s nothing about anything she’s said that can’t be twisted into some awkward conclusion, and feels her face warming again. “I’m making it sound worse, aren’t I?”

“A little, ribbet,” Tsu replies. “But if you say there’s nothing funny going on, I believe you.”

“Thanks, Tsu,” Ochako says warmly. “I’m really glad you said that, because… could you not to mention this to anyone else?”

“You realise-”

“That just makes it sound even worse,” Ochako finishes for her, peeking out from a gap between her fingers as she rests her palms over her face. “You don’t have to tell me.” It’s a lot of trouble for something Bakugo’s calling nothing – at least right now – but Ochako knows for all the hassle, she
doesn’t want to lose this chance.

“I suppose Bakugo’s such a hotshot most of us would say yes to one-on-one time with him,” Tsu considers as she bounces her finger thoughtfully against the centre of her lips. “Shame about his personality.”

Tsu has a terrible habit for being right, and this is no exception. It’s just that Ochako isn’t usually so reluctant to stomach the truth. “I sure hope I don’t end up regretting this.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter has the stuff the first 3 chapters got in the way of, not that I don't like the first 3 chapters, but FINALLY getting closer to the all-important comedy partner for this quirk chemistry straightman.
How was it for you?

Chapter Summary

Bakugo keeps Ochako’s head spinning.

Chapter Notes

Kind thanks to Starfangs Secrets for signing on to the admirable challenge of beta reading this story. A brave soul who may not realise just what they're getting into.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The morning after Ochako’s first training session with Bakugo, she finally gets asked about it by the person she’s been dreading the question from most.

“G’morning, Uraraka!” Deku is in top spirits as usual, and for a blissful moment Ochako thinks she might get away with her willful naivety. This lasts about three seconds, then pops like a soap bubble. “So, how’d it go with Kacchan yesterday?”

“Oh… you know… good?” Ochako doesn’t believe for a minute that she’ll get away with this, but it buys her time to try and think of anything else to say.

Luckily, Deku relieves her of the burden and offers up, “He’s pretty amazing, isn’t he?”

“Yeah.” It’s easy to agree, a little too easy, and Ochako trips into a stiff chuckle. “Almost makes me wonder why he’s bothering, when he’s so much further ahead than me.” It’s pitched awkwardly; a joke that never quite happens. Ochako rubs the back of her neck even more uneasily.

“That’s not true at all!” Deku’s ceaseless optimism is in perpetual motion. “You’re really amazing too.” Deku beams, the pureness of his intentions shining through. “I’m sure Kacchan recognises it, and that’s why he asked you.” Deep down, Deku is truly living the fanboy dream in and amongst the heroes he adores. So when he says Ochako’s amazing and even Bakugo knows it, she actually believes him.

“Thanks, Deku.” An irresistible smile lights up her face. “You always know what to say.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” Deku retreats bashfully, fiddling his fingers together and drawing inward. Maybe Ochako got a little too close, she subtly checks herself. “I wish he’d ever want to train with me, but we always end up fighting.”

For a second, Ochako thinks about telling Deku that Bakugo fights everyone – she has plenty of aches today as proof of that – but she knows that it’s different with those two. The fight between Bakugo and Deku never stops. Ochako pictures Bakugo’s hand stuck out in front of her yesterday, not in attack or to make use of her quirk, but to help her up. And as much as it frustrates her to know this, she’s certain Bakugo wouldn’t be the same way with Deku.
They walk the rest of the way to the classroom together, and Deku’s lightness slowly sinks down. Ochako senses him getting pensive, the quiet murmuring as he mouths through thoughts like hard candy. It isn’t until they’re at the last turning that Deku says anything clearly.

"Uraraka, I know that Kacchan and I don’t always… get along so well."

It’s weird to hear Deku say it, but Ochako knows it’s progress if the two of them can understand each other enough to have a similar view of where their shattered-and-reglued piece-by-piece vase of a relationship is at. Yet Deku will never give up believing he and Bakugo can be friends in the long term – that optimism might be the true source of Deku’s power, because it is truly inextinguishable.

A little mumbling later, Deku reaches the conclusion his thought. “– However, that just makes me even more happy for the both of you.”

“It does?” Ochako wonders what Tsu would make of this conversation, if she overhead it. “It’s really… not that big of a deal.” In fact, Bakugo has specifically told her so.

“Don’t be so hard on yourself,” Deku is starting to beam again, “I think this is a positive step for Kacchan.” They’re so close to the classroom, but instead of trailing off into a murmuring pool of consideration again, Deku stays focused on the very thing Ochako’s hoping he wouldn’t get around to. “So what kind of stuff did he want to do?”

Ochako stalls and is beginning a vague sound of deliberation when from right behind them comes a brisk, “Outta the way, Deku.”

“Oh, Kacchan!” Regardless of Bakugo’s greeting, Deku seems as happy to see him as ever, chock full of puppyish optimism. “I was just asking Uraraka about your training after school yesterday, I hear it went well.”

Bakugo’s focus zones in on Ochako like laser sights, and she fires back a sturdy ‘I didn’t say anything’ look that holds for long enough for Bakugo to turn back to Deku. “None of your lousy business, fuckface.”

It’s overkill, as it always is with Bakugo and Deku. But Ochako is standing right there and she’s not letting it slip. “Deku was just asking,” she scolds in a tone that instantly gets Bakugo’s attention, “exactly like I told you people were going to do.”

“So what?” Bakugo shrugs. “You don’t have to answer.”

Ochako sighs and blows a wisp of hair out of her eyes, inadvertently rolling them in the process. “You would say that.”

“The fuck’s that supposed to mean?” Bakugo sinks deeper into aggression, shattering any notion of being more personable with Ochako outside of training.

“Never mind, we’re going to be la–” Ochako has no sooner started to say the word than Iida’s head pops out almost perpendicular to the doorframe, glasses shining with early-morning vitality.

“Hurry classmates! There’s only fifteen minutes until the beginning of homeroom!” Each term the time Iida thinks they should be in class ‘just to be safe’ seems to get a little bit earlier. By graduation he’ll surely be arriving at the classroom five minutes after the end of the previous day’s classes.

Bakugo makes a derisively huffy sound that Ochako pays no mind, starting to hurry with Deku in the direction of Iida’s sign-post like head. But half-way down the corridor Bakugo suddenly finds his voice. “Wait.” His tone is low and specific, cutting through the hallway chatter. Ochako knows he
means her instinctively and stops mid-step, turning over her shoulder to face him with a look that simply asks, ‘What?’

As usual, Bakugo doesn’t fail to surprise. “Sunday, right?”

Ochako wonders what any of the wheels turning in Bakugo’s head even are, much less how they’ve worked together to come to this conclusion. It’s a surprise that after being as grouchy and snappish as always, Bakugo not only wants to check on their plan, but will do so in broad daylight – and more to the point, in the middle of a busy school corridor. The peculiarity strikes Ochako like a wave, overwhelming the better part of her faculty to reply.

“Um, yeah,” she comes out with awkwardly, “of course.”

That’s all Bakugo seems to want from her, as he ‘hmphs’ and then moves on.

As class begins, Ochako finds herself dwelling on what Deku said – how training with her could be good for Bakugo – and just what Sunday would bring.

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The weekend arrives in an ungainly rush, and before Ochako knows it she’s packing a workout bag and setting off first thing to the training area she and Bakugo used before. As expected, he’s already there. She never saw him at breakfast, and wonders how long he’s been going when she shows up.

Bakugo is wearing similar workout clothes as the other day, though the sleeves on today’s vest dangle much lower around his arms, and his sweatpants are noticeably tighter. Perhaps that’ll keep them on, Ochako can only hope.

Ochako isn’t wearing her jumpsuit, but has her bracelets and boots as a precaution against getting too nauseous. Throwing up in front of Bakugo is very low on the list of things she would like to happen at this session, though the things that Ochako would like to happen is more of a blank slate. A totally blank state, actually.

Bakugo starts, as he often does, at about mach six. “I wanna go higher this time.” His hand is already sticking out, but Ochako keeps her fingers to herself.

“I’ve been thinking about that,” she says a little more timidly than she’d practiced, without Bakugo’s fiery presence right in front of her. “Instead of blowing up… everything… when you land, why don’t I catch you?”

This somehow comes across as a surprising notion to Bakugo. “What?”

“As long as I touch you before you land, you’ll float.”

“I’ll slow down.” Bakugo makes this sound like a criminal offense.

“Everyone needs a way to stop,” Ochako suggests more reasonably than such an inalienable fact merits. “I mean, keep on blasting the training area to bits if you really want to, but we both know you can’t bust out those moves just anywhere.” Ochako ends up sounding a little like she’s making the dire mistake of trying to talk to Bakugo as if she knows better than him, so tries to soften it with a far less certain, “I just figured a less… explosive landing might be useful.”

There’s a more intimidating than awkward silence, before Bakugo points out, “If you’re catching me, then you’ve gotta be where I land.” His pragmatism is refreshing. It’s clear, or at least Ochako feels pretty sure, that Bakugo is more interested in the practical applications of their quirks than measuring
up anyone’s ego. Perhaps he even sees Ochako as a way of getting stronger, she dares to think.

“Or you could come to me.” Bakugo seems to bristle at the notion, but doesn’t actually object, settling into a thoughtful grimace as he mulls it over for a moment.

“I’ll come, but you need to think about ways of getting around fast enough to keep up,” Bakugo sounds like he’s reading off a field evaluation, handing out notes for his partner who really ought to be listening more to what he’s saying than pondering his motivations for being here. Bakugo flaps his open palm at her impatiently. “Tag me in.”

Ochako has already touched her fingers to Bakugo’s hand when she feels compelled to clarify what’s about to happen. “So am I catching you?”

Bakugo gives Ochako a sideways glance down the meaty length of his arm, his hair subtly lifting as gravity stops applying to him. “You fucking better.”

The thought arises in Ochako’s mind that if anyone could use jet blasts coming out their palms to rocket through the air like a flamethrowing drone, it’d be someone with arms – with shoulders – like Bakugo. Then Ochako changes her train of thought like skipping a track, throwing herself into sprinting away from Bakugo before anything bad happens.

“I’m going to that building, then I’ll come back,” Bakugo actually explains before he blasts off. “Drop me after I blast off from the far end, just like before.”

Ochako responds from a safe distance away, popping out from over a sturdy road-barrier type installation with a trusty thumbs up. “Gotcha.”

Bakugo stalls for a moment like he’s snagging on a roughly formed thought that he doesn’t know how to articulate. It comes out as, “This might hurt if you screw up.”

For whatever reason – perhaps because the concept of Bakugo actually thinking of her welfare is like having shoes on the wrong feet – the only response that comes to Ochako is, “Hurt who?”

Bakugo makes a face like he’s offended Ochako even thinks it’s a question. While Ochako and Bakugo both understand plenty well he’s not indestructible, that doesn’t stop him pretending otherwise. “Just be ready for me to come at you hard.”

“Okay, oka–” Ochako cuts off as she realise how weird the decontextualised comment sounds, but before she’s able to feel anything about it Bakugo’s blasting off, speeding away from the ground alarmingly fast from even a small explosion.

Ochako watches Bakugo land several stories up, on his feet but vertically up the face of the building. Ochako doesn’t know how much nausea Bakugo’s getting from throwing himself around like this, but if he is then he’s not letting it show one bit.

Ochako stretches her hands out to either side, exaggerating her movements a little before bringing her fingers in almost to touch. Ready for Bakugo to shoot off again moments later, rocketing towards Ochako with the same aggression he was breaking apart whole buildings earlier this week.

“Release!” Bakugo’s warning about the possibility of getting hurt suddenly becomes very real to Ochako as she touches her fingers together and releases her quirk. Prior to that moment, Bakugo is just hurtling up, but as soon as his weight returns he throws it into a head-first dive coming straight at her.

Ochako reminds herself that she did this once before, and if Bakugo keeps his pants on then it surely
constitutes an improvement on the last time. The thought isn’t very comforting, but it’s all she has.

True to his word, Bakugo aims toward Ochako like a homing missile targeting sources of annoyance. He’s even faster than she remembers, and a lot more frightening. Ochako steadies herself and puts her hands up to brace for impact – although Bakugo will be excluded from gravity and weightless once more when she re-engages her quirk, only the momentum from the pull of gravity will be negated. Meaning the rest of Bakugo’s kinetic energy – propelled by his explosions – is another matter entirely.

‘Catch’ being the operative word, Ochako squares up and sets herself up for Bakugo’s impact. Holding one hand aloft, fingers splayed, Ochako’s palm claps against the centre of Bakugo’s chest as the essential first contact she needs to engage her quirk. When they fought in the sports festival Ochako exhausted herself and couldn’t lay a finger on Bakugo, but now he’s on her side he’ll make sure they touch.

Ochako’s other hand goes to Bakugo’s shoulder as he hits like a bulldozer that’s been launched from a catapult, heels skidding backwards over the ground as she braces against the impact. Ochako stays on her feet – just – and doesn’t take another breath until they finally come to a stop, almost at the gate of the training area. The oxygen she was missing out on floods her brain and Ochako notices this: Bakugo’s heart is pounding fit to burst. For a single, crazy second Ochako wonders if it’s for any other reason than Bakugo just shot himself at her like a missile strike and she actually caught him.

Then Ochako remembers she doesn’t need to be touching Bakugo anymore and stops. “Release.”

Bakugo drops the couple of feet off the ground where he was finally stopped, and gives himself a canine shake as he draws himself back upright. “I guess that’s useful.”

The evaluation is ambivalent, but a fair assessment. To be anything but fair would compromise the ultimate goal of this training, which is to get stronger. Bakugo wants to work with Ochako to get stronger, and she’d pinch herself if it wouldn’t make her look even weirder than he already thinks she is.

“I’ll wear out my boots if we do it too much,” Ochako rambles as she shakes what sounds like a lot of grit out of her footwear, designed for impact but not necessarily as a set of breaks. She might have to apologise to the support department for that one.

Bakugo is drawn carefully in thought, rather than paying much notice to Ochako’s open-space chatter. She’s expecting a non-sequitur, so Bakugo’s query of, “What if you weren’t on the ground?” doesn’t make sense to her the first time around.

“Where would I be if I’m not on the ground?”

Bakugo makes a face. “In the air, idiot.”

Unfortunately, Ochako realises exactly what Bakugo means this time, but sort of wishes she didn’t. It is the reason she wore these boots and bracelets today, but so far the light load on Ochako’s quirk has been a quietly appreciated blessing. Of course, Bakugo doesn’t do going easy on Ochako, so she draws a steeling breath. “You want me to catch you while I’m making myself float?”

“Obviously,” Bakugo scorns.

“What do you think will happen?”

“If I knew then I wouldn’t want to try it,” Bakugo snaps in a feat of inescapable angry logic, then turns around and starts walking back to the centre of the open space they’re based in, a pile of their
bags tucked behind a well-blasted concrete barrier. He stops in the middle and then turns back to watch Ochako approach, arms crossed and a disgruntled look that she’s sure is his default thinking face.

Bakugo has unfolded his arms again by the time Ochako has reached him, and seems content to begin without further negotiation. She supposes he doesn’t think there’s anything more to say, but this radically experimental approach is a little alarming when it’s right in front of her.

“You ready?” Bakugo checks that much at least, though his hand is still an open invitation, held out in front of him,

“I… guess so.” Ochako lays her hand on his, activating her quirk and then skipping back a few steps. She’s seen Bakugo do this a few times now, and if he uses the same controlled blasts to launch himself then she’ll be safe from a few paces, rather than needing to take cover.

The hunch proves right, and a rush of hot air passes over Ochako as Bakugo shoots across the space to land midway up the first tall structure. It’s not exactly close, but Ochako is getting enough of a feel for Bakugo’s timing not to wait for a verbal signal, dropping him a couple of seconds after he blasts off from the building face.

Now comes the part Ochako’s less sure of, where she wraps her arms around herself – more for the mental comfort than need for the gesture – and lifts off the ground. She fights the initial rush of nausea, dulled slightly by her support gear but ever-present in the pit of her stomach. Bakugo doesn’t give Ochako much time to think about it, crashing down on her in a few hot seconds.

There is one thing Ochako has to do, she tells herself, and that’s use her quirk on Bakugo. Everything else in the terrifying unknown that could happen next is firmly beyond Ochako’s control. She has one job to do, so she’s absolutely going to do it.

Bakugo comes down on Ochako like a hailstorm, but she’s stable enough in the air, hands outstretched, that when Bakugo reaches out and wraps his hands quite firmly around Ochako’s wrists, she instinctively returns the hold. Her fingers press into the iron force of Bakugo’s forearms, hot like blacksmithing tools from a furnace, and it’s more than enough contact for Ochako to activate her quirk.

Everything that happens after that is comparable to the experience of a sock inside a washing machine with a bunch of differently sized bricks going around in it. Ochako feels herself spin fully upside down and back around again, swinging around Bakguo in a pinwheeling fairground ride experience that does nothing at all for her nausea.

Somewhere in the whirling vortex, Ochako decides it’s in everyone’s interest to get back down to the ground. Her mouth feels awkwardly dry as she quickly brings her fingers together, eyes screwed shut even if it’s just making things worse. “Release.”

What happens after that feels akin to being flipped like a pancake during an earthquake. Ochako’s inner ear sends her mixed messages, but seems to be regaining some stability as a very firm thump runs up from below. This is followed by a renewed sense of up and down again, even if nothing else makes much sense. Like why her dizzying landing impact should feel so… cushioned.

Ochako blinks a few times and distinguishes what she’s looking at, which is an intimidatingly large-feeling up close Bakugo laying flat on his back directly underneath her. Tingling in Ochako’s knees tell her she’s scuffed them, landing in this position over Bakugo. Which is straddling him.

The addition of a flock of butterflies to the disorientated laser-party going on in Ochako’s stomach
doesn’t do anything for the atmosphere in there at all. According to her most pressing needs, Ochako’s first action is to put her hands to her stomach and start taking a series of very deep breaths, remaining dead still even if it happens to be in a slightly awkward position.

Ochako achieves distraction from her sickness by a sudden and intense fixation on the practical side of their landing. Bakugo must have done it intentionally, going by the determined way he moved her just before impact. Arranging them this way around is one thing, but Bakugo landing on Ochako is an entirely more alarming thought.

By controlling their fall to keep her from splating to the ground like a sickly water balloon, Bakugo is applying the same principles to Ochako as he applies to his growth as a Hero; she is an asset to his development, and therefore to be taken care of. Certainly not to be squashed underneath him or thrown around like the rag doll she feels like.

Because to stop growing at UA is to fall behind, Ochako knows as well as anyone – that's why she’s here too. However, Bakugo might feel under pressure to grow most of all, with the fear of losing his place at the top and drive to keep pushing himself when he's already so powerful and still has to find ways to be more. Ochako has seen more flashes of that frustration from Bakugo than Lunch Rush has cooked curries in almost two years at UA.

Bakugo is still laid out underneath Ochako, and she hates that Tsu’s comment earlier in the week pops into her head – about what people might think about her and Bakugo if they didn’t know the truth. Which is of pragmatically advantageous straddling, no funny business involved.

However, Bakugo doesn’t really help that impression when he cocks his head to one side, looking up at Ochako in a way that makes her feel innately conscious of herself sat on top of him, and asks, “How was it for you?”

No, Bakugo really doesn’t help that impression at all.

Chapter End Notes

Ooooooooooooh yeaaaaaaaah. The nonsense keeps on coming ;)

On a more srs note, I adore Deku in an extremely real way and there is nothing that steams me than when stories trash or erase a romantic rival so as not to compete with their chosen ship. MISSED OPPORTUNITY. That kind of richness is what gives a story real emotional depth, and I'd never forgive myself for not doing justice to the extremely important relationship between Ochako and Deku, to say nothing of the twisted complexity of Deku and Bakugo's shitstorm dynamic.

Also you just know how much Bakugo will HATE Deku being glowingly supportive of him and Ochako, which is a prime reason to do anything.
What Bakugo wants #1

Chapter Summary

Bakugo remains oblivious to anything except his goal. Ochako's just oblivious.

Chapter Notes

These are quite bite-sized chapters (at least for me), so I compensate for feeling like there isn't a lot that happens in each by getting them out relatively quick (also because I'm desperate to share this trainwreck story). I'm still sitting on an awful lot of backlog, so my original 'every 2 weeks' biweekly update plan has turned into '2 every week' biweekly - but hey, ain't like any of y'all are complaining ;3

Some clever ducks have pointed out the chapter titles are all suggestive/innuendos, which for this update goes double because as the #1 implies, there will be some more of 'what Bakugo wants' further down the line... what that *is* I leave to your imaginations.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Of all the places Ochako expects to wind up in her time at UA, straddling Bakugo isn’t high in the rankings. Or on the rankings at all. So in addition to the usual nausea caused by her impromptu trip through a zero-gravity wurlitzer, it’s reasonable that Ochako's a little surprised by the situation at hand – well, at legs.

Ochako’s predominant thought is that she really doesn’t want to throw up on Bakugo: a goal they can both get behind, whether Bakugo knows it or not. So all Ochako does for a moment is stay right where she is, taking deep, rhythmic breaths as she wills away the wall of her quirk.

It’s a shame that, “I need a minute,” is all she manages in explanation of this fact.

“Does it have to be on top of me?” Bakugo crackles with the same ill-tempered impatience, but if he really wanted to move Ochako she’s certain he would. That he remains flat on his back, palms facing the sky and attention drawn into focus on Ochako, means he’s not so violently opposed to this situation that he means to change it just yet.

As soon as the solidified thought takes form – that Bakugo is on some level okay with Ochako sitting on him – she thinks it would be a really fantastically smart idea to stop doing it right away. Riding a tiger doesn’t mean it’s going to start purring, and Ochako’s already pushing her luck with how long she’s taken to gather her wits while settled comfortably over Bakugo’s hips, the shape of which she can feel as her recently returned weight presses down over him.

“Sorry~” Ochako’s stomach gives a lurch, and she leans forward a little. For balance, her hands come to rest on the most practical support available, which is the bedrock of Bakugo’s chest. She takes another deep breath and says, “I’ll get off now.” ‘Context, Ochako,’ she thinks helplessly to herself as she leans harder against Bakugo, forcing enough strength into her jelly arms to lift herself up. It’s really difficult not to notice the way Bakugo’s staring at her. As if they’re meeting for the first
time, but he’s been studying her picture for years.

It’s a terrible joke that what Bakugo comes out with next is a famously blunt, “What’s wrong with you?” The fewest words required to pinpoint the most important thing to him in this moment. Because Bakugo’s concern – what he threw himself under her like a crash pad for – is Ochako’s welfare… for the sake of their continued training, of course. He’s probably annoyed that she doesn’t seem perfectly chipper and ready to do it all over again.

“Nothing.” Ochako pushes harder against Bakugo’s chest – most assuredly firm with a practically juicy amount of give – and lifts a knee, swiveling until she finally comes to a new resting place that’s not on top of anyone. Splaying out on the ground next to Bakugo, Ochako sucks in a new round of steadying breaths.

“You sound like you’re trying to take a shit,” Bakugo says unkindly as he sits up, and there’s even a little arrogance as he strips Ochako down for daring to play tough. “Yeah, you’re obviously fine.” It’s too sarcastic to be a question, and if Ochako wasn’t super busy not barfing on Bakugo out of sensibility right now, she would absolutely do it out of spite.

“It’s just my quirk,” Ochako admits as her stomach starts to settle. “I get enough nausea from lifting myself without all… that.” As much as Ochako values this training, she’s not keen on trying that move again anytime soon.

“There’s an inflection that makes Ochako wonder if she’s not the only one feeling a touch of awkwardness from time to time, but Bakugo’s sights soon key back in on their objective with ruthless efficiency. “I have an idea.”

“Okay.” More than anything, Ochako hopes the next thing Bakugo says isn’t along the lines of “I want to do that again.”

Bakugo, of course, can never let Ochako off that easy. “Let’s do it again, but this time without landing.”

“Without landing?” she echoes. “But we were totally out of control.”

“That was the first time,” Bakugo says with utter confidence. “I know what to expect now.”

Ochako doesn’t even know how Bakugo managed to stay orientated enough the first time to get them both to the ground in the order of his choosing. Then again, he’s spent far more time in the air than Ochako, and perhaps expects her to keep up or at the very least put up.

Bakugo’s palm unfurls in front of Ochako like some rare-blooming flower, fragranced with a heady mix of recently-burned chemicals. She knows what he’d prefer she do with it, but what Bakugo gets is Ochako’s hand resting in his own, dead weight hanging on a slack arm.

“What do you have in mind?” she asks with a poor attempt at concealing her trepidation as he drags her onto her feet like pulling up a root. There’s something other than annoyance in Bakugo’s face for a moment, fiery gaze drawing in to focus on Ochako when she draws level with him: he expects to be trusted. What choice does that leave her with?

“We’ll stick to straight lines, to keep it simple,” Bakugo says without even needing a prompt. “At first.”

Ochako nods like she knows what that means – she doesn’t – and somehow hasn’t yet drawn back her hand from the bowl of Bakugo’s palm.
“What do you want me to do?” It comes out, like so many things Ochako says around Bakugo in these sessions, a little strange, and that lingering thought of what it *sounds* like giggles at Ochako, an itch she can’t quite reach as Bakugo’s grip slips out of hers.

“It’s easier to show you.” Mere seconds after breaking the contact between them Bakugo demands it again; palm flat in front of her like about to take her hand and make a vow. “Give me a tap so I can get some height.” A gesture that leads with a jerk of Bakugo’s chin indicates a large storage-facility type building that he hasn’t managed to destroy yet.

“Then what?” Ochako prompts, still entirely unsure what Bakugo plans to do.

“Just do it,” Bakugo growls a little, and if he senses Ochako’s disapproval it’s of little matter to him. “I can’t explain if you’re pissing around asking questions.”

Feeling herself on the brink of an exercise in faith, Ochako lets her fingertips rest against Bakugo’s palm and activates her quirk, taking a step or two back in anticipation of his launching himself several stories into the air and catching the ledge of his intended building as he sails by. Had Bakugo missed he’d probably be flying into orbit about now, but after barely two sessions he’s becoming more and more confident moving around while weightless. Only Bakugo hits the learning curve with such force it’s like they have a lifelong vendetta – or perhaps just him and Deku.

“Move a bit closer and then release me.” Bakugo’s voice echoes with the height and distance, but Ochako can hear him well enough – thank goodness *only* she can hear him – and starts walking towards the foot of the building, head tipped back to watch the distinctly top-heavy figure he cuts.

“Release.” Bakugo sits on the edge of the building, legs hanging over the three-storey minimum drop like he’s never known fear in his life, letting Ochako look up at the bottom of his feet and ask, “Now what?”

“I’m gonna jump,” Bakugo replies with such calm that for a moment, Ochako treats it as normal too. Then she actually hears what he said, and her mouth hangs so far open she might catch flies in it.

“You’re gonna do what?!” Ochako throws up her hands in alarm.

“Not yet!” Bakugo barks, which is partly necessary from his height, but also his own short temper burning away that non-existent fuse. “You have to get in the air and catch me on the way down, but don’t release your quirk until later.”

Ochako’s disorientated by such clear instructions, albeit not entirely perfect ones. “How much later?”

“You’ll know.”

“What’s going to happen?” Ochako calls up at the bottom of Bakugo’s feet.

Bakugo responds to this with an utterly cocky, “Just fucking do it and you’ll see, won’t you?” His feet swing out of view, and he gets up onto the ledge in a way that makes Ochako’s disturbed stomach even more unsettled, a feat she’d hardly thought possible until Bakugo – without any further warning – drops off the edge.

Objectively, Ochako knows why Bakugo does it. Practical learning can convey in thirty seconds what thirty minutes of talking might achieve. In the heat of the moment, though, Ochako’s pretty panicked to find Bakugo taking short walks off buildings without warning, especially when he takes a dive so he’s coming down on her head-first.

Ochako lifts herself from the ground, wrestling a new wave of sickness on top of her existing nausea,
knowing that if nothing else she ought to stop Bakugo from faceplanting the concrete with this headstrong idea. At least he’s coming at her slower this time, dropping only under the effects of gravity without the rocket-boost of his quirk.

Raising her hands with eyes turned upward, Ochako forms a sketchy idea of what she thinks might happen when Bakugo reaches her. There’s a moment when it’s almost like they’re going to miss each other, then the theory all gets put into practice when Bakugo’s hands close in a recognisably assured grip around Ochako’s wrists.

The spinning starts well before Ochako returns the hold around Bakugo’s wrists and activates her quirk, but she gets that part down on instinct more than anything else. Bakugo swings around Ochako like a pinwheel, except this time it’s a little slower and not quite so violently disorientating. The things Bakugo was saying about ‘straight lines’ sort of start making sense, as they whirl on only one axis rather than several.

Then about as suddenly as it all happens Bakugo lets go of Ochako. Panic overtakes her for a scary moment as she flies through the air like coming off a roundabout, but she’s halfway to releasing her quirk before her feet hit the ground and she figures it all out.

Ochako’s on the ground, while Bakugo is heading back up in the direction he came, at about the speed of a child’s accidentally released balloon. They’re close enough to speak, but a nod from Bakugo is all Ochako needs to release her quirk.

“What.” Bakugo starts falling more or less on top of Ochako’s head, and on some level she’s ready to use her quirk if she has to, but she feels quite sick enough already and is expecting self-reliance from Bakugo. Halfway down to the ground Bakugo delivers. Explosions spark from his palms and he changes course, flipping over to cut a new path through the air, spinning more than once on the way down and landing with a thump a few metres away.

His back is to her, so the turn of Bakugo’s head over his shoulder cuts him out in profile, one red eye on Ochako as he asks, “Do you get it now?”

“Uhuh.” Ochako bobs her head in emphasis, still queasy but managing to keep her breakfast where she put it earlier this morning.

“Good.” The moment of glory Ochako has to bask in hearing such an affirmation from Bakugo of all people is short-lived, because the next thing out his mouth is, “Now let’s do it for real.”

“For real?” Ochako tries not to gape and fails in the attempt. “Then what was this?”

“So you’d understand what happens next,” Bakugo states with enough of an air of impatience to stand the hair on the back of Ochako’s neck on end. It’s a strange mix of realising that Bakugo is actually being cooperative, and that this is genuinely his idea of it. He’s come a long way from the early days at UA, but he’s still Bakugo. That’s just something Ochako has to live with.

“So,” Ochako says with a conscious air of positivity, hoping that Bakugo’s mood might budge to match it even a little. “What happens next?”

“We do it bigger.” Bakugo powers through the course he seems to have so clearly charted in his mind, and while Ochako gets it roughly, she doesn’t totally get it. Perhaps she doesn’t have to, just needing to believe in Bakugo’s nose for this stuff and trusting he shows better than he tells. “It’s gotta pack a punch.”

“I bet it will.” Ochako is trying not to worry about how much more of this her quirk and stomach
contents can take, but she doesn’t want to let Bakugo down. “But… talk me through it first, okay? I
can’t see inside your head.”

Bakugo gives Ochako another of those ‘weirdo’ looks, but coming from him it’s hardly a balanced
source. He just sighs and starts rolling his shoulders, muscles bulging all the way up an iron cable
neck that Ochako is confused to be finding herself in consideration of. Like whether Bakugo’s
tension would measure up to Kirishima’s hardening. Ochako would have to get hands on to be sure,
but reckons it’d be a close call.

“I’m going to get some distance, blast off with the first move and come back down on you, harder
and faster than before,” even knowing this is Bakugo’s earnest attempt at an explanation, Ochako
can’t help but wonder if he has any idea of what some of the things he’s saying sound like out of
context. “You’re going to catch me up in the air and spin out, just like we did here.” An arrogant
smirk starts working its way onto Bakugo’s face. “If you’re still on your feet after that, catch me.”

Ochako wonders when her role in this thing went from being a grounded quirk-supplier to some kind
of zero gravity yo-yo, but each step has been logical in its own way. Somehow she understands the
components well enough that when Bakugo describes it she can picture what he’s going for – a high-
speed direction change midair – and even wilder yet, Ochako believes they can pull it off.

“Alright.” She's determined to make this crazy thing with Bakugo work, even if it means hurling.
“I’m ready.”

Chapter End Notes

Some commenters have also touched on the physics side of this quirk team-up, and this
chapter is definitely where things start getting... physicsey. It's pretty twisty even for me
thinking about how this particular move they do here works, but I'll note that Bakugo’s
doing a reasonable amount of grab/moving of Ochako in the air.

It's also key that they start turning /before/ Ochako uses her quirk on Bakugo, because if
they were both weightless he couldn't set her off spinning, but if for a split-second he's
still falling down/weighted and uses his arms to spin her (while she is weightless), then
he acts as the 'pivot' enough to make her start turning, which then turns him when *he*
becomes weightless too.... maybe this explanation didn't help. It's hard to say.

Basically... spiny thing goes in, spiny thing comes out over it.

See y'all at the weekend (probs)! Love hearing everyone's thoughts, I'm the #1 nerd for
this trash so there's nothing I love more than geeking out.
Next time for an Ass-kicking

Chapter Summary

As promised, Bakugo comes down on Ochako, hard.

Chapter Notes

On the subject of my update schedule, it's racing along for now and might slow down if I thin down my backlog, but at the moment I'm keen to get more of the story up than drawing out time between updates. I'm not writing the chapters between updates or anything, just editing them (which is still a time-consuming process, but I have some help).

Also I'm having so much FUN with this story, I love the serialisation feel that comes from regular updates and getting to know a regular crowd of readers who I get to drag through the fields of garbage. And there SO MUCH trash still to get through... on which note, enjoy the chapter.

It's a classic Ochako move to only think about the things that could go wrong – the many, many things that could go wrong – with Bakugo’s plan about two seconds before it gets put into action. The lunacy of said plan means that this happens while Ochako is floating a few feet in the air, arms outstretched to catch Bakugo as he comes down on her like a guided RPG.

That Ochako only considers how this stunt might be dangerous when it’s already too late speaks volumes to either her carelessness, or Bakugo’s ability to make the risky seem logical. After all, until moments ago Ochako had completely believed in Bakugo’s assertion that they could pull this madcap sequence off – a gravity-assisted slingshot that fires Bakugo up, brings him back down and then changes direction at speed.

Which also means both of them being weightless, and spinning, at the same time. Yet for long enough to get into this position, Ochako believed they could do it. Because she only has doubts when they’re impossibly useless to consider, Ochako has all of a split second to set worry aside and concentrate on getting her part in this sequence right. If Bakugo’s a falling comet, Ochako better make sure he doesn’t hit the earth.

The plan on the ground was for to Bakugo use Ochako’s quirk for one of his zero-gravity-slingshot jumps, but rather than annihilating the ground where he lands, Ochacko is going to catch him mid-air, flip them around and send Bakugo back up with about as much force as he comes down.

Which is, Ochako feels more acutely than ever the moment Bakugo’s hot palms clap against her wrists, a lot of force.

However, rather than spinning endlessly round and round in a way that’d be sure to make her hurl, Ochako feels the momentum kick in as a falling very-extremely-fast Bakugo starts turning them
before she makes him weightless again. Although they move fast, the turns are dead straight – one, two, three, four— and Ochako’s feeling extra-specially queasy when Bakugo finally lets go, flinging Ochako in the direction she came from – which is thankfully, the ground.

Before she really knows what’s what, Ochako hits the unforgiving concrete butt-first, as if she’s been thrown off a rocket-powered carousel. She’s still weightless but has at least come to somewhat of a stop – the same can’t be said for Bakugo, who after swinging off Ochako like some kind of circus performer is soaring back upward with alarming speed.

“Release!” Ochako cries with a gasp of relief as she flattens against the ground with her fingers pressed together, looking up at Bakugo as he slows in his ascent and slowly starts to nose-dive back down, the flicker of his shadow dashing across the buildings like a bird.

It’s only when Bakugo gets a little bit closer – too close, it could be said – that Ochako recalls he’d thrown down the gauntlet of her catching him if they made it this far through the move, which – so far, so good.

So Ochako scrambles to her feet and then scrambles some more to get closer to Bakugo’s landing zone. She truly appreciates the insanity of what they’re trying to do while Bakugo plummets closer and closer to the ground. Then, following an instinct Ochako is learning to trust more and more, she activates her quirk and leaps into the air.

Bakugo uses barely any firepower to guide his descent, so when Ochako meets him at the end of a speedy weightless leap, she negates the larger part of his fall the second her hand touches the swell of bicep and activates her quirk. However, this isn't to say there's no movement when they collide, so Ochako quickly finds herself and Bakugo flying into a screwy tailspin that only stops when they hit something solid. In this case: a wall.

Following precedent, Bakugo doesn’t hesitate to make himself the crash-mat that gets between Ochako and the wall. When they finally stop tumbling, Ochako realises that the arm around her waist is Bakugo’s, likewise the body attached to the rest of it. An inescapably firm body that’s pressed against what feels like the entire length of Ochako’s side, one knee tangled between her own to keep her clamped to him. With the arm that's not squeezing Ochako like the last bit of toothpaste out of the tube, Bakugo grabs onto a window-frame and hangs on with vice-like grip.

Ochako’s gaze meets Bakugo’s, and in a way that's not at all connected with the fiery exhilaration in his expression – he’s pleased, because this is working – discovers the very next moment the limit of her quirk has been reached. Ochako clamps a hand over her mouth as she feels the acid rise in her throat, and at least has the wherewithal to turn to the side for what comes next.

Releasing her quirk at the same time as the contents of her stomach, Ochako drops a couple of metres to the ground and lands straight onto her hands and knees as she ungraciously barfs on the floor. It’s exactly what she didn't want to happen, especially in front of Bakugo, who lands on his feet and goes back a step, but there’s no way around it now.

It’s over quickly, like it usually is, but Ochako feels sheepish and embarrassed to have almost puked on Bakugo in such a clear demonstration of her limits. She’d wanted to be better than this, but her gut betrayed her.

“I'm okay,” she says even though Bakugo didn't ask, and probably doesn't care – or only to the point of thinking less of her for needing to state it.

However, all Bakugo says is, “Your quirk?” and he doesn't even sound annoyed. Ochako nods at the ground feeling even more bashful, if that's at all possible. “Big deal,” Bakugo seems to scoff,
brushing himself down for lingering smudges of dust from his contact with the wall. “So you threw up. Let's keep going.”

Only then does Ochako appreciate being with Bakugo in a way she wouldn't with anyone else. He's not a friend who would, quite naturally, express concern for her at a time like this. Bakugo doesn't seem to care one bit for Ochako’s wellness after watching her hork her breakfast up, but it isn't a bad thing – the complete opposite, in fact.

Instead of making a fuss, Bakugo doesn't ask if Ochako can carry on like he doubts it. He expects her to, because he knows she can.

So Ochako goes for her bottle of water, spits and wipes her mouth like she’s taking this seriously, because that’s what Bakugo expects and he gets what he wants. She looks back to Bakugo to give him a determined nod. “Okay.”

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After a few hours Ochako has only thrown up once more, and it would have been on Bakugo if he didn’t have the good reflexes to get out of the way, but they have something. More than something.

They have a style.

It's rough and messy, involves a lot more of Bakugo’s airborne maneuverability than it should, and results in rather more landing on each other and grabbing than seems necessary, but even Ochako can feel it now. This thing they have works, a way of combining Bakugo’s rocket-propulsion movement through the air with the magnifying power of Ochako’s quirk, using momentum and Bakugo’s firepower to create something that feels new, and more than that – useful.

Unfortunately, another thing this new style makes Ochako feel is violently sick. Not that she has anything left in her stomach to lose, but even then Bakugo’s stamina could wear down an ox. Ochako doesn’t let it show, or tries not to, but she’s weak on her feet when Bakugo finally seems to have enough of zero-gravity slingshotting himself – and sometimes, accidentally, Ochako – around the training area before he finally comes to rest.

Of course, by ‘rest’, what Bakugo means is being ready to spar, signalled by the series of cracks from his knuckles and dirty look of satisfaction on his face.

“You ready for an ass-kicking?” Bakugo, and perhaps only Bakugo, can make it sound like a challenge or insult more than a question. Even though Ochako’s hands are shaking she just nods, because this is what she wanted and signed up for: to be pushed. She’d disappoint Bakugo if she backs down now.

It only takes three swings before Ochako’s knees give and inform her she’s not getting back up without a few minutes. She bites down on her lip in frustration, slumped on her knees and waiting for her head to stop spinning.

But then before she can really catch her breath, Bakugo’s hand arrives in her face, the chemical sheen on his palm as he opens it in front of her like a midnight-blooming flower. Ochako lays a trembling hand in Bakugo’s and lets him haul her onto her feet, but then the grip of his fingers changes, balling her hand into a fist that he holds onto firmly.

“Throwing just this at me is no good,” Bakugo starts an angry lecture, giving Ochako’s fist a demonstrative shake. Though Bakugo sounds annoyed as he delivers this information, he’s offering it all the same. “Put your weight behind it.” Bakugo tugs on Ochako’s wrist with a deceptively small movement and she lurches forward with her whole body, stumbling after the hand Bakugo leads her
by like a puppet with tangled strings.

“I thought I was,” she replies breathily, not about to make excuses but almost wishing Bakugo could be any less… himself for a few precious minutes.

“Bullshit.” Bakugo yanks her arm again and steps out of the way as Ochako almost faceplants in the direction he pulls. “Throw even half of that chubby ass into your punches and I might start to feel something.”

If she had any energy to spare Ochako would bother to retaliate, but instead she heaves a sigh – about all she can manage. Maybe getting a rise out of her is Bakugo’s goal, because a thoughtful scowl crosses his face and remains content to stay there.

“Is that all the fight you got?” he accuses fiercely, but Ochako just shrugs.

“Well, you’re not wrong.” That seems to throw Bakugo off. If he’s looking for pushback, Ochako doesn’t have any; or perhaps he’s just not expecting to be agreed with about her chubby butt. She’s struggled into her super-suit too many times to contest that attempt at provocation. “I just need a few minutes.”

“You can’t have them.” Bakugo is adamant, arms crossed and a rotten look on his face. “If you wanna play softball find someone else.”

Ochako heaves another sigh, and knows Bakugo is right. “Okay.” She resigns herself to this fate, and this time tries to put all the ass she has into the punch she throws at Bakugo’s head. It’d feel better if she thought she might hit him.

To Ochako’s surprise, Bakugo doesn’t dodge, just puts up a flat palm and takes the force without his arm so much as twitching, swallowing Ochako’s maximum power like a sea creature that eats fish like her for breakfast.

“Better,” Bakugo pronounces, eyes narrowing as his hand drops. “Just.” For a moment, Ochako follows the movement of his hand as it falls to his side, eyes tracing the defined shape of his arms until she reaches his shoulders and then a voice in her head goes ‘don’t’ and she stops.

“Again,” Bakugo demands, so Ochako throws the weight of her guilt along with the rest of her baby fat that hasn’t shown any signs of being grown out of just yet. She aims lower, and just as before Bakugo lets Ochako pummel his open palm, hot and clammy against her knuckles.

This time his arm bends, absorbing the force Ochako is surprised to find herself able to muster just because Bakugo says so, and knows only he could draw these last reserves out of her in a training session.

Ochako doesn’t wait this time, following one punch with another without hesitation, aiming for the joint of Bakugo’s shoulder and thinking only half-facetiously about following through with her chubby-and-all butt.

For this all-out onslaught, Ochako succeeds in edging Bakugo back a single step. The fact that he’s just standing there taking it like a punching bag undermines the pretence of this being any kind of sparring – Bakugo’s coaching her, adamant as he’d be to deny it.

Like an older dog allowing the play-fighting of a puppy until his patience wears out, Bakugo lets Ochako chain punches into him, then at the exact moment he gets bored grabs her by the elbow mid-hit and knocks her legs out underneath her. That her legs have all the stability of ten-year old matchstick models doesn’t help, and in a hot second Ochako’s crumpled on the floor waiting for her
head to stop spinning.

Bakugo doesn’t even give her that. “Up,” he demands just after he’s knocked her down, but Ochako rises like she’s under a mind control quirk. The rushing in her ears isn’t going away, nor the spinning of her head like they’re still mid-air whirling around like windmill blades. But she’s here to be pushed, and if Ochako can’t keep up with Bakugo now then she’s no good to anyone in the real world.

So she has to keep going, even if she blacks out.

But as it happens, that’s exactly what Ochako does one punch later.

“All right?” is all Ochako hears of Bakugo’s question, which surely couldn’t end the way she thinks, but she never gets to find out. The second her fist hits Bakugo’s palm, Ochako faints dead on her feet.

Chapter End Notes

*Farmer voice* ah yes, it’s a fine crop of tropes this season. ALL the tropes.

Things that matter dearly to me; Ochako’s chubby butt (canon) & the validity of teenage girl thirst. More of those things.

We also finally get around this chapter to some Bakugo-coaching time, which is an EXCELLENT trope but I feel often gets rushed into or is thin on reasons why Mr. Stroppy-pants would actually agree, I love my tropes but the real satisfaction is finding clever ways of making them seem more plausible than they are.
Ochako opens her mouth, but only to change feet.

This is a good payoff chapter for me, only took 20k to get to the start of the setup that the whole fic's about, that's... progress?

I felt like the fandom was crying out for a nice long/medium-haul get-together fic, because that's a lot of the fun for me so WHY RUSH IT? I called this 'medium burn' in my tags and I'll stand by it provided the story winds up before 100k. Which... might happen?

Thanks for all the support so far, this story is HECKING fun to write and share.

Ochako comes to rather confused, and more than a little uncomfortable. This would be because her face is all of three inches away from Bakugo’s. More than that, his arm is around the back of her shoulders to hold her upright, and he’s lightly slapping her cheek with his free hand. There’s a chemical aura that clings to his palm, which hits Ochako like smelling salts as she breathes in.

“Wake the fuck up, round-face,” Bakugo says in the highest echelons of his most unimpressed tone, and Ochako sits up so fast she almost headbutts him. Bakugo lurches back to keep the scarce inches of space preserved between them. “Easy,” he growls. “I’ll let you faceplant if you drop again.”

“Oh,” Ochako murmurs as the fuzzy feeling wrapped around her head lifts enough for key concepts to get through; she fainted, and Bakugo caught her. “I’m sorry.”

Bakugo, being Bakugo, scowls. “You don’t need to apologise, weirdo.” Like an afterthought his arm slips out from behind Ochako, leaving him squatting down next to her, knees up around his armpits and head cocked at an angle that could be described as incredulous. “Just don’t do it.”

Bakugo, being Bakugo, scowls. “You don’t need to apologise, weirdo.” Like an afterthought his arm slips out from behind Ochako, leaving him squatting down next to her, knees up around his armpits and head cocked at an angle that could be described as incredulous. “Just don’t do it.”

“I didn’t mean to.” At this, Bakugo rolls his eyes.

“Yeah, no shit,” he scoffs, then stands, starting to stretch like he’s warming down. Part of Ochako is waiting for some kind of lecture – a ‘push yourself, but not too hard, know your limits’ kind of deal that Ochako knows and usually sticks to. But then she remembers who she’s with, and that kind of self-preservation moderation doesn’t exist in Bakugo’s world of absolutes.

“I guess we’re done,” Ochako says out loud because she doesn’t know what’s good for her. Stating the obvious around Bakugo isn’t sensible at the best of – or any – times, but she’s still woozy and doesn’t really know whether she’s coming or going anymore.
“For now.” Bakugo stomps over to the pile of their stuff, and without invitation unceremoniously tosses Ochako’s water bottle to her. She catches it, but it feels like a lead weight in her jellied arms. Though his back faces her, Bakugo’s still engaged – to Ochako’s surprise – because he comes out with a muted, “At least until you’ve had something to eat.”

Even if he’s absolutely right, it’s odd to hear from Bakugo. As Ochako gulps down water and then wobbles to her feet, she wonders what went through his head when she keeled over with no warning.

Though Ochako’s stomach curdles at the thought of food, at the same time she’s carnivorously hungry, and knows she’ll feel better once she’s replaced the meal she lost – and then some. Her hands are still trembling as she walks very carefully over to the pile of her stuff, pulling her hands out of her wrist-guards and threading them delicately through the sleeves of a hoodie. Then she plonks down on her butt to drag feet out of her boots, treading them out of each other like a toddler kicking off booties.

Bakugo, for some reason, is pretending not to watch, but Ochako can tell he is. Under the heat-lamp of his gaze she stretches very gently, knowing her muscles are going to hate her tomorrow anyway, and then with the pace of a dawdling snail starts to make her way to the exit. Oddly enough, Bakugo goes with her – not just in the same direction at his own pace, but almost step for step with Ochako. This uncanny habit continues out of the training area, around the first few turns of the route back to the dorms and canteen.

Eventually Ochako can’t stand the silence any longer. “You don’t have to come with me,” she says, and it sounds terribly presumptive when she does. Bakugo snorts like he shares the sentiment.

“What happens if you clock out again on the way? Moron.” The last part feels defensive, and this is the end of the conversation as far as Bakugo seems to be concerned. He mutely accompanies Ochako all the way to the cafeteria.

It’s a strange time of day, well past breakfast but too early for lunch, so though the tables aren’t very busy there are enough students around for some odd looks to linger over the unlikely pair upon their entry.

This turns into some notable staring when Bakugo gives a gruff, “Sit,” that Ochako obeys out of habit and lightheadedness more than anything.

Ochako’s so out of it she manages to be blindsided when Bakugo stalks off and then returns with food for both of them, presenting a couple bowls of fried rice – nothing too heavy for her delicate stomach – like he’s taken all of this into consideration and is doing it on purpose. Logically, Ochako knows he must be, but it doesn’t make it any less strange. Nor is this peculiarity helped by Bakugo’s treatment of his actions as if they’re some everyday occurrence, and not a bizarre, stare-worthy event.

Her circuits might still be a little fried, because nothing intervenes in the pathway of a question from Ochako’s head to her mouth. “Why’re you being so nice to me?”

Bakugo makes a face like this inquiry is an insult of the highest order, and after emptying about half a bottle of hotsauce onto his rice, starts shovelling it away like the high-gains eater he is, only stopping long enough to answer, “I’m not getting in trouble if you wipe out in the middle of school.”

“I’m okay now,” Ochako says, but Bakugo just shrugs like he doesn’t believe her.

“You seemed okay right before you dropped.” Bakugo’s voice is muted without being consciously hushed. “I’ll end up with the blame for pushing you too hard.”
“But I wanted you to,” Ochako replies more easily than she ought to, a point emphasised by the narrow glare Bakugo shoots at her. “Push me, I mean.” Ochako would feel way less self conscious if people would stop watching her and Bakugo as they walk by, but she’s long since accepted getting everything she wants just isn’t how things go for her. “You shouldn’t feel bad.”

“I don’t feel bad,” Bakugo says like Ochako’s accused him of joining the league of villains. “I said I didn’t want the blame.”

Ochako’s starting to feel more herself as she gets the first few mouthfuls down into the yawning void of her stomach, tipping her head quizzically to the side with the question, “Why would it be your fault if I fainted?”

“I don’t know!” Bakugo’s hair trigger is twitching like he’ll go off any second, and the people ‘coincidentally’ walking past their table coincidentally start giving it a much wider berth. “Just eat your damn food and stop looking at me like that.”

Ochako tilts her head to the other side, not sure if it’s the rush of food hitting her stomach, temperature in the cafeteria, or Bakugo’s incendiary company that’s making her feel so peculiar, but she’s oddly at ease for someone sitting across the table from a strongly smoking volcano. “Like what?”

“Like a fucking weirdo!” Bakugo barks louder than necessary, and heads turn before turning right back. Even for people who haven’t shared a classroom with him for two years, everyone in the school knows Bakugo enough to recognise the originality of this scene. And because Bakugo’s never been one for tempering his fury in the presence of spectators, the minor eruption goes off without restraint or the slightest hint of self consciousness. Bakugo is absolute in the things he commits himself to, but around him Ochako finds herself inspired to be the same.

“You’re the one who insisted on coming with me.” Ochako rallies all the strength she can at this point, which isn’t a lot, but is enough to hold her own against Bakugo. Sort of. “I told you I was fine, and I am.”

A part of Ochako’s brain seems to be floating about five feet above her, looking down on this situation with a wry amusement. It’s the source of a voice that wonders if Bakugo could have been worried about her.

“Alright, I believe you,” Bakugo snaps this too much to make the sentiment seem very convincing, “but don’t pull any more shit like that.” Bakugo’s scowling into the last few grains of rice clinging to his bowl. “You’re no good to me unconscious, so say something next time.”

There he goes again, Ochako thinks, with all of this ‘next time’ like it’s a given. She supposes it is to him, with the potential he sees in this… thing they’re working on. “Okay,” she pacifies, then like testing the temperature of just-boiled water adds, “I did ask for a few minutes.”

“That was just you bitching,” Bakugo replies, and Ochako understands what it means in non-Bakugo speak. In a surprising turn, he actually offers the real-talk translation a moment later, “Tell me when it’s important.”

“Okay,” Ochako finds herself repeating, not quite sure how she’s in this position of concluding that Bakugo was concerned when she fainted. “Sorry I didn’t say something.”

Bakugo bristles like this could be aggravating somehow, summed up with a dismissive shrug. “Whatever.” He pushes his bowl away, seeming angry with it like he is with everything in the world when one thing isn’t to his liking. Bakugo crosses his arms in that way Ochako is still coaching
herself not to stare at: only trouble lies down that path, the last rational part of her brain admonishes. “You better not do it tomorrow.”

This, too, catches Ochako by surprise. “Tomorrow?”

Bakugo, being Bakugo, seems deeply insulted by the question, so fires back an aggressive, “You got something better to do?”

“No!” Ochako squeaks, “I just didn’t think you…” She never finishes the sentence, because Ochako realises like a splash of cold water to the face, that Bakugo is going to keep wanting to practice this new style, if they dare call it that, with her, and she better get used to it. “I mean, sure, after class?” she amends just in time, managing to avert volcanic eruption by means of diplomacy.

“Yeah,” Bakugo growls, eyes darting from side to side like maybe he’s picking up on the fairy circle of students that’s developing around them, as more and more filter into the canteen for the beginning of Lunch Rush’s lunch rush – sitting close, but not that close. “Same place.” Ochako nods, and then a hint of something not totally foul-tempered flashes through Bakugo’s expression. “And no more passing out on me.”

“I’ll do my best.” Ochako truly means it.

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It takes a long and steamy shower for Ochako to feel quite herself again, but by the afternoon she’s catching up on schoolwork and doing some more stretching – if she and Bakugo are training again tomorrow, she better be in a shape to do so – when a pink whirlwind catches her.

Mina goes almost head over heels as she bowls herself onto the dorm sofa next to Ochako, the first thing coming out of her mouth sounding like, “Is it true?!” When it becomes clear from Ochako’s expression that she doesn’t understand a lick of it, Mina breaks the noise into distinct words. “Is it true?” she repeats ecstatically, and Ochako’s understanding is no better for it.

“Is what?”

Mina seems shocked by this. “You and Bakugo, duh!”


“I heard the two of you were eating together,” Mina finally gets around to explaining.

“Uh, yeah,” Ochako answers uncertainly. “But it was just… rice.”

“Just nothing,” Mina insists. “Was it a date?”

“No!” Ochako says way too loud. “It’s true that we ate together, but it wasn’t… that.” Ochako can feel herself blushing, and knows it doesn’t help, but that’s not what her cheeks have in mind so there’s nothing she can do. “It was just some food after we… had a thing.”

“Hold up, now you and Bakugo have a thing?” Mina only echoes Ochako’s words back at her, but somehow she makes them sound so much more implicative than they felt in Ochako’s head.

“No, I mean, yeah, but just a…” Ochako knows before she even thinks about saying it that Bakugo would be pissed if she starts talking about their training, even if this is the alternative. She resolves to bring it up with him next time – tomorrow, apparently – but in the here and now Ochako’s still got a whole situation on her hands. “Look, Mina, it’s not like that,” she tries anew.
“Aw really?” Mina’s disappointment shines with the intensity of a mega-powered lighthouse.

“Why’re you so excited about it anyway?” Ochako asks. “It’s not a big deal.” Or so Bakugo has insisted.

“With like, someone else,” Mina points out. “Bakugo hardly hangs out with anyone, so you two getting all buddy-buddy overnight isn’t supposed to be a big deal? Pull the other one, Ochako, you’re practically dat-”

Ochako doesn’t know why her hands think it’s a good idea, but somehow the most reasonable course of action to stopping Mina from carrying on talking about all of this entirely too loud is for Ochako to reach over and put her hand over Mina’s mouth.

“Not so loud,” she hisses with a hint of something that feels like Bakugo’s temper rubbing off. But there’s only need for one temper like Bakugo’s in any school, so Ochako zips her hand back a moment later. “Sorry,” she says quietly, “look, it’s just… whatever this thing with me and Bakugo is, which is nothing like that… he doesn’t want me to say anything about it.” Ochako goes for a smile. “You get me?”

“Uh… not at all,” Mina replies blithely. “Unless you’re like, secretly dating.”

“No!” Ochako shakes her head so hard it makes her head start spinning. “It’s just a… different… secret… thing.”

“Ohhh, is it to do with what happened in class last week?” Mina starts guessing, which is the last thing Ochako wants or needs right now. “Are you like, actually training together?”

“No!” Ochako emphasises this even more, and as such it seems even less convincing.

“Then what is it?” Mina concludes at a loss, and Ochako can’t really blame her all that much, because it shouldn’t be as difficult a question as it is. Eventually Ochako buries her face in her hands with a frustrated noise, mumbling something like ‘why me’ into them half-heartedly.

“Can’t you just ask Bakugo about it?” After she makes the suggestion, Ochako congratulates herself on finding such a clever end to the scenario. She’s wrong, but for a while it’s the thought that counts. “Whatever he says is what it is.”

“Alrighty then,” Mina says with plucky cheer, “Maybe I will!”

Ochako couldn’t know how profoundly she was going to be stitched up by this suggestion, but for a short time it allows her a small, blissfully ignorant window of peace.

Chapter End Notes

Mina, aka BEST GIRL, finally shows up. Bout’ dang time. Expect more from her ;3

For a/n corner this time, and especially following this chapter, it feels like a good time to talk about the difference between Bakugo being rude and a bad person, which is a principle I consider core to his character and influences a lot of the things commenters have picked up on about how Bakugo’s still being his relatively-shitty self but in a way that’s positive for Ochako.
Of course, sometimes Bakugo IS an outright bad person (mostly to Deku), but that's very different from having a temper and generally shitty manners, and is why it's been fun writing him still being 'Bakugo' while he's doing actually-nice things (like cooperating and looking out for Ochako). He can have a shitty attitude but still fundamentally be doing what's right (which we see in the provisional license exam), and as a kid heart-set on being #1 hero, who wouldn't even CONSIDER becoming a villain, we know that his morals are fine. They just get thrown off-course by his emotions, or lost under his mile-deep attitude problems, which is why Ochako is a great contrast for him because she's not afraid to pull him up on his social failings or just speak her mind, and has the emotional intelligence to actually draw Bakugo out of himself even when he's seeing red.

This also factors into the infamous 'swears a lot' tag, which I don't use. Certainly in fan-translations of the manga, curse words can sometimes be indicative of translating Japanese that's more about 'rude speech' in a sense that doesn't relate as easily to English, and swearwords sometimes unfairly pick up the slack for what's really more about being brash/offensive than literally cursing every other sentence. In the anime (especially the dub, which is priceless and perfect) they can't curse, so use tone and (excessive screaming) other techniques to convey his character.

I also prefer a 'less is more' operation, so although Bakugo *does* have a potty-mouth, I find that over-using any device in dialogue dilutes its impact, and try to find ways of conveying his Baku-rage that don't rely on a lot of swearing. With a character like Bakugo, that's obviously a challenge... so the game is to use as *few* swears as possible (two this chapter). Not that I have a problem with it, just not my preference.

That ended up being longer than expected. Thanks for reading! See you at the weekend :D
Not-So Secret Dating

Chapter Summary

Bakugo says all the wrong things.

Chapter Notes

Okay CALL me an old-timer with radical opinions but every time I even consider not capitalising words in my titles, even just chapter titles, my raptor brain SCREAMS at me. How does anyone manage it?

A big thank you to everyone who's supported this story so far! I had a feeling I was onto something good with this story, but the reactions really are what make the experience special. Y'all the best :3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Ochako suggests that Mina confront Bakugo with her many (many) questions about what they’ve been doing behind closed doors – or in privately reserved training areas – it was not her plan that Mina do it in front of people. It could even be said it’s the very opposite of what Ochako’s plan would be had she thought it out properly, which she obviously failed to do.

Due to this oversight on Ochako’s part, it’s during homeroom on Monday morning that Mina bounds up to Bakugo with trademark plucky enthusiasm and announces, “Ochako told me to ask what’s going on with you two.”

Ochako hears this from several desks over, because the comment falls into a lull of sound that turns into a deathly silence. The chirp of a cricket somewhere signals just about everyone’s attention flipping from what they were doing to what Ochako and Bakugo are rumoured to be doing. Ochako wishes for a moment she had a quirk like Lemillion’s, where she could just drop through the floor and no longer be in the room to endure this discomfort.

Bakugo’s bordered somewhat begrudgingly by Kirishima on one side and Kaminari on the other, and though Ochako can only see the back of Bakugo’s head, she can easily imagine the look on his face. An expression Ochako doesn’t have to imagine is Kirishima’s, whose animated excitement projects from his face like a drive-in movie.

“Oh? You and Uraraka?” Kirishima remains fearless as he’s ever been in provoking Bakugo, never more acutely felt than the moment he asks, “Have you been holding out on us, man?” Rather than the explosion Ochako can imagine going down, Bakugo’s shoulders rise and fall in a powerfully dismissive gesture.

“None of your damn business.” There’s a flash of ruby-eyed contact as Bakugo turns around to apply a sullen glare to the whole classroom. “Any of you.”

However, perhaps even Bakugo misjudges what that will achieve, because a ripple-effect crosses the
room in an instant, producing a line-up of intrigued-come-elated expressions, none so clear than the faces of the people who know Bakugo best.

“So it’s like that, huh?” Kaminari suggests dangerously, tone riddled with implication. Bakugo bristles, perhaps realising the perils of being known by his friends slightly more than he’s comfortable with.

“Huh, I never figured Uraraka for his type,” Jirou contributes from her desk, maintaining her ‘I don’t care but if I did-’ attitude even as she throws an oar into this mess. Ochako still can’t see Bakugo’s face, but could swear the tips of his ears are pinker than before.

“It’s surely more surprising that the reverse is true,” Shouji observes, and even Shouji is getting involved in this, which means it’s probably the thing Ochako is going to be remembered by for the rest of her scholastic career.

“I’m kinda regretting not asking her out myself now,” Sero muses extremely out-loud. “I could’ve had a shot if she’ll go out with Bakugo-”

Directly in front of Ochako, Iida’s head whips around with owl-like precision so suddenly it almost makes her jump. “Is this true, Uraraka?” he asks with studious precision. “Are you involved with Bakugo?”

“No!” Ochako replies at a pitch that the room picks up like a dog whistle. Even Bakugo’s head whips around to fire her a caustic look. He probably blames her for this whole thing, she reckons, but then it’s his dang fault she can’t tell the truth.

“See,” Bakugo spits, turning around and giving a defiant rock back on his chair.

Just in front of Iida, Tsu turns around with the best of intentions and the worst of outcomes, and behind her hand but not-at-all quietly tells him, “Ochako told me Bakugo asked her to keep it a secret, so we should probably respect their privacy.” While this comment is made with a sincere attempt to be helpful, and is surely only meant for Iida, that’s not how it lands in the room.

“Oh!” squeaks Mina. “She said the same thing to me!”

“Keeping it on the DL, eh? You sly dog!” Kirishima gives Bakugo a slap on the back, who bolts upright with irate energy pouring off him. Ochako envies Hagakure’s invisibility, Lemillion’s phasing, or anything that would get her out of this situation before her head bursts from blushing.

“Fuck off, hair-for-brains,” Bakugo grumbles, swatting Kirishima’s hand away like a mosquito buzzing by his ear.

“C’mon Bakugo, what’s your secret?” Kaminari chimes in next, prodding Bakugo with an elbow and then snatching his arm away when Bakugo swipes for him.

“You really wanna know?” Bakugo offers with entirely unexpected sincerity, and Ochako lifts out of her stewing discomfort long enough to be puzzled.

“Of course!” This comes in chorus from Kirishima and Kaminari, so Bakugo holds up a hand, beckoning them in with one finger. They duck in, but Bakugo beckons again. When Kirishima’s face is no more than an inch away from Bakugo’s palm, he lets off a blast in his face like a firecracker.

Kirishima staggers backwards in alarm, hard lines of his quirk fading underneath a sooty smudge. “Jeez, alright!” Kirishima seems more concerned by what Bakugo might have done to his hair than
anything else, putting his hands up to feel it carefully for structural damage. “No need to get blasty about it.”

“Mind your own frigging business, then,” Bakugo settles grudgingly, following up with a warning glare at Kaminari and beyond.

“Aw, c’mon Bakugo!” Mina takes up the baton once more, determined as ever to get an answer she can make something of. “Are you and Ochako going out or not?”

There’s a pause that gives new meaning to the word ‘uncomfortable’, which draws out long enough for it to seem suspiciously like Bakugo’s actually thinking about it. However, the sum of this thought is a very underwhelming shrug on Bakugo’s part before he tips back on his chair once more.

“Whatever.”

Aizawa emerges from his cocoon behind the desk around this time, which signals the end of gossip corner. Ochako spends the rest of homeroom wondering how hard it would have been for Bakugo to say ‘no’ and why in the world he didn’t.

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By the time classes have ended, rumours have spread to such an effect that it seems to be wholly believed by a majority of their classmates – and perhaps even beyond – that Ochako and Bakugo are secretly going out. It gets discussed in group chats Ochako’s in. The newly-leaked news of their planning to meet at an undisclosed location for top-secret activities right after the final bell doesn’t help this speculation whatsoever.

The few times Bakugo gets asked to comment on this rumour, he’s sustained the same steadfast ambiguity. Ochako reinforces this in her own way by plain avoiding the question – at least until she can get something concrete out of Bakugo on the subject.

The burgeoning question of why Bakugo couldn’t just say no, or better yet drop this whole ridiculous secret training rule in the first place, fills Ochako with fiery determination to get to the bottom of this farce before it escalates any further.

So she just about storms over to the training area she and Bakugo have staked out like territory, only to find it empty. For a moment Ochako thinks he’s decided not to come, but gives Bakugo greater credit on second thought, setting her things down and starting to warm up with the expectation that he’ll be there soon. She’s bent over touching her toes when she hears the footsteps, snapping upright to catch Bakugo on his way in, his gloves slung over one shoulder and foul an expression as ever.

“I wasn’t sure you were going to show,” Ochako says because – well, she doesn’t know. To test him, perhaps.

“Then you’re as stupid as you look doing that,” Bakugo decrees just as dismissively as she expects, and tosses down his gloves, but doesn’t make moves to put them on yet. Ochako stays where she is, ending up with her hands propped on her hips staring Bakugo down, the pair of them stiff like statues until he finally snaps, “What?”

“You realise,” Ochako starts more bravely than she’s able to finish, “that everyone thinks we’re…” Ochako takes a quick breath, unsure why her heart is racing fit to hop out her chest and go bouncing down the fake-street of their training area, “going out?”

The look on Bakugo’s face would make babies – not only them, grown adults too, probably – burst into tears. “And?”
“Well, you didn’t say no,” Ochako points out righteously. “You just kept saying whatever, or ‘mind your own business’.” Bakugo uses more swear words than that, but Ochako would feel silly repeating them back and settles for a mild imitation of Bakugo’s grousiest tone.

This is poorly received by her audience of one, because Bakugo’s looking less impressed by the second. “So?”

“Well… why didn’t you say no?” Ochako doesn’t know why it sounds like such a big ask when she says it, but manages to feel like she’s asking Bakugo to attend a family gathering together. Like a funeral.

Bakugo, semi-predictably, shrugs. “Like I said, none of their business.”

“But now they think-!” Ochako rushes, then like a cartoon hanging in mid-air off the edge of a cliff, remains suspended for a moment before dropping into awkward silence.

“What a bunch of busybodies wanna think ain’t my problem,” Bakugo says gruffly, hands stuffed defiantly into his pockets. “You tell them if it’s such a big deal.”

“I tried, but I can’t say what we’re really doing, can I?”

“Right,” Bakugo affirms with a beady eye.

“Then what am I supposed to tell them?!” Ochako bursts like a bad pipe, which, with Bakugo, is asking for a flood. A tsunami, even.

“I don’t know!” Bakugo bellows. “Whatever you want!”

“I want to tell the truth!” Ochako throws back almost as forcefully, surprising even herself. “You’re the one who won’t let me!”

“Not until you start pulling your own weight!” Bakugo fires like an overpacked canon, blasting a hole that feels like it goes straight through Ochako.

“Oh.” Ochako has the fight knocked out of her in a single blow: the punch Bakugo’s always had in reserve for her, and had just been pulling until now. That she’s nothing next to him, and if it seems like she’s keeping up that’s only because Bakugo’s slowed down. “It’s that.”

Bakugo’s mood tempers, somewhat. He’s still a hothead, but doesn’t go in for screaming at people who don’t scream back. Much. Calming like sails being blown out by a dying gust of wind, Bakugo doesn’t put it kindly, but he’s matter of fact.

“This thing we have won’t be ready to talk about while I’m still picking up your slack.” He’s right, and Ochako wouldn’t dare to deny it. “So if some idiots think we’re… whatever, doing something else, then that keeps them busy, doesn’t it?”

“I… guess so,” Ochako concedes. “But doesn’t it bother you?” At this, Bakugo gives Ochako such a puzzling look she feels her cheeks warming. The idea that Bakugo is okay with, even mistakenly, people thinking they’re going out feels weird in several difficult to place ways. Ochako wonders if maybe why she cares so much is the real peculiarity.

“The fuck do I care what they think?” Bakugo puts to her in the midst of a silence that might have been getting awkward.

“I guess you’re right,” Ochako admits, which Bakugo seems to find surprising, going by the way his
“Course I am,” he grumbles, eyes on the ground. Then, like the atmosphere can’t be borne a moment longer, he sticks a hand out impatiently. “Let’s do this already.”

A couple of hours later, Ochako hasn’t thrown up, but it’s close, and with Bakugo’s tepid agreement she takes a short break.

Their style, if it can be called that yet, is getting easier – it’s a form of airborne movement more than anything else, something that Bakugo is used to, but Ochako is still struggling to keep up with. As much as she’s frustrated by the fact, Ochako knows how much Bakugo is compensating for her weaknesses – throwing her around like a rucksack to make sure she’s where he needs her to be.

“Hey.” Ochako’s tucked over her knees, chin resting just over the bend of her legs on the ground. Bakugo acknowledges her with a terse look. “You know how you said we can’t talk about this until I start pulling my own weight?”

“I’m not brain dead, so yeah,” Bakugo replies coarsely, but his mean attitude hits a roadblock when Ochako meets his eyes with complete sincerity, even vulnerability.

“How do I do that?” Ochako tries, but for all her effort she’s not like Bakugo, or Deku, or any of their classmates who already seem to know how to be the best heroes they can. Ochako puts two hundred percent effort into everything she does, but she’s just not there yet. She doesn’t always know how to catch up to the real heroes.

For a moment, Bakugo’s face screws up, and Ochako could fear a hard word for her lack of direction. But maybe he understands that she’s trying, and doesn’t always know the best way to improve. And perhaps because of that, his reply is – not gentle, but straightforward, without resentment.

“You don’t know how to control your weight in the air,” he tells her. “If you can’t do that on its own, you’ll never get it with your quirk either.”

“So I should try and get better at, like… acrobatics?” Ochako surmises.

Bakugo seems less comfortable with this conversation than even their yelling match at the start of the session, arms crossed tightly together and a determined scowl that doesn’t match the tone that comes out of his mouth. “Yeah,” he practically mumbles. “Gymnastics, tumbling, that kinda thing.”

“Can you do all that?” Ochako asks innocently enough, but Bakugo seems to find it funny enough to scoff.

“You fucking testing me?” he spits like nails, and before Ochako can say no, that’s not what she meant, he drops the water bottle he’s holding and squares up, eyes pointing forward.

Bakugo dashes forward, a short run-up before throwing his hands down, legs flying over his head as he spins from a round-off into a backwards flip. Bakugo being Bakugo, he doesn’t stop there and jumps again, this time not touching the ground and flipping feet over head all the way round, straight-backed and landing confidently on the ground to give Ochako the dirtiest look, like she’d said he couldn’t.

“I’ll let you off the layout, but when you can show me a backflip somersault I’ll think about letting people know what we’re really doing,” he challenges, then with a cocky twist of the mouth that
could sort-of be called a smile declares, “You’ve had long enough, let’s keep going.”

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The very next day, Ochako signs herself up for gymnastics training – no quirks, just a regular gymnasium for the now-niche olympians and hobbyists who keep the sport alive – and makes the mistake of thinking Bakugo will be pleased.

As usual, she’s totally wrong.

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Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaand there we go. It was REALLY hard not to leave some 'Bakugo's sayin' nothing :)' replies to comments on the last chapter because I didn't want to give it away, but I got real close (or maybe I did, I actually can't remember).

We had some good guesses out there, including a spot-on for Bakugo's motivation to go down the fake relationship route, but the idea of him not technically saying anything and that being interpreted as confirmation was too funny a setup to resist.

I've left this on another cheeky cliffie of sorts, but hey, we're having fun? What's Bakugo got to be annoyed about NOW? (Spoiler: Everything. Everything annoys him.)
Bakugo Can't Wait

Chapter Summary

With trademark Bakugo attitude, he punches a hole straight through Ochako's bubble.

Chapter Notes

Ohhhhh naughty children, it's nonsense time :3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After a conversation with Aizawa that is over almost as soon as it begins, Ochako gets week-long permission to skip the last class of the day for gymnastics training. She has her bag packed and ready to go, chock full of plucky, Ochako-trademark enthusiasm.

“Ah, yes, you’re excused, Uraraka,” All-Might announces to her waving hand at the start of the final lesson of the day.

Ochako picks up her bag and bounces out of the room, unaware that Bakugo follows her until he calls, “Where the hell are you going?” down the hallway after her like a dog making a dash for the back of a meat truck. Ochako wheels around on her heels to face him, utterly perplexed.

“Wh- I’m going to my training?” she says, quickly succeeded by, “Shouldn’t you be back in class?”


“I'm being coached off-site.” Ochako checks the time and starts getting antsy, while Bakugo makes a face like she’s said she’s off to a candy raid at a nursery. “Isn’t that what you wanted?” Ochako doesn’t understand what his problem could be now.

Bakugo scowls, and though there’s a short break between classes, it’s not exactly low-profile for him to follow her out into the hallway to talk about the ‘us’ that they apparently are now. “You coulda told me.”

Bakugo continues to be ignorant of how the things he says might reinforce a now widely-accepted rumour of their dating. “What about us?”

“Oh, well I… can’t do both, can I?” Ochako replies awkwardly, wishing Bakugo had said it literally any other way. “There’s only one of me.”

Bakugo scowls, and though there’s a short break between classes, it’s not exactly low-profile for him to follow her out into the hallway to talk about the ‘us’ that they apparently are now. “You coulda told me.”

“We never agreed to do… that everyday,” Ochako points out cagily, knowing that eavesdroppers in the classroom will have a field day but not knowing how else to say it without giving the game away. “You can’t just assume I’ll spend all my free time with you.” Bakugo’s face reflects either that he doesn’t agree with Ochako, or that he understands her point just fine but is furious about it.

“How long?” he demands like his comprehension of Ochako’s time being her own and not his simply doesn’t compute.
“What?”

“Are you doing this stupid training?” he presses like an interrogation. “When can we do our stuff?”

“Well they recommended a few hours after classes every day,” Ochako explains. “I won’t be able to do what you want otherwise.” Ochako dreads to think what Jirou’s earjacks must be making of this.

“How about the morning?” Bakugo suggests, catching Ochako off-guard.

“What about it?”

“You’re not busy then, right?”

“Busy sleeping,” Ochako retorts. “You’ll have to be patient, Bakugo, I can’t do everything at once.”

“I can’t wait that long,” Bakugo insists, taking long strides until he’s suddenly right in front of her. “It’s gotta be soon.”

Ochako’s gotten used to being around Bakugo, or as used as anyone can, but in school it feels different for some reason. Perhaps because he rarely pays attention to her in this environment, where every small interaction between them is under a magnifying glass that their classmates interpret as they please.

Ochako makes the mistake of trying to stare out Bakugo Katsuki, and naturally loses a few seconds into the all-out glaring match it turns into. “Alright!” she bursts, throwing up her hands and taking a step back that feels like it takes a weight off her chest. “I’ll meet you outside the dorms in the morning an hour before homeroom.”

“Two hours,” Bakugo says.

“Are you trying to destroy me?!” she belts. “An hour and a half.”

“Fine,” Bakugo settles, making Ochako feel like this thing they have is more of a double-edged sword than ever. “You better put the work in tonight, I’ll be expecting results tomorrow.”

“It’s one session!” Ochako erupts. “You can’t just…” Then Ochako remembers this is Bakugo, and Bakugo doesn’t do normal standards and expectations, and he certainly doesn’t do patience. “You know what? Fine.” Inspired by she doesn’t know what, Ochako pokes Bakugo in the middle of the chest, like she could pin an appointment to duel to him and slap his face with a glove. “See you tomorrow.”

For a split second it’s like Bakugo is going to flip and snap at Ochako, then the corner of his mouth lifts. “That’s more like it.”

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Three hours of gymnastics later, Ochako is so tired, the word tired isn’t even close enough to describing how bone-wrackingly, muscles-achingly, fall-asleep-on-the-train tired she is.

Quirks or not, those gymnasts could do things that sure seemed paranormal, and they were not easy-going when it came to showing Ochako the ropes. Or making her climb them. Luckily Ochako’s getting a high tolerance for hard-driving training partners, and is feeling proud of her progress.

However, while the body becomes stronger, the mind has been left to languish. Namely, she has an awful lot of homework to catch up on. Tsu seems to know all of this just from looking at Ochako
after she knocks on her bedroom door, inviting her inside with a solemn nod.

Of course, it’s one thing to get the help Ochako needs with her classwork, and Tsu is patient if nothing else, but there’s always the elephant – or explosive volcano – in the room. Even when he’s not in the room.

“So,” Tsu slips into one of the lulls when Ochako’s brain can’t take any more information going into it without a very small power-nap on her friend’s shoulder. “Everyone’s talking about you and Bakugo.”

“Mhm,” Ochako murmurs against Tsu without really registering the statement.

“Has something changed since last week?” Tsu probes very gently, but is fishing all the same.

“Just the end of my free time,” Ochako bemoans to the soft flannel of Tsu’s froggy pyjamas.

“So Bakugo…”

“Ugh, he won’t leave me alone,” Ochako moans a little more than is necessary, a fact influenced by the looming early start tomorrow morning because Bakugo ‘couldn’t wait’.

“If he's really bothering you then you don't have to go along with… whatever it is you're doing.” Tsu is deliberately vague, which is just how Ochako likes to keep these little chats.

“No, it's alright.” Ochako flashes back to Bakugo's assertion that he'd get blamed for pushing her, realising how careful she needs to be with her words. “I'm being silly, I shouldn't complain.”

“You can do whatever you want, Ochako,” Tsu says with her steadfast straightforwardness. “Complain away, ribbet.”

“It's not that bad,” Ochako says sheepishly. “Bakugo’s only doing what we agreed to, it's just that he's so good at… well, everything, and he wants me all the time. It's hard to keep up.”

“Are you sure you’re not going out?” Tsu might be teasing, but it just takes a look from Ochako to put the question to bed. She hopes. “You can tell him to slow down, you know,” Tsu points out more evenly. “It doesn't have to be all about what Bakugo wants.”

“Try telling him that,” Ochako heaves a sigh, wishing she could just sleep on Tsu’s shoulder all evening and not struggle half-awake through homework. This dream comes true when Ochako wakes up – not realising she'd even dropped off in the first place – drooling on poor, ever-understanding Tsu.

“You should get some sleep,” Tsu says good naturedly for someone being dribbled on. “I can help you in the morning.”

“Can't.” Ochako rubs her eyes. “Bakugo.”

Tsu gives a slightly overblown sigh, setting a hand to her chin. “Then ask him to help you, ribbet.”

“Mhm,” Ochako murmurs dozily, before Tsu shakes her shoulder and Ochako bolts upright.

“Ochako, go to bed,” Tsu just about orders, and maybe Bakugo has used up all Ochako’s will to fight, because she can't find it in herself to object and shuffles like a zombie back to her room. Asleep before her head even hits the pillow.
Dawn splashes the clouds with slow-changing pastels when Ochako heads out of the dorm, bundled in a hoodie against the early-day cold. Predictably, she finds Bakugo waiting for her right on the steps.

“About time.” Bakugo makes it sound like Ochako’s late to her own trial, wearing just a short-sleeved vest and giving Ochako cause to wonder if he feels the cold at all. “Move it, bed-head.”

“You’re one to talk,” Ochako mumbles into her hand as she rubs the sleep from her eyes. Bakugo's hair looks like it's been working stunts on an action movie set all night, chaotically uneven and even more exploded than usual.

“I have an idea about how we can get around quicker.” Bakugo slips into step next to Ochako, conversation – about their training, of course – an easy accompaniment to her drowsy shuffle.

“Mhm,” Ochako bluffs, thinking he might not notice her trying to snatch a few extra minutes sleep even as they walk across the abandoned campus at stupid o’ clock in the morning.

That is, until Bakugo stops dead in his tracks, prompting Ochako to do the same a couple steps later. “I’m gonna throw you.”

“That’s nice.” Ochako starts shuffling on once more, then stops again. “Wait, what?”

“You seem real fucking confident,” Bakugo snaps. “As long as you can keep off that crash-matt ass we’ll be alright.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” Ochako asks before seeing Bakugo’s open palm in front of her. It's like he wants to hold hands, except that it's Bakugo and therefore impossible he could want such a thing. So when Ochako puts her hand on his and Bakugo's fingers close tightly around her, she doesn’t know what to think.

“You need to lift yourself first, then use your quirk on me just before I let go.” Bakugo explaining things to Ochako has become as normal as a prizewinning boxer being passionately into needlepoint. Not impossible, but still slightly unexpected. “Got it?”

“Not really, but I guess I’ll figure it out,” Ochako replies drolly.

Had she realised what Bakugo was about to do, Ochako might have extracted a more elaborate explanation or displayed far less enthusiasm. Because when Ochako uses her quirk on herself for the first time that day, ready for the glut of nausea to slide into the pit of her stomach as she rises, she doesn’t expect Bakugo to tighten his grip on her hand and then a split second later use all the strength in one of those thick arms to fling Ochako like a damn hammer-throw.

Ochako, without feeling too much discredit to herself, screams blue murder. But she does remember to activate her quirk on Bakugo just before he releases her, the heat of his blast-off explosions caressing her skin as she flies away – admittedly not thinking all that much about the warmth Bakugo gives off so much as not throwing up.

Fortunately, Ochako puts her fingers together and screams, “Release!” only a few seconds later. She hits the ground clumsily and almost falls, but Bakugo’s words shoot through her head. While Bakugo’s still in the air, Ochako has the notion that she needs to keep covering ground to be near to where he’s going to land, so she tumbles into a ridiculous half-wheel on the ground but manages to re-launch herself forward and activate her quirk without losing too much momentum.

Ochako carries on moving, close to the ground if not on the ground, while Bakugo hails down from above. It’s only as the footpath they’re following crosses another that Ochako recalls they’re doing
this on the school grounds and not in a training area. Doing something like this outside a proper practice space not only risks them getting into trouble for using their quirks so riskily – even if the grounds are more or less deserted this early in the morning – but they can also be seen. Ochako dares to wonder if Bakugo isn’t worried because he thinks the stunt is good enough, but that might just be wishful thinking. She certainly doesn’t feel graceful in the path she cuts through the air, doubly so when she looks up and sees Bakugo falling down with a look of incredible focus.

Ochako’s still playing catchup to Bakugo, of course, but it’s not by too much distance on the ground. She has a clear view of the moment Bakugo chooses to blast himself into a twisting flip, rolling in the air as he swings his feet down below his head. The move is so perfectly choreographed that Ochako can’t help but marvel for a second, right before her path and Bakugo’s finally intersect.

As acrobatically impressive as Bakugo’s two-and-a-half-turn flip is, he’s still moving incredibly fast, and when Bakugo becomes the wall in front of Ochako all of a sudden her first thought is to stop him from hitting the ground. For this reason, when Ochako drifts into Bakugo like a frisbee hitting a meteor, her instinct is just to grab on and get her quirk activated. That this happens to in a position of Ochako being face-to-face with Bakugo is a mere coincidence on her part, though perhaps not Bakugo’s.

Either Bakugo plans it this way, or his reactions are sharper than ever, because his hands move readily to grab hold of Ochako as soon as they make contact. When her quirk punches her gut a moment later, Ochako puts her hands together and gulps, “Release.”

Bakugo is the one whose feet hit the ground first after the short drop, and Ochako’s first instinct is to be still and breathe deep, something she achieves in the ragdoll position that she’s left hanging in.

It’s only when Bakugo breathes in that Ochako really processes how close he’s holding her against him, his hands under her legs just above the knee, her chin hooked over his shoulder. She can feel the rise of Bakugo’s chest against her own, followed by the shift when he adjusts his grip and makes it all the more noticeable how intimately they’re arranged.

Yet the move worked almost perfectly, a span of a few hundred metres crossed in seconds. So when Ochako feels Bakugo’s heart beating fast, she assumes it’s because of the results to this experiment.

“You gonna puke?” Bakugo’s voice is even, restrained like he wouldn’t dare to sound too excited, but Ochako can feel his heart racing.

“No,” she answers weakly, and Bakugo’s hands start moving as if to put her down. “Don’t move,” Ochako blurts without thinking about it; an impulse that strikes the moment Bakugo starts to lower her. It’s only the moment after she says it that Ochako thinks about how weird it is to want Bakugo to keep holding her – or what anyone who sees them like this would think.

But whatever compatibility makes Ochako feel so sure that being held around Bakugo’s waist like a backpack is exactly where she needs to be while recovering from the rush of nausea, maybe Bakugo’s feeling it too. His hands tighten in the wide grip they have on the underside of her legs, supporting Ochako’s weight easily. He doesn’t drop her – shifts her a little higher, even.

And Bakugo sounds thoughtful, even pensive when he murmurs, “It’s like you’re meant to touch me.”

It takes a good few moments to consider the sound of such a thing out loud. Even in context, it’s a pretty unusual way to express quirk chemistry. The simmer in Ochako’s stomach heats up a few degrees, and it is, of course, exactly this moment that Monoma from the other class just has to be jogging by.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry that I'm not that sorry about firing out cliffhanger chapters like clay pigeons. Maybe if I wasn't updating twice a week I'd feel guilty, but I killed myself with this fic long before slaying anyone else. I've always been the #1 screaming nerd for this story and really appreciate the other screaming nerds who enable my terrible fanfiction habit.

Next update... honestly? Probably like Thursday. Ish.
Getting Ochako's Panties in a Twist

Chapter Summary

Ochako gets introduced to the whole package.

Chapter Notes

So you like the cliffhangers, ey *strokes bear* interesting, very interesting....

That was meant to be beard but I feel like I could roll with a bear too.

And now we return to our regularly scheduled SHENANIGANS.

“Keep walking, motherfucker.” There’s a threatening rasp to Bakugo’s voice that Ochako can feel right in the pit of his chest, but only because she’s hanging onto him like a baby monkey.

“Oh, am I interrupting something?”

Ochako pictures Bakugo’s glare without needing to see it, and it dawns on her with mild horror what the whole shot looks like; Ochako, his supposed girlfriend, hanging off Bakugo’s neck. Him looking angry about the interruption.

“You’ve got until I put her down,” Bakugo’s voice is hard, and if the heat Ochako thinks she can feel from his breath is imagined, the warm-stove pressure of his hands on her legs sure isn’t. “If you’re still here, I’m coming for you.”

There’s a pause, something potent in the air that leaves Ochako convinced there will be talk of this by the time school starts, and then the footsteps jog away into the dawny distance. Ochako ought to be grateful Monoma didn’t have another smartass comment to make, but knows that it probably means he’s just saving them for a less volatile audience. She doesn’t relish the thought of this little exposé coming back around on the grapevine.

Bakugo, as ever, comes off as irritably indifferent to the whole thing. “If you throw up on me, I’ll kill you.” Without context this would be easy to interpret as a run of the mill Bakugo threat, but in context Ochako can feel the sweaty-palmed press of his hands against her legs, the slight tension strung through his tone that doesn’t sound like it’s much in the mood of making threats. But nor does this mean she wants to test Bakugo’s patience.

“You can put me dow-” Ochako’s barely finished before Bakugo drops her like a bag of shopping. When she stands upright Ochako remembers how much shorter she is when not anchored off Bakugo’s waist like a harbour ship. The best, and only, thing she can think of to say is, “Should we have done that?”

“What was wrong with it?” Bakugo snaps in that hunting dog way of his.
“Nothing!” Ochako’s hands shoot up like it’s a reasonable defence against the stormcloud that is Bakugo. “I just mean, should we be doing it here?”

“No one saw,” Bakugo grumbles a little defensively, but Ochako can tell he knows she has a point.

“What about Monoma?”

“Fuckface was only there at the end,” Bakugo snaps. “And he’ll keep his mouth shut if he knows what's good for him.”

Ochako can’t help considering that for all their clashes and how differently it manifests, Deku and Bakugo share a certain naivety.

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Ochako and Bakugo travel the rest of the way to the training area by foot in prickly silence. How Ochako can be so comfortable scooped in Bakugo's arms like the rumours about them are true, but can’t string together a single sentence around him doesn’t make a whole lot of sense, but she has a feeling the less she probes that question the better.

It's only been a day, yet Ochako can already tell the merciless training of last night is paying dividends as she and Bakugo start the practice that's growing into sure habit. A sequence of grab-throws and jumps that make up their style so far, strung into a routine that probably comes off a little like a manic game of table tennis – disorientating at the best of times, and violently nauseating at the worst.

Bakugo is still doing most of the work, but when they turn and change places in the air, Ochako can feel the direction of the movements, rather than just being tossed around without a sense of up or down. It's not a lot, but it's progress she clings to as hard as she hangs onto Bakugo in the moments they inevitably have to touch.

The challenge of the day comes after they've run the warm-up sequence and Bakugo's ready to get back to pushing Ochako like a boulder uphill.

“I'm gonna throw you again,” he announces. “Higher, this time.”

“How much higher?” Ochako dares to ask, and when Bakugo gives her a look that's underlined by a completely undeniable twist of a grin in the corner of his mouth, there's a small but clear voice in Ochako’s head that says, ‘easy, girl.’

The first time Bakugo sends Ochako upward like he's trying to launch her into orbit, she hangs onto her breakfast but shrieks in a way she's not proud of. Bakugo throws Ochako a lot further from the ground than she has ever let herself be on purpose, and her fingers fumble for a moment before she releases herself.

Free-falling back down to the ground isn't totally Ochako’s thing either, but she's watched Bakugo do it enough that even without explosions to propel her it doesn't seem quite so scary. There's also the matter of her quirk, which Ochako activates well before she gets made into a pancake. And there's Bakugo, who stands under Ochako as she drifts a few feet off the ground like he had every intention of catching her.

“If you lose momentum there's no point, dumbass,” Bakugo lectures in a way that still feels strange coming from him.

“What about-”
“I’ll catch you,’ Bakugo snaps, and then more uncannily, “You have to trust me.”

“Release.” Ochako drops without warning, but Bakugo's there. Strong arms spread out to catch her, cushioning her fall so she ends up being held bridal style. Ochako’s gaze meets Bakugo’s with unfiltered sincerity. “I do.”

“Then fucking act like it.” Bakugo tosses Ochako like a bag of concrete, resulting in an ungainly sprawl in the air as she finds her feet for landing. “We'll do it again,” Bakugo’s voice holds that note of tension Ochako can't interpret as annoyance, and for lack of a better cue is starting to think of as discomfort, “Don't chicken out on the landing this time.”

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After almost an hour of Bakugo throwing Ochako around like an oversized Frisbee, she reaches her limit rather suddenly, kicking out of Bakugo’s grasp like a fussy toddler and sprinting to a trash can to barf into seconds after. Given the throwup and how clumsy Ochako feels around Bakugo – at least by comparison – she might as well be a child Bakugo has to babysit. Or so she feels when he wordlessly hands her a bottle of water after she's finished hurling.

While Bakugo makes quiet noises that hint at his frustration, it never makes it to actual complaint. He wants Ochako to do everything harder, faster and longer, and that's just Bakugo, but even he has to accept the limitations of others. Within reason.

“Let's go for a couple of rounds to start out.” Bakugo launches into the combat portion of their training schedule with indefatigable confidence, flexing like he might even be looking forward to a knockabout the way a cat bats around an over-eager kitten, but Ochako is having no such thing.

“Not today.” Ochako’s already anticipating the infuriated look the comment invites. “I want you to help me a different way,” she gets into explaining, but Bakugo is like a dog denied a promised trip to the park, pacing up and down with a terrible scowl.

“You don't get to change the fucking programme when you don't feel like it,” he growls, “pull it together, bubble-brain, you only puked once.”

“I have homework, okay?!” A surprising streak of forthrightness rears its head, like a sleeping dragon in Ochako’s belly that’s still cranky about being woken up so early. “I'm training all evening to improve enough to keep up with you, training all morning to keep you happy, but if I fail in class then I won't be able to train with you at all!”

Bakugo looks as if Ochako has dumped ice water over his head, like he can't believe she just scolded him seven ways to Sunday and used this training as leverage. Ochako can't quite believe it either. Pre-empting the hopeless fallout of explaining to Bakugo why he can’t get what he wants all the time, Ochako goes for her bag and starts packing away her things.

“Just… forget it, I’ll ask Tsu to help me,” she says to herself as much as anyone else.

Bakugo’s voice comes over Ochako’s shoulder, like a pissed-off little devil bouncing up and down on her back. “You didn’t say anything about homework.”

“I’m saying it now,” Ochako replies with just a hint of irritation, propping her hands on her hips as she turns just enough to shoot a glare at Bakugo. “So is that a yes?”

“Yes what?”

“Yes, you’ll help me?” Ochako fires back. “Otherwise you’re wasting my time.”
“Yes! All right!” Bakugo goes off like a box of fireworks strapped to a crate of explosives. “Don’t get your panties twisted.”

Before Ochako has adequate time to answer, Bakugo snatches up his bag and storms out of the training area, setting a pace so fast she practically trips over herself keeping up with him long enough to get a response out.

Bakugo being obstinate has never been a barrier to Ochako telling him exactly what she thinks of a situation, and this is no exception. She bounds after him full of indignation. “Well if my panties are in a twist then you’ve only yourself to blame!”

That Ochako says this a little too loud, and a little too close to the border of the training area and school grounds, which more students are surely beginning to populate, is perhaps not the best choice she could have made. Nor were her words chosen expressly well, and at the exact moment that Ochako hears echoing laughter in the distance, she wishes she had said just about anything else.

Bakugo might hold the sentiment, Ochako reckons, because he does stop for a step to give her a look back over a shoulder. Very much like the thought could be crossing his mind that Ochako is, as Bakugo would put it, a fucking weirdo sometimes.

“Get used to it,” Bakugo doesn’t seem terribly bothered, shrugging his bare-and-always-there shoulders. “This is the package.”

For a moment, and only a moment, something flutters in Ochako’s gut, and then a second later she unloads a dump-truck of ‘don’t even go there’ on top until it’s squashed flat out of sight and mind.

Bakugo’s past the gates of the training area when he turns back to Ochako with a face like he’s annoyed about something very specific she’s done, and hasn’t a clue what it might be. “Are you coming or not?” he snaps pretty aggressively for someone who is agreeing to spend the rest of the morning helping Ochako with her schoolwork. “Move your ass.”

Ochako doesn’t second-guess this crude instruction, practically skipping alongside Bakugo’s perma-furious stomp across campus to get back to the dorms. This is how it comes to pass that Ochako and Bakugo are discovered by their classmates bunched up at the end of one of the common-area sofas trying to salvage her mathematics homework around the time most of them are just getting up.

In fact, it’s only when the first interested spectators walk by that Ochako considers how close she and Bakugo are even sitting – it seems natural because they’re poring over the same exercise book, Bakugo’s face hovering over her shoulder and their legs touching as they sit side by side. With how physically close they get as a matter of course during training, this feels – or had felt – totally normal, right up until Kirishima strolls by. Or to be more accurate, he’s the first one who dares to get close enough to say something to Bakugo.

“Well don’t you two look cosy,” Kirishima clearly delights in observing, and Ochako feels her cheeks tingle as they go a shade pinker than usual. She’s waiting for a snappy response from Bakugo, some back-off/fuck-off type of thing that would nip precedent in the bud, but it’s not what she gets.

Instead, Ochako’s the one who ends up getting barked at. “Concentrate,” Bakugo bites, reaching through Ochako’s personal space – not that there’s much of it left – to point at the page where her sums crawl up and down like lost sheep. “Why did you work this one out like that?”

“I thought we were supposed to do it like that.” This theory of Ochako’s is disproven with Bakugo’s impatient scoff.
“Always solve brackets first,” he says, and then much less kindly, “Pay less attention to idiots with hair for brains and listen to me, I’m not gonna say this twice.”

“Brackets and Bakugo come first, I get it,” Ochako rattles off with a hint of sass that doesn’t go unnoticed, but only gets addressed with a narrow look from crimson eyes. If she isn’t totally off the mark, Ochako would think Bakugo likes being affirmed as a priority. It makes her wonder if she’s building habits that will come back around to bite her in the butt.

“Do it again.” Bakugo sits back with a defiant flop against the couch, and Ochako feels the brush of his arm against her shoulders as he slings it carelessly along the back of the sofa. She can't help but notice how blurred boundaries have become in the spaces they share and thinks ‘when did that happen?’ before Bakugo snaps her back to reality. “Get it right this time.” Easy for him to say.

Then again, Ochako reasons, if putting Bakugo first means getting anywhere close to him – in academic performance or otherwise – maybe it’s not such a bad thing.

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Chapter End Notes

TROPES? In *MY* Fanfiction??! Heavens no. *Swats away flying 'homework together trope' and 'trust fall/catch trope' NO, NO TROPES HERE AT ALL. *literally drowning in them*

I recognise this isn't a cliffhanger ending (it's got squiggles), so the cliffhanger has got to be what the NEXT cliffhanger will be?! *dramatic gasp* Next update soon!
**Taking Bakugo's Breath Away**

Chapter Summary

Ochako takes Bakugo for a quick spin.

Chapter Notes

I know I'm on a roll when every time I look back at what's coming next in this story I'm constantly going OMG. We're on a Zero-G rocket ship to greatness, and this chapter is a particularly important one in a lot of ways, so I hope y'all enjoy it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Oh hey Uraraka, are you going to sit with us?”

As far as questions went, this one was far from malicious. And yet.

“Uh, yeah.” Ochako stares blankly at Deku, lunch tray in her hands, trying to work out why in the world he would ask such a strange thing. “Where else would I sit?”

“Wh- well, I thought you might sit over with Kacchan.” Deku is trying to be considerate, if a little sheepishly. However, Ochako finds it difficult not to pull a face that would invite all kinds of questions she’s not prepared to answer.

Into a silence on the cusp of becoming awkward, Todoroki looks up from his soba and turns to Deku like the tiny people who work the machines in his face and give him the ability to emote are all on break at the same time. “Why would Uraraka sit with Bakugo?”

“Because they’re… you know?” Deku explains without really explaining. Todoroki’s blank canvas face conveys that he does not, in fact, know.

“You really have no idea?!” Iida bursts like he can’t believe it, and in the bustle Ochako slides quietly in next to Iida and hopes this conversation will somehow go away. It doesn’t. She’s not sure when her closest friends started accepting the rumour-turned-apparent-fact about her and Bakugo, but they’ve never directly asked her – usually because she avoids it. Lying outright to them is too hard, but her aversion has been enough to bury her in this one.

Todoroki’s gaze returns to his lunch, like the bemusement could be contagious and he’s not sure his noodles are noodles anymore. Ochako envies such blissful ignorance. At least until he remarks, “How would I know why anyone wants to sit with Bakugo?”

Iida does an extremely poor job of muffling a sudden laugh, and Ochako gives him a dig in the side with her elbow.

“Well because they're… going out.” Deku’s cheeks have tinted pink, and Ochako sort of wants to bop him on the head and ask why he’s the one getting flustered, especially after the way things went...
between them. It would have to be *now* that Deku starts to find the dating world of interest – or perhaps it's only where other people are concerned. Maybe just Bakugo.

Todoroki looks up from his first love, food, to fix a mismatched gaze on Ochako. “Really?” he asks with a slight tilt of his head. “Why?”

“Uhhhh good question.” Ochako gives a nervous giggle, digging her fingers through the hair at the back of her head. She won’t – *can’t* – lie to her closest friends. Doesn’t have it in her. But, Ochako supposes, she can tell parts of the truth without giving it all away. “You know, it's all happened so fast and I… well I didn't say no, I guess.”

“I see.” Todoroki looks and sounds wholly unconvinced, and Ochako doesn't blame him. She wouldn't buy the story either. But rather than continuing with his lunch, Todoroki lays his chopsticks down so carefully it's as if they might shatter. “People with tempers like Bakugo can be… difficult in relationships.” It's an unexpected observation coming from an even more unlikely source, and throws Ochako seriously off guard.

Could her friends really be worried about Bakugo mistreating her? First Tsu, and now this. It’s turning into a pattern Ochako finds hard to understand. Because while Bakugo is rude, crude, and has a temper like a bull in an exclusively red-glazed china shop, he's not making Ochako do anything she hasn't signed up for. If anything, he’s been more considerate than she's known him to be under any other circumstances.

It strikes Ochako with an even more peculiar turn that Bakugo might actually be nicer to her – at least sometimes – than his actual friends. With no clue as to what she should do with such a notion, Ochako buries it deep and puts on a face-value grin.

“Oh, it's not so bad, really,” she replies uncomfortably, trying to play off humour that flies like a brick. “If he yells then I just yell right back.”

“He shouldn't be raising his voice at you at all,” Iida says with a touch of worry that makes Ochako’s heart squeeze.

“I know!” she zips. “I… wasn’t being serious, I mean, it’s not that bad, so please don’t worry about me.” The words must have the opposite effect because Iida seems more worrisome than ever, and even Deku’s drifting into concern.

“Kacchan can be difficult, it’s true,” Deku murmurs, “but he’s always recognised Uraraka, and... I think this will be good for him.”

“So you approve of the match?” Todoroki puts like he might have slipped into medieval times by mistake.

“Oh! It’s not like it’s up to me or anything,” Deku says a little shrilly, “I was only making an observation about their mutual compatibility, you know, based on a few of the factors.” With the inevitability of wet cement in the proximity of a cat, Deku starts to babble, “ *I mean, it's more complicated than if you were only thinking about their quirks, but if you interpret a relationship as a partnership based on support and balance, then it'd be possible to analyse it in a similar way and there’s clear synergy between- “

“But you *do* think they’re compatible?” Iida interjects like Deku is announcing his intention to wed a cat to a dog based on *their* mutual compatibility.

“Well, they say opposites attract.” The flush in Deku’s cheeks deepens, and something about it
prickles Ochako. In the middle of a conflicted train of thought about why Deku should be so flustered if she and Bakugo were going out, Ochako ends up being caught out when he looks to her for corroboration. “Right, Uraraka?”

“Actually… I’d rather not talk about it, if you don’t mind.” Ochako’s about as stiff as a well-starched iron girder, and though she knows it’ll cast suspicion, that’s still better than having to talk about Bakugo to her friends. If Ochako can’t even have a conversation with herself about him, what hope has she with anyone else?

Deku’s face creases, as if he’s a spider picking up vibrations of worry along silk. “Is everything alright?”

“Yeah,” Ochako blurts. “It’s just a bit… weird.”

“Such a feeling may be an indication something isn’t right,” Todoroko observes in spite of no one asking him to, and for a second Ochako wants to tell them all to button their lips and stop being so fucking nosy… then realises what a Bakugo thing it is to think. And now she just feels even weirder.

“I just… everything’s fine.” If Ochako can convince someone else, maybe she’ll start believing it too. “But it’s…” none of their goddam business, “not something I want to talk about right now.”

“Of course,” Deku sounds remorseful enough to make Ochako feel guilty, and how did that figure? “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

“No–” Ochako can’t seem to get this right, and it’s gotta be because she’s letting her closest friends think something that’s not true. “It’s me, I’m sorry, I…” Ochako glances across the lunch hall like that’ll help, and somehow manages to catch a moment when Bakugo’s looking in the same direction from several tables away, but not at her. She can’t hear what’s going on at the table, but the shade of pissed-off expression Bakugo’s wearing makes her wonder if there’s any chance he’s going through something similar with his friends.

Bakugo’s gaze keeps crossing the room until it inevitably meets Ochako’s and stops. His eyes narrow as if to say ‘you better not blab’ and a second later Kirishima’s head whips around, following Bakugo’s line of sight and finding Ochako at the end of it with a grin that needs no translation. Ochako looks down at her lunch like it’s turned into the most fascinating thing she’s ever seen.

“It’s okay, Uraraka.” It makes Ochako’s heart ache when Deku talks to her like this, the tone of voice that suggests he could fit all the world’s problems into his heart and still have room to care about the smallest, most trivial of ones that affect his friends. “You don’t owe us an explanation.”

Ochako keeps her eyes down, knowing Deku will see the twisted frustration in her face if she looks up and only care more – which is the last thing either of them need. Deku already cares so much and it can be so hard sometimes because Ochako knows it’s not like that. Not the way she cared. Had cared?

But Deku always knows what to do, even when it’s not on purpose, and changes the subject before Ochako sinks under the table in order to army-crawl out of the cafeteria and this conversation. “Hey, wasn’t All Might’s lesson today great?”

“One of his best yet!” Iida chimes in enthusiastically. “He’s really excelling as a teacher this year, and hardly ever needs to check his notes.”

When Ochako dares to look back up from the table, she’s surprised to discover Bakugo is still watching her, his expression unreadable.
Bakugo has a unique method of giving advice. For one, it's completely uninvited and out of context to what he and Uraraka are doing – which is their usual training warmup at stupid o'clock in the morning.

For two, it runs to the effect of, “If that fuckstick Deku is pissing you off, tell him to get a life before I end his.”

It's way too early in the day for life coaching, not to mention Ochako hasn't the foggiest clue as to what Bakugo’s talking about.

Ochako also happens to be clinging to a windowsill about five stories off the ground, one hand out to catch Bakugo as he freefalls down the side of the building. Their hands close surely around each other, and if not for Ochako’s quirk she would probably be a lot less comfortable dangling Bakugo from four fingertips on a short ledge. As it is, he starts to drift up slowly like a day old helium balloon. A pause – or stopping at all – is permitted only because they're way off the ground, inadvertently opening this window of conversation Ochako’s so sorely unprepared for.

“What?” Ochako says when Bakugo drifts high enough to make eye contact. “I'm not, I mean, Deku hasn't done anything.”

“He's a goddamn busybody,” Bakugo growls as he rises, then when he's level with Ochako reaches out and grips the ledge she's anchored to. It has the effect of caging Ochako against the wall somewhat, enclosed on two sides by Bakugo, her back touching the cool cement. “I asked you to train, so it's none of his business what we're doing.”

Ochako wrinkles her nose. Being piggy in the middle isn't her idea of a good time, but it's like everything Deku and Bakugo do has some butterfly effect on the other. “Deku thinks we're dating, not training,” she says a little sharper than is strictly necessary. “Because of you, in case you forgot.”

Bakugo’s eyebrows practically knot themselves. “So what’s he pestering you about?”

“He's not pestering me!” Ochako retorts, giving Bakugo a prod in the chest like he's going to be cut loose. But he's Bakugo, so the tight grip he has on the building face behind Ochako holds true. “He's my friend, and actually all he talks about is what a great couple he thinks we are.”

As soon as she says it, Ochako realises this was the wrong thing to tell Bakugo. She knows this from the face he makes, before he even opens his mouth to snarl, “He what? That fucking-”

“It was your idea!” Ochako interrupts, giving Bakugo a firmer push with the flat of her hand, like it'll create space that's not going to happen, because the distance between them is exactly the length of Bakugo’s arm, which isn't getting any longer. “You can't insist I let all my friends think we're going out and then be annoyed when they talk about it!”

“I can do whatever I want!” Bakugo barks right back, and for some reason it's the thing that makes Ochako snap.

“Uuugh!” Ochako bunches up against the wall, feet to the concrete, and plants both palms firmly against Bakugo’s chest, pushing against him until Bakugo’s forced to let go and launches him across the space. “Quit being so difficult!”

The force Ochako uses to push Bakugo off is such that she ends up going after him, cutting a straight line through the air only a few metres behind Bakugo – who naturally, is furious with the stunt.
“Watch it, bitch!” Bakugo yells, swinging his arms helplessly, as if to turn over himself in the zero-gravity conditions and yelling at Ochako as he revolves, like an abusive satellite in orbit.

As soon as Bakugo next squares up in Ochako’s direction, there’s an instinct in her gut that tells her even before he spreads his hands behind him what’s about to happen. So when Bakugo blasts himself straight back at Ochako, she’s not only ready, but so not in the mood for Bakugo’s crap that when he hurtles at her like a rocket, she snatches him out of his planned trajectory and throws him the way he’s been tossing her, letting go at the point that sends him soaring straight up in the air.

Bakugo’s infuriated scream pitches up into the distance, while the pushback from throwing him causes Ochako to start sailing in another direction. This is at a slight enough angle that when she touches her fingers and cries, “Release!” it’s only a short drop before she’s able to grab onto the horizontal bar of a facsimile lampost, one of many dotted about the mock-city complex.

Drawing on the skills being drilled into Ochako by her gymnastics coach on a daily basis, who easily rivals Bakugo for how hard he pushes her and how little he cares for excuses, Ochako swings around the bar and hooks her legs over it, ending up dangling upside down as a red-hot, fury-spitting comet falls from the sky above her.

Before anything comprehensible can be made of Bakugo’s descending scream, Ochako swings up and tucks her feet up into a crouch on top of the bar, then when the timing is right leaps into the air – no quirk, just the force of her jump and the unreliable friend of gravity – so that she intersects with Bakugo’s fall.

Ochako knows what’s going to happen the moment her hands make contact with Bakugo’s scorching, clammy skin. But just as Bakugo tries to hurl her skyward in retaliation, Ochako activates her quirk on him, and only him. The culminating effect of this is that Bakugo’s not the pivot he was trying to be, only moving himself now that he’s weightless and tethered to Ochako, who carries on falling like a balloon tied to a lead bar.

What Ochako wants to do is throw Bakugo again – see how he likes it – but this runs into trouble because when she lets go of him, he doesn’t let go of her. In fact, Bakugo grabs onto Ochako’s wrist with his other hand, brings up a knee, and plants one thick-soled boot right in the middle of her body.

“Cheeky fucker,” he rasps, and with only a few meters before they hit the ground too fast for safe landing, knows just as well as Ochako does she’s going to have to use her quirk on herself sooner rather than later.

When Ochako stops their fall entirely too close to the ground for comfort, she has no time at all to consider what’s coming next. Bakugo pushes off from her into a slow-turning flip, head back and feet following, while Ochako goes flying in the opposite direction, now moving somewhat quicker than she’d like towards the nearest wall.

Feeling sick enough to override her flaring annoyance-come-frustration with Bakugo, Ochako’s trying to figure out the best way to land when she’s snatched right out of the air.

Not content to just boot her off like a game of kickball, Bakugo’s blasted himself right after Ochako and grabs her with a hand so hot it almost burns; a momentary contact before he flings her spiralling up into the air. Feeling like a hamster that’s stopped running and is now spinning helplessly around a wheel, Ochako flails and twists enough to see Bakugo flip to land feet-first on the wall she would have made a much less elegant landing against, and then flip off it into another blast to rocket after her.

By this point, Ochako’s also feeling too nauseous to do much of anything, smothering out any other
feelings that might have been directed at Bakugo. Now the only thing she wants is to be standing on solid ground again, and the only thing she does in pursuit of this goal is touch her fingers together. “Release.”

By the time they drop, Bakugo has easily caught up with Ochako through his rocket-launch propulsion, but this time he swings an arm out and catches her around the stomach. Ochako wonders is this is what it feels like being a beloved dolly that a small child takes onto all the rollercoasters at a theme park, flailing limply over Bakugo’s arm before it closes firmly around her body, taking her along for this ride whether she likes it or not.

For a short while they keep going up, such is the force of the explosions Bakugo uses to catch up with Ochako, while the top of one of the tallest buildings in the training area approaches rapidly in the distance. This is the first time Ochako’s been a tagalong in one of Bakugo’s long-shot jumps, and isn’t convinced she loves the experience, at least not while she feels so much like barfing.

So focused is Ochako on the not-barfing component, she isn’t really tracking the upcoming slab of concrete roofing that Bakugo means for them to land on, so it’s only when she feels a firm double-tap on her side that Ochako responds instinctively.

Definitely not using her quirk on herself if it can be helped, Ochako zips her hands to Bakugo’s bicep where it presses tight across her belly, fingers digging into the muscle with more desperation than intention. The sudden change from two bodies falling under the effects of gravity to just one – and the lighter between them – has enough of a breaking effect, and Bakugo thankfully doesn’t do any uncalled-for flips or somersaults as they come in for a landing, just lands heavy on his shock-absorbing soles as he gets his feet down, dropping deep at the knees just as Ochako brings her fingers together and whispers, “Release.”

Bakugo sets Ochako down more carefully than she expects, then subverts further expectations by not launching into a predictable stream of abuse over what a stupid thing she’s done. Instead, all that Ochako hears after she staggers away and drops to her hands and knees is Bakugo’s deep, rhythmic breathing. Almost in time with her own.

“That was,” Bakugo pants, and it’s only here that Ochako realises what’s happened – what they, she, has done to leave Bakugo so breathless. “Fucking great.”

Unbidden by her conscious mind, Ochako finds Todoroki’s words of advice echoing in her ears. If it feels weird, something’s not right. And as soon as the thought occurs, Ochako realises without any shadow of doubt that this, with Bakugo, doesn’t feel weird. Couldn’t feel farther from it. Because just like Bakugo says, this – the way they work – feels just right.

When Ochako’s gut finally stops heaving and she lifts her head to look at Bakugo, she sees something rare in him. An exhilaration that animates him from head to toe, not vibrating with anger or overrun by emotions that cut both ways; but for once, happy. Because he – they – have done something that he’s pleased with. Even if it was achieved through a zero-gravity squabble gone awry.

Maybe, Ochako revises with a sudden flutter in her stomach, it does feel a bit weird.

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Chapter End Notes
Finally the all-important scene with Deku, which has been asked about in previous chapters and *finally* we get around to. One of the fun things about this story is the vaguity of so many conversations, and Deku's dedicated 'they're good for each other' stance is true in a lot of ways.

Also it gives me SO MUCH DELICIOUS KACCHAN/Deku dynamic to deliver directly into my open mouth. I don't directly ship them (too messy even for me) but oh BOY do I enjoy letting their fucked-up dynamic be the unwitting third wheel in Ochako and Bakugo's shiz.
Stomping on Bakugo's Toes

Chapter Summary

Ochako doesn't try to get in Bakugo's face, but he makes it very difficult not to.

Chapter Notes

It's come to my attention that popular consensus suggests my so-called 'medium burn' might be a tad on the slow side. Trust me, this is the fastest I can go. I WANT THIS TOO, THEY'RE JUST BEING *STUBBORN*

*Ahem* so yeah, I have no power over my own creation. But that said, this is another GOOD'UN of a chapter, and the start of a sub-arc here that all fans of fiesty!Ochako will surely appreciate.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ochako’s days are beginning to pass in an almost-predictable blur. They start too early, with whatever breakthrough Bakugo has in store for them. Classes come after that, running head-first into gymnastics training – which, slowly, Ochako is beginning to enjoy as well as endure. The evening is marked by exhaustion, falling asleep on Tsu, and homework that becomes incomprehensible half-way through sentences when Ochako starts dreaming of mochi and wakes up chewing her pillow – which is, as discussed, poor Tsu. This is the predictable part.

The almost part, well…

Today's task in hero training is a blazing tower block scenario, and when it's Ochako’s turn to run the course she doesn’t hesitate to put everything she's learning into practice. The second Aizawa’s whistle blows Uravity crouches down and activates her quirk, pushing off to launch herself straight up the face of the building. She’s not the only one to have accessed the towering inferno this way so far, but where Ochako might have been more reserved in the past for fear of hitting the limit of her quirk too soon, today she goes full throttle. She’s gotten used to being hurled around by Bakugo like a zero-g frisbee, so launches herself fast and without fear of the approaching flames.

Aiming for the floor where the fire is strongest, Ochako grabs onto a balcony railing as it comes within reach and spins over it, deactivating her quirk to drop down onto the ground as she rolls to a crouch below smoke level. From there she starts to comb the floors for dummies to be evacuated, carefully using her quirk to float them out of the building in pairs with careful taps.

This is the kind of task Ochako’s quirk is suited for, so she moves with easy confidence, waiting until each pair of dummies drifts out the building before catching up with them at breakneck-pace and sending them carefully down to the ground with precise pushes. Working methodically through the floors, Ochako clears the building with ease, swinging between the floors with turns and flips across the surface of the building to avoid the smoke-filled interior unless retrieving dummies.

It's a long time for Ochako to have her quirk activated on herself, but nothing compared to what
Bakugo put her through only this morning, so she keeps pushing through the nausea without dropping pace. This results in barfing once, when Ochako inhales some particularly acrid smoke and immediately spatters a doorway inside one of the final floors, but she’s so close to the end she just rinses out her mouth and moves even faster.

Ochako finishes on the top floor, and after all the mad things Bakugo has made her do so far, thinks nothing of launching herself straight out the window and dropping most of the way to the ground, activating her quirk just in time to break her fall – if Bakugo was catching her. Without her personal crash mat in service, Ochako lands less gracefully than she’d like, but makes it through the challenge without throwing up in front of her peers.

It's only when Ochako bothers to look over at her teacher and the class that she sees the looks of surprise mingled among the faces, and her first thought is that her jumpsuit suit might have been burned somewhere awkward. A quick check confirms it hasn't, so Ochako is left no option but to be confused by what everyone is looking so astonished by.

“That was amazing, Uraraka!” Bouncing gloves indicate Hagakure is literally hopping up and down on the spot, and Ochako starts to get the picture.

“Good time.” Aizawa lowers his stopwatch, still staring at the face of it, then looks back up to Ochako. “Great time.” It’s only when she sees the rankings at the end of the class that Ochako realises she tops the leaderboard for this task. By a notable lead. And only then does she fully realise what a difference training with Bakugo has made.

Of course, Bakugo looks furious about this – or perhaps just that he’s not first, not even in the top five – glaring at Ochako the only time she dares to meet his eyes.

At the opposite end of the scale is Deku, who can hardly wait for the class to end before rushing Ochako in a fast-talking blur of enthusiasm. “That was so cool, Uraraka! Your movement in the air was so fluid, and I’ve never seen you look that comfortable so high off the ground before!”

“Oh, it wasn't anything special.” Ochako is trying not to blush and not doing a very good job of it, though she is pleased to have finished first for once. “My quirk gives me a big advantage for something like this.” It’s also the kind of thing she’s thinking of specialising in as a hero, though the jury goes out for that every two weeks.

“Even so, it's what you do with your gifts that makes the biggest difference.” Deku insists. “You would have lost time if you’d taken breaks to manage the side effects of your quirk, but you were really focused and confident up there, it was incredible!” The way Ochako actually managed the side-effects was to spew somewhere her friends couldn’t see, but she’s not about to correct them on it.

“Midoriya is quite correct,” Iida chips in as a model-of-grace runner up in the exercise, and also the target of a lot of shitty looks from Bakugo this class. In fact, he’d pretty much been hate-glaring Ochako, Iida and Deku indiscriminately across the full period. “Your extra-curricular training must be really paying dividends.”

For a second Ochako panics, thinking of the way she and Bakugo were swinging around earlier that morning, and fears the game is up.

“Yeah, maybe we should join you at the gymnastics centre some time, they must be really great teachers if you're improving this fast.” Deku’s heart, as ever, is in the right place. It frustrates Ochako even more for letting him be misled.
“It really wasn't anything that special, guys,” she tries to play down.

“Hey.” The three person wide procession Ochako, Deku and Iida make falls apart, and there's only a few people who can achieve such a fracture with one word.

Ochako turns a half-step back to catch sight of Bakugo glaring something awful, and her first instinct is to sigh, “What?” at him like she's utterly fed up.

Which, as a matter of fact, Ochako has had enough Bakugo for one day; their morning session caused her to throw up twice, which this exercise has just made a hattrick before lunch. So she seriously isn't in the mood for Bakugo’s petty competitive attitude, which she can sense in the air like a hot wind blowing.

But this, Ochako considers belatedly, is perhaps not the best way to address Bakugo. Ever. Much less under these circumstances.

The vindictive narrowing of Bakugo’s eyes promises trouble, but Ochako doesn't realise exactly what kind of trouble until he takes two long paces up to her and then swings an arm around her shoulders like it's the most natural thing in the world.

Being close to Bakugo is nothing new or alarming to Ochako, usually, but right now he feels entirely closer than she’s prepared for him to be during school hours. His mouth in particular is in alarming proximity to the side of her face, breath hot on her cheek while his arm curls around her neck and manages to draw them even closer.

So close, that Bakugo can just about put his mouth on her ear and mutter, “Suppose you think you’re hot shit now, huh?” As if she did well just to spite him.

Deku and Iida look respectively like their heads are about to ex- and implode, and if Ochako didn’t know better that’s exactly what Bakugo is going for. His bitter chewing on Ochako’s ear like a playtoy is hushed enough she can only just make out what he’s saying, much less anyone standing several paces away.

Ochako’s mood for this kind of thing is that she’s completely not about it – not today, or any day as it happens. So her response is to wriggle uncomfortably under the heavy-slung scarf of Bakugo’s arm and then dig her elbow square into the centre of his chest, attempting to get some space between them that doesn’t come. Trying to edge Bakugo away when he doesn’t want to be moved is like trying to nudge a concrete pillar, and if anything he seems to find it amusing that she tries.

“Cut it out,” Ochako berates, and predictably when she tries to pull away Bakugo doesn’t budge, remaining with his elbow hooked around her neck to keep her uncomfortably close – at least while people are watching. Which they are. A lot.

Bakugo might as well have set off a box of fireworks for how much attention his stunt attracts, and Ochako has no doubt that he doesn’t care in the least – or worse yet, it’s what he’s going for in the first place. It sure seems like it, based on the dirty twist of satisfaction that’s hanging in the corner of his mouth as he asks, “Is that all the thanks I get?”

Ochako pulls a face and accepts the perch of Bakugo’s arm like a cat determined to sit across her shoulders. If she were more set against the intrusion – and truth be told there are far worse arms to have around her – it’d be a quick tap on the wrist dangling in front of her chest and then Bakugo would be soaring for the clouds. Instead she settles for a question. “For what?”

Deku seems firmly settled in his understanding of Bakugo and Ochako’s dynamic, as he launches
into an ever-positive, “Oh, are you two still training together?” like they’d described it as a cute couple-activity. As much as punching each other and Ochako throwing up could be fun ideas for a date.

Bakugo seems to register two things at this point; the first being that he can’t gripe about getting credit for Ochako’s improvement without having to admit they’re training together, and the second – but probably the more important – Deku is talking to him.

“D’ya fucking mind, Deku?!” Bakugo’s got a snarl like tearing sheet metal, and Deku jumps like he’s touched a livewire. “Can’t you see we’re in the middle of something here? Back off.” It’s around this time all their other spectators start to scatter, like sheep after a one of the flock has just thrown off their costume and turned out to be a wolf.

The arm that Bakugo has around Ochako starts feeling a lot more possessive. In perfect synchronicity, Deku’s face fills with colours while Iida’s drains of it, and Ochako concludes that Bakugo’s posturing is wholly and absolutely intentional. He wants their behaviour to be interpreted as that of a couple, or at the very least someone who can stake a claim to Ochako’s time and attention, particularly over her actual friends who are actually happy for her when she does well. She’s so stunned by the revelation that she doesn’t react right away.

“Sorry! I didn’t mean to-” Deku unloads in a big ungainly rush. “I-, I was just-”

“I don’t give a shit what you just,” Bakugo growls. “Get lost.”

“Hey!” Ochako starts trying to interject, but stopping Bakugo and Deku from getting to one another is like trying to stop the wind blowing leaves.

“I didn't mean to interrupt the two of you-” Deku blabs even though it's Bakugo who interrupted and he damn-well knows it.

“Then why don't you do all of us a favour and fuck o-OW!” Lacking a better way of getting Bakugo’s attention while he's mid-rage, Ochako picks up a newly reinforced steel alloy boot and brings in down on Bakugo’s foot hard enough to pull his focus. What this means is that the next second Ochako has him screaming, “What the hell was that for?!” literally in her face. Though as it happens, his arm doesn't go anywhere.

“For yelling at Deku when he hasn't done anything wrong!” Ochako fires back, unflinching and undeterred by the shell exploding in her face. Meanwhile Iida has transcended into being some kind of ghost, white-faced and mortified by the whole exchange, while probably worrying about being less than ten minutes early to their next class. “You’re the one who wanted us to-” Ochako cuts off when Bakugo gives her a look that simply says ‘try it, bitch’ on the subject of her finishing that sentence the way her gut wants her to – with the truth.

“It's okay, Uraraka,” Deku interjects before Ochako comes down definitively on what she was actually going to say. “I'll let you and Kacchan... talk.”

“No, you don't have to-” but by the time Ochako’s finished saying it Deku and Iida are already gone, beating a hasty retreat before catching any more heat from the master of unnecessary explosions himself. Ochako watches her friends speed-walking away, takes a deep breath that doesn't calm her very much, then turns to Bakugo. Because he's yet to move away, this means their faces are still alarmingly close. “You did that on purpose,” she points out crossly.

“Course I did,” Bakugo replies about as obnoxiously as should be expected, but it still stings for some reason. A naive part of Ochako might have hoped if he was being nicer to her, that temperance
might have extended to others, but Ochako’s dream was too big as usual.

“Well you can’t.” Ochako shoves Bakugo’s arm off and he lets it slip, stepping back now that they’re firmly left behind by the class and likely running late for the next lesson.

Bakugo looks at her like she’s told him, as he’d put it, to go fuck himself. But it turns out to be another four letter word he takes issue with. “Can’t?” he echoes cruelly. “You don’t get to tell me what I can’t do, round-face.”

Ochako retaliates the only way she can think of. “Then you don't get to tell me what I have to do.”

Bakugo scowls harder, which is tricky because he's already been scowling this whole time, but he makes it work. “What?”

“I'm going to stay in bed in the morning and you can… hang out all by yourself.” Ochako folds her arms like she can tie a knot over the promise with action as well as words. “Unless you apologise to Deku.”

Bakugo, as expected, doesn't take it well.

“What??!” he thunders, and then with an air that rocks like aftershocks from an earthquake carries on. “Why’re you so bent up over that shithead anyway? I'm the one you're-” There is a moment, a second split so carefully in half it could be a timekeeping quirk, where Bakugo hesitates over what he’s about to say next. “-hanging out with,” he finishes with a hushed bite, and Ochako is suddenly desperate to know what he was poised to say.

“Well Deku is my friend, and even if you don't want to be nice to him for your own sake, you should do it for mine.” After the fact, Ochako will ask herself what on earth she was thinking in saying what she does, but in the heat of the moment it all feels perfectly justified. “We can't do this if you're always fighting with Deku.”

As ever, Bakugo continues to not respond well.

“Of course we can.” Bakugo is about a pace away from her, but after having him close enough to stick his tongue in her ear, it still feels very close to be standing next to a person-shaped bundle of lit firecrackers. “You're just being stubborn.”

“Wonder where I'd pick up a habit like that,” Ochako rounds back on him without missing a beat. “And fine, I won't train with you unless you make up with Deku.”

“Then you're even more of an idiot than I thought,” Bakugo delivers in a low tone Ochako finds more hurtful than she's prepared to admit. It’s too bad he throws another punch to Ochako’s gut that throws her in a different way entirely a moment later. “What we have is worth way more than protecting that crybaby.”

“Then you're the idiot,” Ochako retorts. “If it's so important you'd say sorry to Deku.”

Bakugo bucks like a horse. “Like hell!”

Ochako props her hands on her hips, fast-becoming the formal stance for arguing with Bakugo. “You know he didn't do anything wrong.”

Bakugo moves his hands as if he’s going to tear out some chunks of hair, but jerks to an awkward stop, fingers flexing into nothing. He knows it, Ochako is sure just as she knows the sky is blue. Bakugo is stubborn, not stupid, though he's arguably pretty dumb when it comes to Deku. “He's...
always in my damn business.”

“That’s just Deku,” Ochako despairs. “You’ve known him the longest of anyone, how can you not understand that?”

“Stop defending him!” Bakugo’s getting wilder, which Ochako should expect when engaging him on this subject, and finds a voice in the back of her head warning her to tread carefully. “Why does Deku get everything? Even you pick his side!”

“Because you’re the one who was being nasty, Bakugo,” Ochako tells him straight, meeting his eyes without shying away. He’s wild-dog furious, but Bakugo is still listening, and it’s an opportunity she wants to capitalise on. “And while we’re at it, what’s up with you doing all that touchy-feely stuff, huh?”

Bakugo scoffs. “Doing what?”

“I know you said it’s convenient if people think we’re going out, but I didn’t expect you to start acting like we are in front of them,” she lectures, free to speak with the rest of the class scurried away out of fear of crossfire and lateness. If she’s not mistaken, Bakugo gets distinctly less comfortable, hands diving into his pockets and eyes dropping away from Ochako’s.

“I dunno what you’re talking about,” he mutters.

“Yes you do,” Ochako retorts. “If you’re trying to make Deku jealous I can tell you it’s not gonna work.”

“Since when did you become the fucking expert?”

“Because I tried it!” Ochako bursts like an overblown party balloon, the filter between her head and her mouth there one moment and then pop, gone. A unique effect that Bakugo has on her, because that’s not something she’d been planning on revealing to him. Or anyone. So much for taking that secret to her grave.

Bakugo looks at Ochako like she spat on his noodles, yet there's a hint of sick satisfaction in this particular scowl. “I fucking knew it.”

“I’m not… proud of it,” Ochako says glumly as she chances a look at Bakugo, taking him in and knowing deep down why Deku lets Bakugo be the way he is around him; so broken. “So take it from me, Deku just… wants everyone to be happy,” Ochako explains like it's a more terrible thing than it is. “Even you.” Especially, she should really say but doesn't for fear of antagonising Bakugo further. He would probably be miserable out of pure contradiction.

As fun as all this isn’t, time is dragging on and their next class is starting on the other side of campus any time now. “We’re gonna be late,” Ochako points out, edging away from Bakugo and this argument before she can spill any other awkward secrets.

Bakugo has gone quiet, sullen or maybe even resentful as they arrive at loggerheads. Then he says, “Unless we get there fast.”

Ochako isn't sure she heard him right. “What?”

“Are your ears blocked?” he snaps. “It's a clean shot.”

“We can't do that here!” Ochako is aghast, but Bakugo’s face reads clear as day.
“You wanna be late instead?” he poses with a roughness that comes off smug, like he knows exactly what he’s trying to get Ochako to do and is confident of getting his way with it. “Come on, chicken.”

Bakugo’s palm opens up in front of Ochako like an explosive flower, a slight sheen from the chemical sweat that coats them. Realising how worked up Bakugo is from this blowout, a feeling of responsibility divides Ochako in a way she doesn’t expect. It’s not that she wants to cause anyone stress, but finds it strange knowing she can affect Bakugo in this way.

“Okay.” Ochako puts her hand on top of Bakugo’s. “But I'm still not coming tomorrow morning unless you apologise.”

Bakugo makes his distinctive ‘tch’ sound, and his fingers close around Ochako’s, pulling her into him so her back is tucked against his front comfortably enough to be uncomfortable on a completely different level, even though they’re just getting ready to blast off. He’s solid behind her, voice rough from a mouth tucked just behind her ear. “We'll see about that.”

Chapter End Notes

After all this "working together" and "getting along" I felt it was high time for Bakugo and Ochako to NOT get along so well, and here we have it... yelling! That's some primo medium-burn shipping content, right? (Medium burn is Ochako still agrees to what she does at the end, if we were in a slow burn she'd have told him to piss off and what happens next would play out over days instead of hours). Sorry for not being all that sorry.

Oh also the Deku-third-wheel-in-the-relationship continues, I'm having way too fun laying out all the clues to Ochako and Deku's backstory piece by delicious piece. This chapter one goes out to everyone who wanted some Deku and Bakugo interaction. This is what you meant, right? ;)

Chapter Summary

Bakugo tries to get his own way, with mixed results.

Chapter Notes

Me: I'll update on Thursday.
Also me: Or you could update it Wednesday.
Me and me together, but slightly out of sync: THAT'S A GREAT IDEA. *Update happens*

I'm loving the love for this fic, thanks everyone. Also replying to comments is like, my thing that I do. I'm a very clingy author. Welcome to the second edition of what Bakugo wants, what an exciting time!!!

True story I started to edit this chapter and then was like, OH YEAH, I REMEMBER ALL THIS SHIPPY GARBAGE I PACKED INTO THIS ONE and thought about how the reader-squad (yes, y'all) are going to DIE.

So that's my promise to you I guess.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s only when their toes leave the ground that Ochako realises this is the first time she and Bakugo are really going to fly. Together. On purpose. And it would have to be when she’s annoyed with him.

This tempers Ochako’s anticipation a little, but not enough to quiet the flurries of butterflies in her stomach as she activates her quirk on herself and Bakugo, then feels them begin to drift. Because they start out already locked together, Ochako and Bakugo float as one object rather than two things colliding, and in such a static pose she's all the more aware of the shape of him shadowing her from behind.

They’re so close Ochako can feel the shift throughout Bakugo’s whole torso when he moves, holding the only arm not wrapped tightly around Ochako's body far out behind himself. With a mouth that is still way, way too close to her ear, Bakugo asks, “Ready?” in such a way it makes her half-furious that he was being such a pig moments ago. Still is being, she firmly corrects herself.

Because this is exactly what Bakugo’s counting on, the last rational voice in Ochako’s head tells her amid the whirlwind of everything else this pose makes her think of. Things Ochako does everything in her power not to think about – and especially not about Bakugo.

What Bakugo wants is for the all-consuming synergy of this thing they’re doing to overwhelm Ochako’s resolve to deny him and show up for training tomorrow. This is why instead of giving an answer that might be expected, considered normal by basic conversation standards, Ochako’s
response is a sullen, “I’m still mad at you.”

Bakugo snorts, and then a second later fire bursts from his palm and they’re airborne.

Even though Ochako has done this with Bakugo before, it’s been clumsy, mid-air and usually while Ochako is busy trying to keep her breakfast down. So this time feels brand new.

Bakugo is holding Ochako so tightly the only movement that happens in the air is what he chooses, puppeting with the whole of his body to mould hers into the right shape for them to shoot so fast through the air it literally takes her breath away. In the same sense as being in a wind tunnel would.

With Bakugo holding her hand – of course he is – Ochako can’t release them, a complication she suspects Bakugo might also have only thought about a little later than would’ve been helpful. Like when they were still on the ground and not hurtling like a guided rocket up and over the school.

Bakugo’s hand slips off Ochako’s as she strains to bring her fingers together, and because they’re still going like a jet engine, he has to keep hold of her somehow. Awkwardly, the first thing he manages to grab is very definitely her boob, then as quickly as Ochako realises it’s happening it’s not anymore, and Bakugo’s forearm is pressing stiffly against her collarbone.

Ochako has more important things to think about, thankfully. She touches her fingers together, while one of the roofs of the main academy building hurtles toward them distressingly fast. “Release-eek!”

When Ochako’s quirk drops she feels the kick from Bakugo moments before the explosions go off. How the very second their gravity returns Bakugo translates as much of this energy from the wind tunnel into movement towards his target. The next blast from his palm sets them onto a new course with another boost of carefully positioned energy. Bakugo’s other arm moves down to Ochako’s belly, locking in tight around her waist like a seatbelt to keep her safe as the sole passenger of this wild ride he managed to sell her on.

When she’s not mad at him and airborne, Ochako would be really interested in revisiting exactly how he convinced her into this.

Though it’s fair to say Ochako is a little exhilarated by the experience, the moment of awe passes quickly when bandages come shooting at them out of nowhere. The long white tendrils lash securely around Ochako and Bakugo, and she lets out a particularly girlish squeal when the way the bandages tighten makes Bakugo’s hand dig into her hip in a way that feels extremely ticklish all of a sudden.

Rooting her fingers around under the winding layers, Ochako pushes past herself to grab Bakugo, any part of Bakugo. Before the ground comes up for a grievous meeting, she presses her fingers against the iron-like layer of his abdomen and activates her quirk on both of them.

The end result leaves Ochako and Bakugo floating together like a mummified kite on the end of Aizawa’s bandages, and not one of them has the presence to find it amusing.

“Put me down, bastards!” Bakugo hollers indiscriminately, starting to thrash in a way that Ochako feels is super unhelpful in literally every way. Especially the way it lets her feel how strong Bakugo is even when he’s tied up, while tied to her. Maybe especially now, all wild-dog angry and pulsing.

“If you say so.” Aizawa has a deadpan so dead it needs defibrillation to return to the land of the living, but in this case it instills a deathlike stillness in Bakugo. Ochako’s hands are tied, but it only takes one flash of their teacher’s stare before the bundle she and Bakugo are tied up in comes thumping to the floor. Well, the roof.

Once the bandages loosen Ochako does everything in her power to get off Bakugo as quickly as she
possibly can. She scrambles to her feet under a normal but none too impressed stare from Aizawa, who stands so still he might be power napping upright. No such luck.

Instead, Ochako is treated to her homeroom teacher’s driest tone. “Care to explain?”

“Sorry!” Ochako claps her hands together, head bowing instinctively. “We were worried about being late, but that's no excuse.”

“Correct.” Aizawa’s heavy gaze sets itself to Bakugo, but the next part doesn't seem to be something either of them expect. “We?”

“You heard her,” Bakugo mutters with his gaze fixed on the floor just in front of Aizawa’s feet. Then they shift, and Bakugo’s fiery glare sits on Ochako so she can be sure he's saying this for her benefit too. “It won't happen again.”

Ochako rushes into her defence like she's throwing herself at the charge. “Only because you won't apol-oh,” Ochako trails off when Aizawa clears his throat.

“As Bakugo may recall, I gave my permission for you two to engage in certain activities on the premise there would be something to show for it.” Aizawa slowly crosses his arms, and Ochako would love to be in class making excuses for her lateness the usual way right now. “Is there something?”

“No anymore,” Bakugo says resentfully enough to annoy Ochako all over again. He's trying to play her with the subtlety of a drumset with a set of dynamite for sticks.

“That's not true,” Ochako pitches in, because she’ll hold back on silly gossip in the classroom but she is not lying to their teacher. “We have been training in the practice areas until now, this was just a… silly mistake.”

“An interesting definition of both those words,” Aizawa points out. “Uraraka, your apology is accepted. Bakugo -” Aizawa hangs on it for a second, maybe because he's thinking, or taking a micronap, or perhaps just to test Bakugo’s patience a little. “Refrain from indulging in this little experiment outside of the designated areas, and I think it's high time for an assessment.”

“No!” Bakugo snaps like a firecracker. Aizawa just waits him out, knowing as well as they all do he doesn’t get to call the shots here. Bakugo can bark and bully his way through a lot of things, but not this. Aizawa just needs to wait. Eventually Bakugo’s head drops, and Ochako hears the resigned murmur. “Not yet.”

Aizawa’s deep into one of those long, is-he-awake stares, then blinks heavily and uncrosses his arms. “Two weeks,” he sounds as if he’s bored of this already, and the slow turn-and-walk towards the roof access indicates they’re surely done. “So I suggest you focus on the practical realities, and resolve your…” Ochako catches a stern look from her teacher, though Bakugo gets strung up on the same line too, “personal issues if you intend to have something worth my looking at by then.”

Ochako shoots Bakugo a sidelong glare only to find she’s getting one right back, though between them Bakugo is the shitty-stare maestro. Maybe going head to head in a battle of wills with a boy who could be the dictionary entry under ‘headstrong’ isn’t the best idea, but that’s the situation Ochako is in, and she can’t do much about it now.

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It goes without saying, given their newfound status as a supposed couple, that Ochako and Bakugo arriving late, together, and looking like they’re in trouble to the next class isn’t her ideal entrance. It
doesn’t seem to be much in Bakugo’s favour either, not that you would know it by looking at him. If anything, Bakugo looks annoyed the class and teacher didn’t all wait for him.

Without anything more than resentful glances between them fired like warning shots, Ochako and Bakugo split to their usual seats. Of course, Ochako has only been in hers a moment before with surprisingly owlish qualities Iida’s head flips around to face her.

“Is everything alright?” Iida whispers urgently, clearly torn over his dedication to paying attention to the lesson and clear concern for Ochako. She wants to tell him not to worry, it’s all stupid and Bakugo is just being Bakugo, but the words aren’t there.

“I can’t talk about it right now,” she gives in hushed reply, and hates the puzzled concern that reads so clearly off Iida’s face, even Tsu peeking from behind his bulky form like she wants to sneak a once-over to make sure Ochako’s all right after a – by now, probably widely discussed – bust up with Bakugo some fifteen minutes earlier. Even Deku’s sneaking woeful puppydog eyes across the classroom, and Ochako catches herself sighing, “I’m okay,” in a hopeless attempt to stop them worrying, but doesn’t expect it to convince anyone of much. It doesn’t.

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Ochako is grateful for the block that gymnastics training takes out of her day on this occasion. An escape before the final bell and prying friends that sets aside three whole hours of non-Bakugo talk, training and focus. It’s a relief she doesn’t realise she needs, until she’s swinging between bars and realises that she hasn’t thought about a single thing Bakugo since she got here. Her coach isn’t exactly permissive of distractions.

However, as if to immediately contradict herself by thinking about Bakugo excessively, Ochako settles on what she needs to do.

“Coach Nikiforov, I have a request,” Ochako asks after dismounting the bars. “There’s something I need to learn how to do, as fast as possible.”

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Ochako is an aching kind of satisfied some hours later, almost asleep on the train but with the sense of a job well done; better yet, she has something great to rub in Bakugo’s face should the chance arise.

Though Ochako tells herself she shouldn’t be thinking like this – shouldn’t be rubbing anything in Bakugo’s face, much less feeling satisfied about it. But with the future of their training hanging precariously in the balance, it’s hard for Ochako to unlatch him from the thoughts in the back of her head, like a piece of clothing that she keeps trying to set aside only for it to turn up in the back of the closet a few days later.

Lost in these concerns, Ochako jumps a mile high when her phone starts ringing on the walk back from the station to the school. Though the caller ID that flashes up isn’t unusual, Ochako can’t work out what it could be about, and her mind jumps to a place of panic for a moment.

“Deku? Is everything okay?” she rushes, mind a flick-book of things that could have happened for him to ring her unexpectedly.

“Hi– yeah, everything’s fine,” Deku answers, quickly settling the fears to rest. “It’s just… did you ask Kacchan to… apologise to me?”

Ochako’s first thought is to play dumb, a role she can pull off pretty well, but probably not with this
audience. She’s deceived Deku enough already. “Uh… you mean he actually did it?”

“Kinda… at least for him.” There’s a pause on the line, which Ochako leaves as it is, expecting that Deku has something to say, and he can’t say it if she’s blabbing away on the other end of the line about how ‘kinda’ shouldn’t cut it, and Bakugo either said sorry or he didn’t and can’t get away with half-apologies. “I… it’s not that I don’t appreciate it, Uraraka, but you really don’t have to.”

“I didn’t… I mean, well, I did… want him to apologise, I mean,” Ochako manages with the grace of a giraffe on roller skates at an ice rink. “I really hate when he’s like that with you.”

“I know, I know,” Deku soothes in a way that Ochako doesn’t understand – why is Deku trying to console her over Bakugo treating him so awfully? “But if he’s only doing it because you asked, it’s not really the same, I mean – it’d be great if he did say sorry, but it should be because he wants to, not because you want him to.”

“I… guess you’re right,” Ochako admits, and really, the surprise here that hasn’t sunk in is that Bakugo did it – because Ochako made him. She didn’t realise she had that much power, certainly not over Bakugo. “I just wish it was easier.”

“Kacchan is… he’s hard work.” Deku’s right, of course, and says all the things Ochako can’t figure out how to. Bakugo is hard work, utterly exhausting, and packed full of conflict that confrontation is inescapable on a daily basis. “But I honestly believe he’s worth it.”

Ochako lets out a deep sigh she wasn’t aware of holding, but as soon as it’s been said she feels the weight lift. “Sure would be nice if he was less of a butthead, though.”

Deku laughs, and Ochako feels so much better as soon as he does. “You wouldn’t believe what he was like back in middle school.”

“Oh I dunno, I think I would,” Ochako replies with a little more cheer.

“What I mean is, he is getting better, it’s just… hard for him.”

“It shouldn’t be hard for him not to be awful to you, Deku.” Ochako is sterner, because it needs to be done. Deku can’t let Bakugo rip him to shreds because it’s easier for Deku to stand it than for Bakugo to stop. “You’re the nicest person I know.”

Deku laughs again, though this time with a more nervous air. Things between them are good, but sometimes Ochako remembers when it wasn’t quite so easy. “Thank you anyway, for looking out for me. It means a lot.”

“You’re welcome.” Being on the phone means that Ochako doesn’t have to worry about Deku seeing her blush, a small mercy of the moment that goes unacknowledged. “Hey, I’m almost back at school, wanna help me with my history of heroics homework?”

“You bet I do!” Deku chimes like a bell. “Then I’ll meet you in the common area?”

“That’d be great.” A tired smile crosses Ochako’s face, relieved that not even Bakugo can put a dent in her friendship with Deku. That’s one thing she couldn’t handle. “See you soon.”

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The downside of Bakugo throwing another wildball by actually apologising to Deku – as much as a text reading ‘Sorry, asshole’ can be an apology – is that Ochako doesn’t get the extra sleep she was counting on. Ochako banked on Bakugo being stubborn enough to let her have a least one day
that didn't start at dawn, but having seen the unlikely proof with her own eyes, she can't break her word by not showing up.

If Bakugo keeps demonstrating how much this training means to him, more than Ochako ever realised, she feels she owes it to him to commit as much from her side too. Though it sure is gratifying seeing the moment of recognition when she does.

Bakugo is already at their regular training area, perhaps not wanting to lose the time if Ochako was going to bail, but when she jogs in there is a tiny pause in Bakugo’s warm-up that tells her he's noticed. A look that might even be pleased flashes across his face, and then he's back to compensating for it.

“Finally,” he grumbles even though Ochako is perfectly on time and they both know it. She's not going to pick on an easy smokescreen like that for no reason. It doesn't take a genius to work out Bakugo feels threatened by how much he wants Ochako – for this training, obviously – and like most insecurities, he reacts with needless aggression. But at least for now, Bakugo keeps his lid on. “Let’s get on with it, we don’t have long.” Whether Bakugo means today or before they're getting evaluated by Aizawa is unclear, but either way Ochako’s response is the same. They’ve got better stuff to do than pick a fight.

“Wait, there's something I have to show you first.”

Bakugo looks furious at any diversion, so without explanation Ochako gets to quickly unzipping her hoodie. She strips and throws the first layer on the ground, followed seconds after by her sweater until she’s in just a tank top and sweatpants a la Bakugo.

If he wasn’t paying full attention before, now Bakugo is definitely focused on Ochako, unblinking and gazing intensely, like he's got a problem with her stealing his look. After a few quick stretches, Ochako skips forward and breaks into a run, remembering her coach’s advice and all that relentless put-Bakugo-to-shame practice of the night before. The ground here is no sprung gymnasium floor, something Ochako feels all too pressingly as she builds speed and prepares for the cartwheel into the first backflip.

Ochako has been backflipping for days now, so even though it’s a little different on this terrain she’s comfortable enough to follow through and launch from the flip into the layout – yes, Bakugo said he’d let her off staying untucked and she could get away with a somersault, but that doesn’t rub Bakugo’s standards in his smug face, so it won’t do.

Turning feet over head, Ochako is prepared for the feeling and though she’s not moving as fast as she’d like, it’s enough to get all the way around without bailing – if it goes really bad she can always use her quirk, though saving face with Bakugo would be a completely lost cause. As it is, Ochako makes the backflip layout into a rough landing, recovering how her coach has schooled her and zipping her arms up into a finishing pose.

Bakugo’s sure as hell still watching, and for a moment when Ochako focuses on him she sees the blank slate of his face, mouth slightly open and wide-eyed after everything sceptical has been wiped clean off it. Then it changes as soon as Bakugo realises he’s being looked at.

“Is that supposed to impress me?” he scoffs, but Ochako saw him and knows the truth.

“Of course not.” Ochako crosses her arms and thinks about not letting her bottom lip stick out, because she’s not pouting, it’s just that if Bakugo is going to pretend then so will she. “I was just proving that I could, like you said.” She uncrosses her arms, deciding this is silly and the less she thinks about how Bakugo the things he does are the better. “Let’s get started.”
Bakugo likes that much better, a thin smile shadowing his face as he gives her a brisk nod and steps forward, hand outstretched.

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Chapter End Notes

If you've watched Yuri on Ice: IT'S HIM. I couldn't resist.

I'm going to take a stand now and fess up to being low-key high-key didn't-do-it-on-purpose-it-just-happened all ABOUT that thirdwheel!Deku in the BakuOchaDeku dynamic that literally no one asked for. I didn't ask for it but I'm *ABOUT* it. This is still v much a Kacchako fic, but just... Deku, UGH *lays down on the ground and is very still*
Bakugo’s might be shorter, but Ochako’s got a fuse too.

Soooooooooooooo this one’s a Gud, in my own humble opinion. I hope y’all enjoy it.

Ochako’s unrelenting lifestyle reaches a point of equilibrium again; the routine of training, school, training, sleep and then back to training. It even has her dreaming of grabbing Bakugo’s hands seconds before she wakes, only to find herself on the ceiling of her room – again. But nothing can quite prepare Ochako for the weirdness to come a few days after her shaky peace is brokered with Bakugo. More of a ceasefire than peace.

The rumour mill had been busy since Ochako and Bakugo’s high profile fight earlier in the week, the grand culmination of which comes to a head during homeroom a couple of days later. Ochako is sitting at her desk, frantically jotting notes off of Iida’s notes, when she senses a presence at her side. She turns to find Mina about two inches from her face, grinning from ear to ear.

“Oh… hi,” Ochako says with one eye on her notes still. “What’s up?”

“G’morning!” Mina cheeps like a very excited bird bouncing around a mountain of seed. “I was wondering how things are going with you and Bakugo.” Though Ochako sort of expects this to be Mina’s line of questioning, it’s no more welcome for being anticipated, especially without even a dusting of small-talk to hide behind and use as a diversion. That might be why Mina avoids it, actually. Ochako’s become a consummate pro at dodging questions about her-and-Bakugo, which remains one of the top trending stories in the schoolyard chatter rankings.

“Mhm.” Ochako isn’t really paying attention, and it shows. It’s a little bit deliberate.

Mina leans in, which means her face is almost touching Ochako’s, and keeps going. “Well?”

“Um, fine,” Ochako gives up reluctantly, trying very hard to keep up the sentence she’s working on without slipping the wrong words in there – like Bakugo’s name or something awful like that.

“Just fine?” Mina gasps. “Didn’t you two have a big fight the other day?”

For reasons best not delved into, but that she writes off to her distraction, Ochako’s off the cuff response to this is to quietly remark, “It wasn’t that big.”

“But you did fight?”

“Mhm,” Ochako murmurs without thinking about it. “We fight a lot, though, so…” slowing, Ochako realises she’s saying these things out loud, and snaps her mouth shut like it could somehow suck the
words back in. “Oh.”

Mina is looking a little bit like Ochako gave her a basket of kittens two weeks ago and this morning just took them all back. “Oh,” she echoes Ochako. “It’s that bad, huh?”

Ochako has a sky-top loud ‘NO’ on the tip of her tongue, because things with Bakugo are as fine as Bakugo-things can be, but she’s also bursting with a mile-long list of everything Bakugo does that drive her nuts and they end up squabbling over. Except those things don’t fit together, and for the life of her Ochako can’t figure out which one to say first when Present Mic bursts into the classroom with distraction to spare.

“Gooooooood morning boys and girls! We interrupt your regularly scheduled homeroom snore with sleeping booty for a super-fantastic session brought to you by the one and only: ME!”

Mina abandons her factfinders mission for jumping into a group selfie with Present Mic, leaving Ochako with a sinking sensation of this not being the end of it.

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Ochako is entirely too right sometimes.

“Hey Ochako.” Tsu hops over one of the short recesses between classes, and Iida’s head does the owl thing at the first opportunity. “I don’t mean to pry, but are things with you and Bakugo okay?”

Ochako takes a deep breath, chances a quick and unfruitful check on Bakugo across the room, and then meets her friends’ searching gazes with a sigh.

“They’re… fine.” Ochako isn’t sure they are, but she says it with the hopes of convincing herself. Her and Bakugo’s training couldn’t be better, the flow between them getting stronger every day; but that’s not what Tsu and Iida are curious about, and frankly, Ochako wonders a little about the rest too.

Bakugo hasn’t helped her with any more homework since the first occasion – not that she’s asked – and even the sparring sessions between them are being left out as they work even more intensely on their style in the run-up to Aizawa’s judgement. It’s not like they really talk about anything except the training, and though they patched things up enough to keep on practicing together, Ochako doesn’t really feel like things are as wrapped up as she’d like.

Talking to Bakugo is still hard, and in school that turns into plain avoidance. Ochako knows that private time between them will come before long, swearing to herself that’s when she’ll break the ice, but it never ends up happening. Bakugo’s drive, and Ochako’s inability to find the words for what’s actually wrong, keep shifting focus back to their training – the one thing that’s going right between them.

“You don’t sound very sure about that,” Tsu observes – a fair, but unhelpful, assessment. “Is it something you want to talk about?”

“No, I just… well I…” Ochako flails, waiting for something or someone to intervene and save her. Thankfully, someone does.

“While I share your concerns, Asui, I feel we must continue to respect Uraraka’s privacy.” Iida is only missing the shining armour and white horse at this point, and Ochako could leap-hug him in gratitude. “As… difficult as that is sometimes.”

“I guess you’re right, prez,” Tsu agrees without much joy for the admission, fixing her big saucer
eyes on Ochako in a way that tugs harder on the heartstrings than Ochako is prepared for. “But you know you can always talk to us?”

“Of course!” Ochako zips. “It’s not… I’m okay, really, so please don’t worry.”

“Every time you say that I doubt it a little more, but we’ll just have to trust you.” Tsu doesn’t look sold, finger propped to her mouth. “Ribbet.”

“Indeed.” Iida is perhaps the best boy in the whole world, and it pains Ochako to see how hard he tries to uphold her wishes while clearly worrying over her. “Really, if there’s anything… She wants to hug him just for trying so hard.

“Thank you.” Ochako ducks her head, palms pressed together, and hopes this time it’ll be enough to keep her friends’ concern at bay. She doesn’t feel worthy of such good people, not while she’s having to deceive them. It fuels a malcontent fire in her that keeps getting stronger.

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The slow buildup of Ochako’s frustration stops being so slow when later that day, she’s walking between classes and gets that sense of things about to go down. Namely, Bakugo is approaching her with a particular kind of look in his eyes.

“Hey-” This is a normal start, as far as Bakugo and most of their classmates would be concerned, but Ochako’s so ticked off from ducking inquiries and digs into what’s ‘going on’ with her and Bakugo that she reacts like – well, like him.

“I have a name, you know!” Ochako fires off, and it hits Bakugo like a bunch of lead balloons.

Bakugo’s eyes widen, the whites in clear contrast to the fiery red of his irises, and his mouth twists like barbed wire. “So?” When Bakugo crosses his arms and anyone standing within a metre radius finds an excuse to suddenly back away, Ochako considers she might have tugged the tiger by the tail on this one. “Cool it, chubby-cheeks. I just wanna talk.”

“Then you can ask me nicely,” Ochako replies, mimicking the crossed-arm position and twisting her mouth into a comparably sulky frown. “Instead of marching up all ‘hey’ and demanding whatever it is you want now.”

Bakugo doesn’t react at first, which makes Ochako think she’s got him on the ropes. More the fool her, for thinking he’d do anything except come back punching even harder. He tilts his head, eyebrows lifting slightly, and asks with frustratingly composed nonchalance, “Are you on your period or something?”

Ochako’s mind goes blank for a moment, spirited somewhere high up above her looking down on this situation making notes of each and every misstep in this exchange – which is every step. Ochako visualises hurling Bakugo into space and not releasing her quirk until he’s on the flipping moon. However, Ochako somehow finds the sense to back away from a fight she can’t see going any way but badly – not like this, in public with all those eyes and ears. At the crack of dawn she can throw Bakugo sky-high and know he’ll just come back down on her harder, because things between them are different in training; but not here, like this.

“Ugh.” She huffs, rolling her eyes and treating Bakugo to ice instead of fire, knowing it’s not his preference of the two. “I don’t have time for this.”

It’s true, but Bakugo clearly hates being told Ochako doesn’t have time for him, and it’s partly –
okay, mostly – why she says it. Bakugo wants to be the trump card over Ochako, able to stroll up and demand her attention as and when he wants it, but she’s tired of letting him call all the shots just because he’s deigned to train with her. And now she knows how much it means to him, what he’ll do to keep this going with her. Ochako feels it’s high time to adjust the scales a little.

“We can talk when you learn how to use some manners, Bakugo,” Ochako says firmly, though in truth her heart is beating like crazy – something to the tune of ‘do you realise who you’re talking to?!’ “I’m a person, not a pet.”

“Who died and made you the queen of attitude?” he spits.

“If I’m the queen you’re the king!” Ochako jabs a finger at Bakugo, and only after saying it considers what kings and queens are to each other. “Never mind,” she sighs, already turning away even with the feeling like she’s putting her back to an explosion. “I don’t wanna be late because of you again.”

It’s silly and vindictive, and Ochako knows it is, but that doesn’t stop her this time. She’s had just about enough of this nonsense with Bakugo; lying to her friends, always being tired, training like crazy just to play petty mind games instead of the simple recognition that seems so easy for everyone else.

So with all of that weighing on her mind – not on her period, thanks very much, but perhaps a touch hormonal and certainly out of flips to give – Ochako pivots on her heels and marches confidently away.

“Hey!” Bakugo yells after her, and if that isn’t exactly the kind of thing she’s purposely turning her back on. “Don’t walk away from me!”

Ochako bites her lip and does just that.

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Bakugo’s response is not what Ochako expects. Then again, it rarely is.

He’s waiting when she comes back from training with Coach Nikiforov. Ochako has stopped skipping the final class of the day for gymnastics practice, but the routine has become so set that she’s hard pressed to give the invaluable training up just yet. It reminds her of the days of interning at Gunhead’s, albeit not quite the same skillset or personalities at the helm. Ochako’s not ready to repurpose those couple of hours after school – certainly not to give them to Bakugo, with the way he’s been of late.

So to find him waiting for her barely inside the entrance of their dorm is an imposition Ochako isn’t quite prepared for.

At first Ochako keeps walking, pretending that it’s mere coincidence he’s hanging against the wall like someone has hung him up there on a hook. “Uraraka,” he addresses, face disguised by long slants of shadow, and she doesn’t miss the deliberate use of her name. It drags Ochako to a stop as she tries to pass him, feet like they’re stuck to the floor.

She’s exhausted and has a mess of homework to try and tackle before the morning. “Can’t we do this tomorrow?” she asks with wearied hope, but Bakugo lifts himself off the wall and takes two long steps to be next to her.

“No.” Bakugo’s hand moves, but rather than opening up palm-first to be touched, he’s the one who goes to her, reaching for Ochako’s wrist to wrap in a loose grip. “Now.”
When Bakugo gently pulls, Ochako finds herself following on instinct, so used is she to letting him move her. Her gut has a lot of things to say about this, but none of them are coherent, and Ochako finds herself wishing there was someone, anyone else in the lobby to break this immense tension. Or maybe not.

They get to the door. The ground floor lobby is empty for now, but they can’t very well get into this… whatever it is, in plain sight. While Ochako understands that, she also has questions about Bakugo simply leading her like a lamb to who-knows-what. “Where are we going?”

Bakugo is silent, but the tugging on her arm is plenty indicative. But that’s not enough, so when he pulls again Ochako resists. Her weight is nothing against his, but it’s not a contest of strength, it’s willpower – the fact that she won’t be led without explanation. Bakugo stops when she makes her objection clear, not dragging Ochako where she won’t go.

“Where?” Ochako repeats, and there’s a flash of eye contact when Bakugo’s gaze zones in on her.

“Behind the building.” There’s a bite to Bakugo’s tone that lifts the hairs on the back of Ochako’s neck. “That okay, or you gonna keep bitching?”

His manners still a work in progress, but Bakugo’s making an effort, and Ochako can’t bring herself to reject what is probably a big concession in his head. It has to count for something. Ochako’s resistance fades. “Okay.” She lets Bakugo lead her.

They trudge around the dorm building in the dark and silence, Ochako staring at the back of Bakugo’s shoulders and wondering just what’s going to come out of his mouth next.

Bakugo stops in the shadow of the dorm building, tucked away far from the view of passers-by. When he lets go Ochako realises how warm his hand is by measure of the cold left behind, like an empty space on her skin left by his handprint. He turns with a movement akin to a whip and a look so fierce it could pin Ochako to the wall. She makes no mistake, he’s pissed, utterly fuming, but there’s no explosion – yet. Whatever the reason, he’s restrained.

“So,” Bakugo begins in a gravelly, fed-up-as-hell tone – but one that totally fails to raise the appropriate warning flags in Ochako’s head, so desensitised is she to his fury. “What the fuck’s wrong with you?”

Chapter End Notes

Soooooo000000000000 I did another cliffhanger. Uh, oops?

*Curls up for catnap on top of powder keg* back soon.
There’s only so much Bakugo Katuski Ochako can take before getting truly fed up, and she’s finally out of tact to keep dancing around the issue.

I couldn't let everyone suffer for too long, so here you go *pulls release lever on cliffhanger*

Shit I just realised I should share my writing playlist for this ship/story, as it will instantly become apparent when looking at it that my taste in music is pure chaotic neutral and the songs do not have a whole lotta connection to this ship, mostly I just like the feel a song gives me and use that to ride the mood I want to hit when writing. This one's basically just FEELS?! of any kind.

(youtubedotcom)/playlist?list=PLYs9dh1XEc7UI0WVQ21CZNHqoEFISidou

“You want to know what my problem is?” Ochako wouldn't believe this, except that it just happened. To be standing with Bakugo in the dark, led behind the dorms like a toy on a string, and then asked to explain why she’s broken. Ochako prods Bakugo in the chest. More of a jab, really. “You are!”

Bakugo, as ever, looks pissed to all hell, but with this addition something else taints his scowl. It’s anger at something he doesn’t understand, the confusion casting dramatic lines in his face like a furious piece of abstract art. “Me? What did I do?”

Ochako quirks her head to the side. “Apart from being rude to my friends?”

Bakugo’s head tilts down, chin close to his chest. “I apologised for that, let it go already.”

Ochako’s hands lift up and settle surely on her hips, a familiar pose in an unfamiliar environment – tucked away in a backalley whispering like a real couple might. It seems bitter irony that the reality is so far off. “And do you always call people assholes when you apologise to them?”

Bakugo scoffs, the distinctive ‘tch’ sound that could put a hole through steel if scathing were bullets. “I get it now,” he mutters, “that shithead’s put you up to this, hasn’t he?”

“No!” Ochako throws up her hands, convinced there’s nothing Bakugo can’t find a way of pinning on Deku. “In fact, Deku’s the only person who’s done nothing but support us, and in return you’re awful to him.”

“I didn’t ask Deku for shit and I don’t want his goddam support!” Bakugo blows like a full
meltdown is imminent, and Ochako knows these are fuses better unlit, but she’s trying to draw a line here and with Bakugo that means there’s going to be a few fireworks.

“You don’t,” she hurls back like they're playing rocket-powered baseball, “but it matters to me!” This is the crucial difference, and it occurs to Ochako from the look of perplexity that strikes Bakugo mute that until she says it, he’s never thought about it like that.

Reeling from this revelation, or perhaps grasping that it’s something he can’t change with yelling, Bakugo’s temper pulls back like a wave washing out, though Ochako knows she only has to wait for the next crash of surf. “Then why do you care so goddam much?”

“Because…” Ochako isn’t good at not telling the truth, and keeping up this facade with Bakugo has used up all her capacity to do otherwise. So she just goes for it. “Because Deku is my only friend who seems to thinks this is worth all the trouble, and doesn’t seem secretly convinced you’re treating me badly.”

Bakugo’s initial reaction to this is a scornful laugh, which doesn’t really bode well. “You’ve gotta be kidding me,” he spits like slow-flowing magma, and from the ground his gaze lifts to meet Ochako’s. “I treat you like a damn princess.”

“A princess of what?” Ochako accuses. Perhaps hard work, nausea and handling temper tantrums.

Bakugo doesn’t seem furious about this immediately, which is unusual given Ochako’s expecting an outburst. Instead he’s smug, an insidious vitriol in his tone like he thinks he got something on her, the so-called princess. “So you just got that much better all by yourself, huh?” Ochako never forgets what he’s talking about, how much he’s helped—slowed down for her—but right now Bakugo’s absolutely wallowing in it. “I even helped you with your friggin’ homework.”

“Yes, and I… appreciate that,” Ochako rushes to agree before her nerves can warn her about throwing Bakugo’s efforts back in his face, “but you only help me because it gets you what you want.” Ochako’s sure Bakugo’s preference would be that she’s already able to do everything he needs her to, exactly when and where he needs her to do it, but it’s not a way a real person can live. In reality, he has to negotiate.

“What difference does it make why I’m helping?” Bakugo sounds fed up with this conversation, even though it’s happening at his insistence. “Just be grateful that I am.”

“Because everything we do is about navigating what Bakugo wants a hundred percent of the time,” Ochako does her best to explain, because even if Bakugo doesn’t get it, she’ll have tried and that’s something. “I have to argue with you to do anything except exactly what you want, and even then it’s not enough. You’ll just come marching up whenever you fancy either to pick a fight or make a new demand.” She thinks on it for a moment. “Usually both.”

“What else would I want?” he says cruelly, arms crossed over his chest. “If you wanna make nice then you have friends for that dippy shit.” The way Bakugo’s looking at her makes it clear as day that—even for all their chemistry with quirks in training, how easy it is to get along on that one very specific subject—she and Bakugo are not friends.

“I don’t need it from my friends,” Ochako didn’t plan on this being where she’s going with this argument, but it suddenly feels like the most sense that’s ever come out of her mouth on this subject. “You never ask, or even think about how the things you want us to do affect me, you just march up and bark orders as soon as they pop into your head.”

“If you don’t want to do something then tell me to piss off.” Bakugo acts like that’s a thing that could
ever happen and go well for the person doing the telling. Ochako would know.

“I do! But you don’t listen unless I throw a fit, then when I do you drag me off like this and ask me what’s wrong!” Ochako blows like a fuse, breaking the connection between her rational mind and mouth for good. “You’re making it impossible to win unless I do exactly what you want when you want.”

Bakugo takes a half-step closer to Ochako, and it feels like a huge leap. There’s a current in his voice that makes Ochako’s heart pick up a notch; not ominous, but sure of itself, and that alone is a powerfully intimidating force. “You wanted to be pushed.” Reminding her of the deal she made.

“I… I do.” Even at her wits’ end with Bakugo, Ochako still doesn’t want to end things here – she can, if she really wants to, but she doesn’t. She just needs something more from him, and telling’s the only chance at things getting better. “But I need you to listen to me.”

Bakugo’s feet slide backward, and the crushing pressure of his presence lightens a fraction. “So talk.”

The spotlight is Ochako’s, and of course she gets stagefright.

“I… this whole thing,” she starts to explain in uneven, jagged tones like the words are getting stuck in her throat. “I hate it.”

Bakugo’s face curls in the wrong ways, eyebrows pressing closer together, a flash of teeth behind a snarl. “If it’s that bad then fuck off-” He’s venomous the way a disturbed snake lashes out with pure instinct.

“No, I don’t mean that stuff,” Ochako makes up for her ineptitude, and the fangs retract a little. “I just hate that we’re pretending to be something we’re not, misleading everyone into thinking we’re… you know.”

Bakugo’s nonplussed. “You care what other people think too much.”

“I don’t like misleading friends who are just trying to look out for me,” she replies. “I don’t know what it’s like for you, but things get a little… uncomfortable for me.”

Something weird happens in Bakugo’s face, like he’s putting the pieces of a puzzle together and finally being able to see the pattern on the surface. “Because they think I’m bad for you?”

“No,” Ochako doesn’t quite come off sincere, and it would be because she’s not entirely convinced Bakugo is wrong, with the way their friends have talked. “But you can hardly blame them, we’re always arguing around school and you’re nasty to all my friends.” Ochako lets out a sigh she only realises she’s been holding when it blows a hot-air balloon’s worth of exasperation out in a single puff. “I get asked if things are ‘okay’ like ten times a day.”

“So tell’em to piss off,” Bakugo recommends, because he apparently still thinks that one will work.

“If I did that they’d just worry more about me.” Ochako rolls her eyes, which in the dim light might be lost as an expression, but it feels good to do anyway. “We’re not all Bakugo Katsuki, you know?”

Ochako doesn’t know why she goes for his whole name, it just comes out on the fly and is done before she can think back on it, but he certainly seems to find it amusing.

“You suck at boundaries, bubble-head.” A damning prognosis if Ochako has ever heard one.

“Yeah, well, you could make things a bit easier.” The responses start flowing again, and when
Ochako has finally blasted through the thick walls and actually engaged with Bakugo it’s not so bad – it’s just the demolition work of getting him to really listen that’s been the trouble. “I’m not a gadget from support to make you stronger, I’m a whole person.” Ochako tries to remember if Bakugo did actually step back or not, because he still feels awfully close.

“I know what you are.” When Bakugo looks Ochako up and down, she’s certain he does know exactly what she is, at least in the terms he’s thinking of. Although what they could be beats her: the inside of his head remains an unsolved mystery.

Then because he’s Bakugo, and an even playing field is of the utmost threat to him, he keeps on swinging. “You need me more than I need you.”

“Funny,” Ochako says with a slight sigh. “I was thinking the same thing about you.”

Bakugo doesn’t enjoy that, but he’s the one buckling when Ochako threatens to quit. Then again, Ochako is the one getting a swift pickup in her academic performance, thanks to the boundary-pushing intensity of this unrelenting training with Bakugo. She does need him, at least to keep up with anyone like him, as weird as it makes her feel to acknowledge it. So maybe it’s a draw.

Bakugo stands there just… thinking, for long enough that Ochako starts contemplating him standing before her in the silence. For as hard as he pushes Ochako, she has a hunch he’s just as tough – maybe tougher – on himself, and that in Bakugo’s eyes he’s only doing what he must in necessary pursuit of a goal. Figuring out that another person can’t always handle the way he deals with things seems to be a new concept, and he’s taking a little time to process it.

More than ever, Ochako reckons Bakugo is selfish not because he consciously puts himself above all others – which he does, of course – but because he never even thinks of anyone else. Only when Bakugo is actively invited, practically ordered to contemplate the world from someone else’s shoes does he actually do it, and Ochako’s are surely a weird fit for him.

So he’s taking his sweet time, but everything Bakugo says when he finally does talk has been given great thought. “If you really don’t like people thinking we’re… something else, you can tell’em whatever you want after we get assessed by Aizawa,” Bakugo issues like a final judgement on a case set before him. “Two more weeks doing it my way, then come clean if you wanna.” His shoulders rise and fall with a deep breath, calm. “Okay?”

It’s weirdly frustrating how reasonable Bakugo can be after making Ochako suffer so much, and when she thinks about it, it really isn’t impossible to keep telling her very good and sweet friends she doesn’t want to talk about it right now. Knowing there will be an end to ‘right now’ changes things, and a couple of weeks will go by in a flash on Bakugo’s schedule.

“Okay,” Ochako grants, and sees how pleased – not even happy, but maybe just relieved – Bakugo is. They both want this to work. “But be nicer to me during school.”

Bakugo smirks, or at least Ochako thinks he does in the dodgy lighting. She wonders, given the open air and floors of their classmates’ above them, if any of this particular ‘spat’ between them might have been overheard. Although it almost certainly has, she lets herself pretend there’s a chance everyone’s deeply asleep. That it’s just her and Bakugo here.

Ochako definitely hopes this is the case when Bakugo says, “I’ll just leave you alone, princess.” His head moves back and yes, it’s a smirk.

Unwisely, because if Bakugo’s pulling attitude then it’s exactly what he’ll get, Ochako quips, “Oh, that’d be nice.”
With an arrogance of pretending it’s unrelated, Bakugo leans forward and puts his palm flat on the wall next to Ochako – not blocking her way, but certainly reminding her of his presence. Like she needs much reminding. “You don’t seem to mind me other times.”

“When you’re not being difficult, sure,” Ochako replies quite boldly for anyone feeling as physically small as she does about now. Which, encompassed by Bakugo and all of his chest and shoulders, is a sense of a matador in front of a bull. “I’m not saying you have to make friends.” Ochako’s holding Bakugo’s gaze while her heart and stomach have some kind of contest running to swap places inside her chest. “Just don’t be nasty for no reason.”

Bakugo, ever-defiant, says with his gaze unwavering from Ochako’s, “I have reasons.”

That’s an answer Ochako’s not expecting, and is such a peculiar notion – that Bakugo could have a grievance against her friends – is forced to ask simply, “Which are?”

Bakugo, oddly, doesn’t answer. Just… stops as quickly as turning off a tap, and instead of responding to Ochako’s question picks himself off the wall and takes a few steps away, his back to her.

“We still on for tomorrow?” the way Bakugo asks makes Ochako think there is light at the end of the tunnel, and she remembers Deku’s advice.

Maybe Bakugo’s… Bakugo, really is worth it – if he can actually show progress, and not crawl back to the same toxic loop. He’s a fast learner, and usually only needs to see something once to turn it around in a way that works to his advantage. Perhaps that trait could be encouraged into other areas of his personality.

“Yeah,” she replies simply. “We ought to get some rest.”

Bakugo is looking up. “Hey,” he says thoughtlessly. Ochako huffs, even if Bakugo’s not pushy with his summons this time, too busy staring back up in the air like he hasn’t even noticed. “Wanna take the fast way up?”

“We can’t do that,” Ochako gasps with an outrage that comes off a lot more put-upon than she means it to. “What if we get caught?”

Bakugo puts his hand out, and Ochako feels the instinctive pull of her own – to naturally want to reach out and grab him.

“We won’t.” He sounds so sure Ochako can’t help but believe him.

This, Ochako observes as she watches her own hand lifting like it’s not her working the controls, is exactly how Bakugo keeps getting them into trouble. A sensible Ochako would stop them.

She does it anyway.

Chapter End Notes

*Sipping cocktail inside bubbling cauldron of trash soup* come join me in the ship hell hot-tub, the water's heating up nicely.

OH YEAH, and for readers who notice the whole kabe-don thing Bakugo's got going
on, I swear on my life I NEVER REALISED I literally just was like 'ah yes he better do this thing that feels right' and then much later was like holy shit that kabe-donning tropelord. I have... questionable control over my own creation.
Bakugo's Problem

Chapter Summary

Bakugo's problem is of a different, more troubling nature.

Chapter Notes

So I'm about to go on vacation, at LAST. It's a well deserved break, though I will have every ability to keep updating this while I'm there, so it's probably going to happen.

We're reaching a real gear-shift in this story that I just think everyone is going to LOVE, so once more for the record thanks a whole massive bunch for everyone who's hit kudos, left a comment or bookmarked me with amusing tags, as well as the hits from people just reading and enjoying. I'm SUPER thrilled you're all here and am incredibly psyched for the story that I get to roll out for all of you. It's gonna be WILD.

On the wrong side of curfew, and definitely bending the rules, Ochako and Bakugo must be silent in their ascent of the dorm building. That means no explosions, which is Bakugo’s game. So now it’s Ochako’s turn.

“Fourth floor,” Bakugo says quietly, eyes turned up and a hand absent-mindedly outstretched towards her. Same as Ochako, though there’s no easy way of getting between the boys and girls wings without taking the actual stairs on the ground floor.

“Why aren’t we using the stairs again?” Ochako whispers, but she’s still touching her fingertips to the hot, clammy surface of Bakugo’s palm and activating her quirk.

“Boring,” is Bakugo’s concise reply, and then like he’s never doubted a thing in his life – Ochako isn’t sure he has – Bakugo tugs on Ochako’s arm and pulls her flat to his side.

“We don’t need to do it like this ,” she finds herself saying terribly softly, because Bakugo’s just that close it doesn’t need to be any louder.

“Sure we do,” Bakugo replies, and Ochako swears she can feel his breath on her cheek. She can certainly feel the heat pouring off him where they press together. That in itself isn’t so unusual, but this soon after arguing Ochako is extra aware of the ease with which they still fit together, even after yelling so honestly at one another. On second thought, that might be why. Yelling isn’t pretty, but it gets things out in the open. “You’re gonna steer.”

Ochako looks left and right like there’s a car or train cab they’re missing. “Steer what?”

“Us,” Bakugo explains without an angry flash of impatience. “Like in that fire exercise.” His head tilts a bit, and there’s the glimmer of annoyance in his eyes. “Show me some of that shit you’ve been holding out on.”
“I wasn’t holding out, you just never gave me a chance.” Ochako knows she’s been passive with Bakugo – at least in the air – a disproportionate amount of the time, but it’s easy when he can just do everything and has a plan for them all laid out in his head before she even walks up. It honestly hadn’t occurred to her that anything she does with her own quirk could be of value to Bakugo.

“So take control,” he says, eyes narrowing as his gaze drops downwards with an implicit ‘I know you can.’ They both know it. Not least because Ochako plays Bakugo-frisbee when he annoys her during training. However, blowing off steam and snatching the reins isn’t the same as a proper contribution to their style, which is what Bakugo’s openly offering to her. Ochako needs to step up.

“Alright.” Ochako pulls back from the over-closeness of Bakugo’s chosen pose and grabs a handful of his sweatshirt collar, baggy in her fingers and all the contact she needs with her quirk activated to move him around her like he’s a feather and not a whole lot of muscle and bad attitude. “I will.”

There’s a flash of surprise in Bakugo’s eyes when he realises that Ochako is going off the script he expects for this exchange, but he asked to be shown her way, and that means less unnecessarily close body-contact.

Ochako throws Bakugo like a wedding bouquet, and he goes up with the aerial grace of one. In truth he even flails a little as Ochako watches him from the ground, pausing only a moment before she pushes off the ground. Purposely moving a little faster than she tosses Bakugo, Ochako overtakes him just over half-way up to the fourth floor and grabs Bakugo by the scruff of his top to guide them rest of the way up.

While Bakugo doesn’t much like this, there’s little he can do but flail, and even trying to stop Ochako would defeat the purpose of what he’s asking to see. Ochako pretends Bakugo is another dummy from the silly training exercise, and it helps her detach from the reality of moving him around like a bag of shopping.

When they reach the right floor of the building, Ochako lets go of the back of Bakugo’s collar, allowing a controlled drift until he’s level with her before securing a firm grip back in the front of his top. “Hold it,” Bakugo says unexpectedly, and Ochako freezes; the fingers of one hand wrapped tightly around a window sill, the other’s even tighter in the dark fabric of Bakugo’s artfully overstretched t-shirt.

“What?” she asks in a whisper.

Bakugo’s hand lifts to wrap around Ochako’s wrist, centering the hold she has on him so it runs through his arm, and not the baggy fabric of his top. “Watch the threads.”

Ochako has the smallest suspicion that Bakugo stops her just to see if he can, to test her ability to react fast and respond to him. Or maybe he’s just worried about her pulling his clothes off. Again. Forget Aizawa’s assessment, Ochako still has Bakugo judging her every waking moment.

“What else should I grab?” she replies. “It’s not like you have handles.”

For a brief moment, Bakugo looks utterly astonished with the suggestion, a fire in his eyes that Ochako doesn’t know what to expect from. But then he murmurs, “There’s an idea,” and Ochako feels her cheeks burn a little warmer.

Like it will somehow help, at the very least moving the conversation on, the next thing Ochako works up to asking is, “So which room’s yours?”

It’s entirely possible that Bakugo’s voice holds a note of tension too, maybe as the reality of sneaking
in and out of the dorm like this – and the trouble they might get into if caught – really sinks in. “Three from the back.”

Ochako slowly moves them along the back of the building towards the boy’s side – her own room on the corner of the girls’ side behind her – and stops on the corner. A shared look with Bakugo manages to convey mutual understanding of what comes next, when Ochako shifts him like a shuffleboard puck parallel to the edge of the building. She doesn’t follow, not wanting to be caught floating past the boys’ rooms – there’s no need for any more fuel for the rumour-fed fire.

As expected, Bakugo sails straight past the balconies of classmates Ochako sure hopes are asleep or not noticing any of this, and grabs onto his own rail when it comes up. Bakugo swings over his balcony to set weightless feet on the ground, and Ochako waits on the corner for a signal she’s expecting without thinking about it.

Bakugo’s arm pops out from past the edge of the building, sticking over his balcony. His fingers lift and flex in a way that’s almost – if she squints – a wave goodbye, and only then does Ochako move back from the edge, swimming the short distance over to her balcony and releasing her quirk.

Ochako gives a deep sigh as she lets herself into her room, feeling like the slow-burning fuse that burns between her and Bakugo smoulders for another day.

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The next morning, break of dawn as ever, Bakugo isn’t barely-dressed and raring to go out front of the dorms when Ochako steps out into the cleansing morning air. He’s not in the dorms at all, as it happens; she recalls him saying he’d give her more space – leave her alone, in his words, but didn’t expect it to be like this.

Ochako jogs to the training area expecting Bakugo to be warmed up and hopping with impatience, but when she gets there she doesn’t see him on her first sweep. That’s because he’s slumped against a wall in a patch of early sun, a dogeared notepad in one hand.

“G’morning!” Though yesterday was… tense, to say the least, Ochako believes firmly in fresh starts in the light of a new day, and has decided to be as upbeat as possible in the hopes of keeping Bakugo similarly animated. The only thing being bitter would achieve is quickly annoying Bakugo, who – if he did listen and is going to try and be better – needs to be given the chance to do better, and not to be undermined with nagging off the bat. Ochako more than anything wants to give Bakugo the chance to be a better person.

Bakugo’s response to this clean-slate attempt is a nondescript, ‘hn’ sound, neither annoyed or amused, but a simple acknowledgement that he’s being spoken to. Also, apparently about as good as Ochako’s going to get while he’s otherwise occupied.

When she’s close enough, Ochako sees what Bakugo has on the page in front of him are sketches. Of his own costume on one side of the page page, but what also looks an awful lot like hers.

“What’cha working on?”

“Handles, duh,” Bakugo answers without wavering from the focus he has trained on the strokes of ink over pencil as he places careful marks over the figures sketched out in front of him.

“Oh! Can I see?” Ochako comes right up behind Bakugo and leans over to watch, following the perfectly logical places on each of their suits where a quick modification could be made to give them better grip on each other.
It’s odd to see Ochako’s hero outfit rendered in any form, much less by Bakugo, and with an awkward flush she wonders if her costume is really so… well, curvy. It has to be something Bakugo’s noticed, proof on the page here, and Ochako certainly doesn’t know what to do with the fizzing cocktail of things that observation brings out in her.

“Least we have the same designer,” Bakugo’s thoughtful, laser-focus applied to the task at hand, and even tilts the page for Ochako to see more clearly after he’s made the final stroke. They’re mostly around the collar – for Bakugo – and hips – for Ochako. The places where it’s hard to grab without things getting awfully personal awfully fast. “You wanna add anything?”

At first Ochako doesn’t realise he’s outright asking her for input, then she remembers this is Bakugo, who learns fast and rarely makes the same mistake twice. It hits Ochako that he’s trying, and her gut is even more twisted up before they’ve even got off the ground. “Uh, looks good to me,” she answers with the hope that her peculiar awkwardness won’t come through in her voice.

“Good.” The notebook snaps shut, and Bakugo puts it into his bag. “I’ll send it over so we get ’em with the next round of upgrades.”

“Great,” Ochako replies, and then whether it’s needed or not, adds a, “thanks,” which seems to confuse Bakugo more than anything, giving her one of the weirdo looks as he stands up and stretches. “So what are we working on today?”

“When we show Aizawa, it can’t just be a fixed routine.” Bakugo grabs the back of his sweater and pulls, shedding the layer to the usual tight-fit tank top that Ochako’s a little more intimately acquainted with than she’s comfortable to admit. “We have to be able to react to anything and still make it work.” When he bends over to stuff the sweater into his bag, Ochako finds it hard to miss a brightly coloured shock of elastic that can only be Bakugo’s boxers, clinging to his hips well above the waist of his tracksuit bottoms. Contemplation of this neon distraction banner plays a significant role in Ochako’s delayed reactions thereafter.

When the tennis ball Bakugo throws at Ochako bounces off her forehead, she jumps into an attack pose on instinct, only realising as it rebounds that he was expecting her to catch it. “You still fuckin’ asleep, pink-cheeks?”

“No! Sorry, I was… distracted,” Ochako says about as comfortably as a frog in a saucepan. This clearly irritates Bakugo, but so does everything.

“By what?”

“Nothing.” Ochako cannot, under any circumstances, let Bakugo know his underwear was in any way responsible, but even thinking about it makes her cheeks turn even truer to his latest nickname.

“Then pull it together.” Bakugo picks the ball back up, which means another flash of neon embarrassment, but this time Ochako manages to catch it. “Throw the ball, catch it, bring it back here. Okay?”

Ochako nods, pressing her fingers into the felt of the ball and activating her quirk. After all of yesterday’s drama, she can’t deny that training Bakugo’s way isn’t so bad. “Okay.”

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True to his word, after they’ve finished training – which involved chasing tennis balls so long Ochako feels convinced Bakugo is part dog – he leaves her alone for the rest of the day. Although Ochako catches a caustic look or two from Bakugo’s blood moon glare as she goes about her day,
they remain only looks.

Relieved to no longer be putting her friends in the crossfire merely by being around them, the moment of truth comes when Ochako is walking right past Bakugo with Deku and Iida in tow. Because this is usually the point Bakugo finds any reason to be invasive and demanding. Ochako could’ve set her watch by it over the past few days.

But this time, nothing happens – it’s as if Bakugo doesn’t even know her. Ochako finds herself straining for the ‘hey’ she railed against so ardently with a pang of something like disappointment when it doesn't come. It gets her wondering how she can miss something that caused her so much trouble.

Bakugo’s trouble proves to be of a rather different nature.

Kirishima remains the bastion of fearlessness in taking shots at Bakugo, never more evident than when Ochako – and the rest of the class, no doubt – overhears him teasing the barely dormant volcano after class ends.

“So you and Uraraka crashed and burned already, huh?”

The back of Bakugo’s head doesn't respond. Neither does the front, it'd seem, but that doesn't stop anyone.

“Seriously!?” Kaminari reacts like Bakugo said it, but after a second’s glare shifts his gaze uncomfortably back over to Kirishima. “So I guess even Bakugo can't hold down a girl like Uravity.”

“If that's intentional you should be ashamed of yourself,” is Jirou’s opinion on the matter.

“Is what?” Kaminari lives to inadvertently pun another day.

“Since when did they break up?” Jirou sits with face propped in one hand and ever the air of aloofness, even while she digs for gold.

“What?! They broke up! Nooo–” Mina, ever the enthusiast, doesn't take it well.

“Well, they sure don’t seem like they're going out, do they?” Kirishima points out, and for some reason this is taken to be as good as the word of Bakugo; who remains indifferent to all this, as if they’re birds hopping around on the back of a hippo.

“They have been arguing an awful lot,” Mina sighs, “maybe it's for the best.”

“Hold on, does that mean Uraraka’s back on the market?” No one asks Mineta for his input, but then no one ever does. He just offers it, like an oil well spitting gunk in the middle of a botanical garden.

But this is the moment, of all moments, when Bakugo snaps. Just about flips his whole desk with how fast he gets to his feet. Kirishima rocks back a step with how suddenly Bakugo gets in his face. But Bakugo doesn't stay there long, turning over his shoulder to give Mineta a glare that could be judge, jury and executioner by hanging.

“You touch her, and I'll fucking kill you.” The way Bakugo says it leaves absolutely no room for doubt. Mineta visibly shrinks under his desk, and before anyone can follow up by asking what the hell’s gotten into Bakugo, he's stomped out of the classroom.

There’s a silence that could only be added to by a tumbleweed drifting through the room.
Then Kaminari says, “Well someone’s taking this breakup badly.”

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Chapter End Notes

Possibly radical opinion: I don't hate Mineta, he's shitty little pervert, but I feel like he's a very real classroom character and most people knew kids like that back in school. Also he's great for comedy and getting ragged on, I wouldn't trade his place in this chapter for anything. It's perfect with his dumbo stickyball head in it and all.

Not at all radical opinion: Kirishima is a good sweet soul and he has the patience of an utter saint for the bullshit he puts up with from his human sized hot sauce bottle he carries around with him.
The Breakup Fakeup Makeup

Chapter Summary

The plot thickens, then Bakugo pours a whole load of hot sauce in it.

Chapter Notes

This is a big chapter, for reasons I hope will be obvious.

I also write this from a sunny balcony in the canary Islands, which is absolutely fabulous and thanks to everyone who wished me well and emphasised that I didn't have to update from vacation, which I appreciate a lot but am totally doing anyway because *distant screaming* 

So enjoy!

There are lots of things that Ochako has come to expect from Bakugo. Things that a few weeks ago she would have insisted were pure lunacy to claim – like having a working relationship with him that actually involves listening and being considerate of her feelings, or a quirk-teamup that could be the biggest development of both their academia, or knowing what brand of underpants Bakugo wears. Some things Ochako's learned whether she likes it or not.

However, the compendium of things Ochako understands about Bakugo does not have the slightest impact on his ability to completely, totally and undeniably blindside her. Often at awkward times. This time, it’s while they’re playing an evolution of the tennis ball game – make that training – with a bounce modifier of needing to hit at least two hard surfaces before they go to catch it. There’s a lot less spinning and a lot more triangulating the trajectory needed to be in a certain place at a certain time, but this is still a Bakugo-approved exercise and Ochako just happens to be holding her own at it. For once.

Bakugo started the contest by counting. Or so Ochako argues. Bakugo claims she started it by snatching the ball away from him, which she only did because she could. The result is that although the exercise stays on the rails of being valuable practice most of the time, when the ball bounces in a particularly erratic way it becomes fair game. All at once the cooperation of Ochako and Bakugo’s style flips like alternating current, and they're suddenly fighting each other in whatever way necessary to snatch the lightly charred tennis ball first.

This training area is becoming more and more familiar to Ochako, and at times like this it feels almost like a comically oversized playground for her and Bakugo, fresh parts of the landscape pulled up overnight by Cementoss when they’re broken beyond repair.

The thwack of the ball as it bounces off a broken stump of concrete echoes around the empty slabs of building. Ochako swings around a lampost way too fast, but still manages to come off right on target for the green dot up ahead – just as Bakugo comes down from above.
Bakugo’s falling like a comet, but Ochako isn’t giving up until she sees the ball in his hand so keeps going in hard. They collide in a not so glamorous fashion with their fingers tangling together against the burned felt of the ball, spinning end-over-end and only stopping when Ochako releases them and barfs a second later, leaving her panting on her hands and knees under a tingle of warmth from the early day’s sun.

There’s a silence that Ochako’s gaspy breaths manage to dominate, but Bakugo is easy enough to hear. “I was first.”

Ochako takes a swig of water from a soft pouch she’s taken to carrying and spits, taking a few more deep breaths before she’s caught up enough to speak. “In your dreams.”

“He-” Bakugo cuts his address in half with a strange hitch in his breath, then like resetting a needle on a record goes back to try again. “Uraraka.”

“Yes?” Ochako shuffles around to face Bakugo, who’s sitting up with his legs sprawled as if he landed just like that. She’s gotten used to Bakugo when he’s not scowling all the time, although he does have a decidedly grumpy resting face. Ochako’s come to the conclusion that Bakugo’s features don’t really hang any way but intimidatingly.

However, right now he looks more like a resting warrior than one going into battle. Ochako catches herself being pleased he’s gotten relaxed enough to be this way around her, though it figures he’s most comfortable in the throes of exhaustive training.

Perhaps that comes into it. Because although they’re words Bakugo seems to have thought out carefully, the context in which they arrive is severely lacking. “I think we should make up.”

“What do you call this?” Ochako almost says, but in practice it comes out, “I thought we did.”

“Not like… no.” Bakugo is odd to see struggling with something, when he’s usually so sure in everything he does. “It’ll be weird if people think we’ve broken up but carry on spending time together.”

Strangely, the main thing Ochako finds contentious isn’t Bakugo’s argument. Some other glaring contradiction dominates her concern. “Since when did you care what people think?”

“I don’t.” Bakugo’s hand goes to his head, fingers weaving through and combing out his hair into the wild peaks it’s determined to roam in. “But they’re gonna get suspicious if we don’t have a story.”

Ochako doesn’t goad Bakugo by pointing out his comment means he’s accepted she’s right – that pretending to be a couple is the only plausible excuse they can give to their classmates and ‘laying boundaries’ just isn’t going to be enough – but only because she’s more interested in what Bakugo’s going to say next and wouldn’t want to distract him with an excuse for a fight. Neither of them need excuses for that.

Bakugo seems more invested in tugging his hair than talking, so Ochako gives a little nudge – proverbial, not literal. “So you want us to pretend make-up for a real fight we had in our fake relationship?”

Some part of this Bakugo finds objectionable, annoyance darting across his face like sheet lightning. “Fake?” he echoes like Ochako’s called him the biggest phoney on snake oil island.

“Well, we’re not really going out,” Ochako points out like the moon in the sky – something Bakugo’s surely noticed before, and at times is pretty dang hard to miss.
“Obviously.” Why Bakugo’s so moody is beyond Ochako, and she's about to get cranky herself when he says something that sends a chill all the way up her spine. “But this is real.”

*This*, the combined style that leaves waves of shattered concrete in their wake. Except Ochako just can’t understand Bakugo sometimes, wanting proof of the strangest things at the strangest times. “Isn’t that what we’re pretending in order to hide?”

“You don’t have to,” Bakugo snaps with blunt force, like he’s *ordering* Ochako to know she isn’t being forced into it. “I know that shit pisses you off.”

Ochako thinks about it, and based on her limited experience so far, she has a hunch that being fake-broken-up from Bakugo is not going to be any less question-attracting than being pretend-back-together-with-him. Only then does Ochako realise she’s thinking like they *are* fake-broken up, although it’s not like she and Bakugo did anything to confirm it. Or deny it.

But if Bakugo *had* wanted his friends to think they were still together, wouldn’t he have said something when Kirishima asked him?

“Hey— uh, Bakugo,” Ochako does not deliver with grace. “Is that why you didn’t say anything the other day?” When it would’ve been easy for him to deny they’d broken up and he *hadn’t*.

Bakugo’s going an angry kind of red. “I didn’t say anything because those nosey shitheads are full of it.”

“I’ll take that as a yes.” Bakugo seems furious that Ochako knows the translation of his puffed-up posturing, starting to go a really alarming cherryish colour across his whole face and right down to his neck. Ochako smiles when she works it out. “Thanks for talking to me about it first.”

Bakugo’s head might explode, but he’s actually managed to check in with Ochako before doing something that affects her, even when it’s clearly what he wants—enough to ask. It feels like effort to be rewarded, because when she gets a chance to think about it, Ochako doesn’t mind Bakugo’s way of doing things.

“If it’s just for a couple of weeks, I think it’ll be alright.” She rocks her head to one side to try and catch more of Bakugo’s blush, but he’s looking away from her. “After Aizawa assess us we can tell everyone the truth.”

“If you still wanna,” Bakugo grunts.

Ochako feels like she’s always going to want to tell the truth, but why Bakugo is so at peace with this particular bit of untruth is the more interesting part of the equation. She knows it’s convenient for them to be seen as a couple to explain why they’re… *close*, but after the way Bakugo snapped at Mineta, Ochako’s starting to wonder if there’s other aspects of pretend-dating that he’s starting to see the benefits of.

Bakugo being possessive of anything, even a person, isn’t exactly surprising, yet it surprises Ochako anyway. If she looks back on Bakugo’s behaviour with an ounce of insight Ochako would bonk herself on the forehead and say *‘duh, obviously,’* but until that exact moment she’s never thought of it like *that*. And the way the thought does strike turns her mouth into a desert.

“So…” Ochako grapples for anything, anything to say at all that’s not observing how Bakugo’s interruptions are—were—always worst around Deku, and whether that’s because he knows Ochako and Deku have *history*, or simply because he still has enough childish hate for Deku to want anything that’s his. Perhaps both. Ochako doesn’t care for either, now she thinks about it. “How
should we do this?”

Bakugo looks at Ochako like he thinks she ought to get her head checked. Forget checked, swap it out for someone else’s head. That gets Ochako thinking who Bakugo would even want to swap her for, and it’s a while longer before she realises he’s waiting for her to explain what in the heck she means through the delicate art-form of glaring.

“I meant, us… making up.”

Bakugo seems no more pleased with the question than when he didn’t understand it. The fair daggers of his eyebrows screw up into an angry knife-pile in the middle of his face. “How the fuck should I know?”

Ochako doesn’t remember when the razor-edge walk of this conversation fell down on the cranky side again, but then she rarely does. “But it was your idea.”

“We didn’t do anything before,” Bakugo grumbles. “Goddam idiots took it into their heads all the same.”

“I’m not sure it’ll work like that again.” Ochako wonders what Bakugo imagines ‘making up’ even is. If his precedent with Deku is any indication, she should expect to be cussed out a whole lot more. “We might have to really… pretend.”

Bakugo looks a bit like Ochako threw up on him, which she didn’t. She’s made a pretty dedicated effort towards avoiding it at all costs, actually. But even so he’s defensive, cornered dog attitude and bared teeth. “That a problem?”

Ochako could roll her eyes, but Bakugo either wouldn’t notice, or he would and the fallout wouldn’t be worth it. Maybe she’s overthinking this. “I said it wasn’t.” A hint of impatience taints Ochako’s tone by mistake, because they’ve literally just covered this as far as she’s concerned, and Bakugo does about as well with the unintentional attitude as she expects.

“Alright, princess!” he barks. “You’re the one who wanted your damn hand held.” He’s being figurative, but it gets Ochako thinking.

“Oh,” Ochako comes from a place that tonally puzzles Bakugo, whose steam runs out in a sudden puff. “There’s an idea.”

Bakugo stares flat out at Ochako for long enough she has to blink and ask herself why she’s getting into staring contests with him in the first place. Then one side of his face lifts a fraction, just high enough to shift his mode from surly to defiantly amused. “You want me to hold your hand?”

“W-” Ochako doesn’t think that’s what she said. The she checks, reeling back through her short-term memory like a double-taking goldfish, and it is. “W-well, we do it all the time, you know? And it’d definitely make everyone think…” Ochako puts an important question to herself, which is exactly when she became a willing accomplice in this ruse. “It was just an idea.”

Bakugo mulls it over long enough Ochako wants to click her tongue and hurry him up – only that’d never work on Bakugo, so she saves her tongue the trouble.

“It’s stupid,” he finally decrees.

“No need to be rude, it’s not like you’ve-” brought anything to the table,’ Ochako is getting to scolding when Bakugo cuts her off with clear I-wasn’t-done finality.
“That's why it'll work.”

This isn't a big deal, at least according to Ochako’s own reasoning. Because when it actually comes down to it, after they've changed into their uniforms, when she finds Bakugo waiting for her outside the changing room block like this fake relationship can be pretty convincing sometimes, Ochako isn't so sure.

Because usually Bakugo’s gone by the time Ochako’s in uniform. Today, he waits.

It's not very far from these changing rooms to the main building, a short distance that shouldn't feel so intimidating and does anyway. Ochako reminds herself this is something they do literally all the time, have done since the very beginning of this training. Because her hands have to touch Bakugo somewhere in order to use her quirk, and his hands are as good a place as any.

Assumptions Ochako may come to regret, when she locks eyes with Bakugo and tries to read the measure of his temperament like a thermometer. Cold with a touch of fucking freezing. But this was, Ochako reminds herself, all Bakugo’s idea. Okay, maybe three quarters his idea.

“Should we start now?” Ochako asks, feeling like it’s a solid fifty-fifty her idea to his.

Bakugo scoffs, which Ochako thinks is a bit much in response to a simple question. But Bakugo has a decided position on backing out of things, so when he irately huffs and reaches out to grab Ochako's hand in his own, her last doubts about whether they're actually going through with this are blown away. It's absolutely happening.

“Move your ass.” Bakugo sounds like he'll move it for Ochako if she doesn't get with the program sharpish, so that's what she does, and that's how it happens.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, y'all didn't think I was DONE with the fake relationship but, did you? You didn't think that other people thinking they're dating would be a step up to them actually agreeing to pretend to fake dating because totally in-context legit reasons?

In this fic, I go hard or go home. And I'm on vacation so like HELL I'm going home.
Setting Ochako's butt on fire

Chapter Summary

Grenade-juggling: not to be tried at home, and especially not around school.

Chapter Notes

I'm getting better at not capitalising EVERY letter of a chapter title, that's progress, right?!?!

My holiday's been going great, lots of rest, writing and relaxing. It's also WARM and SUNNY here unlike the frozen miserable dumpster I left behind (London, sorry, but you SUCK right now).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Holding Bakugo's hand is like hanging onto a grenade. The longer it goes on the more nervous Ochako gets.

Although it's not all that bad in practice. Ochako's actually gotten quite used to the feeling of Bakugo's palm on hers, and is even more used to following his lead as he uses their interlocked fingers to steer her as they walk. And if it's bothering him in the slightest, it sure doesn't show.

Soon enough, the weirdness melts into familiarity – Ochako is no stranger to letting Bakugo handle her physically, which is an odd thing to think when she puts it like that. In practice, Ochako tries not to think about it like anything, especially not when she and Bakugo start passing other students and you can bet they're noticing.

Just once, when Tetsutetsu literally walks into a wall while staring most pointedly at Ochako and Bakugo, her nerve wavers. With their fingers locked together, Bakugo feels Ochako’s pull-away limpness at once and his grip tightens.

"Don't you dare, chicken," Bakugo shoots out one side of his mouth. Ochako knows he's right, but the unexpected squeeze of Bakugo's hand on hers a moment later leaves her peculiarly incoherent. Because it's not an aggressive attempt to keep her committed to a plan that's at least half her idea, she thinks he's being… reassuring. Maybe even on purpose.

So Ochako sticks it out, fingers on the pin of the grenade, trusting him not to blow her arm off.

“How long do you think it'll take?” There's a sway that comes from Ochako and Bakugo’s synchronised steps that translates into a slight swing of their joined hands. If she pretends there's no one else around, Ochako could be totally comfortable like this. It feels absurdly normal.

“Will what take?” Bakugo's tone lacks the usual bite, and if Ochako had known holding his hand makes him tamer she'd have started doing it much sooner.
“This,” she says with a jiggle of their hands, “you know, for people to think what we want them to.”

Bakugo gives an indiscriminate shrug of ‘how the fuck should I know’ indications. “It was your damn idea, you tell me.”

“Uh, it was your idea too,” Ochako retorts, because she's not taking full credit for this if she can help it. Not when Bakugo started it in the first place. “I just suggested how we do it.”

“Yeah, well it better work,” he grumbles for the sake of grumbling, Ochako's pretty sure.

“Oh.” Ochako’s eyes widen. “I hadn't thought about that.” She hasn't. Ochako's trying not to think about this very much at all, as it happens. “If it's not enough, maybe we'll have to keep on doing things to convince them.”

“Like what?” Bakugo is giving Ochako a skeevy kind of look, like he's not sure he'll like what's coming next. He probably won't.

“I don't know… eating lunch together?” Ochako isn't sure where the suggestion comes from at first, then remembers it's something Deku said back at the start of this ridiculous charade. There’s a pang in her chest at the thought that Deku’s still helping, even now.

Bakugo makes a sound that's like scorn and laughter had a very proud child together, and Ochako is even more aware of the damp heat of his palm pressed to hers. “Now you want me eating lunch with you?”

“I don't want you to do anything, Bakugo,” she scolds a little more than is wise or good, because he gives a scoff that's borderline cruel.

“Bit rich coming from you, princess.” Bakugo, and perhaps only Bakugo, manages to perfectly communicate this term of address as the insult that it is.

They round a corner and Bakugo tugs on Ochako’s hand, but she pulls in the opposite direction, heels planted in the ground and not to be led a step further. “And what's that supposed to mean?” She anchors Bakugo through their joined hands, having the confidence to expect him not to drag her.

Bakugo stops and just glares at Ochako sideways, one hot coal of an eye glowing under a heavy brow of disapproval. “You'd want me to bring you the friggin moon if you thought I could reach it.”

“If you could reach the moon you'd just start a fight with it,” Ochako accuses indifferently for anyone holding hands and having a squabble at the same time, “And you’re hardly one to complain about being demanding.” He could write the manual on it.

“I told you, sweet-cheeks, this is the package.” Bakugo gives Ochako’s hand a coaxing jostle, not pulling even though it’s clear he’s getting impatient. “You wanna be late?” It goes without saying Bakugo could just let go of Ochako’s hand and carry on, but it’s not what he’s doing, and she likes that more than it gives her comfort to admit. Bakugo’s so single-minded and wild, being able to affect him in any way makes her feel strong.

“Fine.” The next time Bakugo yanks on Ochako’s hand like a rope she lets him pull her, but she’s kind of expecting him to start walking and he doesn’t. Tripping a step closer than expected, Ochako finds herself in that slightly-too-close zone, looking straight up at Bakugo who’s stiff as a statue, fingers still locked together. “What about being late?”

“One sec.” Standing head on in one of Bakugo’s intense gazes is like staring down a truck – inherently dangerous, but difficult to look away. “If you want something, ask for it.” His eyes narrow
a little, like he’s attempting to solve Ochako the way he figures out a move or mathematical equation. “Don’t bitch because I didn’t work it out by myself.”

“I don’t expect you to,” she replies, head tilting back to make up for the difference in their height. “What’s this about?”

“You wanna eat together or not?”

“I…” Ochako doesn’t know. Like one hundred percent, couldn’t-answer-if-someone-put-a-gun-to-her-head-and-made-her-choose doesn’t know; Bakugo’s asked her, which is sort of the same thing. Neither. Both? “Are you going to be nice?”

“Nice?” Bakugo echoes not at all nicely. “Who do you think I am?” He doesn’t do nice, and knows himself enough to own it. But he’s good for other things.

“Exactly,” Ochako retorts. “Besides, I eat lunch with my friends,” just in case that isn’t clear enough, “that means Deku will be there.” Bakugo makes a face that perfectly conveys his feelings.

“Deku can go fu-”

Instead of pointing out that’s probably the last thing Deku would be interested in, Ochako jumps in with a peace offering. “So if you don’t want to just don’t, okay?” They’re standing barely outside the door of the main building, but are so caught up that the passers-by are, well, passing by. “I’m not going to force you into anything you’re not comfortable with.”

This, as it turns out, is exactly the wrong thing to say to Bakugo. He rips his hand back like Ochako’s the one seeping liquid explosive, his mouth an angry tangle as he snarls, “Are you calling me scared?”

Ochako doesn’t know how to react to this, not least because she doesn’t understand how on earth Bakugo could even come to that conclusion. So she reacts perhaps a little insensitively, tilting her head to one side with a look of some scepticism. “Of what?”

Bakugo doesn’t have an answer for this – probably never did – but that only seems to frustrate him even more. “I’ll eat lunch wherever I goddamn want to,” Bakugo’s still going for snarling with this line, which is odd, because it’s exactly what Ochako’s trying to tell him. And they’re still managing to argue about it.

“Uh, that’s what I said,” she points out to this very effect. Bakugo doesn’t like that any better.

“Then back off!”

“Okay, okay.” As usual, Ochako can’t recall when Bakugo’s switch suddenly flipped from testy-but-manageable to unrelenting hothead, but with homeroom about to start she’s not much for looking into it. “I didn’t mean it, it was just a silly idea in case… you know.” Ochako raises her hands up as if in surrender, like she can somehow placate him with the motion. This is how she comes to notice the chemical sheen on the hand she was holding Bakugo’s with. “Just forget I said anything.”

Bakugo opens his mouth like that’s the last thing he’s got any intention of doing, and Ochako gets ready for a fresh onslaught when whatever he’s about to say gets lost in a high-pitched crescendo coming from indoors.

It sounds very much like, “I wanna seeeeeee!” and a moment later Mina surfs into view through the open doorway, sending a couple of first-years flying in her wake.
Unsurprisingly, Ochako and Bakugo’s heads both whip around to look at Mina. Ochako had expected the news to travel fast, but not this fast. Perhaps that’s why she feels so caught out, zipping her hands behind her back and then rubbing a palm coated with Bakugo coldsweat on the back of her skirt like this isn’t what she wanted, and maybe doesn’t want quite as much anymore.

Mina doesn’t miss a single beat. “Were you two just holding hands?!” This is followed by an excitable squeal, and eventually by Kirishima and Kaminari who are panting like they’ve sprinted all the way from the classroom.

Ochako feels like a bunny caught between multiple oncoming vehicles, so is thankful when before she can even think of answering, Bakugo covers it.

“Turn those antenna around, bugbrain, there’s nothing to see here.” Bakugo’s monotone still manages to come off pretty intimidating, and when she’s not in the firing line Ochako’s grateful for it. Bakugo’s hands go into his pockets, shoulders drawn up like he’s retreating into a shell. Or so Ochako thinks. Because she swears, right down to her gut, there’s a glint of a smile in Bakugo’s eyes when he catches her gaze for a moment before stepping forward. “Anymore.”

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In the short walk from the entrance to the classroom, news has obviously spread like a wildfire after a drought. Bakugo paces off ahead of Ochako shortly after his entourage shows up. She finds a reason to change her shoes for ages and skulks up just out of earshot, wondering what information they’ll manage to grill out of him. Whether they succeed at all is perhaps the more pertinent matter; Kirishima’s looking a little singed, presumably from testing Bakugo’s boundaries.

The moment Ochako enters the classroom, talk is either already over or disappears the instant she walks in. Going by the eerie silence, she makes an educated guess as to which.

Bakugo is tipped back on his chair, eyes at half-mast and staring straight forward. He doesn’t turn to watch Ochako like just about everyone else, but she catches a flash of red from the corner of his eyes as she passes, like a splash of colour in a setting sky.

“Good morning, Uraraka!” Iida says brightly, actually behind his desk for once instead of dashing frantically around the classroom in a self perpetuated tizzy. “How are you this fine academic day?”

It’s such a simple question, but Ochako appreciates it so much she pats him on one of his lumberjack shoulders on the way to her desk.

“Pretty good, thanks.” Ochako chances a look around, and just like that she's no longer the centre of attention. Iida’s blessedly normal question shifts attention away from Ochako, and she wonders if it's really that hard to just act like nothing is different. Nothing is different. At least nothing that matters to anyone except her and Bakugo.

Then, just when Ochako is about to sit down, she catches fire. Like, literally.

There’s a spark, must be static, that goes between Ochako's skirt and the metal frame of her chair. A conclusion that Ochako comes to a little later, because at the time she's busy shooting up in the air, activating her quirk like an involuntary clench of a muscle and giving a startled shriek. Perhaps wiping a Bakugo-sweaty hand on the back of her skirt hadn't been such a smart idea, because she goes up like an exercise ball full of hydrogen, even the tiny burst of flames projecting Ochako onto the ceiling alarmingly fast while she’s accidentally using her quirk on herself. So much for everything being normal.
Ochako is left looking down on her astonished classmate's faces while being very thankful to be wearing shorts under her skirt. Bakugo looks too, but not for long, and Ochako is more occupied with releasing her quirk and landing almost on top of poor Tsu.

“Uh, Ochako.” Tsu wafts away a wisp of fine smoke, while Ochako brushes a singed layer of plastic-smelling crust off her skirt. “Did your… butt just catch fire?”

Ochako says nothing, and then before anyone else has a chance to, Kirishima’s elbowing Bakugo with no sense of self-preservation. “You happen to know anything about that, Bakugo?”

Bakugo says nothing, thunder and bad omens in his expression.

Jirou’s twirling one of her jacks around a finger with a look that says ‘I’ve heard things.’ “What’s the deal, Mina, you told me they were only holding hands?”

“That’s all I saw!” Mina shoots from the other side of Kaminari, so basically across the whole classroom.

“I thought you said you didn’t see!” Kaminari pitches in indignantly, like he missed out on a sight for sore eyes. Ochako would quip that they can take a picture, it'll last longer, if she wasn’t too busy pretending not to exist.

“Their hands moved really fast, but Tetsutetsu swears that he saw it!” Mina concludes with a damming energy. “They were holding hands,” she finally turns her accusation to rest upon Bakugo’s hunched-up shoulders. “So fess up already, you two!”

Bakugo shrugs once, and then damns them all. “So what if we were?” He fixes Mina with a ‘call my fucking bluff’ look of intimation.

Forget Bakugo’s quirk, Ochako might explode all by herself.

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Chapter End Notes

This chapter marks the end of my first master document of backlog, congratulations everyone! Updates are now coming from the same document I'm writing into, though I'm close to getting out of that into a new master doc #3. For reference, a master document is about 50k long, which is how much google docs is prepared to put up with on my phone, and an indication of how much story we're still in for.

So it's with grave resignation that I must admit, against all my best plans and attempts to keep the length of this story 'under control'... it's going to be over 100k, and thus, I admit it, I ADMIT IT. It's a slow burn *broken sobbing*

Anyway, I LOVE the comments last chapter speculating about whether Ochako and Bakugo's hand-holding was with 'interlocked fingers'. What a fantastic detail to fixate on, and ofc I already had it that they were - it's the only actually comfortable form of hand-holding in my experience. Bless you all.
Ochako learns things she didn't want to know.

The good news is... I just moved into a new master document, updates are now still coming from a 50k wad of backlog while I write into a new document (a relief tbh loading 18 chapters is a pain in the ass).

On the back of last week's a/n about acknowledging this story is a slow burn, just to be clear the actual content I have planned hasn't changed whatsoever, nor has the pacing, I've just finally admitted that my attempts to NOT be a slow burn have failed miserably. But my failings as a writer are your gain!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ochako’s day is proving to be rife with surprises, or so she concludes when she looks up from her lunch and finds Bakugo sitting square across from her. Like, actually dead in front of her on the opposite side of the table, with his lunch in front of him, as if he sat down here on purpose and intends to remain there for some time. He even starts eating.

Turning left and right, Ochako sees the stunned looks on Deku and Iida’s faces and decides that this must be real and it’s not a hallucination. Bakugo is sitting with them.

Iida’s making frantic, mime-esque hand gestures at Deku, who in turn casts ‘better if you do it’ eyes at Ochako with an indicative flick of his gaze in Bakugo’s direction. It's not like Deku to shy away from reaching out to Bakugo, which means he's probably trying to be considerate of Ochako – which is nice, but also kind of terrible. Because Ochako doesn't know how she let this all happen.

“Uh, Bakugo?” Ochako offers up like a leg of lamb through the bars of a lion's cage.

“What?” He bites remorselessly.

“Are you… I thought we agreed that you don't have to-”

“We agreed I'll sit wherever I want,” Bakugo swings like a world class baseball player. “That includes here.”

Ochako gives Bakugo a look that he could sprinkle on his rice instead of the chilli flakes he heaps on instead. The glare he returns is akin to pulling on a pair of boxing gloves and backflipping into the ring. He'd just love that, Ochako decides. A nice public blowout where she's the bad girlfriend who doesn't want her supposed… Bakugo sitting with her.

Though it's clear what everyone else will think Bakugo’s motivation is in sitting with Ochako, the
real reason is a fish that slips out of her fingers at the last minute. She has the vague shape and nothing more. Maybe Bakugo’s doing this just to be contrary, or perhaps to prove he’s not scared of whatever he’s cooked up in that nitro-crockpot head of his.

In the middle of Bakugo and Ochako’s tense silence-off, Deku comes in from left field. “I’m really glad you and Uraraka patched things up, Kacchan.”

Bakugo’s gaze flicks to Deku like he only just noticed Deku daring to exist, much less speak to him. Ochako fears eruption, but for now the crater only smokes. And through the smoke, Bakugo’s smiling. It doesn’t bode well.

“Maybe I’ll dump her, then.” Bakugo’s indiscriminately vindictive, as if he’d do it just to piss Deku off. Even if he’s only threatening to break up a relationship she’s not really in, Ochako still kicks Bakugo under the table, and his gaze zones in on her like a marker for an airstrike.

“We talked about this,” Ochako begins, and then without actually saying anything mouths the words ‘be nice’ at Bakugo, like an attempt to bind him with magic.

“We sure did.” Something feels wrong with Bakugo’s calm, a vacuum instead of the explosion of temper that hasn’t happened. Meltdowns don’t just get averted with him, and Ochako feels the promise of heat in a certain tightness to his voice. “You suggested we eat lunch with your dipshit friends, and here I am.”

For a single, crazy moment, Ochako imagines if things could actually be so simple. But Bakugo wouldn’t be Bakugo if he could manage sitting with Ochako without it being some chronically unstable compound, about to blow any minute, while trying to prove some nonsensical thing that he’s made up in his shot-up-tin-can state of mind. She wonders if things were different, would they have anything to talk about, other than their training?

Someone who doesn’t lack for things to talk about is Deku, who remains upbeat even as the atmosphere at the table plummets. “Hey Kacchan, seeing as you are here, I was wondering what you thought of-”

“Piss off, Deku,” that Bakugo doesn’t shout this is a minor achievement, but it’s hard and blunt enough to hit like a slap in the face. “If I want your input in a conversation I’ll write you a letter and then fucking burn it.”

“Bakugo.” Ochako doesn’t kick Bakugo under the table this time, just hits him with a baseball-bat-strapped-with-bricks degree of subtlety to her tone. There’s a part of this fake relationship that Bakugo’s probably not banked on before now, which is if they’re dating then she’s allowed to nag him. Maybe that’s a rule Ochako just makes up now, but she’s determined to make it work.

Bakugo’s head tips to a funny angle, like he’s a puppet. “Sorry, Deku.” He makes it sound as shallow as it is, and Ochako remembers with a bolt of guilt that Deku asked her to stop asking Bakugo to apologise with supposed-girlfriend arm-twisting.

This whole thing feels like a weird charade of how they could interact, petty bickering and constant break-up make-ups over the same recycled spats. However, this is Deku, who reaches for the heart of a matter and always knows what to say. Almost always.

“I’m not going to force us to be friends just because you’re going out with Uraraka,” he says square to Bakugo in the middle of lunch rush, and until Deku says it, maybe Ochako doesn’t think it’ll be as big of a deal as it is. “But you can’t pretend I don’t exist.”
Naturally, Bakugo takes that as a challenge “Watch me.”

“Bakugo.” Ochako reiterates, and in a split second Bakugo's palm comes slamming down on top of the table.

“Fucking what?!”

Ochako doesn't hesitate under the heat of Bakugo's rage, as if she's been tempered to withstand much greater force than this needless bickering. She's calm. “You know what.”

The hall may be noisy but at the table there's quiet, like the air before a quickest gun draw. Bakugo's glare shoots straight across the table at Ochako, but she knows that he knows what she's talking about, and he's going to have to face up to it sooner or later. Preferably right now.

But the moment of truth doesn't come. At least, not this time.

“Can I join you, ribbet?” Tsu appears just behind Bakugo and unknowingly saves him from final judgement, but he doesn’t even have the manners to look grateful for it.

“Of course!” Ochako and Deku manage in near-perfect chorus, and Bakugo probably hates that too. He certainly doesn't look thrilled about Tsu setting down her lunch and sitting down next to him, placing her across from Deku – and soon, at cross purposes to the entire conversation, with her innate ability to hone in on an irregularity and shine the biggest stating-the-obvious spotlight on it.

“It's weird seeing you here, Bakugo,” Tsu observes plainly, though Ochako's not sure she appreciates it at this exact moment. “You and Ochako must be getting pretty serious.”

“Shut it, frog-face.” Though Bakugo's tone lacks sincere vitriol, it's still a step too far for Ochako, who swings her foot at him under the table again. Except this time Bakugo shunts like a freight train and blocks Ochako's kick with his shin, making an attention-grabbing noise as their knees bang the tabletop. “Swing that leg at me one more time and I'll break it, chubbs.”

Ochako ignores her least favourite nickname yet and just gives Bakugo a dry look. “No you wouldn't.” If only because it would affect their training.

“That's not funny to joke about, Kacchan,” Deku offers up with the same gentle inner strength that Bakugo finds so damn threatening. Caring is the most dangerous thing Deku does, at least in Bakugo’s eyes.

On which point, Bakugo's deathstare slides from Ochako resentfully across to Deku, then bounces across to the other side of her. This could be the tipping point before full-blown eruption, but the smoke doesn't lead to a fire – for now.

“Who says I'm joking?” Bakugo asks so quietly that it's the scariest thing he's come out with yet.

While Ochako knows he's bluffing, because Bakugo would never hurt her like that, but what she can't quite figure out is why he's putting on this puffed-up show, like a cockerel getting ready to crow.

“This is…” Iida’s hands move through a complicated sequence of flexes, then drop flat to the tabletop like landing gear on which he raises himself. “It’s no way to talk to a… significant other!”

Tsu breaks the moment of stunned silence that follows this outburst. “Isn’t that kind of language a bit much, Iida?” This part is fine, but in classic Tsu fashion the sucker punch comes just after Ochako’s guard drops. “They’re not married yet.”
Ochako’s world shatters and reassembles with one word. Maybe two. Married, and yet. Hell, she’s not so hot on significant other either. She and Bakugo have hardly been fake-dating for a day – at least with their own participation – so even if it were legit everyone’s getting way ahead of themselves.

Bakugo just tilts back, flinging a knife-throwing glare at Iida that’d slice his glasses in half. “You got a problem, white knight?”

It’s the understatement of the century that Bakugo’s gunning for a fight, and Ochako is not having it. That must be what powers through the good-sense override in her head, the one that stops her from saying things to Bakugo that she and everyone else of sound mind in the whole world knows are a bad idea.

“Bakugo, stop being such an asshole.” Part of Ochako’s mind is thinking ‘wow, who’s crazy enough to say that to him?’ before it fully sinks in that it’s her voice. Because she just said it. Out loud.

Bakugo’s gaze slips back to Ochako, hell, everyone’s does. But to Ochako’s surprise, there’s no countdown clock ticking in his eyes or proverbial steam pouring out of his ears. He actually looks kind of… amused.

“But I can’t say ‘I’m fine’ any more times,” Ochako sighs like she’s just defused a bomb. Maybe. She could, of course, but things like this will still happen.

“Then keep your friends out of our goddamn business.” Bakugo hands out a lot of trash talk, but seems to be surprisingly tolerant of it in the other direction. Within reason.

“Bakugo!” Ochako’s forgotten how to say much else to Bakugo, apparently, so just parrots his name like a recorded insert in a birthday card.

“No, Bakugo makes a… point,” Iida’s deflating like someone punctured him. Ochako just doesn’t realise why, at least until he says, “I’m… sorry, Uraraka.” His hands come to rest together, palm-to-palm. “I just get…” not even Iida can get to the right word quick enough to escape an implicative pause that says something other than what he does, which is a laboured, “concerned.”

“Pretty sure that’s your own damn problem,” Bakugo bites, and maybe this is what he’s after – laying the boundaries he says Ochako isn’t being hard enough with. “She’s a big girl and can take care of herself.” Ochako’s not sure if that’s a compliment, but it makes her feel good in an indistinctly weird way, so that’s something. “Got it?”

“I… understand.” Iida’s head is bowed, face a blank canvas that Ochako finds unsettling. She feels responsible somehow, although she’s not done anything that should cause him such grief. Then in a flash Iida’s animated once more, glasses shining as he picks himself up and faces Bakugo off fearlessly. “But I swear, if you ever hurt her I will make you pay!”

Ochako has to wonder if Iida would be this protective if she was dating… pretend dating, anyone else but Bakugo.

“Yeah, yeah,” Bakugo sounds positively bored of this now, attention returning to his lunch with a gradual slide. “I’ll be waiting, dickwad.” Not more than a moment later, so soon that it’s almost the same sentence, Bakugo does the absolute last thing Ochako – perhaps anyone – expects. “Deku,” he says loud and clear, and Deku’s eyes snap up like switching on an electromagnet, “is that your
mom’s hotsauce?"

“Uh, yeah.” The container Deku’s homemade liquid fuel comes in is marked with a label, drawn by Ochako as it happens, that’s just a picture of a face spitting out fire. A homage to the one and only time she made the mistake of daring to try it. “You… remember it?”

“Course I do, idiot,” Bakugo growls, but it’s slightly different. Like a dog growling on the end of a chew-toy believing it’s a game. “Gimme.”

Deku pushes the container towards the middle of the table and leaves like a peace offering, then after a tense moment Bakugo snatches it, helping himself with gusto. And with that, the battle is over – or paused, at least. Suddenly Ochako’s sitting with her friends, and Bakugo, eating lunch.

“Say Midoriya, what did you think of those techniques from Aizawa’s class today?” Tsu remarks, unaware or just plain uninterested in drama over Bakugo – one of her many likable qualities.

“Really interesting, now that you mention it!” Deku launches enthusiastically into a much-favoured area of discussion. “They weren’t like Aizawa’s usual style at all, so I’m curious about how they could have ended up in his curriculum.”

A definitive “tch,” from Bakugo disrupts Deku’s flow, because even when he’s not the centre of attention, Bakugo’s certainly going to make himself known. Ochako thinks about kicking him under the table again, but doesn’t trust him not to do something unnecessary in retaliation.

It turns out she’s got nothing to worry about. “It was Present Mic all over,” Bakugo mutters without looking at Deku, or acting like he’s talking to anyone except his lunch.

Deku’s face lights up. “Right! That’s just what I was going to ask you about before, wasn’t it just like the technique Mic used for his battle with the Railway Bandit?” Ochako remembers that fight from TV, but way, way back in middle school. It reminds her of Deku’s comments about Bakugo – how long they’ve known each other – and if this is now, Ochako can only imagine what he was like before.

“Don’t push it, fucker.” Bakugo prowls the line of his personal boundaries with a survivalist ferocity, like his very existence is threatened by over-familiarity with someone who holds such a big piece of his history in countless broken fingers. But after a latent pause, a rumble-like aftershock comes in the wake of Bakugo’s temper. “It was more like his fight with Mad Mac.”

“Oh, you’re right,” Deku converses easily, and just like that, there’s ten seconds of normal conversation between him and Bakugo. Ochako is so grateful that it can happen, even in small snatches like this.

Because she doesn’t know what she’d do if Bakugo and Deku can’t get along. And as soon as Ochako has the thought, it makes her wonder just when it became so important to her that they do get along. She’s always wanted it, but it’s so much more important now.

Ochako’s forced to ask herself what’s so different that it makes there be a ‘then’ and ‘now’.

As she watches Bakugo douse his lunch in death-by-fire hotsauce and eat it like rice pudding – actually managing to be civil with Ochako’s friends, not because he wants to or likes them, but because he knows it matters to her… Ochako comes to the abrupt conclusion that she doesn’t want to know.
Welcome to our best slow burn friend: DENIAL. Why's Ochako so adamant to hide from her feelings? I have reasons! Good ones!! Well... plausible ones for her emotional backstory/baggage.

Another point I’d like to note in this a/n corner, as it's come up a few times before from different sources and I'd like to go 'on the record' with it, the rating for this fic is T and will remain so. That means, to be absolutely clear, no sex or underpants-area activities. I understand if that's a disappointment and no shade to anyone who has asked about it (it's fine to want, just not from me!), but I really want to be clear about it.

This story was never envisaged to include mature content, and for my own reasons I wouldn't feel comfortable (or be very interested in) writing that kind of material for it. At my ripe old age (27), messy-awkward-teen-sex stops being sexy and becomes primarily comedy/cringe material, so even if I *did* write it then it's almost certainly not bound to be the kind of thing people who want to read naughtyness are looking for anyway (my Tododeku pt. 2 is pretty much the most explicit I'm ever looking to be with characters in this age bracket, and even they're a year older than in this fic). This isn't to say I wouldn't be interested in supplementing this story once it's finished with a side-story that does explore that angle, but I'm not making promises I can't keep.

HOWEVER, this doesn't mean that there won't be satisfying teen-appropriate content, and I think I have the chops to make that equally satisfying. There's a lot more to gratifying slow-burn-payoff than jumping straight into bed, and this fic is very much about navigating the sheer inexperienced hopelessness of that early school-era romance, and what I think constitutes a healthy approach, including taking time and not rushing the physical side of things. Plus there's M-rated Kacchako material in the tag already, so I don't feel like there's a 'gap' I need to fill there, so to speak.

A slow burn agony gap, tho, that's ALL MINE.

/rant over.

See you soon!
Getting Serious #2

Chapter Summary

Ochako and Bakugo get some *alone* time, or so they think.

Chapter Notes

Psych, this chapter's ALSO about 'getting serious', and somehow ended up being a little bit longer than usual, but I'm *very* about a lot of the stuff in it. Hope y'all enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

In an unlikely turn of events, Bakugo has managed to get through almost an entire meal in the company of Ochako’s friends, including Deku, without resorting to extreme violence or swearing. Mild violence and swearing, sure, but no more than his usual brand of dysfunction. It’s practically been *civil*.

That might change soon, because as the lunch Bakugo appears to have eaten with them as much out of spite as anything draws to a close, the company he usually keeps comes looking. Deku and Bakugo’s avoidance of each other is usually the thing that’s kept everyone apart before now, so their being together is like two magnets sticking together and doubling their pull.

“What’s this, you get a girlfriend and suddenly start ignoring us?” Kirishima’s joking, but not so much that there isn’t a grain of truth in it.

“Maybe I needed a break from looking at your eyesore face,” Bakugo grumbles as Kirishima invites himself into the seat next to Bakugo, meanwhile Mina's slotted in next to Tsu and has her head propped up on one hand.

“Okay guys, it’s time to *dish,*” she announces with a look that practically ties Bakugo and Ochako together with red string. “How long has this been going on?”

“Lunch?” Ochako suggests with indefatigable optimism.

“No, you two,” Mina half-teases, half-pries with crowbar insistences, like she'll get to the bottom of this if it's the last thing she does. Just when Ochako thought she might get away with a normal lunch in the company of her own, well-coached-not-to-ask-questions friends. Slim chance of that *now*.

“They've been hanging out secretly for weeks, ribbet,” Tsu puts in like she's been appointed Ochako’s relationship rep, hopping onto the first opportunity to encourage Mina.

“Weeks? I *knew* it!” Mina pounds a fist into her palm in triumph, as if she's cracked the case. “How’d it happen?”

Tsu doesn't have an answer for that. But surprisingly, Bakugo does.

“How’d you *think?*” Bakugo snaps distemperedly, eyes still on the hearty bowl of lava he’s eating
for lunch. “I asked her.”

Kirishima jostles Bakugo with a friendly push of his shoulder. “That's hella manly, bro. I never knew you had it in you.”

“What's Bakugo got inside of him?” This is what happens when Bakugo's usual crew gets left on the fringes; Kaminari – the source of this particular line – with Sero in tow, traipsing over late for a piece of the action.

“A whirlwind of hidden emotional depth!” Kirishima strikes a pose, one balled hand held up in front of him. “A tender soul trapped inside a crispy coating.”

“Sounds like food,” Sero delivers flatly. “Did you eat enough for lunch?”

Bakugo stands up, not angrily, but like this just happens to be the exact moment he's decided to up and go. Ochako makes the observation that the people who stick closest to Bakugo are also those most likely to trash talk the shit out of him. Then again, Bakugo's never cared much for the opinions of critics. Something else she can learn from him.

“Uraraka.” It's an achievement of some worth that Bakugo uses her name at all, but in the actuality it's so natural that Ochako looks up without a second thought, thinking only of what he might want. “You wanna get out of here?”

Ochako feels torn – would she like to escape this inquisition over the fake relationship that feels terribly real in every way except the ones that would matter? Yes, absolutely yes. But she worries about reinforcing appearances that she's not so sure about – of abandoning her friends, not just for anyone, but for Bakugo.

When she looks at Bakugo, Ochako can read the grade of his expression easily enough he doesn't even need to say 'Do whatever the fuck you want, roundface.' It's just as clear that Bakugo believes with total confidence that what he wants is the same thing Ochako does too. Maybe he's right this time, but it's beside the point.

To her credit or discredit, perspective depending, Ochako turns to sneak a glance at Deku. She knows what Deku would be likely to do, given the offer on the table, but that's not what she's looking for either.

Deku smiles, and Ochako can almost hear his ever-appeasing, ‘whatever you want is fine,’ Just like he'd said to her once, and it hadn't been enough then and still isn't now. Because it’s not enough to only be happy with the choices of others, there has to be something you want too. The wobbly balance of yin and yang; Deku, who wants to be sure everyone else’s needs are met first and foremost, and Bakugo, who wants everything for himself at once with such intensity. Ochako reckons everything Bakugo’s ever wanted he does so more than he's wanted anything else, at least for the duration that he wants it.

Unfortunately, this pinball machine of emotions goes in all directions. So it’s with a little fear of an explosion from Mt. Bakugo that Ochako's hand finds Iida’s arm next to her, and grips it like finding a tiller.

“Do you mind if I go?” Ochako can’t explain why it's important to ask Iida this, but the appreciation that fills his eyes when she turns 180 degrees and meets his gaze tells her it's what he needs just as much as she does.

“Of course not,” Iida replies too gently to bear, “Your free time is your own.” Try telling Bakugo
“Okay,” she finally answers Bakugo, who’s actually managed to wait and not storm off in an impatient huff. So far. Because he doesn’t stall a moment longer after that, setting into a stride so determined Ochako has to run to catch up. Which means most of the packed canteen sees Ochako dashing after Bakugo across the hall, and how when she draws level with him Bakugo reaches out to grab Ochako’s wrist, like it’s the only way he can be sure she’s no more than a pace behind him.

Ochako knows exactly what it looks like. Just as surely as she knows what it is: Bakugo’s gotten so used to holding onto Ochako during training that it feels natural even outside of it, at least based on her own judgement. The way it’s so… normal to have Bakugo’s hands on Ochako – usually telling her what to do.

She was reading Bakugo’s hands long before he started using words to say what he means – still a work in progress. Ochako takes a moment now to divine Bakugo’s mood through his grip, as if she can reveal his innermost thoughts, like where in the heck he’s bringing her with such determination.

“You seem awfully sure of where we’re headed,” she says only partly to pry. Turns out his hands weren’t much help after all. But if she’d thought about it for one second, Ochako would have known better than to ask Bakugo a question without being prepared for him to say just about anything.

Bakugo’s grip doesn’t falter, nor is his tone quiet enough to elude overhearing. “Somewhere we can be alone.”

Ochako’s stomach does an uneven bars flip change with a turn and a half rotation. Coach Nikiforov would be proud. She wonders if this is part of Bakugo’s act, though when they leave the canteen nothing changes. There’s only one thing that changes when they’re alone.

Bakugo guides Ochako into the first empty classroom and shuts the door firmly behind them, and Ochako knows what she expects him to talk about. But there’s the tiniest sliver of doubt coming from the part of her that’s watched Bakugo setting boundaries with her male friends, barking possessively and leading her around by the hand like maybe he doesn’t mind the way it makes things look.

Ochako’s finally starting to expect the wholly unexpected from Bakugo, but even then, she’s surprised to find herself even half-expecting anything like that.

So when he announces, “We need to get serious,” for a moment Ochako isn’t sure what Bakugo thinks he’s talking about.

“Serious… how?” she asks less comfortably than she ought to, and Bakugo certainly doesn’t miss Ochako’s awkward vibrations – going by the disapproving creasing of his eyebrows – but that doesn’t mean he’s going to acknowledge them.

“We have to put a name on our… stuff,” Bakugo makes a meagre attempt at explanation, because when it comes down to brass tacks Ochako’s not certain their conversations couldn’t be had to completely crossed purposes without being none the wiser.

So Ochako’s seriously got to narrow this down, because even if it’s tiny, that voice in her head that wonders what if Bakugo thinks- just won’t be quiet and it’s driving her nuts. “You mean our quirk teamup?”

Bakugo makes a face so disapproving that for a split second Ochako’s gut goes both ways, considering each outcome as totally valid. Then he says, “What else would I mean?”

“Nothing!” Ochako wishes she could just hit the rewind button on her mouth sometimes. “So you
Bakugo looks annoyed that Ochako’s changed the subject, but it’s the subject. The thing that’s different when they’re alone, and the reason why Bakugo is always dragging Ochako off into quiet places without consideration for what anyone else thinks of it. Well, except Ochako. He cares what she thinks of it, but it’s kind of a non-issue. Because she always – okay, almost always – wants to spend time with Bakugo, given the chance. And when did that happen?

At first Ochako had happily accepted Bakugo’s ‘offer’ to train together because it was such a freak rarity the choice had seemed like a no brainer. It was meant to be a comes-along-once-in-a-while, one-or-two-time thing – until Bakugo got sick of her, basically. Instead she’s gotten access to the twenty-four-seven hero bootcamp that is Bakugo’s dedication towards becoming stronger, as strong they can both be – together.

Without realising it, Ochako’s let this thing with Bakugo become a normal part of her life. Routine, even.

“Earth to bubble brain,” Bakugo snaps Ochako out of her contemplation, and she’s vaguely aware that he said something while she was busy trying to work out just when this had all become so everyday. “Go back to club loser if you’re not going to focus.”

“I was, sorry, I mean I will,” Ochako babbles. “I actually had a few ideas about that.”

“Ideas?” Bakugo, as ever, seems nonplussed by anything Ochako demonstrates to have up her sleeve. It’s a real pain that the competency of others is such a threat to him, but Ochako’s learning to live with it. Mostly by ignoring it, but if something works it works.

“For our moveset,” she replies, moving a little further into the room and reaching for her bag. Ochako pulls out a notebook and bends over one of the desks to open it up – they won’t get away with being in this room for long, but a snatched fistful of time is sometimes all she and Bakugo need. “Mostly it’s just what I call things in my head, but that’s a start, right?”

Bakugo is looking at Ochako like he doesn’t understand who or what she is, but it occurs to Ochako that his blank confusion is just a product of his surprise. Bakugo is very good at a lot of things, but snappy names, at least ones that don’t inspire fear in the public, aren’t one of them. Maybe, Ochako dares to think, maybe this is something that she can be of help with.

Bakugo doesn’t say anything, but he steps a little closer to Ochako and hasn’t told her to stop, so she takes that as a cue not to keep him waiting. “So there’s the slingshot, you know, where you gain speed using your quirk with mine active and release it right after.”

“Yeah.” Bakugo seems wholly, profoundly, can-look-anywhere-else-except-at-Ochako uncomfortable, and she reckons it’s because he’s so unused to having this boot on the other foot. To being the one to listen and learn, even if it’s over something as minor as names for their special moves, which he’s invented in the first place. Slogans of the non-offensive variety just aren’t his speciality.

“The reason it works is because you accelerate in zero gravity,” Ochako carries on laying all this out without worrying if Bakugo’s getting fed up of the repeat material, because she’s just about to get to her point. “So why not Zero-G Slingshot?”

Bakugo staring at Ochako like she just started talking another language, but she knows he understands her and just waits for him to get there. He will.
“That… doesn’t totally suck.” In Baku-speak, this is an uncontested triumph. Ochako would jump up and down in joy if it wouldn’t merit an unwanted amount of scrutiny from Bakugo.

“Oh thank you.” Okay, maybe Ochako’s a bit sarcastic and that’s worse than if she’d just been pleased.

“Alright, don’t get too big for your boots!” Bakugo bites. “What about the rest?”

“Uh… the rest?”

Bakugo gives Ochako a sucker-punch of a look. “We have more than one move, dumbass.”

“I know,” she says feeling much smaller already. “Like what, then?”

Bakugo’s focus is a laser. Intense, sometimes destructive, but not always. “The direction change,” he starts off. “We use the slingshot to get airborne, but the turns and throws are what keep us up there.”

“It’s a bit like the bars in gymnastics,” Ochako pitches as she slowly sinks into the nearest chair, thinking out loud with just a hint of surprise that this is even possible – her and Bakugo in such an open, honest discussion.

His reluctance to working with others casts a long shadow over the rest of Bakugo’s undeniably impressive academic record, so it’s a little strange to find how jealousy he guards the secret – that he can do it, when he wants to. Which is almost never. Ochako wonders if Bakugo sees listening to anyone except himself as weakness; that according to his own rules he’s supposed to be the best, which means not needing anything from people below him.

Except Ochako is below Bakugo, but that doesn’t mean she has nothing to offer. There are things that don’t come as natural to Bakugo as fire and fighting, and Ochako’s strengths can play to Bakugo’s… less-strengths.

“Kinda.” Bakugo’s leaning against the next desk to the one Ochako sits at, head tilted to look at her page upright – where she’s drawn a curved arrow and labeled it ‘Zero-G Slingshot’, next to a number one. “It’s more like a…” Bakugo winces, and Ochako has a funny thought about the tilt it gives to his features. He’s plenty expressive, as long as you read far enough through the ever-present rage. “– flying trapeze.”

This isn’t what Ochako expects. But Bakugo rarely is.

“A what?”

“Flying trapeze, you know, like acrobats do in circuses and shit,” Bakugo tries to explain, and Ochako looks at him blankly. “It’s a thing,” he delivers like a punch at the start of a barfight.

“I believe you,” for some reason, it sounds like Ochako doesn’t when she says it out loud.

“Fine, here.” Bakugo manages to snatch his phone out of his pocket angrily and is even more angrily keying a search that brings up a video, which he holds out to Ochako like a petition against her ever questioning him again. “See?” Tiny figures on the screen swing back and forth, flipping around to catch each other by the hands as they move between trapezes over a large safety net – a luxury she and Bakugo never have, though don’t really need. “They pass each other in the moment of weightlessness between each swing.”

Ochako has the peculiar certainty that this is something Bakugo’s watched before, perhaps a few times.
“That’s so interesting.” Ochako leans over, looking closer at the tiny figures spinning like they are, at least temporarily, weightless. Something Ochako and Bakugo can do equipment-free. “Can you send it to me?” Bakugo’s stormcloud face darkens just a fraction, and he turns the phone back around then just hands it to her. It’s on the contact screen, with an empty page that Ochako understands the meaning of perfectly. “You don’t have my number?” She’s a little surprised, after all, she has his; passed on by Yaomomo or Iida as part of presidential duties sometime in the past year. Not that she’s used it.

“Like I’d ask if I did,” Bakugo scoffs, and Ochako can’t argue with that. This is Bakugo asking, if not in so many words.

It’s only after she’s entered her information and handed the phone back, the way Bakugo studies Uraraka Ochako like he’s never seen it written down before – or perhaps just never bothered to look properly until now – that Ochako starts feeling terribly close all of a sudden. Bakugo has a gravity that draws everything into him, so when he takes a step over to Ochako it feels like she's the one who moved. Her heart races like they're about to try some wacky aerial stunt, but it's just Bakugo leaning over to take the pencil from Ochako’s hand – so why won't it stop?

With two arrows Bakugo summarises the most essential movements of their direction-change, and then next to it scores the number two. Below that he adds another move, a dot with two lines diverging from the same point and meeting back up again, one in a slingshot arc and the other a brutally straight line. Ochako knows what that is, resisting the urge to call it the vomit comet. Even Bakugo could do better than that for a name.

Bakugo doesn't stop there, hunching over the desk and leaning on an elbow as he adds more numbers and the line diagrams for everything they've done so far, along with a few things they haven't even tried yet. Without anything in the least bit conscious about it, Ochako considers how amazing Bakugo really is – all that power and potential, a mind for action that’s truly ingenious, packed so tightly into a more fragile ego than he’d ever dare to admit.

Because he wants what they all want, to be a hero, the best they can possibly be – the best ever, in Bakugo’s case – but the searing hot intensity that he wants everything makes it so important that he becomes vulnerable. Bakugo doesn’t want to disappoint himself any more than he wants others to fail to meet his expectations. That’s why everything has to be perfect right away, because to him the difference between where he is and wants to be constitutes a failure.

Which is insane , totally bonkers and beyond being hard on himself, but then Ochako thinks of what Bakugo has been able to achieve with that mindset – and what she could if she does the same.

“We’ve never done half of these;” she points out as Bakugo flips a page and just keeps drawing – variations along a theme, but all to a distinct purpose. He must have thought about it so much, Ochako realises with delayed-onset intimidation.

“Because you won’t give me the time,” Bakugo gripes, but it’s almost ordinary now, like the way she nags him to be nice to her friends over lunch.

“We train for over an hour every morning ;” she returns.

“That’s barely a warmup.” Bakugo talks with such confidence that Ochako wouldn't even consider challenging him, because to Bakugo it probably is a warmup. “If you weren’t pissing around with those losers-in-leotards after school we’d get a lot more done.”

“If I wasn’t training with those athletes I wouldn’t be able to do half of this stuff, and you know it,” Ochako informs Bakugo without so much as a flicker of temper. An argument with all the fight taken
Bakugo doesn’t say anything, just makes a breathy *hmph* that tells of his annoyance. He’s not prepared to teach her the way Coach Nikiforov does, and Ochako’s still learning things she desperately needs to keep up with Bakugo frigging Katsuki.

There’s something hanging in the air, which Ochako doesn’t realise until she reaches out to take the opportunity, like pulling ripe fruit off a tree. “I mean, you could always come with me.”

She’s waiting for his negative response, the ‘*like hell*’ or worse that would demonstrate how little Bakugo thinks he needs anything as unworthy as the help of quirkless gymnasts. But it doesn’t come, and eventually Ochako has to look – just to be sure Bakugo heard her and isn’t riding some train of thought elsewhere.

He’s not. Bakugo is looking dead at Ochako, and there’s something so subtly off about him, like she could draw an outline around the shape of him in chalk – all aggressive angles and posturing – and hold it up as a study in the complexities of the ego. Bakugo is… unsure, she thinks. It’s a weirdly unsettling sight.

Ochako dares to ask, “Would you… want to do that?” Bakugo just looks at her.

A voice answers, but not the right one. “I for one think it’s an excellent idea.”

There’s the sound of a long zip, and Aizawa emerges from the pupa of his sleeping bag that *neither* of them managed to notice behind the teacher’s desk in this classroom. Ochako jumps with fright at the discovery. “Ahh– Aizawa! I didn't see you there!”

“You two ought to keep your voices down,” Aizawa is clearly a little more than cranky about being woken during his lunchtime nap – Ochako has no idea how long he’s been listening, and wouldn’t like to guess. “Especially if you’re expecting this absurd story that you’re dating to pan out.” Never mind, as usual Ochako’s teacher knows *everything*, including the mortifying truth about her and Bakugo. “Which – not that I care – is a terrible idea.” Ochako’s teacher is hard to read, but she swears he shudders as if with unpleasant remembrance. Or maybe just shaking off fatigue, tipping his head back to drip eyedrops into heavily bagged eyes.

Ochako makes *'I told you so'* eyes at Bakugo, who, as ever, doesn't seem to care a lick. “So I can go?”

“Sure, if it'll get you out of here,” Aizawa shrugs. “Nikiforov’s used to hotheads like you, I’m sure he’ll find it positively refreshing.”

“Whatever, I’ll do it,” Bakugo announces like he just made up his mind entirely by himself, and Ochako gets hit with a wave of that funny feeling that she’s getting into something she might live to regret.

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Chapter End Notes

This chapter goes out to all the hungry readers waiting for the Bakusquad to join the lunchtime chatter, but also takes us back into some of their one-on-one time, which is
very comfortable for me and I like a LOT of the analysis of Bakugo that we get in here as well as just letting them talk shop again. I get really twisted about 'normal conversations' as a shipping thing, like the ability to have a solid, meaningful two-way conversation is just *ugh*

Oh! And for sharing corner, here's the kind of thing Bakugo's showing Ochako (aka the kind of thing I looked at for research), this is a very technical 'these are the moves' type of video, but I also looked at quite a few performances and so on. (youtube.com)/watch?v=Ykt5DD8CMy8&t

ALSO! I've been thinking a lot about the 'staging' of this fic (often through reflecting via replying to all your wonderful comments!) and because it's school things tend to take place during very specific slots of time, outside the periods where Ochako and Bakugo are just busy doing their lessons and learning how to be heroes! Their early morning training is one of the first 'regular' slots, lunchtimes are *just* becoming one now, and as of the next chapter, combining this Bakugo-mandated in the first place training with The Grand Hotsauce Bottle Himself opens up a whole new regular slot full of AWESOME interactions that I can't WAIT to share with everyone.

Basically, a lot of the 'slow' in this slow burn isn't actually about things between Ochako and Bakugo going slowly... far from it, tbh, it's just that the plotline with their quirk training and general growth as heroes is MAD ENTERTAINING to write as well, so it just takes a while in words to get around to moving everything forward because there's so much stuff to cram into each day (it's something I did in my last slow burn too). I hope enjoyably so, but y'all are the real proof of that :3

Oh, and the next update will be a GREAT chapter for YoI fans. You know why XD
Ochako throws herself at Bakugo

Chapter Summary

Ochako had thought she was used to being thrown around by Bakugo. Apparently she’s only just getting started.

Chapter Notes

HmmmHmmmmm *reads comments from everyone on board the hype train for the next update and slams the button early*

Happy surprise update erryone, with a shoutout to Wildchildlau to cele/comiserate the result of the Italian election. You ask for an update (and a bunch of other lovely ppl say hi and pump me up for VICTOR) and you (sometimes) get one!

Shoutout to my beta starfangs too, she’s doing a kickass job at catching my blunders and helping keep these chapters coming out POWERFUL fast. I do say this a lot, but I reckon y'all gonna like this chapter, YoI fan or no. It's... *swills brandy in a glass* p tasty.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The gymnasium is a familiar space for Ochako by now, the chalky smell in the air and bright lights that make it seem like nothing will escape the expert eyes of her Coach. What's more unfamiliar is the simmering tower of insecurity at her side. Because Bakugo is in a new environment, a different pond to any he’s been in before – at least as far as Ochako’s aware – and a defensive Bakugo is a volatile Bakugo.

Coach Nikiforov is on a beam across the other side of the gym when they enter, a long gazelle of a man clinging to a silvery head of hair that has all but disappeared on top. Finishing with a rotating flip from the end of the beam onto the matt, he sweeps what remains of his hairline from his forehead and strides across the floor with the grace of a tracksuit-wearing swan.

“Ah, here you are, mooo-chi,” Coach Nikiforov lilts in a heavy accent, before his gaze is naturally drawn to Bakugo. Nothing is said at first, for long enough that Ochako’s sense of awkwardness starts to itch while Bakugo and Coach Nikiforov just stare at each other. Then the silence breaks like thunder. “And this must be the one.”

Ochako doesn’t get it, but she’s pretty sure she doesn’t like it anyway. “The one what?”

“The one you’re trying to impress,” Coach Nikiforov answers with a canny smile, and Ochako’s head starts rapidly increasing in temperature.

“I… uh-” Ochako flails with about as much grace as if she were flapping her arms in order to fly.

“That’s right,” Bakugo cuts in like he’s swinging a breezeflak on the end of a chain. “I'm the guy to
impress,” he pauses just a beat, though long enough for Ochako to develop a cold sweat on top of her red hot blush, “and I don’t like being kept waiting.”

Coach Nikiforov, clearly to Bakugo’s surprise, laughs heartily at this. “I’m not the one who has to worry about impressing anyone, hotsauce.” Bakugo earns a delectable nickname from the Coach in an instant, and Ochako resists the urge to giggle. “Now let’s see what you can do.”

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Bakugo stops being cocky when Coach Nikiforov demonstrates in the first ten minutes of training how to add another rotation to his double twist layout, perfects his ¾ turn without massive energy loss, and then without as much as blinking offers Bakugo a physical mop to ‘clean up after his sloppy technique’.

Ochako hasn’t seen anything like it, but then, Coach Nikiforov hasn’t lost an ounce of skill in his retirement, and seems to find Bakugo’s temperament almost nostalgic. Ochako suspects it’s a weird experience for everyone except the Coach, who remains joyfully unbothered as he pushes the two of them just as hard as they need to be pushed, then slightly further than that.

Bakugo’s clearly alarmed at the discovery of being outmatched by a pension-age Russian, and actually allows himself to be coached through manoeuvres far more advanced than Ochako’s even close to. She almost feels left behind – as usual.

“You have plenty of power, hotsauce, but lack control,” Coach Nikiforov lectures Bakugo in a way Ochako finds just a little gratifying.

“Fuck technique.” Bakugo’s not about to start pulling his punches, not that the coach seems to pay any mind. “I ain’t trying to win points in a pansy-ass contest.”

“You would not even place in a pansy contest,” the Coach replies musically, “You would be lucky even to qualify for the pansy-contest junior category.” It hits Bakugo in his weakest spots – competition and what he can’t do – and Ochako fears he’ll blow his top, but he just remains sullenly fixed on the Coach. “Only when you embrace technique will it give you the control you need.” Coach Nikiforov sweeps a willowy arm in Ochako’s direction. “You could learn a thing or two from mochi here.”

“Why’d you keep calling her that?” Bakugo snaps like he’s the only one allowed to give nicknames, in a way that’s rather symptomatic of his own under the Coach.

The Coach tips his head to one side with a knowing smile. “Because she’s soft and sweet, no?” It was a silly name he appointed to Ochako during their early days of training, which she honestly hadn’t thought about much – until now.

Ochako doesn’t think she’s sweet – certainly not to Bakugo, so finds herself strangely choked up when she catches Bakugo muttering, “Half right,” in an under-the-breath mumble she’s not sure is for her to hear, and kinda wishes she didn’t.

Coach Nikiforov towers above Ochako like a skyscraper, a thoughtful look deepening the lines of his face as he folds sinewy arms over each other and watches Bakugo rip through a tumbling sequence with special aggression.

“You know, I think it’s about time to put the two of you together.”

Ochako’s insides flash-freeze, while Bakugo stumbles out of a flip in a way that must be coincidence.
“Sorry, can you say that again?” Ochako invites, certain that there’s no way her Coach could mean it the way it sounds like – he’s not speaking his native language, so mix-ups are perfectly normal and Ochako’s sure there’s a reasonable explanation in there somewhere.

Coach Nikiforov elaborates merrily. “You’re a little heavier than most of the girls in our mixed pairs, but I think hotsauce will be able to handle that, don’t you?”

“Damn right,” Bakugo spits if Ochako’s not mistaken – so she must be. Mistaken.

“Handle me for what?” Ochako asks obviously, and of course, has no idea what to expect.

“We’ll start you on some basics,” Coach Nikiforov announces, waving to some of the other gymnasts to come over, presumably for a demonstration, before his gaze centres in on Bakugo. “You’re about to make our girl fly.”

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Ochako had thought she was used to being thrown around by Bakugo. Apparently she’s only just getting started. The moves Coach Nikiforov and a couple of the younger gymnasts show them make things Ochako and Bakugo have been doing in training seem like child’s play; a thought never more pertinent than when Ochako stands a few feet from Bakugo, taking a deep breath.

Bakugo has his fingers locked together in front of his stomach, a step-up that Ochako’s expected to take. She breaks into a run and plants a bare foot in the hot cradle of Bakugo’s hands, pushing up while he brings sledgehammer arms upwards and boosts Ochako up above his head. Even without quirks, Ochako shoots up fast enough to hit a moment where her weight balances out against the force with which she’s launched upwards, and in that split-second spreads her feet, finding one of Bakugo’s hands securely under each.

Tensing all over, Ochako comes to a stop standing upright on top of Bakugo’s hands, a surprisingly stable platform that only remains still for a moment. Bakugo’s arms bend, slowly lowering onto his shoulders like loading up a spring to fire – and Ochako is the ammunition.

The last time they tried to do this, which was only a few minutes ago, Ochako’s nerve had frayed and she’d activated her quirk a second before Bakugo let go of her. When he noticed, instead of letting go Bakugo had spun a full circle and hurled Ochako across the gymnasium like a hammer-throw, squealing in weightless terror. No more than what she gets for allowing doubt to possess her for even a second.

Because Bakugo doesn't do doubt, doesn't believe in anything except complete and unwavering commitment to doing exactly what he planned on doing, exactly the way he planned on doing it, and naturally expects the same from Ochako.

That expectation is what keeps Ochako's nerve screwed down when she bends her knees slightly and jumps just as Bakugo pushes up, folding over and rolling, once, twice and just about three times before the floor comes up to meet her. Bakugo's hands scoop under Ochako's arms as she barely finishes the final third somersault, and braces her against a smash hit with the floor.

Ochako's hardly a feather and feels Bakugo's muscles engage as he catches her quirk-free, but landing in his arms feels as secure as a set of bars underneath her. In place of fear or nausea, the only rush Ochako feels is excitement at pulling the move off. She swings low, right between Bakugo's legs, and then he brings her back up with such speed Ochako knows on instinct what he wants next. It’s not good enough to hit the mark – it has to be disappearing in the distance behind them.
So instead of standing Ochako up as planned, Bakugo throws her back up again into a somersault back in the other direction. Ochako follows through, feeling safe even when Bakugo's touch departs and she's spinning just by herself, managing two turns into a tidy landing. Her arms stick out in completion on instinct, and although Bakugo rolls his eyes, Coach Nikiforov bursts into applause.

“Wonderful! You two have such beautiful synergy, why on earth do you waste it by fighting each other?”

Ochako doesn't know whether to laugh or feel embarrassed, getting stuck between the two with an awkward wheeze.

“Bullshit.” Bakugo has a different view, which he conveys with a vaguely ominous promise, “You'd know if we were fighting.”

Coach Nikiforov laughs, which spares Ochako needing an outward reaction. All hell is loose on the inside, but on the surface Ochako's face remains hopelessly blank, unable to process the feeling of such... 

familiarity being with Bakugo gives her. Because he's right, and the realisation that she and Bakugo have such a basis for comparison sits like a badly shaped bike saddle.

Ochako is closer to Bakugo than ever before, but it only makes the distance between them even clearer. Because for whatever sense it makes, the more Ochako gets to know Bakugo the amount that she doesn't understand about him gets disproportionately larger.

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When Ochako comes out of the changing room at the end of Coach Nikiforov’s training, Bakugo is leaning against a set of lockers by the door with a towel hanging over one shoulder. As she gets closer, two things come to Ochako's notice; that Bakugo is, without a shadow of a doubt, waiting for her; and he’s fresh from a shower so hot it seems like the beads of water running down his neck ought to turn to steam by the time they reach his collarbone. He must have near-enough boiled himself, because Ochako feels almost a degree warmer for every step she takes towards him.

“Ready?” Bakugo asks gruffly, and Ochako discovers the only thing she can do at that point is nod. Fortunately it's all Bakugo needs to set off, Ochako half-skipping behind him like she's cruising in his wake.

They're halfway to the train stations before anything is said. In light of Ochako's newfound tongue-tied condition, it has to be Bakugo.

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“That shiny-headed jack-in-the-box wasn't totally useless.”

Ochako is grateful Bakugo leaves this term of address for Coach Nikiforov until they've left – the rest would be fine, but 'shiny-headed' would have surely sent him into a self-conscious tailspin, and without his husband around to calm him down they’d have more than likely lost productivity for the rest of the session.

But after temporarily losing the ability to speak, Ochako reclaims it in the worst possible way.

“Why is it so hard to admit when someone is better than you— at something, Ochako would have said if she'd had the chance.

“He's not better than me!” Bakugo hits like he's going for a knockout.

“At like, one specific thing,” Ochako steams through to the end of her point. “Yes he is, Bakugo.”

Coach Nikiforov has been doing this for at least Bakugo’s whole life three times over, of course he
has things to teach. “It doesn't make you any less to admit that.”

“Cool your tits,” Bakugo says a little unkindly, shrugging into a thick hoodie that Ochako envies whenever she pays attention to it. “I said not useless, that's pretty good for a quirkless loser.”

“Why is it so important for you to push others down?” Ochako asks, then more daringly guesses. “Does it make you feel safe?”

“Fuck you, Freud wannabe.” As good a yes as Ochako will ever get.

“It's like you see anyone with skills that compare to your own as a personal challenge,” Ochako continues the walking analysis, bolstered by the knowledge that she and Bakugo are going the same way and he's low on escape routes. “It's okay not to be the best at something.”

“To you,” Bakugo mutters, and the wall of conversation is familiar. Bakugo's drive and tenacity – the thing that makes him push himself to such heights – is tied irrevocably to his need to be superior, because in his world to be second place is to have already lost.

“If you won’t recognise when a person has something you don’t, how can you expect to learn from them?” That’s exactly why Ochako is here, after all.

“I just did,” Bakugo spits like a fire stacked with green wood. “That bastard lectured me to death about fucking technique.” And Bakugo did learn, so why it leaves such a bitter taste in his mouth is beyond Ochako’s comprehension.

“But you're so negative about everything.” This would be an argument under most definitions Ochako would usually refer to, but somehow only feels like a… discussion. “What's wrong with acknowledging someone's ability?”

“Because even the strong can let you down.” Bakugo's closed off behind a wall of body language, eyes set dead ahead but quite surely speaking to Ochako alone, but she’s surprised by the honesty of his words. “I don't look up to someone unless I'm sure that won't happen.”

More and more, Ochako understands Bakugo as a person desperate not to be hurt. She feels sorry that anyone so accomplished should be so insecure. Maybe that's why, because Bakugo knows better than any of them how being the best is a fragile, easily-lost thing.

“If you set people up to fail you that's exactly what will happen,” she counters. “You have to believe in them.”

“Save that bleeding heart shit for Deku,” Bakugo bites. “I believe in proving your worth before expecting people to cheer you on.” It’s true, Bakugo doesn’t do what he does for applause – couldn’t care less about his outward appeal, for all the good it does him. He does it to be number one.

Ochako doesn't think she should say it, but she's thinking it, and around Bakugo that means a hotlink right to her mouth. “Well, what about me?”

He scoffs. “What about you?”

“I'm not… it's not like I'm so great at… anything.”

Bakugo scoffs again, but it's not in agreement. “Idiot,” he declares, arm swinging close enough to Ochako's it'd be all too easy to reach out and grab her – but there's no one to fool, so it never happens.
Bakugo's gaze shifts from the path ahead of them to catch Ochako in his sights. She feels her temperature going up again, stomach tying itself in a sailor's lifetime of knots when he finishes, “You're a sure thing.”

Chapter End Notes

So basically Victor is a 'what if gymnastics instead of skating in this world' scenario or MAYBE even a 'skating too but he just does this for fun' spin on him... it doesn't really matter which, it's just a Victor cameo basically XD

Reference corner! Russia and the US have INSANE routines in this video (youtube.com) /GCGCybUFiyI?t=9m29s

I actually had to go looking for the thing I was imagining Bakugo and Ochako doing, which turns out to be paired (acrobatic) gymnastics, and then I basically picked moves out of here once I had the detail.

*Slowly turns up the head on the slow burn cooker*... thanks everyone, your comments and love are awesome. Got some primo stuff coming up for you in a few days ;)

Flipping Ochako Over

Chapter Summary

Ochako falls head over heels for Bakugo.

Chapter Notes

Hello naughty children, it's me, fanfic satan.

*smokes cigar while pouring out a long line of gunpowder leading up to a huge pile of explosives*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s a commonly observed phenomenon that when Deku delivers his patented brand of overflowing-with-kindness, instantly reassuring peptalk about how amazing Ochako is, she believes – at least wants to believe – him for as long as he’s around. Then the feeling of certainty fades in his absence like warmth after the sun sets. He’s an easy person to miss, especially when the periods he’s simply not at school grow more frequent, answering a call that is only ever going to get louder; the priority that no one person can compete with, because no one person can outbalance protecting a whole way of life.

But when Bakugo says that, Ochako swears it goes straight into being carved in stone, something innate and untouchable. Because Bakugo only says things he sees as the absolute principles of the world. Rain falls, the seasons change, and Ochako’s a sure thing. Too bad she doesn’t entirely know what it means. A sure thing: Reliable? Someone to count on, but for what?

Ochako doesn’t get the chance to test this statement the way she wants, because the thickening swarm of commuters towards the train station precludes the easy, open conversation of before. But what does happen would probably render Ochako mute anyway, because when the throng of people becomes too dense to navigate in a straight line, Bakugo reaches without hesitation or reserve to curl his hand around her wrist – reaching for Ochako the way he would and does, just not in a situation like this before.

Bakugo draws on Ochako’s arm like a rope and she buoys closer to him as he ploughs his way through the crowd, shoving pedestrians with his shoulders left and right as he bulldozes a path for them both through the hustle. Ochako doesn’t mind it – far from – but wonders at what point Bakugo decided he can just grab onto her and that’s normal for them. It is – was and, sometimes, still is. But not always – not anymore. Ochako’s heart wouldn’t be sprinting like it’s trying to outrun them to make it onto the train if this were normal.

And when they do make it onto the train, packed close together as people do everything but lay on top of each other like sardines, Ochako finds herself up close and personal with Bakugo in the same way as they end up during training, but without being the same at all. Because when they’re practicing their quirk teamup, Ochako’s usually too focused or nauseous – or both – to be noticing anything like Bakugo’s smell.
Besides which, during training Bakugo always has those liquid-explosive fumes clinging to him. Now he’s fresh out of a shower that Ochako somehow had to notice he’d taken, and it gives her no excuse but to know that this must be how he is normally – that, or someone else on this train smells incredibly good. Ochako’s not actually sure which is worse.

Someone jostles Bakugo during the unload/reload of the next station, and he retaliates by lifting an elbow to jab the person. “Watch it, asshole.” Somehow, compounded by the cramped space of the train, the conclusion of this gesture results in Bakugo’s arm coming in to rest around Ochako’s shoulders, which – regardless of how convenient a height they happen to be at – are not supposed to be a holster for his shoving arm.

While she’s contemplating the merits of querying Bakugo’s move against the surprisingly secure feeling of his arm curled around her, Ochako catches a disgruntled mutter from the other side of the wall Bakugo’s struck between her and anyone behind him. “Dickhead.”

That does it. Bakugo drives his whole upper back into the person with a kick like a horse, such that Ochako feels the tension of his arm hooked round the back of her neck. She grabs the front of his hoodie – she might make him weightless and toss him at the ceiling if he’s not careful – and pulls him back without even thinking about it.

Bakugo stops when he feels that tug from Ochako, but a moment later the voice goes, “Yeah lady, keep your crazy boyfriend under control.”

Bakugo bucks like a stallion determined not to be broken, but Ochako hangs on. “Say that again, shitstain! I’ll kick your goddam teeth in-”

“All right, sir!” Ochako pitches like a baseball across the carriage, giving the front of Bakugo’s hoodie a more assertive pull. “We all know it’s cramped in here, so let’s just try and get along, okay?”

Whether swayed by the looming fear of Bakugo’s narrowly-averted wrath, or Ochako’s assaultingly polite good-cop supplement, the stranger seems adequately disarmed and doesn't fight back. Neither does Bakugo, astonishingly, letting himself be tugged closer – which, technically Ochako sort of invited when the alternative was arguing with other passengers.

At the next station the deck of bodies get shuffled again luckily, and though no further fights break out, there’s a point where Ochako inches closer toward Bakugo to allow some people to move past them, but the space she gives up isn’t fairly returned. Meaning she’s now tucked fully under Bakugo’s shoulder, arm heavy around her, and they’re pressed so close together there's not even a breath she can take that isn’t hot out of his own mouth.

Then the train jolts and Ochako reaches around Bakugo instinctively for balance, anchoring herself with an arm slung low around his back. She tries to treat it as if this were a training exercise – one of their many moves that require being this close, though it's never felt so… uncomfortably comfortable.

Because it's easy to be like this with Bakugo – not just for training, but anytime – easier than it should by any rights. Ochako’s tired from the gym, and if she didn’t think about it too much, she could lay her head in the cradle between Bakugo’s arm as it reaches up to a handle on the carriage and the crook of his neck, and easily manage a nap – a temptation that's surprisingly hard to resist.

When and how Ochako became so comfortable with Bakugo that she feels she can sleep on him raises all kinds of interesting questions, none of which get addressed before they're ready to get off the Awkward Truths Train of Questioning. When they do get off – the train, obviously – Bakugo lets go of Ochako's hand but picks up something else.
“Are you still thinking about that shithead back there?” Bakugo sets it up more like an accusation than a question.


Bakugo scowls while also looking sort-of relieved, which is a weird split. “Then what're you all quiet about?”

Ochako doesn't know how to handle this. Because for one, Bakugo noticing such a subtle shift in her behavior is totally unexpected, and for two, she can't very well say it's because of him. Then she'd have to try and explain why being close enough to jump in Bakugo's pocket is leaving her tongue-tied, and this is just a hunch, but Ochako doubts that road goes anywhere they need to be.

“Uh, nothing,” she says awkwardly. “Just… thinking back on today's training.” There's no way Bakugo can argue with that.

But then, Bakugo always finds a way.

“Who says it's over?”

They walk onto school grounds without ceremony, and Ochako heaves a deep sigh. “Of course not.” Bakugo wants what he always wants, which is her unconditional time to be spent the way of his choosing. “Can I at least get my books?”

Bakugo eyes Ochako tepidly, mouth a thin line that barely gives as he answers, “Fine.”

The implicit agreement makes Ochako itch, because it means Bakugo’s granting some study time without ever saying it. As they walk back to the dorms it’s somehow harder not to bump into Bakugo than it would be just to hold hands, and their elbows brush a few times as they lapse into hypersensitive silence.

“See you in the common room?” Bakugo mutters at the door, and Ochako nods. This is their big mistake. Well, one of them.

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“Well lookie-here.” Kaminari’s head folds back over the sofa, gazing at them upside-down, his legs stretched out with ankles crossed over one of Kirishima’s knees. Hagakure pops up from behind Shouji on the other sofa, something Ochako missed in her first sweep of the room.

“Ohmygawd! Have you two been out on a date?”

Ochako knows what answer would keep up the appearance they’ve agreed to maintain, yet she’s deeply relieved when Bakugo answers, “No.” But then he steps right up to Ochako, stopping much closer than necessary – almost as close as they were on the train – then turns over his shoulder to fire a lazy glare at the audience of stunned-yet-still-rather-smug onlookers. “I’m not finished with her yet.”

Following fashion, Ochako finds herself rendered speechless.

Her capacity to talk returns about halfway out of the building. The rest of Ochako’s friends she assumes are still in shocked silence, where they were left after the latest Bakugo-bombshell drops. “Where are we going?”

“But we're only supposed to… *you know* in approved areas.”

“It won't take long,” he says with frustration jumping off him like static. “Anyway, this will be all you.”

What Ochako thinks Bakugo means is they will only be needing her quirk, which admittedly does lower the risks of practicing outside training areas due to the lack of explosions or shooting around at high speeds. But in practice it still sounds… weird.

Ochako effortlessly manages to make it weirder. “What if someone sees?”

Bakugo’s solution is simple, if inelegant. “I'll kill ’em.”

Ochako can sense that arguing won’t be getting her anywhere in a hurry – do the thing or don’t, but leave out the bitching as Bakugo would surely say. So she just follows him around the back of the dorms and awaits further instructions.

It doesn’t take long. “Do the thing from today’s training, but instead of jumping off me we're both gonna go up,” Bakugo explains in his uniquely not-entirely-clear way.

“So I should use my quirk on you during the boost?” she clarifies. “What about myself?”

“Go zero-g at the point you’d jump if we were doing it normally.” Bakugo pauses for a moment, then yields to further explanation. “It’s like a… pinball machine,” he stumbles into it, but Ochako starts getting it. She thinks.

“Sort of like, you're the spring launcher, and I'm the ball?”

“Yeah,” Bakugo confirms. “Only I'm coming with you.”

‘*Of course you are,*’ Ochako doesn’t dare say. Bakugo is facing her with his back to the dorm building, draped in shadows that he might sink into with the dark clothes he's wearing. But Ochako knows he’s there, so she doesn't hesitate. She breaks into a run, raising a knee with the knowledge that when she puts her foot down Bakugo's hands will be under it. They are.

Needing that all important contact to use her quirk on Bakugo, Ochako takes an extra boost from the hand she presses flat against his shoulder, then leaps for the sky as Bakugo pushes up under her. Ochako seizes the moment where she would be about to start turning head over heels if this were gymnastics training, but instead takes a similarly nauseating alternative and activates her quirk on herself, arms stretched up into the twinkling night sky.

If anyone *is* watching, the result must look terribly strange. Without letting go of Ochako's feet, she and Bakugo lift off the ground with surprising speed, shooting up the side of the building like a double-decker bottle rocket.

It’s bizarre, but it *works.* Ochako’s basking in the peculiar thrill when – with no warning – Bakugo takes the grip he has on her feet and pushes in so specific a way that her heels go sailing up and around to swap places with her head. She lets out a protestant squeal and reaches out to grab… *anything*, even while still moving rather fast up the face of the dorm building.

When Ochako’s fingers tangle with Bakugo’s, she realises that he’s flipped her end-on-end and brought them face to face – only she’s upside down and *still* soaring for the heavens. That’s plenty to turn her stomach, but then a flash of light passes over Bakugo’s face and he’s…

Well, he’s *smiling.*
Being upside-down and all, weightless to boot, Ochako doesn’t quite ‘bring up’ so much as forcibly eject, snatching a hand from between Bakugo’s fingers to press over her mouth as she gags.

“For fuck’s sake.” Without missing a beat, Bakugo wraps Ochako under one arm as he catches a railing – her railing, as a matter of fact – and hauls the both of them over it.

“Rele-a-augh-!” Ochako drops her quirk, hands gripping the edge of her balcony tight, and – not being at all proud of it – barfs four stories onto the ground.

“That was quick,” Bakugo sounds annoyed, obviously, not that Ochako really gives a damn or not at the moment. Mostly working on not puking anymore and figuring out what in the hell had set her off so suddenly. “What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing.” Ochako breathes deeply, and tries not to think about Bakugo maybe knowing this is her room and bringing her here on purpose because it gives her stomach a kick that it sorely does not need right now. Maybe that’s it, Ochako dreads to think – her stomach’s already unsettled when she’s airborne, especially with her quirk, but could some… other kind of provocation really trigger her side-effect so easily?

“Don’t bullshit me.” Bakugo’s arms are crossed heavily over his chest. “I deserve to know if something’s off.”

“You just… took me by surprise, that’s all,” Ochako downplays. It’s not entirely wrong, but isn’t quite the whole truth either – channelling Bakugo’s own conservative approach to telling the truth. “That went really well otherwise.”

It’s a strange consolation prize to offer Bakugo, but he’s watching her from the corner of his eyes, and takes the bait like a dog snatching pork chops from the table. “It can be better.”

“Okay, but can it be better tomorrow?” Ochako’s homework is, inconveniently, in her bag on the ground four stories down, and not getting any more done by the second. Not that she and Bakugo would study in her room in the first place – he’s only on the balcony, and that’s bad enough. “I need to go over Ectoplasm’s class notes at least once before tomorrow’s class.” In Ochako-speak, this actually means about five times, but she won’t tell him that just yet. “And brush my teeth.”

Bakugo pauses for a moment, then lets out a huge, utterly unnecessarily put-upon sigh, like all the world’s inconvenience has been manifested in Ochako’s very specific needs of him at this exact point in time. But he’s still here. “Alright.”

In one fluid movement he hops up onto the edge of the balcony, hanging low between his knees in a deep squat. “Tag me in and I’ll go get our shit.”

“Uh… okay.”

“What, you wanna go back down there?” Bakugo fires accusingly, and Ochako shakes her head. Maybe they are studying in her room after all.

After she touches Bakugo’s back gently and he spring-launches himself at the ground, Ochako considers how many times he’s gotten her into almost-trouble doing this kind of thing, and that she really ought to stop letting him. But when he comes flying back up with a single arrow-like leap, hurling Ochako’s bag at her like pitching a ball before flinging himself back to the solid ground of her balcony, with his own slung over a shoulder like an illicit study-session totally is on the cards, she accepts that’s never going to happen.

Because Ochako lets Bakugo get away with just about anything.
Chapter End Notes

Now you wouldn't believe me if I told you, but I'm gonna tell you anyway.

I love this chapter, but I love the next one even more.
Getting Ochako into bed #1

Chapter Summary

Ochako gets a wake-up call.

Chapter Notes

Sorry I had to tease y'all so much by talking about how this is one of my favourite chapters, but it TOTALLY is. I don't know if it will involve what anyone (or at least some people expect), but I hope it's enjoyable all the same.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ochako wakes up, which is bad news, because it means she's been asleep. And not on the floor. No, the comfortable rest Ochako has been napping on is upright, warm. Kind of like snoozing on a bag of raw steak. That means…

“Sorry.”

“Hm?” Bakugo sounds almost like he didn't notice, which is crazy because Ochako has literally fallen asleep on his shoulder over math homework. And Bakugo would notice a hair out of place on her head today, so his missing being slept on just doesn't fly.

Ochako doesn't know how long she's been out, but any amount of time snoozing slumped against Bakugo's shoulder is too long, so she sits up rubbing the side of her face guiltily. Why didn't he wake her?

Bakugo's sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of Ochako's low table, poring over the latest in a series of dot and arrow doodles that he seems to have no reservations about peppering her notes with.

When she's awake, it's actually been helpful having Bakugo here, though Ochako's not entirely calm about the casual invitation he offered himself into her room. It is better than studying in the common areas, where they'd draw too much attention just by being together. That's not to say Ochako's completely on board with having Bakugo in here, but she wasn't going to get his help anywhere else.

Bakugo for one seems profoundly unbothered with being in Ochako's space. He just kicked his shoes off at the balcony door and made himself at home. He's similarly unbothered by having Ochako in his space, given just how warm her face feels when she lifts it out of the groove of Bakugo’s neck, swaddled in that good smell her drowsy mind clings to. Bakugo’s patience for being used as a nap-rest is better than his patience for most other things, but it's not exhaustive.

Although a sleeping Ochako is one he doesn’t have to tutor in math, and Bakuo remains focused on his workings out in strange scribbles on the back of a homework sheet she hasn't even done yet.

Without so much as a flicker of his eyes from the page, he delivers a flat, “You were snoring.”
“Sorry,” she says again, and Bakugo makes a small, impatient noise. Ochako tries to pick up where she dropped off with the equation she was working on solving, but ends up preoccupied with the dawning realisation that Bakugo was just... letting her snooze on him.

“Stop apologising,” he bites. “If you bleat it over and over for stupid shit then there's no meaning.”

“I guess.” Ochako wants to tell him that saying sorry isn't like an eraser, it doesn't wear out with each use, but she doesn't. Bakugo knows how to apologise, even if he avoids it at all costs; Ochako suspects that it just makes him uncomfortable, and that's why he wants her to stop.

Bakugo chews over something he doesn't say, at least, not right away. So Ochako waits, pretending to be trying to solve the math problems that make much less sense than Bakugo's scribbling down her margins. In spite of her best efforts to resist the urge, eventually Ochako yawns, and that seems to push Bakugo into coming out with it.

“You know, we can do this tomorrow.” Even sat right next to her, Bakugo feels so far away at moments like this. The strange distance between them that manages to be too close and still incredibly distant. “If you can't even stay awake.”

“I'm okay,” she says across another yawn.

“Like I care.” Then Bakugo yawns, though he tries to cover for it, and Ochako doesn't feel quite so guilty. They're both tired. “We'll get back to this shit first thing, okay?”

Ochako looks at Bakugo and wonders if what she thinks is happening is happening. Is he trying to get her into bed?

“Okay, but what are you gonna do?”

Bakugo makes a very disconcerted face for a moment, then it snaps back to the usual pouty scowl. “What?”

“How are you gonna get back to your room?”

“Oh.” Based on his... face, Bakugo was confused and perhaps even thought Ochako was talking about something else. She’s desperate to know what he thought she meant, but Bakugo doesn’t give her the chance to find out. “Easy,” he says with a reversion to more familiar surety. “I’ll jump.”

“Over the building?” Ochako asks in disbelief, then remembers who she is and what Bakugo’s always thinking about. What he always wants to do with Ochako. “You... want to do a moon jump.”

“A what?” Bakugo’s words wrap around a bolt of laughter that he shouldn’t let loose so freely, because these walls aren’t fully Bakugo-soundproof and there’s fuelling rumours and just plain getting into trouble. But it’s a laugh from Bakugo, which is so sorely disarming that Ochako’s stomach gives her a spiteful punch.

“Where I only cancel part of your gravity,” she specifies in a rush. “Sorry, I probably never called it that out loud before.”

“Quit apologising,” Bakugo snaps as he gets up. “It’s a good name.”

Ochako’s gut creeps up behind her and then kicks her in the back of the head. She gets up after Bakugo and follows as he treads back into his shoes and heads onto her balcony, bag dangling from one hand and the other closed into an instinctive fist.
“Are you sure you’re going to make it?” Ochako should know this is a stupid question but doesn’t think about it properly.

“Fuck you.” Bakugo’s standing with his back to her, and even his insults seems low-energy. This is followed by an entirely more weighty – and Ochako is seriously going to get it if there’s anyone who catches earshot of this – “Do it.”

Without hesitation, Ochako lifts a hand to set on the back of Bakugo’s shoulder, warm to her touch – even more comfortable next to her cheek, as it happens. This trick takes a while, and the queasiness in Ochako’s stomach doesn’t help as she channels sand the wrong way through a timer. But Bakugo is steady as a rock underneath her, something to hang onto until Ochako’s ready to let go.

“You’re good.” Ochako finally hears how tired she sounds, although her choice of words merits some consideration too.

“See you tomorrow.” Bakugo still doesn’t turn around, then with a burst of static energy puts one foot up on top of Ochako’s balcony and leaps for the sky. Ochako stands there with her hand still held out, watching the tiny flickers of fire that spark from Bakugo’s palms as he ascends high enough to clear the building and then finally out of sight.

Only now does Ochako wonder when she’s supposed to release her quirk, but has barely thought about this half a minute when her phone vibrates. She checks it and finds a message from Bakugo that amounts to a grand total of two words; ‘Drop it.’

“Release.” Clasping her phone between her palms, Ochako turns the screen back to face her and thinks way, way too much before typing out, ‘goodnight’ and hitting send. She’s not using her quirk anymore, but the sickness remains as Ochako changes for bed and deliberately doesn’t look at her phone, not even to check because there’s going to be nothing there worth checking.

Then she actually just forgets about it, so she’s laying in bed half-asleep when she hears the buzz. Ochako drowsily fumbles for her phone without a thought for who it might be. Certainly not Bakugo.

Of course, by rule of opposites that means it has to be Bakugo. Ochako’s blurry eyes focus on the single word, ‘nite’ then she puts her phone down and turns over fast, like if she can unsee what she read then she can unfeel the reaction.

Ochako thinks she might have a problem.

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The next morning Ochako feels a little better, though her stomach does a pancake flip when she heads downstairs to fix herself something to eat and runs into Bakugo looking exceptionally sleepy over porridge.

It’s the wrong side of 6am so no one else is around yet – busy sleeping, like Ochako wishes she were – and the deserted common room feels safe enough that without bothering to discuss it, Ochako and Bakugo settle on a sofa to pick up where they left off last night. With math homework. Obviously.

Except where she really left off last night was sleeping on Bakugo, and maybe the early starts and late ends are catching up with both of them, because barely fifteen minutes into working through the assignment littered with doodles Ochako looks over to see Bakugo fully clocked-out next to her. He’s stretched out from the feet propped on a table to his head lolling back on the top of the sofa, arms spread out in a long line and eyes lined with fair lashes shut, breath falling as regular as waves.
At least to Ochako, he looks pretty dang comfortable. So comfy Ochako thinks hey, it's not like he's going to notice or complain, and twists into a half-curl her side, finding it tricky to find parts of the sofa that aren't in someway occupied by Bakugo, and shuts her eyes for just a moment.

Or so it feels.

Because Ochako wakes up to the creature-like sound of her classmates trying to be quiet and that being much louder than if they'd just gotten on with it.

Since first laying down her head, Ochako's pillow has gotten a lot more comfortable than the funny angle she started out at. The couch is also smelling unusually great, which should be a clue, but it's only when the cushion takes a breath that Ochako realises it's happened again.

Ochako bolts upright and elicits a disappointed noise from Hagakure. “Wait!” she pleads, phone in her hands. “I was about to take a picture!” Ochako breathes a sigh of relief that turns out to be too soon.

“I already got one.”

Ochako wonders how she might negotiate with Jiroy for non-circulation of such an image, then realises that it's probably already too late. For all her too-cool-for-school attitude, Jiroy is as bad as any of them when it comes to scrutiny of Ochako and Bakugo’s supposed relationship. Probably the worst of all with those earjacks, but nothing that’s come past Ochako’s channels of information. Though it must be said, Ochako has taken to scrolling past the messages in group-chat, letting a voice that sounds like Bakugo in her head remind her not to care what anyone else thinks.

“Really?! Lemme see.”

Around this time, Bakugo stirs from rest like a bear coming out of hibernation. At first he mostly seems confused, then, of course, annoyed. “What happened?” he demands as if Ochako’s responsible.

“We fell asleep.”

Bakugo’s already-grumpy expression twists into an even fouler scowl, and without trying too much Ochako can divine the source of his anger. The dawdling pace of their classmates suggests it’s still early, but falling asleep means lost time – the thing Bakugo wants in endless supply from Ochako. It’s reassuring somehow, though, that they both succumbed to fatigue. Bakugo’s incredible in a lot of ways, but he’s still human, and it comforts Ochako to confirm that every now and again.

Less comforting is the voice that comes from behind the sofa, dripping with warm, mushy smugness. “You two sure can’t get enough of each other, huh?”

Ochako doesn’t need to turn around to see who that is – she knows perfectly well who dares to address Bakugo like this – and watches Bakugo instead. The twitch that isn’t quite a flinch, but a flicker of something under one of his eyes. He looks forward with a deathstare that goes into space, though there’s no doubts about the intended target of his mutter, “No one asked you, shithead.”

Kirishima looks like he’s come straight from his room, pyjamas and his crimson hair hanging down like a peacock with its tail lowered. His grin could best be described as shit-eating meets cat-that-got-the-cream. “Wasn’t last night enough?”

“Last night?” Hagakure echoes. “What happened then?”

“Ask Bakugo,” Kirishima straight-up purrs. “He’s the one sneaking back to his room all floaty-like.”
“Ohmygawd, for serious?!” Hagakure shrieks, hands pressed together like she’s thanking the heavens for such pearls of information.

“Huh, now you mention it I never heard Ochako going back to her room last night either.” Where Mina has come from Ochako doesn’t know, but she’s feeling rather like Bakugo could do with laying some boundaries with his friends right about now. They’re all friends, obviously, but Ochako’s inner circle is managing to be rather less… invasive than Bakugo’s, at least of late.

“Hey Mina.” Jirous beckons Mina over with an earjack, smirking at her phone. When Mina gets over there she lets out a girlish squeal, crowding even closer to Jirou to peer at what Ochako can easily guess.

“Ugh, I seriously can’t take it, they’re just so cute together!” Mina declares with a beckoning wiggle of fingers to coax Ochako up. “Seriously, girl, you’ve gotta take a look.”

Mina takes hold of the phone over Jirou’s hand, turning it around to face Ochako. The image is tiny from so far away, but what Ochako does see draws her up onto her feet, pulled toward the screen like she’s being carried on a rail. Real Life Bakugo has shifted away from her, elbows propped on top of his knees as he leans forward, head dropped to his chest. But On Screen Bakugo’s still asleep, sprawled out on the sofa like Ochako remembers, but the bit she doesn’t is more concerning.

Because Ochako’s pretty sure she didn’t set her head down for the tiniest of naps on Bakugo, but in this picture she’s definitely not on the sofa anymore. In the picture, which Jirou snapped well before either of them woke up, Ochako’s not only got her face resting against Bakugo’s shoulder, but she’s draping an arm across his stomach like a scarf. If that’s not enough, one of Bakugo’s arms has slipped from the back of the sofa, slung around Ochako with an instinctive grab that she apparently hadn’t noticed when she was waking up. Well, Ochako remembers being very comfortable, but that’s all.

“That’s… wow.” The picture, as much as Ochako would like to be able to deny it, looks pretty darn cute.

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Chapter End Notes

So who guessed sleeping together in a LITERAL sense would be the thing I like SO MUCH about this update???? Any takers?

The trust and comfort factors of sleeping with a person are SO satisfying to me, I really love it, and if there's a single scene from this whole story I'd love to see drawn (one of my commenters I'm just gonna call Yurio has already been doing some lovely things so I'm already spoiled) Jirou's photo is THE thing (if anyone reading this takes commissions I'm open to talking cash, leave me a comment or msg me on tumblr @fear3loathing).

Also our leap forward in Ochako's many levels of denial makes this an important chapter for me too, though I have to admit that there’s a subplot coming with the next update that’s my favourite subplot so far, so if anyone is waiting for this story to peak, I’m just getting us STARTED on the good shit. Y’all ain’t seen nothing yet.
Setting a Date

Chapter Summary

Ochako says things she'll live to regret, while Bakugo says things he'll never regret. Or perhaps the other way around.

Chapter Notes

I promised this chapter was the start of my favourite subplot... and so it is. Y'all will see.

Me: I might not update tonight unless I get really into it in the next few hours. Also me: *does that* oh, I guess I can do another double-update... happy Monday, everyone.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Some sentences start in such a way that – regardless of who's saying it or their intentions – can never end well. This is one of those.

“Guys, I've had the best idea.” No shade to Mina, but if her idea has anything to do with Ochako and Bakugo, they're probably not going to like it. Mina’s determined gaze and mile-wide grin at the pair of them are telling clues it's going to be one of those kinds of ideas, so Ochako braces herself for the worst.

It's the very end of breakfast, after the training session Bakugo and Ochako's never managed to have, writing off the practice time to actually get ready and walk over to the classroom with their classmates for once.

“Oh yeah?” Kirishima has transformed into his full-plumage form, full of cheer and inclinations to mercilessly tease Bakugo – who has maintained an attitude all morning of a distinctly grumpy hippopotamus that has birds hopping all over its back.

“We should go on a group date this weekend!” Mina declares with all the enthusiasm that would be normal for the situation – where Ochako and Bakugo are really going on dates, instead of training until she pukes and getting abused by a retired russian olympian. “Wouldn't that be awesome?”

“That’s a great idea!” Kirishima cheers, knocking Bakugo with his shoulder as they walk. “Waddya say, man?”

Bakugo opens with a disdainful ‘tch’ sound and then moves up to, “Yeah right.”

“Aw, come’on,” Kirishima nudges Bakugo again.

“People actually gotta be dating for that,” Bakugo mutters, and for a moment Ochako’s paralysed with confusion; she’s forgotten why she’s even walking to class with Bakugo and his tagalongs again, then remembers it’s because Deku and Iida – Todoroki too, probably – would have all gone to
the canteen for breakfast after running a few laps. It’s certainly more productive than dawdling lazily around the common area eating toaster food and catching up on the homework more diligent students finished last night.

But this is Bakugo’s secret, so why he would suddenly announce it to the very people he wants to deceive doesn’t make any sense. However, Kirishima’s defiant. “You and Uraraka, of course.”

“Yeah,” Bakugo replies with a confidence that makes Ochako’s chest tight, “and who else?” Only then does Ochako realise Bakugo’s so confident he’s straight-up bluffing – or maybe he’s not even thinking about it.

Kirishima slows like an engine running out of fuel. But that’s when Mina sweeps in like an eagle snatching an egg, powering forward with the tenacity that’s probably a big part of why Bakugo puts up with her. The trait that keeps the people close to him in orbit: sheer persistence. “Me’n Kirishima, duh.”

Ochako finds her voice all at once. “Seriously?”

Kirishima also looks pretty shocked with this news, but not in a way that he’s unhappy about. “Uh, sure!” He grins wide and toothy. “It’ll be fun!”

Ochako wants to say the last thing it’ll be is fun, and then another part of her realises that it’s sad and wrong to feel that way about hanging out with people she likes. If she actually thinks about it, wouldn’t it be nice, if things were just… different?

“Hey, don’t leave me out of the action,” Kaminari butts in. “I want in on this too.”

“Then you and Jirou should come together!” Mina proposes like that’s exactly how easy it is. Then Ochako checks Jirou’s face and sees the proof that it’s absolutely not.

Jirou’s staring at Kaminari like the last pudding on a sale stand; a bargain in theory, but perhaps not quite as appealing as looks at first glance. Then she glances at Mina, and finally double-bounces between Bakugo and Ochako like a visual game of table tennis.

“Does it have to be with him?” Jirou asks with her eyebrows in a devilish slant across her forehead.

“Okay, ouch.” Kaminari sounds a little hurt, but he’s still grinning. Maybe because he knows what he’s about to say next. “Fine, how about Kendo Itsuka in the other class? She’s cute.”

“Alright, I’ll do it,” Jirou jumps in. “But let’s ask Yaomomo to come too.” This is the kind of caper Momo would take to like an over-enthusiastic tourist, but from where Ochako’s standing it can’t be anything except a bad idea.

“Yaomomo?” Mina’s head tips in thought. “You mean, she’d come with-”

“Slow down, I never said yes in the first place,” Bakugo snaps.

“Aww, why not?” Kirishima asks with a fat bottom lip, then an ever-so-slightly impish. “Are you and Uraraka hiding something?”

Bakugo doesn’t say anything, but having cultivated a reputation for stony silence, gets away with it longer than most would. But when he does, there’s nothing uncertain in his tone. “What if I just want her to myself?”

“Ugh, you convince him, Ochako,” Mina links an arm through Ochako’s, which makes them as set
of three as at some point Kirishima’s latched onto the other side, like a lure sweeping up fish. “We can go shopping, get something tasty to eat, hit up the arcade, it’ll be so much fun!”

Ochako does a silly thing, which is say what she’s thinking. “It would be nice to take a break from…” Training non-stop with Bakugo every waking and sleeping moment of late, “…school.”

“That’s a yes!” Mina decides ecstatically. “Whaddya say, Bakugo? You don’t want to let your girl down, do you?”

Bakugo’s head turns to look at Ochako, and all she can think of is that he would never let her down, not while he has strength and willpower to wield like weapons.

Even so, Ochako still expects Bakugo to say no, which somehow means… he’s going to say yes. So Ochako’s weirdly not that surprised when Bakugo grumbles, “Alright, princess.” Perhaps the last part is a little alarming to hear in front of other people, but even that highly-sarcastic nickname is old news to Ochako – if not the rest of them, who side-eye at each other so hard it’s a wonder they don’t swap eyes. “We’ll go on the stupid date.”

Up until that point, Ochako’s thinking about how she’d like to have fun with her friends, stop being completely devoted to her development as a hero, and just get to be a teenager for a short while.

After Bakugo says it, she realises how much trouble she’s gotten them into.

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They say all’s well that ends well, but Ochako doesn't think anyone who said it had to go on a group date with Bakugo before.

Ochako knows she doesn’t have to go through with this, even if it's easier to feel like she's been shenaniganed into it rather than expressing a preference which Bakugo accommodated. Because no, he has not let Ochako forget she's the one who said it would be ‘nice’ and could do with ‘a break’ – taking a rather personal interpretation of what, who, she wants a break from. Even if it’s true.

Not that there’s been any break in their training regimen in the run-up to date-gate anyway. In fact, their training is the bastion of continuity that Ochako has come to trust in; the place where everything is Bakugo-simple, boiled down to its most necessary parts. Each day starts with a goal, an exercise, and a determination to nail it before the rest of the day lays claim to their time. This doubles down in gymnastics training under the iron guidance of Coach Nikiforov – which is Ochako and Bakugo’s running after-school date as far as half the class is concerned. The other half isn’t too concerned at all, or like some malcontents may be starting to suspect the hot couple about school aren’t all they’re cracked up to be.

It’s never said outright, but their friends aren’t idiots and can tell that gym bags aren’t the usual accompaniment to dates and even the keenest couples might not have a regular-booked two hour date night in exactly the slot Ochako was training off-site every day. They can work it out.

That might be why Bakugo is tolerating date-gate, or so Ochako suspects when she gives it proper thought in the approximately two minutes of the day she gets to herself. If there's any doubt about whether they’re really going out, no better way to prove it than an exhibition in front of his staunchest allies and critics – same thing for him, mostly.

So Ochako understands, or thinks she does, why Bakugo’s allowing this black hole in their training schedule on the only day off school they have before Aizawa’s imposed hour of judgement. Not that it means they’re not training at all. Obviously, from dawn onwards Ochako’s being bowled like a
baseball along the long edge of a triangle Bakugo makes up the other two sides of, going from both-on-the-ground to meeting mid-air on the other side of the training area in a few nauseating seconds. As always with Bakugo, the name of the game is finding limits, then showing them the utmost disrespect.

Ochako can’t deny that, when she’s not clutching the contents of her stomach like a firstborn child, it’s exhilarating. Bakugo sets standards Ochako never realised she could meet until he expected her to, appreciating more than ever before just how important his capacity to push her is. Whatever Ochako thinks her upper limit is, Bakugo seems to know she can do better, and then sets the bar a little bit higher than even that. She’s amazed by how far she can reach standing on top of his shoulders, sometimes literally.

This is why, when the fated hour finally strikes, they’re late. To the date, that is. Ochako changes at lightspeed and runs ahead in a panic, which Bakugo refuses to do, so she arrives a grand total of two minutes ahead of him at the assigned meeting spot out-of-breath and ten minutes after the appointed meeting time.

“Hi! Sorry we’re late,” she pants, wishing she’d picked out an outfit that let her run without looking quite so… girlish. The skirt she’s wearing is much tighter than she last remembers, but Mina had absolutely insisted it was ‘hella cute’ and she’d be crazy not to wear it – it’s nice to dress up and not wear something not devotedly practical for once, though Bakugo had been full of scorn when she popped out of the changing rooms dressed like a real girl. In case he forgot. Asked her ‘who she’s trying to impress’ for all the sense a comment like that didn’t make.

“Been busy elsewhere, huh?” Kirishima baits, digging Kaminari with his elbow with a sideways look.

“Bit of heavy breathing, it looks like,” Kaminari plays back, and Ochako’s a little pleased Bakugo’s not here yet to fire off – or confirm it, which she no keener on as an option.

“Maybe that outfit’s doing a little too much for him,” Jirou drops in to complete the triple-threat of friendly torment.

“Uh, thanks,” Ochako says, still feeling very breathless. “Bakugo’s just… coming.”

“Oh I believe it,” Jirou replies with a wink like she knows way too much – more than Ochako even. Ochako’s half-convinced the only reason Jirou’s going along with this is to check out her and Bakugo’s supposed relationship under a magnifying glass. It sure isn’t for the amorous attentions of her own date.

By now the standard Bakugo ‘gang’ are all assembled, meaning Mina, Kirishima, Kaminari and Jirou, along with Yaomomo of course, who’s predictably thrilled about the socio-cultural experience. Obviously, her date is…

“What the fuck are you doing here?” When Bakugo finally stumps up, his gaze fixes on Todoroki like someone finding an entire toupee in their soup.

“I could ask you the same thing,” Todoroki replies indifferently, head tipping quizzically so the silver fan-brush of his hair crosses his eyes. “Who are you here with?”

It takes a moment for everyone to realise he’s being serious, even when Ochako just made Bakugo’s excuses for him, but then Todoroki’s not renowned for his astute ability to read between the lines.

“He’s with Ochako, of course,” Mina fills in helpfully.
Todoroki Shouto, cool prince extraordinaire and possible inhabitant of outer space, doesn’t show as much as a flicker in his expression, watching Bakugo like a piece of impressionist art he’s yet to learn how to appreciate. “Still?”

“Screw you, baked alaska,” Bakugo delivers with a truly Bakugo amount of grace. So, none at all.

But Todoroki seems about as bothered by this as by a light breeze on a pleasant day. Maybe he is enjoying the breeze, as he certainly doesn’t seem too affected by Bakugo’s… everything. Ochako’s not totally sure what he’s doing here, bar that Yaomomo must have asked him, and saying no to anything she’s enthusiastic about feels like tossing kittens over a bridge.

“Is everyone ready?” Mina rounds up like they're sheep to be corralled before scattering across the shepherd’s field.

“Can't believe this is the final guest list,” Bakugo mutters, and if he's going to sulk all day this experience is going to be chronically embarrassing in a way Ochako can't quite put her finger on.

“A group date with everyone you liked on it would just be you in a gym by yourself,” Ochako ribs in a way that's supposed to be funny – and thankfully is to a few of them, if not to Bakugo.

“Not true.” Bakugo is giving Ochako a ‘vengeance will be mine’ glare that would put whiskers on her chin. “You’d be there, chubby-cheeks.”

Ochako doesn't know what to make of that, and kneejerks into being adversarial like a bad habit; to squabble with Bakugo like it's fun. It kinda is, at least if he’s going to mess with her by playing into the performance of being ‘together’ in front of their friends to keep the lid on his precious secret.

“Not if you can't get through a sentence without insulting my face,” Ochako fires back, well aware of the ‘here they go again’ elbow-nudges of their friends. More the fool her for trying, because Bakugo’s the best when it comes to finishing in first place; this is no exception.

Bakugo initially looks shocked with her response, like he was expecting anything else – some flirty playback that would make them seem like a real couple – before his mouth curls into a wicked smirk.

“Who says I was talking about your face?” Bakugo spits just about vindictively as he strolls by.

And Ochako has no response to that.

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Chapter End Notes

SURPRISE the whole fic was leading up to a dumb chubby butt joke. That's it, we're done now.

Jk I got a boatload more, a nice thing about this fic is that I’ve taken liberties to skip a little time if I want to, only a couple of days at most in this chapter, but sometimes if I just wanna GET to the next important thing to happen why NOT just get straight there? You can imagine the training sessions we miss out on however you like, but they have a certain aspect of stability that means I'm not always going to cover EVERY minute they spend together or we'd be here literally forever... plus, we wouldn’t get to THIS point so quickly.
Ohhh enjoy this one, we're about to have SO much fun over the next seven chapters as this particular subplot plays out, which goes out to the commenter(s) who have specified being pleased to see Momo and/or Todoroki in this story. Todoroki in particular is my #1 scene stealer and I love him and I will never quit him, so yeah... enjoy!
Getting Bakugo out of his clothes

Chapter Summary

Ochako and Bakugo take things too seriously, each in their own unique way.

Chapter Notes

Now I wouldn't say this is my favourite chapter so far because we've just had that (getting ochako into bed #1), but it's definitely a REEL GOOD one and has a lot of very satisfying moments packed into it. Enjoy!

Me: You can't update 3 chapters in 3 days.
Also Me: Yes you can.
Me again: Shit you're right. *Literally does it*

I promise I'm not going to do this regularly, I have a lot of backlog but this is getting ridiculous (and yet I indulge us all). New chapter Thurs/Fri :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's unsurprising that Bakugo finds moving at the pace of the group like having his teeth pulled. He's good at making this sentiment known, strolling either several feet ahead of everyone or an equal distance behind, slipping abuse to whoever at the back he deems to be holding them up. Although he hasn't gone totally volcanic just yet, Ochako feels it looming with every seismic shake of his temper. When they actually get to the shopping centre things are no better.

“Isn’t this cute?” Mina holds the skirt up to her front and twirls.

“I preferred the other one.” Jirou sits as the first chair on the outfit evaluation committee, but is by no means the only one at the table.

“Kirishima, what do you think?” Mina asks, putting Jirou out of joint just a little if Ochako doesn’t know better.

“Uhh great,” Kirishima sounds like he has no idea what she’s talking about, but approves all the same. “Hella manly!”

“Manly? It's a skirt,” Jirou riffs. A cupcake-print skirt, no less, but Kirishima laughs good-naturedly.

“They can be manly!” he retorts. “Haven't you heard of kilts?”

“You pull it off then,” Jirou challenges lazily. Instead, Kirishima holds up a pink t-shirt with a pegasus unicorn on it in front of himself.

“Manly is just what you feel inside,” he says with toothy grin, posing with his free arm like a seaside strongman. “See?”
“That's a cute outfit, actually.” Mina holds the skirt up against Kirishima to match it to the t-shirt, eliciting smiles and laughter all around.

But Ochako can't relax, for reasons never clearer than when she catches Bakugo’s eyes and he rolls them like he's playing slots in his head.

“Bakugo, whaddya think?” Kirishima fishes, and he's fearless in a way Ochako marvels at. To so openly invite trouble, like climbing into a lion's mouth and taking a gravy bath. “My new look?”

“I think you're a frigging dumbass,” Bakugo mutters, and Ochako knows that Kirishima most of all wouldn’t expect any less of Bakugo, but she can't help feeling guilty somehow. Because she’s the reason he's here, perhaps even all of them, given the foundation of Mina’s idea.

And if Bakugo doesn't want to be here, he should have just said instead of coming along only to be sour – though technically, neither would Ochako be here in that case, being his supposed date and all. Not that Bakugo’s acting much like it, with everyone else making far more of an effort to chat while he fulfils the role of a petulant stormcloud above their heads a little too well.

So when Ochako next turns around and Bakugo is nowhere to be seen, she's first relieved, then annoyed she even feels that. It'd pop some big questions if Ochako’s date-and-supposed-boyfriend deserts a half hour into the outing, but she'll be a lot more at ease if Bakugo simply goes if he doesn't want to be here.

“Hey, where's Bakugo?” Kaminari picks up a moment after Ochako clocks it; he's also lower on the scale of how much interest he has in this shopping portion of the date himself, and is certainly getting no love – barely eye contact – from Jirou so far, who's only got eyes for the rapid array of outfits Mina's putting together like she's missed a calling as a fashion blogger.

“Uraraka ought to put a bell on him,” Kirishima jokes, now posing for a purple number like a dressmaker’s dummy that's on fire. “Oh well, he'll turn up.” It almost sounds like they'll find Bakugo uncollected in lost and found at the bottom end of this – or following a mall announcement for Ochako to come and collect her disgruntled boyfriend from the guard’s office before he blows up anything… else.

This fantasy has enough power to captivate Ochako when she’s crossing the store at Yaomomo’s invitation, seeking a second opinion on a pair of matching yukata that Ochako would pay all-the-money-she-doesn’t-have to see Momo and Todoroki wearing come the next fireworks festival, and catches sight of Bakugo emerging from a curtain in one of the smaller concessions.

Possessed by a sudden urge to do preventative damage control, Ochako doesn’t think about anything except saving them both embarrassment and discomfort down the line. She paces over like a spontaneous speed-walker and grabs Bakugo with both hands, steering him back the way he came, a curtain falling behind them as she backs him up into a somewhat alarmingly small space. More surprising is the fact that he lets her.

“Bakugo, you-” Ochako starts out at full steam, before a few things come to her notice that make her engine sputter, then stop dead. The first thing she actually manages to remark upon is, “This isn’t your shirt.”

“Not yet, dipshit,” he replies plainly, and it finally dawns on Ochako what the t-shirt she has two firm handfuls of is.

“Wait, you’re trying something on?”
“Have you been saving up all your stupid to use at once?” Bakugo’s eyes narrow, and then he calmly reaches for Ochako’s wrists to lift her hands from their baby-monkey grip around his collar. “So lay off the goods, I haven’t even seen it on yet.”

That would be because there’s no mirror in this dinky changing room, which – wait a second – they’re in a changing room. Together. Ochako’s not sure how she missed that, save that she was so convinced Bakugo wasn’t joining in or enjoying himself she simply discounted the possibility he was just doing things his own way.

For some reason that Ochako will later chalk up to the reflex of speaking her mind whenever Bakugo’s around her, picking up truths like a magnet does pins, she shoots a glance head-to-toe and tells him, “It’s nice, I like it.”

Bakugo looks at her like Ochako’s just announced she’s the Queen of Sweden. Even though it’s true – about the t-shirt, that is. Bakugo’s sense of style is just fine, better than Ochako’s probably, but like most things he’s not really bothered about the opinions of anyone else about what he does or doesn’t like.

“Didn’t ask you,” he mutters in proof of this fact, his gaze managing to find multiple places to rest that aren’t Ochako, which is an impressive feat in this small curtained space. “You done assaulting me in changing rooms yet?”

“Yes,” Ochako squeaks a little, like she’s swallowed a mouse along with all those butterflies in her stomach. The speech she’d been ready to give about how he doesn’t have to tag along being miserable if he doesn’t want to feels particularly redundant now, even before the words fly out her head like a flock of doves let loose. So Ochako goes with what she’s got. “Sorry.”

Bakugo rolls his eyes, and Ochako wants to click her tongue and tell him if the wind changes his face will get stuck that way, but she’s feeling far too close and prickly for anything like that. She knows that Bakugo finds her over-apologising annoying, but he seems extra-specially uncomfortable this time. “Just get out already, weirdo.” That might be because of the changing room thing, now she thinks about it.

“Right!” Ochako extracts herself in a rush, but of course, this happens to be while Jirou and Kaminari are crossing the store – maybe also on their way to observe the matching Yaoyorozu-Todoroki spectacle – and Ochako pops out from behind the curtain at just the wrong moment.

“Were you trying something on, Ochako?” Jirou asks innocently enough, but soon clocks Ochako’s empty hands and look of bunny-in-headlights look. One of Jirou’s eyebrows lifts, and her eyes flit to Kaminari at her side.

“Or someone, maybe?” Kaminari suggests with a cheeky elbow that he digs into Jirou’s ribs, which she’s surprisingly tolerant of for the purposes of this gag.

“No, I was just, uh…”

As if concluding a really unfunny magic trick, the curtain behind Ochako suddenly whooshes back to reveal Bakugo back in his own clothes. The smiles on Jirou and Kaminari’s faces almost join at the corners to make one massive smirk.

“Needed some help getting out of your clothes, Bakugo?” Jirou provokes like she’s gunning to be the most fearless of them all. Probably because she knows more than she’s letting on, Ochako has an unsettling suspicion.
“Mind your own, damn busybodies,” Bakugo deadpans with his hands stuffed in his pockets, the t-shirt slung through the gap between his wrist and hips as he storms off – in the direction of the tills, Ochako realises with a weird sick feeling that slides into her gut.

Because while everyone else loses interest and abandons shopping without committing to purchase, Bakugo buys the t-shirt Ochako wrinkled the front of without even ‘seeing it on’ – like her endorsement is enough, or even matters.

Every time Ochako sees at the bag in Bakugo’s hand afterwards, she feels like she needs to sit down, or – if she’s sitting – stand up. Or maybe just turn around on the spot in the opposite direction to the way her head is already spinning in a vain attempt to cancel out the dizziness she can’t shrug off, like she’s left her quirk activated on some deeply-buried part of herself.

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“Okay gang,” Mina cheers as the self-appointed and uncontested troupe leader. “What should we have for lunch?”

“Don’t let Bakugo choose,” Kirishima comes in fast off the block. “I don’t want to breathe fire.”

“Crybaby,” Bakugo accuses indifferently, but he’s been… okay, so far. Still Bakugo, but Ochako’s stopped worrying about him ruining things for everyone just because he’s not having fun. Which if he isn’t, he’s keeping it mostly to himself. Todoroki doesn’t interact too much either, tagging along with anything that takes Yaomomo’s fancy – so, everything – in a way that makes him more palatable in his reservation. Bakugo’s just a little… spicier. “Why do we all have to have the same thing?”

“That’s a good point,” Yaomomo swoops in thoughtfully, fascinated by her group date experience so far. “It’s a shared table, so we can choose anything we want.”

“In that case, I’d like to try several dishes,” Todoroki reads off like he’s giving a status report. He has also, at some point, been given Momo’s purse and not been asked to return it, which in addition to the heavy-knit cardigan he’s wearing makes him look sort of like an old lady. He remembers the purse, or at least that he needs his hands for other purposes, and offers it back out to Momo. “Hold this.”

Momo’s a little embarrassed by the oversight, cheeks colouring, not that Todoroki notices, as he quickly departs to join the back of a line for soba. This precipitates the break that sees almost everyone scattering to a different vendor like a flock of birds taking off.

Except for Bakugo, of course. The only person left standing with Ochako at the table they’ve apparently claimed, strewn all over with various jackets and bags of trinkets they’ve collected along the way.

“Alright, chubbs, whaddya wanna eat?” is Bakugo’s incredibly casual opener, and Ochako isn’t thrilled with it. Not just because of her least-favourite nickname, but the uncomfortable feeling of Bakugo asking what she wants to eat like they’re going to choose together; something that does her appetite no favours.

“Stop calling me that,” she nags – justly so, she might add.

“Take it easy, Princess,” he baits back.

“That either!” Ochako protests, and it’s an even weirder fit realising she’s the one getting hot-headed first. Though she has been learning from the best.
“Jeez, calm your tits! I'm just messing with you.” Bakugo makes it sound like he's the one being reasonable somehow, and it's true Ochako has tolerated a lot of nicknames so far, but she reserves the right to get fed up with them anyway.

“Would it kill you to just call me by my name?” she sighs.

“Which one?” The moment Bakugo asks Ochako’s stomach unties itself from the knot it's in, but only to jump up into her chest and wrap around her heart. She doesn’t expect Bakugo to ask her that, which must be why he does.

“You can… call me Ochako.” What Ochako wouldn't give for someone else to be around and break the tension, though on second thought, maybe not.

Bakugo doesn't say it, doesn't say anything at first, just watches Ochako with a sly satisfaction, like maybe she's played into his chemical-loaded hands exactly the way he wants.

“Choose something to eat already,” he speeds on like nothing of importance happened, even if it did. Maybe especially if it did.

“Why are you asking me? You're the one who wanted to get different stuff.”

“From those idiots,” he says as if she should already have known that. “Isn't eating together supposed to be part of the stupid date in the first place?” The only thing Ochako can’t process about this statement is that it’s coming from Bakugo. That he’s given even another ounce of thought to what a so-called stupid date is supposed to entail.

“Well, I guess… but no one else is doing that,” Ochako points out uncertainly.

“Shows what they know,” he scoffs. “Just pick something for fuck’s sake.”

“I don't know, you pick!” Ochako lobs back, and realises the next second she's done it again – played right into Bakugo’s hands. Because speaking of which, he grabs one of hers not a moment later, leading her to the first place with chillies on the sign.

Still not picking up on ‘this stupid date’ theme, Ochako’s got her money out and a hidden wince for the hit on her savings, then is utterly dumbfounded when Bakugo wordlessly pays for them both before she gets a chance to. As in, like a not-all-that-stupid-after-all date.

It’s not like anyone is going to see Bakugo paying for her, so Ochako can’t figure out why he’s doing it – or maybe just doesn’t want to. Especially not when they get back to the half-full table together and Mina frantically waves them into – specially reserved, Ochako assumes – adjacent seats.

“You two went for food together? That’s so adorable,” Mina assesses.

“Why?” This voice of malcontent comes from Todoroki, stationed at the table in-between food shifts as if guarding the mountain of different dishes Yaomomo has stacked up at her elbow. It’s not an accusation, so much as he seems genuinely perplexed by the statement.

“The hell would you know about it?” Bakugo snaps before anyone else can answer. “Stick to carrying purses.”

“I’m simply showing a proper amount of courtesy,” Todoroki replies. “Something I've yet to see you do for Uraraka.”

Sub-conversations that were happening suddenly end. Yaomomo stops eating. Kaminari looks up
from his phone while Jirou straight up drops hers.

Ochako almost says ‘he’s got a point,’ but holds off out of curiosity for Bakugo’s response. That, and she can’t quite claim Bakugo’s never shown her courtesy while literally eating a free lunch from him – or any of the other ways he’s helped Ochako since this thing between them first took off, no pun intended.

“Then keep watching, asshole,” Bakugo says with tightness in his voice like a snare drum. “You’ll see.”

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Chapter End Notes

I’ve said it in comments before but I really wanted this story to perform well as an ensemble piece as well as for its shipping chops, so often the supporting characters in fanfic are where a great story becomes just a good story. Whether this story is great or good is really up to everyone’s personal judgement, but it’s certainly the best I can make these good children to the best of my humble ability.

Also the name of the shipping game is spot the polygons. That means points for every vaguely-shippy moment between the Jirou-Mina-Kaminari-Kirishima question-mark because I CAN’T BE EXPECTED TO PICK SHIPS, I already chose Kacchako and that’s as much shipping commitment as I can handle. Let the games begin XD
Chapter Summary

Ochako comes in for her close-up.

Chapter Notes

Gosh, waiting a whole DAY for an update! Aren't you all good?

You deserve only the best chapter for such patience. I have a ~feeling~ you're going to like it.

One uncomfortably tense lunch later, the group date party, which seems rather more like a group outing with a flimsy premise if Ochako’s honest about it, moves onto an arcade. This suits Bakugo a little better, though not when Kaminari beats him for baskets on a hoop-scoring game.

But even that's easier, because a curse-spitting, demon-eyed Bakugo burning up with fury that he lost at a ‘stupid game for stupid dumb idiots’ is a more familiar Bakugo than the one who pays for lunch and asks to call Ochako by her given name. Not that he has exercised that privilege yet, but he might and she doesn’t know why that puts the jitters into her, but Ochako’s insides feel like a box of glassware being shifted around by some very clumsy removal men.

Ochako tries to switch off the running commentary in her head, the one that won’t stop obsessing over Bakugo’s every mood and whim – he has plenty of each – and just have fun. The whole reason she wanted to come along on this thing in the first place: to enjoy herself. Bakugo won’t explode if she stops watching him for five minutes. Probably. So Ochako warns herself off thinking about it, and agrees to join Mina on a dance machine that turns out to be surprisingly punishing.

Yet just when Ochako stops watching, that’s when Bakugo starts – watching, that is. There’s hardly a moment where Ochako can’t find him in the corner of her eye, usually wearing a strange look of non-anger on his face, as he lurks vaguely near Ochako while they move around the arcade trying out games in broken-up and clumped-back-together groups.

In a way that seems inevitable, the boys all meet back up around a boxing arcade machine that scores on ‘strength’. It’s trouble waiting to happen, especially when Kirishima beats Bakugo on the first swing and Bakugo throws several more until he beats it. As a champion of ill-conceived ideas, Ochako decides to have a little fun.

After the boys have all made multiple attempts at the ‘hit the bag’ style game; current ranking running Bakugo, Kirishima, Todoroki, Kaminari, Ochako steps up to the plate.

“You’re taking a swing, Uraraka?” Kaminari says as he rubs his knuckles like dented pride will be soothed along with them. There’s not much in it between the boys, half a point at most between Bakugo and Kirishima, but with such a small margin between them it makes all the difference, taking
multiple tries to edge each other out. Kirishima’s first punch had beaten Bakugo’s by a few points, and he had not taken that well.

“Sure,” Ochako replies cheerily. “It seems fun.” The punch-bag swings out the top of the machine on a hinge, and Ochako reaches out to feel the inflated rubber dummy as if testing the material. All five fingers to the springy surface, then she steps back and squares up with the feeling of Bakugo’s gaze on her like a mantle over her shoulders.

Ochako throws her fist at the rubbery bauble and sends it swinging up into the machine, which promptly starts freaking out, bells ringing as the high-score numbers shoot skywards. Kaminari’s jaw just about hits the floor. “Holy shit, Uraraka!” he gushes. “What’s Bakugo been feeding you?”

Bakugo’s not listening, letting the joke fly meaninglessly past him. His gaze zeroes in on Ochako like a laser sight is about to appear on her forehead.

“Lemme see that.” Bakugo stomps up to the machine where Ochako’s still standing, reaching around her as much as past to investigate the mechanism. It only takes him a second to work it out, even before confirming it by manually moving the punch-bag out of the slot it’s supposed to fall back out of – if it had weight. “I knew it,” Bakugo mutters hot over the back of her neck. “Dirty cheat.”

“Gotcha, though,” Ochako replies with no more than a pouty grin at Bakugo’s heated accusation. After all, this is about what she expected to happen. “It’s only a game.” Just like this weird pseudo-dating stuff they get away with in front of others.

“Drop it.” Bakugo’s tone is flat and thick as a paving stone, eyes very much on Ochako as he leans on the boxing-bag part of the machine just above them.

Ochako touches her fingers together with a sigh-like murmur. “Release.”

“Wait, Uraraka was using her quirk?” Kirishima clues in first as Bakugo lets go and the bag swings back down to its rightful place.

“Uncool, that’s gotta be cheating.” Kaminari bandwags like he might redeem himself after all. Todoroki has already lost interest in the game, now occupied completely and wholly immersed in a two-player drumming machine with Yaomomo.

“That’s what I said,” Bakugo announces with an inarguable smirk, checking the machine part after Ochako’s released her quirk like he’s got to be absolutely sure it’s back to normal. “Do it right this time.” He loads up another round and steps back, his grin only getting more wicked as time goes on.

Ochako had only wanted to mess around a little with the boys’ over-competitiveness, and actually wasn’t counting on trying it out for real, but now Bakugo’s got her on the spot – a subtle piece of payback if Ochako didn’t know better. Nevertheless, it’s not like she can’t give it a go. So Ochako puts down her bag, widens her stance as much as her skirt will allow her, and then wallops the machine’s dummy-target with everything she’s got.

The game starts singing and the numbers whip up, and Ochako’s score is nowhere near Bakugo, but it’s not as bad as she expects. A solid ‘not bad’ on the scoreboards.

Bakugo, of course, could never be content with that.

“Again.” He sets up another round without pause, leaning against the machine with a shoulder, watching Ochako’s attempts with a lazy grin that screams self-assured arrogance. Bakugo’s gaze drops once up and down her person before centering back on Ochako’s face, the corner of his mouth lifting with the inception of a smirk. “Put your ass into it.”
Ochako, not that she’d admit it, pouts. Bakugo notices this, of course, but the only reaction is the corner of his mouth twisting even further into a sly grin. His face says more concisely than words could ever hope to, ‘I’m waiting to be impressed.’ And Bakugo gets what he wants, at least when it comes to throwing Ochako’s butt into things.

Ochako shoves her stance a little deeper, plants her feet like she’s supposed to and thinks about slamming Bakugo in his big dumb face instead of the dummy – actually being able to clock him one because she’s finally fast enough. Then she puts a hundred-and-ten percent of her ass into it and knocks the boxing machine absolutely what for.

The lights come up and Ochako’s beaten her own score by several of the arbitrary points the game chooses to indicate strength, upgrading her from ‘Red Riotin’ to ‘All-Magnificent!’ through the Bakugo effect alone. She wonders if he even knows he’s doing it, or if Bakugo’s tunnel vision makes him consider anything except his own insane drive not worth consideration. Ochako suddenly wonders if or when Bakugo ever eases off and just rests, which instantly brings up the picture of him fast asleep on the common room sofa next to her, the one she might have saved when it inevitably got shared on the groupchat. Sometimes, then.

“Better,” Bakugo declares with – Ochako could be wrong, but doesn’t thinks she is – genuine sincerity. It makes her sudden-vacuum chest feel even tighter, like Bakugo could be pressing down with the flat of his hand and not just a look that Ochako could swear seems fond.

“How come you’re never nice to me like that when we’re training?” Kirishima asks Bakugo with his own comical pout, and the goodwill fades fast from Bakugo’s face, like wiping compromising notes off a chalkboard.

Bakugo’s gaze tips from one end of the emotional see-saw to the other with a wry tilt of his head. “Cause you ain’t my fuckin’ girlfriend.”

Forget the hand on her chest, Ochako feels like Bakugo’s straight-up reached in there to grab hold of her heart and give it a good squeeze. Ochako knows plenty of completely logical, basic facts that cover why Bakugo’s able to say things like that; like she and him are pretend-dating, how they have to actually be convincing now if they’re going to keep suspicion off even the idea of them training – but for some reason it’s still a shock to hear words coming from Bakugo’s mouth like it’s not hard for him. As if it’s totally natural to talk about Ochako like his real girlfriend, and doesn’t make him sweat bullets just to think about.

“Aw c’mon, that can’t be the only reason,” Kirishima goads, while Ochako’s still the chair of a one-person freakout committee in her head, and is therefore unprepared to be turned to for comment. “What’s your secret, Uraraka?” Bad question. Awful, the worst question. But Kirishima gives it a good contest with the follow-up. “How d’you keep Bakugo sweet?”

“Uh, I…” Ochako feels like she’s been put under a vivarium heat lamp, someone’s lizard going cold while her makeup starts sliding off her face – Yaomomo’s idea, she’d been watching tutorials and practising creating pigment last night. The only thing Ochako can possible think of to do, the only logical conclusion she’s able to reach, is try and tell the truth, or as much as she’s able to. How does she keep Bakugo from souring like a glass of milk? “Well, mostly I just do what he tells me to.”

Kirishima laughs more heartily at this than Ochako thinks is necessary, and Bakugo’s naturally furious at being even partly the butt of a joke. “That easy, huh?” Kirishima poses with a lopsided grin.

“Oh no, managing to actually do what he wants is the hard part,” Ochako quips a little too easily in the security of a conversation she feels vaguely comfortable in for once – Kirishima’s got an
understanding of Bakugo that makes Ochako feel much more at ease, even with such awkward subject matter. Like he just gets it, maybe best of anyone.

Except when Jirou’s coming up to pick on Kaminari, who’s not drifted far, and they catch wind of a line like that, things get rapidly a lot less comfortable. Stifled laughs Ochako tries not to hear, and Kirishima’s grinning even wider now.

“He sure is demanding, huh?” Kirishima suggests, but it’s a confirmation rather than an open question. Ochako has a brief flirtation with the idea of just how much Bakugo’s shared with his closest friend.

“She can handle it.” Bakugo’s next to Ochako once more in two strides, and he sounds so damned sure that if the next thing he said was that Ochako could steal the stars from the sky, she’d believe him. Then Bakugo takes one of his beefcake arms and sets it across Ochako’s shoulders like she’s a shoulder-height armrest, close enough to seem intimate even with so many other people around, and says, “Right, babe?”

It strikes Ochako that she might have a bigger problem than she realised.

This problem of Ochako’s, unlabelled as it’s remained in an unloved corner of her head, is growing rapidly out of control, something never clearer than this very moment. Ochako stares straight into Bakugo’s eyes, and entirely accidentally speaks her mind. “Did you seriously just call me that?”

Kaminari’s laugh – escaped from around his hand – is of an unusually high pitch, and the second it comes out Jirou clamps her own hand on top of his, biting on her own lip as she also stops herself from cracking up just past Bakugo’s shoulder.

Bakugo’s face loses a shade of determination, but only a slight flicker of what might not be absolute confidence. Then because he’s Bakugo, he comes back kicking harder. “What about it, short-stack?”

“Don’t start fighting again, you two.” Jirou’s regained her air of calm. “We don’t have time for you to break up and make up again before we leave.”

That annoys Bakugo, Ochako can read in the lines of his face as easy as writing. If he’s so protective of a sham, Ochako can’t imagine what he’d be like if this were real. Yet Ochako’s only had the thought when Bakugo’s words float back to her from that forgotten corner of her head – ‘but this is real.’

Ochako’s not so sure she can tell what’s real from what isn’t anymore.

“Hey gang!” Mina calls from the corner she pops out from behind, Yaomomo and Todoroki being drawn along semi-haplessly in her wake. “Let’s go take some pictures in a photobooth!”

Glad for the diversion, Ochako ducks Bakugo’s arm and heads quickly in Mina’s direction, even as the sensation that she’s running from something that’s going to catch up with her very soon grows.

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Ochako’s trouble catches her sooner than she expects.

“Do a silly pose now!” Mina cheers like the action-photographer of this crowded photobooth experience. Just after getting out from under Bakugo’s arm, Ochako’s found herself sandwiched to his front like they might take off any second.

There’s only just enough space for all of them in here, and of course there’s grouping by supposed
dates – it’s a surprise Bakugo’s participated this much at all, but he stays mutely close enough to Ochako to get ordered in along with everyone and never objects like he’d be expected to.

The shutter clicks, and Ochako feels plenty silly already, but Mina’s next call blows Ochako completely out of the water.

“Okay, now… kiss someone!” Mina rushes with a cheeky squeal, and the next few seconds pass in a strange slow-motion blur. All eight of them squeezing into the same space start shifting in different directions, and without thinking about it – why she does it, what she’s expecting – Ochako turns over her shoulder and looks at Bakugo, who is posed like he was moving to do something until the moment she turned.

He’s close. Closer than Ochako expects. Close enough she can get lost in that Bakugo smell and instead of doing anything smart, just stares at him with her mouth hanging half-open, wondering if he’s going to do what she thinks he might.

Except because it’s Bakugo, anything Ochako expects is what doesn’t happen. So this – the unfinished implication of his movements prior to her turning around and freezing him in stone – never happens. The shutter clicks and Ochako’s still holding her breath, but at least remembers to close her mouth.

“Serious pose next!” Mina calls out next, and Ochako and Bakugo can handle that just fine. Neither of them move as much as a muscle, staring dead at each other as Ochako wraps her head around the alarming reality that’s just dawned on her, inarticulate shapes finally pulling into focus under such a specific set of conditions.

Ochako wants Bakugo to kiss her.

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Chapter End Notes

This train has left Denial station: I repeat, we have left the station. Next stop: Outer Denial (where all the denial moves out to after they have kids for the extra space).

OH! For a/n corner this time, a couple of Rules of Engagement about ships, and more generally engaging with The Author.

1. This is a Kacchako fic, the only ship I consider myself to be writing for is Bakugo/Uraraka. This particular subplot involves a 'date' between some friends, but the conclusions you draw about their relationships based on this story are your own. I really enjoy seeing the additional dynamics between side-characters as platonic *or* romantic, with the exception of Kacchako because it's the main ship ofc. Your preferences about other ships are also your own, and I'm pleased if you consider me to be writing for a ship you like, but I can promise you it's not on purpose, this is just how the cards fell in the story.

2. I truly love replying to as many comments as I can (and there's quite a few of you now), but I sometimes struggle to address requests or suggestions on 'what to do next' or things to come up in the story. This is because I have a LOT of the story already mapped out, and if a suggestion to make 'scenario x' happens comes in I can either
ignore it (I hate that), say it's going to happen (which defeats the purpose of storytelling), or explain why it's not going to happen (also defeating storytelling but with an added downer). To this effect, 'I like/hope x happens' is a lot easier for me to address than 'you gotta let x happen', and make me feel less creatively 'trapped' by looking like I'm following comments/requests when really this is just the story.

3. That said, I totally AM interested in suggestions and hearing thoughts and insight on any aspect of the story. The kind of suggestions I really DO respond to are things that I can either work in through editing or develop a lot further ahead of where this story is currently at (there's at least one full scene later on that I spun off a commenter talking about Ochako's jealous streak in a way I hadn't thought of before). Telling me what YOU think of the story or how it makes you feel does worlds more for me than predictions about what's going to happen next. If I'm doing my job right, you're mostly going to be wrong, though you're welcome to guess (in a well-mannered way) ;)

That's enough rules of engagement, just a few pointers to help all of you who like to comment get the most out of talking to me, and vice versa!

Oh and prankster! Ochako is like... myyyyyy favourite thing in the entire world????

Anyway... NEXT chapter... *rubs hands together in anticipation*
What Ochako wants

Chapter Summary

Ochako wants answers. Bakugo just wants her.

Chapter Notes

Oh, this chapter *sighs* THIS chapter. This. Chapter.

/nothing more to say.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If Ochako is honest with herself, needing an entire date – including being packed together in a changing room and photobooth before literally being ordered to kiss – to realise she wants Bakugo to kiss her is pretty bad going. If she’d realised any sooner, the surprise might have been more manageable, but it’s not.

Instead, Ochako’s so blown away by the revelation that she can barely function, mindlessly following instructions as the group is shepherded out of the booth, unable to focus on anything except that she wanted Bakugo to kiss her. She hadn’t realised until Bakugo was about to do it – maybe – and even though he hadn't, Ochako would’ve been fine if he had. More than fine, she reckons.

It's gotten so difficult to separate what's real from what isn't in this show-date that Ochako’s wires are getting crossed, making it feel like the things Bakugo is doing are more meaningful than they're supposed to be. But if Bakugo was only keeping up appearances by playing at romance, why did he stop?

“Great pics, everyone,” Mina coos over the printouts, and Ochako isn't sure she wants to see. But it'd be weird not to, and she's a little curious.

It's a good picture, at least where everyone else is concerned. Ochako and Bakugo are having a three-frame staring match while the rest of them manage to play along. Sort of. When Mina yelled kiss she wasn’t super specific, and as such in that shot she's got Kirishima with over-pursed lips laying a peck on one cheek, while Jirou does the same on the other. This happy triangle cuts out Kaminari, who looks less than thrilled at being caught between them and Yaomomo and Todoroki on the other side – the former blushing fit to burst as the latter holds up her hand to lay a peck on the back of it like he just might be a real Prince.

“Ochako and Bakugo are super-intense as usual,” Jirou comments, and Ochako’s a little startled by the reputation, though she supposes she understands where it comes from; Bakugo’s contagious aura of being too much about everything.

“No smooch, though,” Kirishima points out, sounding practically disappointed as he hangs over Mina to look at the picture like a floppy cat, then turns to face Bakugo and Ochako with an impish
grin. “Didja get stage fright or something?”

“What're you trying to see, creep!” Bakugo snaps like a particularly hungry alligator, and Ochako has no idea what he's got to be cranky about – he’s the one who never finished whatever it was he might have been about to do.

Ochako can't work any of it out – she can barely tell up from down at this point – so simply allows herself to be strung along for the rest of the ‘date’ recycling the same two thoughts; what Bakugo was about to do, and why he stopped.

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“What's gotten into you?” Ochako jumps at Bakugo’s question, though there's no reason to – her head’s just in the clouds still, dizzy on the thought of what might have almost happened between them. They’ve left the arcade, and for lack of a better description, are aimlessly wandering in the vague direction of the way back to school. She’s been a little more sedate, sure, but hadn’t thought it was enough to hit Bakugo’s radar – clearly a mistake on her part.

“Nothing,” she answers awkwardly, and Bakugo doesn't seem convinced for a second. Ochako’s not so convinced herself.

“Bullshit,” he labels accurately, then takes a step closer to her, casting a heavier shadow from the concerned furrow of his brow. “Do we need to ‘talk’?” He wraps the word like a sarcasm spring roll. Ochako wonders what ever happened to the oblivious breeze-block-headed Bakugo of before, and when this insightful weather vane sense of his became so damn accurate. Or maybe it was always this finely tuned to her moods, but Bakugo’s feelings on whether that matters to him has slowly shifted.

In fact, Bakugo has been at his best during this date when Ochako’s not worrying about him at all; when she’s enjoying herself and he gets to be there, being happy that she’s happy.

“Yeah,” Ochako agrees with the significance sitting in the pit of her stomach like she ate a brick for lunch. She can’t not know what Bakugo was going to do earlier, but is terrified to ask him. He’s going to have to make her, which is apparently what’s happening right now. “I suppose so.”

Bakugo doesn't seem surprised with this revelation, but neither is he thrilled. Ochako has hardly ever seen him thrilled in the first place – okay, a few times – but this is very definitely not it.

“Fine,” he mutters like he might have preferred to be wrong for once. “Let's get out of here.”

It catches Ochako a little off-guard. “Oh, you mean, like, right now?”

“Obviously,” Bakugo all but spits, then turns the other way and barks at the rest of the group, “Oi, we're leaving.” That’s quite courteous from him, so his mood can’t be completely shot yet, Ochako reasons in the last rational corner of her mind.

“What? You can't!” Mina replies indignantly.

“Watch us,” Bakugo says lazily, reaching for Ochako’s hand like it’s the most natural thing in the world to him. Maybe it is.

“Ohh, you're skipping early?” Kirishima seems less surprised, but far more smug, like he's getting a little more right about Bakugo and Ochako every day. “Gotta have that alone time, huh?”

Ochako isn’t using her quirk on herself, but might as well be for how easily she lets Bakugo trail her
around on the end of his arm like a large balloon, filled to bursting with thoughts of how it can still feel so commonplace being around him even as the Bakugo-sick part of her is totally freaking out.

“Go pick a fight with a manhole cover, bonehead,” Bakugo says like he can't even be bothered to make his insults good – or make sense. Anyone would think he's got something else on his mind. “We're out.”

“Alrighty then,” Mina play-relents, not that it was her choice in the first place, with a ‘those kids’ kind of resignation. “Byeee, you two! Have fun.”

Ochako makes hurried goodbyes feeling like that's the last thing she and Bakugo are in for.

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Whether intentional or part of their seemingly directionless wandering, Bakugo ends up leading Ochako to a nearby park. A little too nearby, as the first time they’re about to get into whatever it is they’re here to unpack, Bakugo turns around to violently punch the nearest bush, which quickly proves to have Kaminari in it. Moments later Kirishima drops out of a tree, sprinting away in the small window of time Kaminari’s capture gives him as a head start on Bakugo – but then he’s Bakugo, so chase is inevitable, capture even moreso.

After Bakugo has chased away their spies while proverbially, if not literally, breathing fire, he comes back to find Ochako in the quietest corner she could find with an even more tepid temperament. Bakugo crosses his arms over his chest, most of his face lost in shadows that’s she’s unable to read. “Spit it out then,” he opens in a truly appalling fashion.

“What? But you’re the one who said we needed to talk,” Ochako replies innocently, feeling like they’ve been through this situation before-ish.

“Yeah, ‘cause I don't know what's up your ass this time,” Bakugo fires like he's unloading a cannon. “So just tell me already.” It’s classic Bakugo, so Ochako doesn’t know how she didn’t see it coming.

“Why is it always something wrong with me?” she shoots defensively.

“You're the one being mopey and weird,” he retorts, but then in a peculiar mark of progress, follows up, “If it’s something I did, just tell me.”

“It’s more like something you didn’t do,” Ochako mumbles, but Bakugo’s got all his attention fixed on her and that means he doesn’t miss a beat.

“And what the fuck does that mean?” Bakugo’s face twists into frustrated incredulity, like he’s about to flip but is just barely holding on – for Ochako’s sake, she fears. That he’s keeping the lid on his temper because he’s waiting for her to do the right thing and tell him what’s wrong, which means Ochako taking the next step and admitting it.

So Ochako faces the fact that she might just have to own this one, and finds herself so sick of not being honest that it’s easier than she expects. “It’s just, in the photobooth, it’s like you were about to do something.” Not the right words, but the only ones she can manage.

Bakugo’s head tilts back slightly, perhaps just so he can look down on her more effectively. “You’re real sure about that.”

“Don’t bullshit me,” Ochako comes back harder than she expects, and Bakugo notices that too. “But you stopped.”
“So?” he bites like testing a gold coin with his teeth.

“You?”

There are flashes of anger licking through the cracks in Bakugo’s keeping-it-together grimace like flames under a heavy log. So many of his emotions translate into some kind of anger, but what Ochako’s not sure of is the original feeling behind this fury. “It doesn’t matter.”

“It matters to me,” Ochako contradicts, and takes a small step closer to Bakugo. “You wanted to know what’s bothering me and I told you.” She squares up, looks him in the eye. Fair is fair, and she’s told him the awkward truth. “So why did you stop?”

“It’s stupid,” Bakugo tries next, and he just keeps avoiding it, so Ochako takes another step towards him.

“Just tell me.” Bakugo’s got nothing but space behind him, and Ochako’s got him to the wall all the same. “Bakugo.”

He finally pushes back. “I thought it’d be a shitty way to lose a first kiss, alright?!”

Ochako doesn’t know what to say, which is a terrible thing. Because when she’s lost for words, Ochako says the first thing that comes into her head. On this very specific occasion, that happens to be, “Who says it’s my first?”

Bakugo looks like Ochako has whomped him around the head with a fire extinguisher, and it occurs to her that she might not ought to have said that. Not to Bakugo. Next it occurs to Ochako that Bakugo never specified he was talking about her.

“I shoulda fucking guessed,” Bakugo’s almost turned himself to charcoal with the heat of his own temper. But if he burns, Bakugo will see to it that Ochako goes up in flames with him. “It was Deku, wasn’t it?”

Ochako almost wishes Bakugo was losing his shit, in a way. If he’s yelling and going nuclear over things that aren’t his to get mad about then Ochako can just yell back, and things are simpler. This isn’t even close to simple.

Bakugo’s expression darkens, distant thunder forewarning the storm of the century. “I asked you a damn question.”

“Yeah.” It comes out of Ochako like a punch to the gut, closing her eyes for a moment and taking a breath. “Once.”

“So what the fuck happened with you two?” Bakugo doesn’t ask; it’s a barefaced demand, which Ochako complies with like dumping a skeleton she’s been hanging onto far too long.

“Deku just… never felt for me the way I did about him.” That’s all there is to it, really. Ochako supposes it could be comforting, thinking that if Deku doesn’t feel that way for Ochako then he can’t feel it for anyone, but she lacks a competitive streak vindictive enough to get any satisfaction from it. She just feels foolish and sorry. “I found out in an unfun way.”

Deku had tried, much harder than Ochako ever wanted one of her closest friends to make himself into something he wasn’t. Isn’t. Even when he cares so much – not in that way, but in his own – that Ochako’s still a little bit in love with him.

Bakugo’s not doing anything, which is probably the most scary of all, because Ochako’s got
absolutely no idea which way he’s going to pull. She’s finally stopped having expectations and accepted that around him anything is possible.

When Bakugo finally speaks, it’s like he’s looking for something that isn’t there. “That can’t be all of it.”

“What do you mean?” Ochako says.

“Deku just didn’t… that’s it?” Bakugo’s eyebrows furrow into a tightly knit knot in the middle of his brow, like he’s looking into a magic eye picture only to find the hidden image is a flipped-up middle finger. “That’s the frigging story?”

“Uh, yeah.” Ochako’s not sure what to make of this last-thing-she’d-ever-expect reaction. “Is that a problem?”

“It’s the dumbest shit I’ve ever heard!” Bakugo’s gobsmacked, it seems, like he can’t process the underwhelming reality. “That’s how you… because that fucking nerd didn’t feel like it?”

“Not just with me,” Ochako rushes more than she needs to, forgetting how this started out with Bakugo not-kissing her and has ended up about the one disastrous time she kissed Deku. “Maybe not with anyone.”

“I don’t fucking believe it,” Bakugo sounds like he could be about to crack up with hysterical laughter. “I knew he was a dumbass, but this is a whole new kind of stupid.”

“He’s not stupid!” Ochako defends fiercely. Deku still wants the best for everyone, and it’s nothing wrong for him to not want something the way other people – the way Ochako – does.

“For turning you down?” Bakugo scoffs, a flash of teeth from under his top lip as it lifts in disdain. “Trust me, he’s a loser.” Bakugo might just be ragging on Deku because that’s what he does, but he’s making Ochako feel a guilty kind of good the way he does it.

It doesn’t help that Ochako can’t get the picture of Bakugo in the photobooth out of her head, even if she does have literal photographic evidence in case she happened to forget any detail of Bakugo’s most intense stare. The same one he’s giving her now, which makes her feel like there’s nothing else in a ten-mile radius that he’s paying the least bit of attention to. Like they could be the only people in the whole city right now.

“You deserve better.” The words are careful and thought out, such that Ochako would never doubt Bakugo for a second.

“It’s okay, it all happened so long ago,” Ochako’s not really consoling Bakugo, but would love to get off this subject matter as soon as possible, and shoving it into the past where it belongs is as good as any exit strategy. “Why’re we even talking about Deku, you’re the one who-”

Just when Ochako’s about to accuse Bakugo of trying to kiss her, he does. With quick movements of sweaty, chemical-damp palms that cradle her face before he ducks in close and finishes what he started. Not just today, in the booth, but long before.Scratching an itch Ochako didn’t realise she was so desperate for until right now.

She lets her head roll back in his hands and thinks, for a moment, that it’s so much nicer when the other person wants to kiss you too. Then as quickly as he was, Bakugo isn’t kissing her anymore. Shame.

He pulls back and – obviously, this is Bakugo – looks absolutely furious. Of course he does.
“There,” Bakugo’s voice lacks his usual highly-strung arrogance, the one that screams insecurity, and instead sounds quietly assured, like he’s settling a long-running blood match. “That’s a better first kiss.”

Ochako’s not inclined to argue.

Chapter End Notes

*Takes a moment to let y'all recover*

... Sure about this being a "slow" burn now? Or have I convinced y'all to upgrade the temp to medium burn ;)

THINGS! I had it thought out very early on that the history with Deku/Ochako would be like this, partly because ace!Deku (FINALLY I get to admit that) is like, one of my favourite things EVER and it was one of the only reasons I could believe for why he and Ochako wouldn't actually be together. (I mean come on, it's DEKU)

This is also what I mean about 'rival' ships to a chosen pairing for a fic not needing to be erased or sidelined in order to make the chosen ship seem plausible. USE the canon ships to develop the reasons why that first relationship didn't work, but this one WILL. Turn it into the hot mess of emotions it was always meant to be *dives into it* join me in the Kacchako + thirdwheel!Deku hot spings. It's open all year round.

You'd think, wouldn't you, that after this chapter I'd be like, hey, the next one's not even better than this... but I'm not gonna say that. Because I know for a fact that several things about the next one will make y'all freeeeeeeeakeak. Gosh, I'm the worst, aren't I?
The aftermath of being kissed by Bakugo leaves Ochako in a great void of uncertainty, trying to guess if this stillness is the end of the storm or just the eye. Bakugo looks like he doesn't know what to do with himself either, hands flexing open and shut like he needs a pull-up bar to grab onto and work off some of this excess tension. That'd be one way of doing it, at least. Ochako doesn't dare think of any others.

‘Now what?’ Ochako only says in her head, staring at Bakugo tight-lipped across from her. She's not sure he knows either. Bakugo’s thoughts aren’t so linear as to make it clear what happens after he manages to combine fulfilling Ochako’s recently discovered fantasy of being kissed by him while simultaneously finding a way to make it about giving a petty shove to Deku. Bakugo still wants to be number one, any way he can, but doesn’t seem to know what’s beyond the finish line.

A rustle in nearby greenery sets Bakugo off like a hunting dog, instantly on the highly-offensive defence as he whips around to investigate the cause of such a convenient diversion.

“You?!” Bakugo roars from just out of Ochako’s view. “The fuck are you lurking around for, goddamn perv!”

Ochako couldn't be prepared for who Bakugo comes back out of the bushes dragging by the collar.

“Todoroki?!” she squeaks, she'll admit. “What’re you doing here?”

“Ah, Uraraka,” Todoroki sounds practically relieved, easily shrugging off Bakugo’s grip on his scruff. “Have you seen the others?”
“They ain't here anymore,” Bakugo growls; he'd seen to it personally. “So what's your shitty excuse?”

“For what?” Todoroki is clearly bemused. “I got separated from the group, we were nearby and I thought I saw a squirrel, then when I came back they were gone.”

“A squirrel? What are you, a goddamn labrador?” Bakugo barks like he's not one to talk.

“I was looking for someone to ask for directions when I heard your voices,” Todoroki regales easily, setting his hands to rest on his waist as he gazes around the leafy corner of not-that-much privacy Ochako had chosen for them. “I'm glad I found you, Uraraka.” He's awfully specific, and if Bakugo could bristle like a porcupine, Ochako has no doubt he'd have every hair standing on end.

“Damn creep,” Bakugo’s all snarling attitude again, and Ochako doesn’t understand why he's so angry – surely being seen like this is what he wants? Or maybe only on his terms. “So you just got lost?”

“Clearly.” Todoroki misses Bakugo's sarcasm, probably on purpose. “What's your excuse?”

The Mercury inside Bakugo’s thermometer shoots upwards, almost cracking. “None of your lousy business!”

“Shall we return to the group?” Todoroki glosses past Bakugo to Ochako, the nature of his consideration for Bakugo as that of a roaring lion preserved behind glass at a natural history museum. “They must be getting worried.”

“She's with me.” Bakugo is glowering, like he can nail Ochako’s boots to the floor with words alone. “We’re fine.”

“Are you sure?” Todoroki’s voice echoes with implication, and Bakugo looks like he's been slapped with a wet fish.

“What's your fucking problem?” Bakugo growls. “She's my girl.”

Something shifts in Todoroki, from lukewarm to a temperature so extreme it could be hot or cold. He steps closer to Bakugo, gaze tilted downwards from the just-noticeable height difference between them.

“People are not possessions,” Todoroki tells Bakugo in a tone so calm it’s terrifying. “Uraraka is no more yours than mine, or Midoriya’s.”

Bakugo hates that for too many reasons to place. But he doesn’t blow up at Todoroki, perhaps because he knows better than to pick this fight with this particular opponent. Bakugo’s reckless and insensitive, but not outright stupid. “You know what I mean, dipshit.”

“I don’t think I do,” Todoroki replies with that intimidating stillness, like the unbroken surface of a lake that will swallow up a person without a ripple. He’s been plain oblivious to Ochako and Bakugo’s supposed relationship before, but this is different. Intentional. “I’ll believe there’s something meaningful between you and Uraraka when I see any evidence of it.”

Ochako can’t believe Todoroki just melted Bakugo to the goddamn ground like that. Neither can Bakugo at first, going by the dazed look on his face, angry energy jumping off him like a rage-powered tesla coil.

“Then you walked up too late.” Bakugo’s still volcanic, it’s just a slow-moving lava flow instead of
an eruption. “Ochako,” takes flight out of his mouth like a fledgling from the nest, “you wanna go
with baked alaska, or come with me?"

It’s only natural that Bakugo makes it into an either-or choice, like he and Todoroki are on opposite
ends of a collapsing bridge. And it’s even more natural that this is the first time he calls her by her
given name; when it’s to make a point to someone else, like sticking darts in a board with their
picture on it. Ochako pinches the bridge of her nose, taking a deep breath as she carefully considers
what she’d like to do.

No good, she can’t make up her mind. At least, not without a little more information. “Well, where
are you going in the first place?”


“Oh, if that’s the case maybe I’ll go with Todoroki,” she offers what she thinks is sympathetically,
though Bakugo’s face conveys anything but appreciation. “I wouldn’t want to impose if you’re
spending time with family.”

“Fuck that,” Bakugo scoffs. “I only go home to hang out in my room.” He gets more withdrawn.
“It’s not a big deal, you can come.” Todoroki’s watching every angle of this exchange like a kabuki
theatre performance just for his benefit, which makes it harder for Bakugo to do what Ochako’s
come to expect from him – far more tension in his voice than usual. It’s back to the old days, almost,
the way Bakugo spits out, “If you want,” like gum he hates the flavour of.

“Really?” Ochako says with her hands on her hips, head quirked to one side. “Won’t it be weird?”

“Not if you don't make it, weirdo,” Bakugo replies as if it's totally that easy. Maybe it is, and
Ochako's just overcomplicating things. “We can work on our stuff,” Bakugo throws in for extra.
Ochako resists the urge to ask him to define what kind of ‘stuff’ he means exactly, but she suspects
she still has a pretty good measure of Bakugo's priorities.

Then again, she's been wrong before.

“Thanks for the offer, Todoroki, but I’m alright going with Bakugo,” Ochako decides more calmly
on the outside than in, letting the answering look of satisfaction on Bakugo's face hang in the corner
of her vision like a smug wind chime. “Tell everyone I'll see them back at school.”

Todoroki looks utterly puzzled, but then his phone rings and he shrugs the curiosity off like a
brainteaser he's not that committed to solving. “Hello? Ah, Yaomomo, I was just looking for you…
yes, but it ran up a tree… is that so? I'll come and meet you, try to keep everyone in the same place…
“ With a lax wave, Todoroki exits the ill-fated stage of this farce, leaving Bakugo and Ochako back
where they started, give or take.

“Let's go.” Bakugo doesn't waste time, and only after she's broken into half a run just to keep up
with him does Ochako notice the open palm Bakugo has turned to her, the way a sunflower keeps
the light shining on its face.

Consciously, and in spite of the agitated screams from less coherent parts of her inner narrative,
Ochako takes Bakugo's hand.

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Bakugo’s house isn’t that far away, and Ochako vaguely recognises the neighbourhood from being
around Deku’s before, but the trip is more than long enough for Ochako to wonder what in the wild
world she thinks she's doing, walking hand-in-hand with Bakugo to his home, where his family
presumably live. In fact the closer she gets, the more she wonders what possessed her to think this would be okay or not-weird.

“Ignore my parents,” Bakugo mutters out the corner of his mouth as they come around what turns out to be the last road. Ochako tries to recall what brought her here; that’s right, Bakugo asked, and she’s chronically incapable of turning him down. “They’re fucking morons.”

“That's not a nice way to speak about the people who raised you,” Ochako replies as her uncertainty wells up like springwater.

“Yeah, and look what a shitty job they did,” Bakugo’s – she thinks – joking, but it’s hard to be sure when it’s so rare. Especially at the expense of himself, a flash of self-awareness that seems as rare as northern lights.

They stop at the door, and Ochako never expected Bakugo’s house to be so big. She didn’t have him down as a rich kid, but just because her family's home would fit inside a place several times didn't actually make it that fancy, she's just not used to it. “Just stick with me, and don’t let the hag get her claws in you.” Bakugo’s rummaging through his bag for keys, then pauses, adding like an afterthought, “and don’t be weird.”

“Not like I do it on purpose,” Ochako muses as Bakugo finally opens the door, but he stops it halfway to turn his gaze on her like a spotlight, corners of his mouth twitching like he’s – who knows, enjoying her company or something similarly wild. Then the light of his gaze moves on and Bakugo opens the door the rest of the way, no call to announce his arrival as he strolls in and kicks off his shoes.

Bakugo slams the door behind Ochako and has stomped half-way down a corridor before she realises she better keep up, wriggling out of her boots and scuttling across the smooth wood floor so fast she slips into him when she means to slow down, bumping into Bakugo’s side as he stops suddenly.

The reason is presumably the distant cry echoing from elsewhere in the house. “Katsuki?!”

“Na, I’m a frigging mass-murderer!” Bakugo just about blows Ochako’s ear off, then starts walking again.

“Don’t show up unannounced and start slamming the goddamn door before you’ve even-” Footsteps accompany the increasing volume of the voice, and Ochako can already guess where Bakugo gets his temper from. His mother comes down the stairs and sees Ochako before reaching the end of her sentence.

No, Bakugo’s mom takes one look at Ochako and stops dead, gaze flitting between Ochako and her son like she’s witnessing a miracle. After a pause in which Ochako feels like she's lived an entire lifetime and been reincarnated already, Mrs. Bakugo fixes her son with a look and remarks, “Friend of yours?”

“From school,” Bakugo mutters without stopping, forcing Ochako to keep on padding alongside him for fear of being left defenceless in this utterly foreign environment. “We’re going upstairs.”

“Uh, it’s nice to meet you,” Ochako puts forward when she realises Bakugo’s just going to keep on walking in silence, because he thinks this is enough explanation for the conversation to be over. “I’m-”

“You don’t have to introduce yourself, idiot,” Bakugo tries to butt in, but Ochako’s not going to be
some strange nameless girl Bakugo practically drags up to his room – and wait a minute, they’re going to his room.

“-I’m Uraraka Ochako,” she finishes insistently, offering as much of a greeting she can manage while still staying no more than two steps behind Bakugo. “Thank you for having me.”

They’re halfway up the stairs when Bakugo’s mom announces, “Keep your door open, Katsuki.”

“What?!” Bakugo whips around almost at the top of the stairs, Ochako fully in the crossfire between him and his mother at the foot of them. “That’s stupid.”

“It’s nice to meet you too, sweetie.” Bakugo’s mom fixes an eerily familiar gaze on Ochako, but speaks with such pleasantry to how she communicates with her son it’s a wonder she doesn’t get whiplash. Then her gaze lifts back to her son, and Ochako sees the dark clouds gathering. “I said keep that damn door open and I mean it. Understand?”

“Piss off,” Bakugo spits.

“I’ll have your dad take it off the fucking hinges if you don’t!” his mom knocks right back, and Ochako would duck if she wasn’t specifically trying not to be weird.

“Try it, bitch!” Bakugo snarls, then turns sullen stomp into angry storm-off, leaving Ochako to flash a nervous smile at his mom before dashing after him before she gets lost in this getting fancier-by-the-minute house.

Bakugo’s room is underwhelmingly normal, right down to the All Might posters and stacks of dusty video games. Like he’s a real teenage boy, in a real boy’s room – that Ochako is now in. With him. Wait. How did she let this happen?

Ochako’s hard-pressed all of a sudden to think of anything except the not-quite-in-her-body memory of Bakugo kissing her a short while ago, so much so that she jumps half out of her skin when he swings the door shut with a frightful bang.

The banshee wail comes no more than a second later. “KATSUKI! Don't make me come up there!”

“Alright! Alright goddammit!” Bakugo rips the door back open like he’ll tear it off the hinges himself if he’s any further agitated.

“I see where you get it from,” Ochako comments, realising perhaps a little later than she should’ve – like, after she's already said it – that it's no recipe for a calmer Bakugo.

“Get what?!” he turns on her with an indiscriminate snarl, but it fades fast. “... I don't call her anything worse than she does me.” This is a mumble that might even be considered conciliatory.

But then if Ochako knew what was good for her, she wouldn't be in Bakugo’s room in the first place. “Is that a good reason?”

“I didn't fucking ask you!” Bakugo bites like he's got a mouth full of venom just waiting to unload, crossing the room – that takes a while anyway – to sit on the end of an impressively wide bed that dominates half the room.

“You didn't, I was just… never mind,” Ochako writes off. “So, uh what did you want to do?” Stuff, Ochako remembers, but like what?

The look Bakugo gives Ochako from the edge of his bed could be bottled and sold to people like
him to put on food. It makes her tongue tingle just to think about.

“Right now?” Bakugo flops onto his back. “Probably take a nap.”

“A nap?” Ochako steps closer, sneaking into Bakugo’s eyeline if he lets his head roll to the side, which he does. “That’s what you brought me here for?”

“I said you could come, not that I’d put on a three ring frigging circus,” he retorts a little lazily, if Ochako’s honest. “Go if you wanna go.”

After coming all this way? Not a chance, Ochako thinks decidedly, resigning herself to the most reasonable of the unreasonable options left to her. She's staying here in Bakugo’s room, the door actually only very slightly ajar, and what could probably be described as quite deliberately more shut than open.

“I suppose it would be nice to… lie down for a bit,” Ochako reasons like she's trying to persuade herself out loud. Bakugo’s sole response is to lift his eyebrows, a proverbial ‘yeah, right’ that suggest he's no more convinced by Ochako’s excuses than she is.

“Do what you want.” Bakugo scoots himself further up the bed up to reach the grey-and-black pillows that seem remarkably stylish for a teenage boy – presumably his mom’s choice, then – and releases a deep breath that's not huffy or impatient, just low energy. Ochako’s tired too, and comes back to Bakugo’s simple philosophy.

Ochako does what she wants.

“Move over, then.”

Chapter End Notes

Sooooooo this is probably a good time to gently reiterate the NO STOPS AT SMUT-TOWN aspect of this fic, which is still the same and will STILL REMAIN SO. My creative reasons for not having that kind of content in this fic haven't changed, and so my stance hasn't either.

Just to be super clear once more: I will not be writing smut/lemons/m-rated content in *this* fic... smutty things that are *supplementary* to this fic, perhaps (and at a later date once this story is wrapped up), and the ol' smut-talk sure comes up in discord on the regular, which I'm totally ABOUT so don't think I'm anti-smut in general (total opposite), just on *this* story.

So for any of you hot-blooded readers out there with imaginations running wild about what happens next... just keep those snakes in their sheaths for now and see how this all plays out. I'm going for 'authentic teen experience' vs 'authentic teen fantasy' which means we will not be seeing any magically-good-at-sex-things-on-the-first-try Bakugo, nor any sex-things-at-all as it happens. TEEN RATING for TEEN stuff, though I won't reveal what that means exactly or it'll take away the fun.

On a less rant-y note, I realised the only way I could top 'group date' trope with 'first kiss' trope multiplier would be with MEET THE PARENTS trope. Hope it satisfies.
FRESH DISCORD INVITE (come play in the trashcan): https://discord (dot) gg/RrrySz
‘Move over, then.’

Simple enough request. But this is Bakugo.

“No.”

For a moment the floor drops out from underneath Ochako, and she thinks she’s got this all wrong. Misread the situation – again – and assumed things of Bakugo that aren’t true. It’s like a stress-dream she can’t get out of; the fear of admitting something, feelings she’s clung so tightly onto, only to realise the person doesn’t feel the same way. Just like with Deku, poor simple Ochako with the wrong end of the stick. “Oh.”

If her tone conveys even half the crushing defeat rising up around Ochako’s waist like floodwater, it’s not intentional. Bakugo would notice either way, so it doesn’t really matter.

“This is my side.”
“What?”

“Of the bed, idiot,” he snaps, flinging an arm into the masses of empty space on his other side. The bedroom door is still open, a fact that makes Ochako simultaneously nervous and comforted. She doesn’t know how to deal with this situation, off-script as it’s run from her past experience – work up to the dramatic moment, snatch a clumsy kiss, and then realise that one of you doesn’t like the other the same way. Write it off as a silly mistake and remain friends. Except Bakugo’s never been her friend, not in a way that’s separate from this, and Ochako doesn’t know what to do about any of it.

So Ochako does what she can, which is walk around the bed – practically a ten-minute stroll – and come to a stop on the other side. Bakugo’s eyes are shut already, arm still prone across the charcoal-grey bedding. Then his hand makes a flapping sound as he pats the covers like coaxing a pet, one eye opening just a sliver to find Ochako. “C’mon,” he murmurs, eyelid drooping shut once more. Ochako doesn’t know what Bakugo’s so keen on getting her into bed for if he’s about to fall asleep anyway, but it’s not a question she probes. She’s busy being unable to speak or think straight, neither of which stop her from sitting down with her back to him, taking a deep breath and considering how all of this seems to have happened so fast.

But then, has it? She and Bakugo have been pretending to be something they’re not for a while now, presumed to be that something for even longer before that, but it somehow never dawned on Ochako that anything between them could be real. Even when Bakugo literally outright said it to her and she agreed with him. Because it’s true, this is real, but she couldn’t – didn’t want to – think about it like that.

If she thinks about it now, Ochako’s pretty sure Bakugo’s been the more insightful between them from the start; he’s the one who recognised this thing between them. Everything between them. Ochako’s just gone along with Bakugo’s instincts... so maybe it’s time to go with some of her own. Like, if she’s going to take a nap, she’ll damn well do it the way she keeps thinking about every night while she’s about to fall asleep – the innately satisfying feeling of being cuddled up with him, until now only accidental.

Ochako scoots backwards into the middle of the bed, rolling over as she lays down so she turns right into Bakugo. His arm stays stretched out, making a particularly supple cushion for Ochako’s head to come to rest on, more comfortable than she’s expecting.

Bakugo could almost be asleep already, but Ochako has no sooner laid flat than his arm bends, scooping her effortlessly closer to him into that insidiously familiar fit of their bodies. Ochako is tired, and Bakugo’s so warm and good-smelling. She feels so profoundly safe, that Ochako gives up resisting anything and just burrows into Bakugo like she can take a nap inside his chest rather than on top of it.

“That’s more like it.” She thinks she hears from Bakugo’s barely-moving lips, but it’s hard to tell when they’re pressed against the top of her head. She’s asleep before she knows it.

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“Wake up, dipshit!” is not how Ochako ideally likes to be woken.

But then, Bakugo probably doesn’t like to be woken drifting against the ceiling, and that’s where he is right now. So they can’t all get what they want.

“Release!” Ochako does this in such a hurry that she doesn’t think about the consequences, which is Bakugo dropping the height of his room almost right on top of her, bouncing heavily on the bed as
she rolls out of the way with a disoriented squeak. “Sorry,” she rushes as the furniture thumps underneath her from the force of Bakugo’s landing. “That happens sometimes.”

“S’fine.” Bakugo rights himself, pressing greasy hands against his face, then dragging his fingers up through his hair. Then in an innately guttural way, like he’d still do this if he were alone, mutters, “Fuck.”

“Katsuki! That door better still be open!” Mrs. Bakugo’s impressively piercing voice echoes with perfect clarity through the still-open door, and Ochako’s got enough of a sense this time to put her hands over her ears.

“It is, you crazy bitch!” Bakugo just screams through the house – what a habit – before track-skipping back to Ochako without missing a beat. He’s looking very pointedly at her hands. “So d’you wear gloves to sleep too?”

“Oh, yeah, mostly,” Ochako answers reflexively before realising Bakugo said ‘too’. She wonders if Bakugo ending up on the ceiling was the better outcome in this scenario. “You have to?”

“Not so much now, but… sometimes,” Bakugo mumbles as he knuckles an eye socket drowsily. “If I’ve been in trouble.”

Ochako knows what kind of trouble Bakugo means; his kind. The kidnapped-by-villains, taken-hostage and targeted-for-his-quirk kind of trouble that doesn’t just go away once everything’s back to ‘normal’. It’s amazing he even admits this much, but Ochako’s getting used to the disarmed version of missile Bakugo; who actually feels like he can tell her things, and might even feel some affinity with, even if their need to contain the effects of their quirk have very different outcomes.

“Well, good thing I floated you away, I guess.”

“It wouldn’t happen if you were here,” Bakugo says with such complete normalcy that it hits Ochako like a cinder-block to the head. “Idiot.”

“Stop calling me that,” Ochako berates as she comes to sit up almost beside Bakugo, knees half-bent and feeling like the strip of space between them might as well be the length of Japan.

But Bakugo turns to her with his mood completely transformed, warmth like the deep embers of a fire lighting up his gaze. “What should I, then?” He doesn’t wait for an answer. “Ochako?”

Bakugo’s hand crosses the open plains that separate them to hook under her knee. Ochako’s capacity to think straight departs once more, and Bakugo pulls to draw her over the covers, moving her like a doll until her legs rest horizontally over his – practically in – his lap by this point.

“Sweet cheeks?” Bakugo leans fearlessly into the negative space between them, and Ochako doesn’t think she can even breathe right now, not with Bakugo’s face venturing into the hollow of her neck, mouth just below her ear. “Fat ass?”

“Bakugo!” Ochako gives him a shove, but rather than push Bakugo away he just latches onto her arms with a firm grip that makes Ochako drive herself back by merit of his own immovability. Not for long, though, because a moment later Bakugo steers Ochako back into him with an intention that doesn’t need putting into words: not when the action is to close the space between them entirely. As without warning – okay, maybe with a bit of warning – Bakugo kisses her. Again.

Ochako freezes out of antici-surprise and then goes soft, no need to resist when this is all she wants or can think about. She just leans into the press of Bakugo’s mouth on hers, curling one of her arms around him and grabbing a handful of the back of his shirt. With movement so smooth it’s like he’s a
well assembled machine, Bakugo’s hand makes its way up her arm before coming to rest on her shoulder.

Eyes shut, Ochako moves with Bakugo to tilt one way while he goes the other, nose-to-nose fitting together like machine parts made for each other. The contact lingers and a warm rush swallows her whole, practically dizzy with the sensation. She’s stopped herself thinking about how much she wants this, assuming as she does on some subconscious level that her feelings wouldn’t be returned, as if she’s been cursed to the same failure to launch again and again.

But Bakugo not feeling enough has never been the problem. His other hand moves lower, finding Ochako’s waist to pull her even closer to him than she already is, twisting further over his lap as the exploratory movements of one kiss runs right into another. Then Bakugo’s mouth opens just a little, and Ochako’s absolutely done for.

Footsteps herald impending calamity, preceding a yell so sharp it makes Ochako jump, bumping Bakugo with her teeth so he recoils like she sucker-punched him. “What the fuck was all that banging about, Katsuki, you better not be-”

Bakugo shoves Ochako off his lap like an unwanted dog that’s jumped up. “What the fuck is your problem?!” he roars as he bounds for the door to catch the edge before his mother pushes it all the way open, and Ochako’s got a hunch the redness of his face isn’t all fury.

“I thought you were old enough to grow out of jumping on the bed,” his mom launches into. “It’s a wonder it didn’t come down through the fucking ceiling, what’re you two ‘friends’ even doing up here?!”

“Nothing, so mind your own damn business!” Bakugo spews upward like he might actually start breathing fire in a second. Ochako’s just mostly pretending not to be there, even though she is. Furthermore, she’s sat on Bakugo’s bed, hand to her mouth after almost giving herself unexpected dental surgery. She’s pretty hard to miss.

Yet when Bakugo’s mother leans around her son to address Ochako, her temperament shifts once again. She’s weaponised politeness; razor sharp and ready to slay a man with quick wit and killer dress sense. And she’s got her eye on Ochako. “Can I get you anything, hon?”

“Oh, no thanks,” Ochako answers timidly, struck by the resemblance between Bakugo and his mom standing side by side.

“Dad’ll take you back to school,” her attention flips back to Bakugo. “When are you going?”

“I dunno… he doesn’t need to,” Bakugo replies grudgingly.

“So help me Katsuki, we can’t do much, but you’ll let us do what we can.” Mrs. Bakugo puts her hands on her hips to argue and Ochako feels a strange affinity with her for a moment.

“I’m fine!” Bakugo barks like a particularly antisocial dog behind a chain-link fence. “You and Dad couldn’t do shit to protect me even if something did happen.”

“You think we don’t know that?!” In the blink of an eye, Bakugo’s mom whips her hand around the back of his head, and Ochako flinches instinctively in shock. “Just let him drive the two of you back to school, for fuck’s sake, it’s not that hard.”

“ Fucking hell, fine, ” Bakugo groans. “We’ll go in an hour or so. Now piss off already.”

His mom rolls her eyes, but that's the end of it – at least for now. Bakugo’s mom retracts from the
opening like some kind of ill-tempered hermit crab. The door is left further open this time, and Bakugo gives off a truly petulant sigh before turning around.

Ochako doesn’t know what to say, which means that whatever’s coming next is the first thing popping into her head. “Your mom is a bit scary.”

Bakugo makes a noise that’s closest to ‘angry laugh’ as he rolls one of his shoulders like he’s working a kink out of it. He did have Ochako sleeping on it not long ago.

“Forget it, she’s all bark and no bite.” Bakugo manages to sound this out in such a way that Ochako feels like the implication is he’s not like that; how if the conditions arise, he does. As soon as the thought appears in her head, Ochako stops herself thinking about it like a parent stopping a child from eating a handful of sand. Just because an idea intrigues her doesn’t mean she needs to stuff her mouth full of it. Or Bakugo’s, practically speaking.

The grand total of Ochako’s distraction is to foolishly wonder out loud, “Do you always argue like that?” and hope Bakugo’s not paying close enough attention to wonder why she’s blushing so much.

“Just with Mom,” Bakugo shoots off like he doesn’t even care, which could be a good indicator that he doesn’t, in fact, care. “Who gives a shit, all families argue,” he follows up, and Ochako resists saying that not all families argue like that.

“I suppose you’re right.”

“Let me guess.” Bakugo strides back over to Ochako, who’s moved over to sit on ‘Bakugo’s’ side of the bed, legs hanging over the edge. “It's all sunshine and fucking rainbows at your house?”

Ochako does something that could go either way, and quotes one of Bakugo’s sound bites back at him. “Obviously.”

Bakugo grins at her – not like a jackal over a wounded deer, as if she’s something to make a meal of, but a lion over… a lioness, she supposes. An uncontrollable flush in Ochako’s cheeks has been getting steadily stronger since she vacated Bakugo’s lap not so long ago, and it’s supposed to go the opposite way.

“So you've never had it out with your folks?” Bakugo seems to believe her, which is a funny sensation; that he can be a sceptic, but wouldn't doubt her if she was being serious.

“Sure, we've had arguments before,” she admits. “Just not…” screaming ones, “many.”

Bakugo rolls his head back with fingers digging into the joint of his neck and shoulder still, and Ochako remembers thinking about giving him a neck rub before, what feels like a long, long time ago. “What about?”

There’s something disarming about Bakugo’s sincerity, which Ochako decides is from the realisation that he actually wants to know more about her, because they’re something now that they weren’t before.

“Well… about me becoming a hero, for one.” Ochako digs a bit for it, because it's not all that easy to recall the last non-money thing she'd fought with her parents about; normally when they actually get to be together they're so appreciative that fighting is the last thing any of them want.

The sharp lines of Bakugo’s face tangle together, a shadow falling over his expression. “They were against it?”
“Oh no, they were all for it,” she rushes. “It was me who didn’t want to apply to UA.”

Bakugo looks like Ochako’s admitted to being a hobbyist of kicking the homeless. “Why the fuck not?”

“I wanted to join the family business is all,” Ochako explains. “My mom and dad work so hard and still have so little at the end, I just wanted to do what I could to help them.”

“Instead of becoming a hero?” Bakugo’s incredulous, to the point of outright disgust. “I knew you were dumb, angel face, but that’s the stupidest thing you’ve said all day.”

For whatever reason – namely, that he’s close enough to reach – Ochako decides to respond to this by trying to punch Bakugo in the gut. This isn’t a goal she achieves, a lightning-quick flash of his fingers snatching Ochako’s wrist before she’s even close to her intended contact. Caught like she’s wearing Bakugo as some new-this-season accessory (hot-tempered, sorta-boyfriend), Ochako sees a dangerous glint in Bakugo’s eyes, like he’s about to have some fun – and fun for Bakugo isn’t always fun for anyone else.

“Hm, with weakass punches like that maybe you should’ve stuck to the family business.” He’s baiting her, quite obviously and childishly, but it works. Ochako snatches her hand back from Bakugo and springs up, trying to shoot an uppercut on the bottom of his chin that he steps away from like he’s not even noticed, much less be trying to engage her physically. Not like this, at least.

The next punch Ochako throws at Bakugo, and then the next five after that, never make contact but she keeps throwing them all the same. The only testament to her ability is that Bakugo edges slowly backwards across the room as he dodges Ochako each time, reminding her not-so-subtly that she’s got a long way to go before really being able to get a hit in on him – when she does. A window in Bakugo’s guard opens up when he expects her to throw a punch in the opposite direction to the way she does, and then Ochako’s knuckles are connecting with his jaw, knocking him back a half-step as he lifts one of his hands to the point of contact.

It’s not a hard hit. In fact, Ochako’s pretty sure Bakugo’s probably walked in strong winds that did him more mischief than that baby-punch, but there’s a curl at the corner of his mouth the moment after that tells Ochako something very important: she’s impressed him, at least a little. He wasn’t holding back, and Ochako still managed to land a hit, even just in play-fighting.

The curl in Bakugo’s mouth deepens to a full grin. “Maybe you’re cut out to be a hero after all.”

Ochako believes him.

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Chapter End Notes

More kissing???? In MY shitfic?????? Indubitably....

Remember, this fic rated T for TENSION.
Putting a name on it

Chapter Summary

Ochako gets a little closer to what she wants, but a little farther too.

Chapter Notes

Surprise update! It's a *good* chapter. Oh, it's a GREAT chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As far as compromising positions go, this one's right up there. Because, for lack of better words, Ochako's more in Bakugo’s lap than not – again – and the most accurate description of what she's doing there is, quite undoubtedly… making out.

When Bakugo first invited Ochako home with him to work on their ‘stuff’ she had assumed he would find a way to make it about their training, squeezing every last drop of useful time out of the day. But Bakugo’s got a knack for doing the thing she doesn't expect, and this day in particular has been full of the unexpected.

Note, unexpected isn't unwanted, because Ochako wants what's happening very much. So much it could – and probably would be argued by Bakugo if he weren’t otherwise occupied – that Ochako’s just as responsible for getting them into this state as he is. If Bakugo were of a mind to argue, as uncommonly rare as that is, he would surely point out he was just trying to fit in a quick workout before they went back to school. There’s plenty of work that goes into maintaining all that.

So as much as Ochako had appreciated watching Bakugo lifting heavy dumbbells until his t-shirt dampened with sweat – which she definitely appreciated – it was entirely too tempting to wait until he’d stomped off for something to drink and then touch her fingers to each of the weights. Not disturbing them, but keeping her quirk active, so when Bakugo came back and picked them back up he’d almost fallen over backwards with an unbalanced topple of trying to lift eighty-odd kilos of weight that wasn’t there.

Ochako, naturally, burst out laughing, and Bakugo, naturally, retaliated. This inevitably gave cause to the current situation; Bakugo caught Ochako around the waist with an arm like the bough of a tree, hauling her back when she was trying to dash away from him and utterly failing at it, dragging her down onto a ‘small’ sofa tucked in the ‘corner’ of the room with him. From there it was entirely too straightforward.

Because it only needs to be on the table – on the sofa, in this instance – for that baseline of intimacy to flip from one intention to another, like the flow of alternating current. One second they could be touching without it having that charge, then a simple, almost indiscernible shift and Bakugo’s mouth presses to the back of her neck. In the time it takes for Ochako to turn and face him – a hot second, just about – they’re already tangled up like this.

Ochako's pretty used, given the basis of the training she and Bakugo have lived and breathed for
upwards of a month now, to being grabbed and handled by him, but none of that prepares her for this – not what it does to her. Because Bakugo touches her like he actually wants to, which sounds simple but matters so much when Ochako knows what the alternative is.

In fact, Bakugo’s touching Ochako like he really wants to, as if he's been thinking about this for a while too – or that’s the impression she gets when one of his hands sinks past her waist and quite definitely grabs her butt, pulling her against him like she’ll get any closer. She won’t, about as close as anyone can get to another person without having to take clothes off – and there’s moving fast and there’s that – so Ochako’s plenty thrilled, but it certainly doesn’t stop Bakugo trying as she twists further and further into his touch like a handful of wet clay.

Ochako doesn't have much of a basis for kissing, either; this, today, is now the majority of her experience to date, but that's okay. It's Bakugo’s too, maybe even all of his experience, and there’s an emerald streak of emotion that cuts sharply through Ochako at the thought of being his first and only; hypocritical as that is when she's told him all about her past. Which is just about the worst, most-likely-to-provoke-Bakugo person to have ever kissed, but maybe that's not the worst after all. Bakugo sure doesn’t mind right about now, head tipped back to fit his mouth to Ochako's as she faces down from her slightly raised seat on him.

It could be said that neither of them have much of an idea what they're doing; all lip, tongue and clumsy teeth that manage to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but it feels good so Ochako doesn't much care for anything else. Neither does Bakugo, who is firm underneath her like newly laid foundations, entire width of his shoulders easily spanning the length of Ochako’s forearm, which she’s looped around his back – like there’s any risk of her coming loose. But in case she does, one of Ochako’s hands is making a destined-to-fail attempt to grasp all of Bakugo’s biceps, which even on a single arm is way too brawny for one hand to get any semblance of purchase. Ochako’s not sure she could even touch her fingers from both hands all the way around the thickest part of Bakugo’s arms – but there’s an experiment.

There comes a point, inevitably, where they have to take a pause. The wet sound as their mouths come apart is a stark reminder that brings reality crashing back around Ochako. Like, what the heck is she even doing?

“There’s something I’ve been meaning to talk to you about,” Bakugo begins quietly, not that he needs to be loud this close to Ochako. And for a moment, a glimmering ray of hope pierces the clouds of Ochako’s worry; that sense will be made of the madness. She should be so frigging lucky. “It’s about our style.”

“Our- oh, our style.” Ochako echoes like she’s with the program, when in reality she’s running about a hundred metres behind it waving frantically in the back window. But then she says, “That’s what you’ve been thinking about?”

Bakugo gives Ochako a look that would melt her knees so fast she’d fall over if she happened to be on her feet. Lucky for her she’s hauled with great certainty over Bakugo’s lap, his legs spread wide, bearing her weight easily. “I can have more than one thought.”

Ochako’s not so sure that she can, but doesn’t say anything about it. She thought boys were supposed to have the one-track mind, but then perhaps it was ambitious to think she could take Bakugo’s mind entirely off their training for any amount of time. That’s the real single-track record playing in Bakugo’s head. Get stronger: any time, any way.

“I’ve been thinking about the name,” Bakugo picks back up, and it somehow normal for them to pick this conversation up from the position of Ochako sitting in Bakugo’s lap, moments after they were swapping saliva. But somehow it is normal; like that’s something they do, and so’s this. Even if
Ochako’s chest does feel several sizes smaller and rather more wheezy than usual.

“Yeah?” Yet for the static of the air, there are no words good enough to describe how physically comfortable Ochako feels right now, one arm around Bakugo’s shoulders looking down at him past the brim of hair like straw poking out from inside a scarecrow. This whole thing has blasted Ochako into a sort of relaxed-astonished-dazed nirvana that's made her the ultimate go-along girl. She’s so loose she bounces slightly with every hyperactive jiggle of Bakugo’s knees under her, something that increases in frequency as the silence of her prompting stretches on, waiting for him to get the words out.

“Well, it’s been said already, hasn’t it?” He tilts his head back enough to look right at Ochako, apparently expecting her to know what he’s talking about. So she has to think, and there’s something that comes to mind, but it couldn’t be that. Not the first silly thing that ever popped into Ochako’s head. “C’mon, bubs.” This bouncing of Ochako’s weight gets more vigorous, and she can’t even figure out what this nickname’s supposed to be in reference of. He’s just addressing her with disjointed sounds at this point. Better than chubbs in any case. “What’s our first move?”

For some reason, Ochako found it easier when they were making out. Maybe because then she doesn’t have to talk. If she can’t even handle being put on the spot by Bakugo while literally perched in in his lap, having to stand up and present their style in front of Aizawa feels terrifyingly out of her league. “Well, it’s… Zero-G Slingshot.”

Bakugo seems to find something about this situation real fucking amusing, though the laughter stays locked in the creases of his face. “So what’s our style?”

It can’t be, but it is, because Bakugo only said two and a half words, so it has to be.

“Zero-G?” she says with half an expectation of being shot down, even though she doesn’t know what else it would be at this point. Ochako’s got no idea how Bakugo’s mind works, to have ticked away on something like this for so long, only to bring it up now. But she doesn’t really need to understand, she just has to deal with what Bakugo gives her as it comes. The corners of Ochako’s mouth stretch into an astonished, because he’s picked her words. Even now, Bakugo doesn’t stop surprising her. “Really?”

Bakugo rolls his eyes as one of those old favourites, the distinctive ‘tch’ slips from his lips, like he can’t believe this squeaky disbelief is her first response. “You’re such a weirdo.”

Then the current flips, but before she makes a move Ochako really looks at Bakugo for a long moment; he’s actually… relaxed, not pinballing from emotion to emotion as he desperately tries to define himself in a world whose opinion he simultaneously cares too much and too little for. And though what he said is the same, the way he says it is so different.

In simple proof of that fact, Ochako ducks in a second later to kiss Bakugo, overflowing with the confidence that it’s exactly what he wants.

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Ochako can’t quite place how this argument escalated so fast, especially over anything quite as dumb, but with Bakugo and his mom anything is possible.

“JUST TAKE THE FUCKING UMBRELLA, KATSUKI!”

“ALRIGHT!” Bakugo snatches the umbrella like he’s being forced to harbour deadly weapons, and not something that’s probably going to prove pretty handy, with the way the skies have opened since
Ochako and Bakugo have been up in his room. Which is... a while. “Keep your goddam hair on, you basketcase!”

Ochako gets the feeling that if Bakugo hadn't taken the umbrella, then he'd be getting bonked on the head with it right about now. She resists the urge to point out she doesn't have an umbrella, and if Bakugo’s so against taking it then she sure doesn't mind.

“Rotten brat,” his mother grouses, then turns to Ochako with an only slightly unnerving smile. “Don't be afraid to kick some manners into him, you hear?”

“Mom.” Ochako wouldn't believe this if she weren't right here, but she appears to be witnessing Bakugo being embarrassed by his parents.

“Oh, I'm doing my best,” Ochako replies a little uneasily, but Mrs. Bakugo just titters, like she's about to break into a ‘I wasn't being serious, weirdo.' Bakugo just scowls pure murder at her.

“It was lovely meeting you,” Bakugo’s mother rounds off before turning to her husband; who Ochako’s yet to hear a word from, but can see where Bakugo gets his build from. “Drive safe in the rain, hon.”

“Yes, dear,” Bakugo’s father declares with the air of a man quite used to saying those words, then with an innately dad-comical air sticks his cheek out, one finger pointing towards it.

“Stop it already, pair of idiots,” Bakugo grumbles as his mother leans in to kiss his father on the cheek. Ochako finds it endearing, but they're not her parents so maybe it's less embarrassing.

“Thank you for having me.” Ochako ducks her head in farewell, and has only just turned around to follow Bakugo and his dad when she feels Bakugo’s hand brush hers, latching on instinctively into the reassuring grip she's become so used to.

They dash to what could easily be described as the third best car Ochako's ever been in, coming in after Yaomomo’s family Rolls Royce and whatever insane supercar Iida’s parents drive because they don't know the value of money.

The ride is quiet and soft-spoken after the harshness of Bakugo’s home, with its broken-glass yelling between mother and son, and is much helped by the soothing patter of rain on the windows. Ochako would be at risk of falling asleep if she hadn't had a very satisfying nap already today.

“I wish you and your mother wouldn't fight like that in front of guests,” Mr. Bakugo sighs over the steering wheel at the first set of lights, while Bakugo huffs from the backseat.

“Why not?” Bakugo resists. “She might as well see what we're really like.” Ochako thinks she appreciates the sentiment, but there’s being open, and there’s… Bakugo’s family.

Bakugo’s father releases another what Ochako can only assume to be a long-suffering sigh as the car pulls off again. “Even so, you ought to try and control your temper a little more, for the sake of others.”

“That’s what I’ve been saying!” This comment slips out of Ochako like tripping on an uneven stone in the pavement, and Bakugo throws a newly-sharpened dagger across the width of the backseat at her.

“Don’t you start too,” Bakugo grumbles, bunching one of his legs up to prop against the inside of the car door and slumping towards the middle of the backseat, resting on an arm that encroaches extremely close to Ochako’s space. Close enough she could reach across and wrap her hand around
his, if she wanted to.

She resists the urge, thinking it’s silly, or too much in front of Bakugo’s dad, but then Ochako realises – she wants to, and by the rule of Bakugo, that means she not only could, but should do it. So she slips her hand across the soft leather of the backseat until her fingers gently nudge the equally soft edge of his hand. Without even looking at her, eyes still trained monotonously out the window as raindrops slide down the glass like a sheet of tears, Bakugo lifts and curls his fingers around hers.

The car rolls smoothly around a corner, and Ochako catches Mr. Bakugo’s eyes in the rear-view mirror. “Say,” he picks up like fresh spring flowers, an upbeat nature that Ochako feels vaguely called out by, as stumbling on similarities between herself and Bakugo’s parents is the very last thing she expected. “Aren’t you the young lady Katsuki fought in the sports festival last year?”

“Oh, yeah… that’s me,” Ochako fesses up like it’s something to be guilty over.

“Aha.” It’s just a small sound, but the way Bakugo’s dad makes it sounds wholly revelatory, like he’s really saying, ‘Oh, I get it now.’ “You made quite an impact.”

“She did on the arena,” Bakugo butts in with a sudden certainty. “Tried to drop the whole frigging stage on me, didn’t you?”

“Only because you blew it up in the first place,” Ochako replies easily. She doesn’t know which of them squeezes first, but the fact of it is their hands tighten around each other, and her chest feels like it might float her all the way onto the roof of the car.

“It was quite the blowout, huh?” his dad offers with an effortlessly amiable nature. “Katsuki must have rewatched that footage every day for two weeks afterwards.”

“Dad!” It’s such a profoundly funny thing to hear out of Bakugo’s mouth, the nagging, don’t-embarrass-me whine his usually coarse voice takes on, that Ochako stifles a laugh. Badly. “And you can cut that shit out too, chuckles!” Bakugo whips his hand away from Ochako’s, digging it into his armpit as he crosses his arms like it’s a punishment for laughing at him. “I watched all my matches again, not just ours.”

“Why?” Ochako asks innocently. “You won.” Surely that means Bakugo’s the last person who’d need to review what he could have done differently.

“I coulda lost the first round and shoulda lost the fourth,” Bakugo might as well be spitting blood and broken glass for the way he says it, and it’s way past the point when Ochako realises what he implies – he almost lost to her? “Of course I watched it back.”

“Oh.” Ochako remembers that the person Bakugo’s hardest on might well be himself, which says a lot when he’s made Ochako’s life such a living hell at times. “Did you learn anything useful?”

“Yeah.” Bakugo’s hand slips out from under his armpit, and with an air that could totally be played off as a casual, not-doing-it-on-purpose who-asked-you-weirdo air, comes back to rest back over Ochako’s. “You don’t give up easy.”

‘Look who’s talking’ she thinks, but then it strikes Ochako that if it weren’t for that shared quality – the unrelenting determination to push through, even if the odds seem doomed to fail, then she wouldn’t be here with Bakugo now. She finally gets it: a sure thing. Someone who doesn’t back down, not unless she’s about to puke or pass out.

As the tingly warmth of Bakugo’s hand spreads across the back of Ochako’s knuckles, the immutable proof of what it’s all been for, she realises how far they’ve come already – and how far
they’ve still to go. And she's really glad she’s here.

Chapter End Notes

'Shall I start the chapter with them just full on making out?' I asked myself in a fancy bowler hat as I swill apple juice in a comically oversized brandy glass 'indubitably' I answered myself, twirling my large handlebar moustache as I cycle my penny farthing. And that's how magic happens.

So this officially marks the 'y'all blowing up my inbox and I actually can't keep up with replying to all the comments' point. I'll still work on 'em when I can, but I legit can't get through ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS Y’ALL ARE SAYING in time between updates, so I'm just gonna make that point for my peace of mind. I'll keep replying to things if I can/wanna, but I gotta pull back a little on trying to answer everything or I'll literally never sleep again. Come say hi in discord if you wanna yell at me in person! I'm friendly!
Caught in the Act #1

Chapter Summary

Overfamiliarity is easy to fall into, but Ochako seems to have plummeted.

Chapter Notes

You thought you'd get umbrella tropes? Disgusting. Okay I'll do it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s raining even more heavily by the time they make it back to UA, and without an umbrella between them Ochako is silently grateful for the one Bakugo’s mom forced so insistently on him. When they pull up in his family’s car just by the front gate, Ochako swears that Bakugo’s dad is humming the jingle for a popular snack, seemingly immune to the stormcloud for a son he's had drizzling in the backseat for most of the drive.

“Here we are,” Mr Bakugo announces like the world's most cheerful taxi driver. “It was nice meeting you, young lady.” Ochako has a go at figuring out if Bakugo’s dad doesn't know or remember her name – an apple that hasn't fallen far from the tree – and quickly gives up.

“Nice to meet you too, thanks for taking us back to school,” Ochako offers brightly, and Bakugo pulls a face when his dad chuckles, making her think there must be something terribly amusing about Ochako having manners to spare for the both of them.

She scoots along the backseat to climb out of the car after Bakugo, the broad umbrella already popped and sounding out a distinctive patter as the rain hammers against the stretched fabric.

It's a small, but not all that surprising, testament to Bakugo’s progress as a member of society that he waits for Ochako rather than pacing off with the argument that it's her own damn problem if she doesn't have an umbrella. What's a little more surprising is just how considerate he actually is, holding it for the both of them without prompt, and even letting Ochako set the pace of their amble across the grounds. It's almost as if he's no more eager than she is to rush back to school, with all its associated humdrum and endless chatter about who is or isn't dating. The spotlight kind of sucks sometimes, Ochako realises a little more each day.

The rain is coming down in sheets, slanted on a light wind that has Ochako tucking herself even closer to Bakugo’s side, before giving up entirely and just slipping her hand through the loop of his arm nearest to her, linking elbows and falling even more perfectly in step. He lets her without acknowledgement, such that Ochako feels like she’s achieved the taming of a wild beast. At least temporarily.

“What do you think everyone else is doing?” she asks with bubblegum conversationality, and Bakugo gives a ‘tch’.

“Why should I care?”
Ochako gives him a playful bump, and he turns his wrist to spin the umbrella away from over her head. Letting out a squeak she isn't super proud of, Ochako reaches over to grab Bakugo’s wrist and steers the umbrella back. “I didn't say you had to care, just what you thought they did after we left.”

“What a waste of a thought,” Bakugo declares. “You sure ask some stupid questions.”

“Be nice.”

“I am nice,” Bakugo snaps in a slightly counterintuitive way, finishing with a just-aware, “- to you.”

Ochako doesn't feel like she can deny that particular factoid, but that doesn't make Bakugo’s reasoning solid. “So that's it, you don't have to try with anyone else?”

“I bet they got on the wrong fucking train, didn’t realise until they were half-way across the goddam city, and are going to barge in an hour after us soaking wet,” Bakugo unloads like he’s emptying a revolver into a brick wall. “Happy?”

Ochako's stunned for a moment, because Bakugo’s gone and done the thing she didn't expect again. Perhaps that expectation mismatch, combined with the image he paints of their friends, is the reason she starts laughing. Or maybe she's just happy.

Bakugo looks like he's fighting himself not to react to Ochako's mirth like he normally would – to get mad regardless of the reason, because any laughter feels like it's ar him rather than with or even because of him.

“You're such a weirdo.” His lips are tight, tension strung in his voice like a newly stringed bow, and Ochako is certain that he says it in place of the things he can't bring himself to put in other words just yet.

Without doing it on purpose, like a knee-jerk reflex that Ochako’s picked up over prolonged Baku-exposure, the ‘what would Bakugo say?’ question floats through her head. And because she’s Ochako, what goes into her head comes out her mouth.

“Get used to it,” she parrots with a canny grin. “This is the package.”

Bakugo makes a breathy noise through his nose, a huff-puff of something that’s not quite annoyance or amusement, but steals a little of both. “S’pose you think you’re real fucking clever, huh?”

“Not really,” she replies, squeezing just a little bit tighter on his arm as they walk step for step under the sheltering dome of the umbrella, feeling terribly at peace for some reason.

“You are.” Bakugo’s tone of absolutes comes out again, and Ochako wishes she’d realised that doubting herself out loud was the best way of getting a confidence-boost off him sooner. Or maybe it wouldn’t have worked before. “You’re just too dumb to see it.”

Ochako jostles Bakugo again, disturbing an irregular sprinkling of water that falls from the brim of the umbrella, though he hardly budges a step. “You realise that makes literally no sense?”

“You’re smart with people,” Bakugo announces like he’s verging on uncomfortable once more. Ochako could’ve been fooled. “Getting them to listen to you, knowing what's wrong, all that dippy shit.”

“You make it sound so noble,” Ochako's partly teasing, but mostly not. It's strange having a conversation like this with Bakugo, and about her, no less. It never really occurred to Ochako that he'd given it any thought. The notion that Bakugo thinks about her, maybe even when she's not
there, emerges from its chrysalis in Ochako's mind, setting its wings to dry in preparation to one day take flight.

“It's useful, ain't it?” Bakugo shrugs, which has a funny effect when their arms are still linked, hoisting Ochako like she's a flag to go up a pole.

“There aren't many pro heroes famous for their people skills,” Ochako muses; this is a familiar conversation, at least with herself.

“You utter dipshit,” Bakugo scoffs. “Only the most famous one of our time.”

“What? Oh.” Ochako fills in the blanks herself, though Bakugo looks distinctly irate at the missing-out of the Symbol of Peace in any such talk. “Yeah, I guess you're right.” A hero with All Might’s strength and no people skills is, well… Endeavor.

“Course I am,” Bakugo mutters like it doesn't need to be said, but likes to hear it anyway.

They arrive at the front entrance of the dorms and stop just before going in, rain still hammering down on the umbrella over their heads. Except Bakugo doesn't move on just yet. Like he's waiting for something.

“So are you going to go study now?” Ochako poses opportunistically. Bakugo’s eyes roll like the whip of a matador’s cape, knowing what comes next.

“Fine,” he sighs like it’s a terrible burden, and maybe Ochako does slow him down a little, but she knows if he really didn’t want to then he would say. Then the sandy bottom of his expression shifts slightly, one of his eyebrows quirked as if it’s hooked to the corner of his mouth to as it lifts. “What’s in it for me?”

Ochako pouts, arm unlinking from Bakugo’s as she turns to face him square on. “Does there always have to be something in it for you?”

“What, I’m supposed to tutor you out of the goodness of my heart?” Bakugo won’t stop smirking, which is both annoying but signals the all-important air of teasing to his line of questioning. Because the goodness of his heart isn’t really what’s at stake here.

“Alright.” Ochako has a crazy, stupid, definitely-don’t-do-it-Ochako idea, which she ends up doing anyway because she never gets a better one. She pushes right up on her toes, extending like a paper dragon to meet Bakugo’s mouth with a hit-and-run peck on the lips that if anyone was watching through the rain and past the umbrella, maybe wouldn’t be so sure what they’d seen in the first place. Then Ochako rocks back on her heels, pleased with the wiped-clean slate of Bakugo’s expression. “How’s that?”

“It’s…” Bakugo’s still holding the umbrella over them, and with the rain still coming down the space feels more private than it surely is. The corners of his mouth curl. “A start.”

The canopy of the umbrella suddenly gets even more secluded, because Bakugo drops it down, angling to cover them as completely as possible while he leans in. His free hand seeks out Ochako’s cheek, clearing him for landing as his mouth descends on hers like a hawk.

It’s astonishing how used Ochako has become in a matter of hours to being kissed by Bakugo, such that she can receive this gesture with ease, searching for the tentative trace of his tongue against hers for a few moments before pulling secretively away. There’s fake dating, and there’s reckless acts of affection that have still yet to actually be acknowledged between them – which is right there on Ochako’s to-do list somewhere after more kissing and literally all of her homework.
“Get your shit, then.” In the intimacy of the small space between their faces, Bakugo makes this sound far fonder than the mere words suggest, finally stepping forward and putting down the umbrella as they come in out of the rain. “See you at the sofas.”

Ochako nods with a mile-wide grin, and is bouncing halfway up the stairs when the true-north distortion effect being around Bakugo has on her wears off and reality dawns on her. What she’s doing, and with Bakugo.

But, Ochako convinces herself – after stopping dead on the staircase for a moment in contemplation – she has more important things to worry about than a little bit of kissing-Bakugo on the side, so shrugs it off and runs to collect her books.

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“How can you be so bad at this?” Bakugo’s groaning right in Ochako’s ear, legs propped on a coffee table with both of their workbooks spread out across his knees. Ochako’s knees are tucked into the space under his crooked legs, making them at least half a pretzel, and that had been fine when the common room was tumbleweed empty at this indeterminate time in the almost-evening. Everyone else is off campus or in their rooms, which was an unexpected delight when they were able to get… well, cuddly in the setup of this study session. “How’d the fuck you even get into this school?”

Ochako pokes him in the side with the end of her pencil. “C’mon, it’s not that bad.”

“Start the whole section again,” Bakugo shoves Ochako’s book at her like he’s washing his hands of it, making fast work of his own notes that Ochako’s slyly copying – even if Bakugo doesn’t directly tell her what she’s doing wrong, he at least shares his own work so she can see her mistakes. “Don’t half-ass it this time.”

“I whole-ass everything and you know it,” Ochako defies, and for her cheek gets Bakugo’s hand reaching across their fresh-pretzel bodies for an entirely unneeded – unneeded not being equivalent to unappreciated – grope. Well, more of a pat than a squeeze, but the intention’s much the same.

“Bullshit,” he says with his gaze still riveted to the page of his workbook. Then like a couple of marbles rattling around in a jar his eyes roll to one side, catching Ochako in the very corner of his vision. “You’ve got some to spare.”

Ochako huffs in a slightly put-upon way; this isn’t exactly her favourite topic of discussion, even as a metaphor to an irritatingly valid point. “Shut up about that already.”

Bakugo actually turns, attention stolen from his work to bore a look into Ochako like a hot rod. “What?” he challenges with all the tact of a brick taped to a hammer, then draws his attention back to the homework Ochako’s sure he’d get done an awful lot faster if she weren’t here. “Not like I’m complaining.” Bakugo latches this on with such ease that it takes a couple of seconds for the whole implication to sink in.

Ochako puts her chin down, feeling her cheeks warm in a way that ought to be more attributed to Bakugo having his hand on her ass, and yet it’s what he says that really affects her. Maybe because she knows how much harder it comes to him, putting things into words.

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His arm is still lax over Ochako’s side, muscles sticking out against the twist of his forearm as it follows her leg, hand hanging limp over her hip. The tips of Bakugo’s fingers rest lightly against the fabric of the tracksuit bottoms she changed into moments after setting foot back in her room. It’s not like she’s got reservations about Bakugo seeing her – or getting more hands-on than that – in
workout clothes, after all. He's certainly got no preference.

But then the sound of voices and footsteps breaks out from afar, and like a crab scuttling back to sea Bakugo’s hand retreats, moving over to his workbook like it’s mere coincidence, and not because a sodden gaggle of friends are about to come honking into the area.

Ochako can’t be sure they got the wrong train, but the soggy procession of the group date – bar Todoroki, who is steaming like a dumpling in the back, and Yaomomo, who isn’t with them anymore or she would have surely provided umbrellas – certainly got caught in the rain. Obviously, they’re thrilled with the scene they discover.

“Aha! I told you they’d be here!” Kirishima boasts like it’s an act of incredible prediction; though Ochako supposes not so long ago she’d have called a prophecy of her being curled up on the sofas with Bakugo not-doing-much homework pure lunacy, but look at them now. “What did I tell you? They can’t get enough of each other.” He holds a hand like he’s presenting a piece of key evidence at a court, or maybe means to collect on some bets.

“Did you two have fuuuun hanging out at Bakugo’s?” Mina draws out like a cat batting around a mouse – curiosity on the part of the cat, but still distressing for the mouse.

“Hanging out, more like making out.” Jirou just kills the poor creature.

For the same reason Ochako thinks Bakugo pulled his hand back like her butt turned into a hot stove, she ducks her head with a feeling in her gut like she's been sipping a sulfuric acid smoothie. Because – for the first time – their classmates are right, just in the wrong way. They think she and Bakugo are something they're only pretending to be, but the lines of real and pretend have all started running like ink in the rain.

The underlying discomfort of Ochako's original deception pinches like a badly fitting super suit more than ever, and she shuffles away from Bakugo out of difficult-to-place guilt. He notices, of course, but the direction of his anger goes elsewhere, head turning over his shoulder to direct a fierce gaze at the drip-drying line of his so-called friends.

“Why don't you assholes back off already!” Bakugo’s shorting voice is well and truly warmed up after his time at home, and Ochako flinches away from the piercing noise as he goes from nought to spewing eruption. “We were doing something before you shitheads walked up.”

“Something, eh?” Kirishima returns the serve, but the next second Bakugo’s fury in motion, vaulting over the back of the couch to stalk up and stop approximately an inch in front of Kirishima’s face.

“Shut it, hair-for-brains, before I shut it for you.” Bakugo isn't loud, but he doesn't need to be when he can sound like a movie-worthy villain. Ochako feels even weirder, and her homework isn't getting any more done like this either.

“Easy, man,” Kirishima counsels fearlessly, hands held up like he's playing surrender. “No need to get... “ Bakugo, is the unfortunate answer to that question. He's getting Bakugo about it. “Cranky,” is the word Kirishima chooses in the end.

“Then piss off, hard-on head,” Bakugo growls, addressing the wider group with glaring implication before turning back to Ochako with a furtive look she can't place. He makes a sound that seems like it could have started ‘Och’ and ended ‘ako’ but she wouldn't know because he never finishes it. “Round-face,” he subs in instead, “I can’t get shit done with these morons around, I'm going to my room.”
Nothing about this is inherently bad, but in context Ochako's frustrated – he's the one who wanted them to pretend, and now it's like he doesn't even want to be seen with her, even after agreeing to study. Though a, voice of doubt in Ochako's mind speaks up, it's not like they're really, technically going out. Expecting Bakugo to treat her like they are doesn't make her any better than their friends.

Besides, even if he wanted her to, Ochako couldn't go with Bakugo without getting in way more trouble than it could possibly be worth. Doubly so with Kirishima for a neighbour, presumably with his ear pressed to the wall. Not that Ochako’s room would be much better, though it hasn’t stopped them before. Just this time; when Ochako's left high and dry, the fading warmth of where they’d been sat together the only proof of comfort so quickly shattered.

“Okay,” Ochako says without an ounce of her heart in it. Maybe it was presumptuous to think they could be left alone, or expect this weird suspension of disbelief to last when they got back to school. “Then… see you tomorrow, I guess.”

Bakugo doesn't even make words in response to this, just a guttural noise of unclear intention before he stomps off. With insidious habit, like picking a scab she knows is best left alone but can't resist, Ochako finds herself wondering if she did something wrong.

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Chapter End Notes

Rated T for TEEN DRAMA.

Thanks for all the continued love and outreach - I hang around in discord quite a lot (especially after updates) so do pop in and view me in my enclosure at the petting zoo.
Getting serious for real

Chapter Summary

Ochako loses her nerve, not where it counts, but amongst some other things.

Chapter Notes

A slightly lighter update all-round after the length and intensity of some of the ones before, but we're moving into a new era of subplottage, so there's a little getting-there involved as we return to the thing this fanfic's meant to be about in the first place... uh *looks at smudged writing on hand* quick team-sup. Yeah, that sounds about right.

Also I doubt this chapter will have like... much of anything y'all were expecting, so with that in mind let's see how we get on.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ochako has gotten so used to waking up early now it doesn't seem like the chore it was once was. This morning in particular she's wide awake before her alarm even goes off, and finds herself so full of ball bearings it's a wonder she doesn't rattle as she walks nervously over to the training area – no Bakugo waiting for her at the gates this morning.

That would be because he’s already started without her, doing pushups when Ochako finally arrives at their agreed base of operations. It’s not for her benefit, or she doesn’t think so, going by the way Bakugo’s head whips up when her footsteps finally attract his attention. His shoulders and arms complete the bridge of his body, holding perfectly still mid-push as Ochako approaches, easily demonstrating the control he has over every inch of his form. Ochako notices a single earphone hanging from one of his ears as she gets closer, on the far side of his head to where she approaches from.

When she reaches him and comes to a stop, Bakugo begins the day with the delicacy of someone doing ballet in steel toecapped boots, finishing the push-up with a brisk motion.

“We pissed around all of yesterday, and there’s less than a week to go.” His knees bend and he brings his feet between his hands with a neat hop, which as positions go is an impossible-to-resist moment to notice his, uh… butt. He’s literally bent over touching the floor with his hands, what’s she supposed to notice? Bakugo thankfully stands up a moment later with a roll of his – bare as ever – shoulders and a look that’s all business. “We’ve gotta get serious.” This isn’t even the first time he’s said that recently, so it’s an unexpected sucker punch when he adds, “For real this time.” Because of course he remembers that too.

Ochako’s attempts to avoid saying anything compromising go completely wrong when she manages to reply, “Lay it on me, then.” It's better than her original ‘give it to me,’ but hardly by much.

Bakugo gives her a wordless weirdo look and turns his attention upwards. “See that building?” he asks like he needs to be sure Ochako’s still got basic observational skills.
“What about it?”

“We're gonna take it the fuck down.” It's a pure statement of fact; Bakugo’s open palm is already unfolded in front of Ochako, like a badge of authentication that they’re ready to go.

“You mean, the way you were doing at the start?” she clarifies, remembering those early days – how much was different, and not just from the echoing clap of explosions as Bakugo near-flattened whole buildings when he first started using his quirk with Ochako's. Back when it was just him finding out how hard he could go.

“Yeah, but now I want you up there with me,” Bakugo announces like it's so ordinary to him, expressing this desire for her involvement.

In spite of all the turmoil in her stomach, Ochako keeps a straight face. “How?”

“Like this.” Bakugo swings his outstretched palm to face the ground, and without so much as a flicker of acknowledgement looses an impressive blast of flame at the ground. Ochako doesn't know what's gotten into him at first, until she notices the even spread of soot across the pale grey concrete. “This is the target.” Bakugo drops into a squat, hand outstretched to drag a finger through his purpose-built blackboard, marking a rectangle and then a line of ground level at its base. “This is us.”

Bakugo sticks his first two fingers against the charred pavement and then looks up at Ochako. “It's gonna get messy if we miss each other, so do it like I say and don't chicken out.”

“I don't chicken out,” Ochako contests as a distraction for having feelings about how impossibly attractive Bakugo is when he's doing this intense shop talk bit. “That much.”

“You always freak out the first time,” Bakugo insists with a possessive knowing that's really not making things any easier. In fact it could be said Ochako is sick with nerves before she's even used her quirk once this day. “Don’t.” There's a slight pause, like something occurs to Bakugo, some extra piece of information that she needs. “We're gonna nail it.”

Ochako knows swooning is a silly trope, and that being a teenage girl isn't actually like a shoujo manga, but if hearts and springtime blossoms could fill the peachy air, probably while a tacky font spells out the sound of her own heart pounding, it would be for a moment like this. Then she thinks about how much Bakugo would flip if he ever saw such an image of himself, and it's all Ochako can do to stop herself bursting out giggling – which is at least better than hurling.

“You're going to pinball, I'm going to blast off the wall and then meet you at the top.” Bakugo draws out their paths, two sharp lines for him and one straight up for her. “And I'm gonna go for it, so watch out for the blast radius.”

“Oh, as you do,” Ochako rails off like it's nothing, and she's joking, but the fake-it-til-you-make-it mentality goes down better with Bakugo than most things. He ignores it, which is basically a pass in his book. “What happens after?”

“Once we're together, try to make it back here in one piece.” His eyes return back to her, oblivious to any further meaning to what he's saying. “Any more questions?”

“You don't even know the half of it,’ Ochako would love to start. ‘Why did you kiss me, the first time, or any of the ones after, why haven’t we talked about that, and does this mean you want to go out for real? – because, by the way, fake dating is not the same, so this thing where people think stuff that's actually true is doing my goddam head in so can we please just stop and talk about it!?}
But none of those have anything to do with what Bakugo’s asking about, or what he cares about after they apparently ‘pissed away’ yesterday, so Ochako just shakes her head and holds her hand out for Bakugo to take.

“Uh-uh.” Bakugo shakes his head back at Ochako, standing up straight, hands lax by his sides. “Take a run-up.”

“Oh dangit, okay,” Ochako mutters not really to anyone except her, and sees the reaction in the form of a slight lift to one side of Bakugo’s face. He’s not the only one who can throw out the odd pseudo-cuss every now and again, especially when they’re packing the barrel of their self-styled gun with so much powder on the first damn shot.

“Half rotation on the way up,” Bakugo adds with a deadpan that Ochako’s not totally fooled by. She thinks he’s trying to keep a straight face, not letting his amusement show as he deliberately sets that bar just slightly beyond where Ochako thinks she can jump. But if Bakugo has put it there then Ochako knows she can reach it, so she takes a few long steps backwards and turns over her shoulder to fix a mental pin onto their target, first of all, then up to complete the triangle, trying to judge where she thinks she needs to be by the time Bakugo rebounds off the wall.

“Here goes nothing,” Ochako leads into the opening of her dash forwards, seeing Bakugo bring his hands together at waist-level to boost her up.

Ochako plants a boot in the cradle of Bakugo’s palms, one hand pressing a five-finger button against his shoulder, but only activates her quirk when she’s already boosted and turning, leaving it until the last possible second before her hand lifts. With Coach Nikiforov this move isn’t so hard – anymore – springing up to stand on Bakugo’s hands, even with a half-turn rotation thrown in so she's facing the right way. But when they're in Zero-G it's trickier, strength and control needed on both their parts essential to stop them spinning endlessly before even getting off the ground.

And they do get off the ground. Ochako comes off the top of Bakugo like cork popping out a bottle of champagne – she imagines – and only has to look down for a bird's eye view of what happens next.

Bakugo puts one hand behind himself and keeps the other out front, which Ochako realises why when he lets rip the first blast to launch himself and a fiery second later is already at the wall. The blasts are bigger than what he uses when they're just moving around, if Bakugo were only going to jump off the wall and not blast off it. Ochako remembers the rules about equal and opposite reactions all the more acutely when Bakugo uses a bigger explosion to change his direction against the target, shattering the concrete building wall like a hammer through glass, releasing a sonic boom shockwave that blows free-flying Ochako off course just like he warned.

Ochako wants to bail, to release her quirk and scream at Bakugo to have some frigging restraint for once in his goddam life. But she remembers him telling her they're going to nail it, so just settle for the shriek as she desperately keeps her eye on him.

Whether blind luck or skilful execution, perhaps a little of each, Bakugo comes tearing into Ochako like a grand prix racer picking up a hitchhiker. It feels like being hit with a rocket-powered sandbag, though this sandbag has the ability and inclination to rasp, “Gotcha,” in her ear as they move into a late-launching slingshot with the world exploding behind them. Ochako seriously wants to barf, and not just because she’s using her quirk on herself.

“Release,” she manages from within the Zero-G wind-tunnel, feeling gravity embrace them and slowly start bringing the face-to-face Ochako-Bakugo-strapped-together-missile back down to the ground.
Bakugo takes the lead, as ever, and Ochako is plenty grateful for that fact as she clings onto him like a baby monkey that has unexpectedly found itself being launched into space. If it weren't for the hurtling-through-the-air part this, it might be quite the compromising position to be in, but Ochako's focused on the fact that she is going to have to use her quirk again soon and already feels like she's about to blow chunks in the worst possible way.

She's waiting for something that comes when they're much closer to the ground than gives Ochako any comfort, the double-tap of Bakugo’s hand on whatever bit of Ochako he's got hold of for the purposes of the move: in this case, the soft part of her waist, making Ochako even queasier than she needs to be when she reactivates her quirk on them both. She even does the worst thing possible and shuts her eyes, though she knows it doesn't help, especially not when they're still racing way too fast just above the ground and she can feel the acidic taste flooding her mouth. They've got to stop, and it means withdrawing her fingertips from the iron joint of Bakugo’s neck and fumbling them together again. “Release.”

Bakugo hits the ground running and promptly trips over Ochako's jelly legs trailing uselessly behind them, sending them into an ugly tumble that would be uglier still if she didn't reactivate her quirk one more time in quick, volatile succession, freewheeling for as long as possible until she has to tap her hands back together and croak one more, “Release, before Bakugo goes down for good and brings her on top of him, rolling like a log downhill.

Ochako tries not to let it happen. Oh, she tries to get up on her cooked-noodle arms and push herself away from Bakugo before her stomach hits emergency evacuate, and if she'd been a tiny bit faster it might have worked.

Instead, Ochako feels herself gag and she momentarily regrets ever agreeing to this training in the first place – because if Bakugo had never asked her, or she had never said yes, none of the events leading up to this would have happened, and Ochako wouldn't be throwing up on him like a round of shot to the chest.

“Oh fucking hell.” is Bakugo’s initial reaction, and shoves as much as helps Ochako off him as she carries on retching a fat lot of nothing onto the ground next to them. “The fuck’s wrong with you?” he spits, but follows up close with, “We've only just started.”

“I don't know.” Ochako hiccups, feeling a little like she might cry, her eyes already watering from the violent protest of her body against her willpower; to be enough to keep up with Bakugo. “Sorry.”

Bakugo yells over a lot of things, from ill-placed sunbeams to distant laughter of children he finds ‘fucking annoying as shit’ and yet here he is, flat on his back with throwup that sure as heck ain’t his on the front of today's skin-tight tank top, and he just sighs. Ochako feels like she's slipped into an opposite dimension.

“You're fuckin’ gross sometimes,” Bakugo delivers idly, like he’s commenting on the weather. Then he bolts upright up with a startlingly sudden motion and without hesitation whips the bottom of his vest up, shucking out of the top while avoiding cross-contamination and flinging it away with a distasteful air. Ochako follows Bakugo's top with her eyes as it slaps to the ground nearby, before glancing back at him, only to whip her gaze right back to the ground directly in front of her as her gut gives a threatening shift.

Because this is so not the time for a shirtless Bakugo, especially not so close she could reach out and grab a whole lot of skin and bulging post-explosion muscle. He takes a lot of recoil into the heavy-suspension buffers of his arms, so it’s not only reality, but actual science that they’re bigger when he’s pumped from a crazy stunt like that. So it’s just Ochako’s rotten luck that topless Bakugo is exactly what she’s in for.
Doubly, especially, extra-quadruply not when he goes around announcing, “Told you we’d nail it.”

Chapter End Notes

This Bakubutt brought to you by myself with the wholesome support of the discord. Y’all won't get me writing smut for this story, but you can have yourselves a butt-peek you naughty children.

ALSO gosh it was inevitable, wasn't it, that sooner or later we'd be in a puke-on-Bakugo scenario. I think vom!humour is fucking hilarious personally, but there's a knack to it being the right amount of funny-gross rather than just gross-gross. Guess I'll find out which it was ;)

Ochako on her knees

Chapter Summary

It's settled: Ochako's never going to look at Bakugo the same way again.

Chapter Notes

I battle myself not to update on the daily, but this one was too good to make you wait more than a day for. I'M WEAK.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Training with a bare-chested but otherwise cranky Bakugo is exactly as distracting for Ochako as it is awkward, even though – wait, especially because – they literally made out yesterday. A fact that she finds hard not to dwell on, at least between aerial tricks that are only making her sicker by the minute. Ochako runs out of water to even spit back up, so boundless is her thirst on today of all days.

This goes for double when Bakugo’s all skin and densely packed muscle, and is even harder to ignore when he's snatchng her out the air with every necessary connection between his arms, chest and back standing out in his brick-shithouse of a bodybuilder frame. Not even Ochako would’ve denied, back at the beginning, that Bakugo’s body is top-shelf hot. She definitely doesn’t deny it now. She’s just not used to this level of exposure.

“You're useless today,” Bakugo observes after a particularly fumbled manoeuvre, and Ochako hadn't got the nerve to argue with him when he's absolutely right. “Is this what happens after one day off?”

‘More like after one shirt off,’ Ochako doesn’t actually say, not expecting Bakugo to find it funny in the slightest, given how utterly frustrated they both are with the side-effects of her quirk today; Bakugo’s not of a joking mood right now the way a funeral home is not much for a children’s party. After starting on the wrong foot, and with maximum distraction mode Bakugo rippling around making it even worse, the training session is practically a lost cause. They manage, barely, and at Bakugo’s toughest insistence, to make some progress, but it's hardly worth acknowledging.

Ochako's startled out of her contemplative daze when Bakugo snaps his fingers in front of her face. “Did you sleep enough?” As this is Bakugo, he makes the question sound like a totally justified accusation of recklessness. How dare she be kept awake trying to toss and turn enough to shake herself free from the remembrance of being twisted round him, all hands and the taste of his tongue in her mouth?

“I did,” she answers quietly, rubbing her eyes like eventually Bakugo will have a top on when she looks back. “I'm sor-”

“Don't apologise,” Bakugo shoots like he's out for target practice. “Why should I give a shit if you're sorry? Just be better.”

The essential Bakugo philosophy laid out in front of Ochako in its entirety: don't be sorry, be better.
Like the two are mutually exclusive.

“I’ll try.” This is the Ochako philosophy – nothing like Bakugo’s, but what she’s got and all she can do. Give it your best shot, and even if you didn’t make it as far as you wanted, you tried.

Bakugo doesn't react at first, even though he's staring right at Ochako, so it makes sense he’s about to launch into a ‘try isn't good enough, you have to do it, preferably on the first go, and like you've been doing it your whole life.’

But if that's what he was going to say, it gets botched before turning into words coming out of Bakugo’s mouth. The only thing coming out of that is a long sigh – and when did he start sighing around her?

“Forget it,” Bakugo finally issues like a punch-out card, limbering up with a few stretches of his tree-bough arms across his front. He might as well strap fireworks to his biceps and it wouldn't be any more distracting. “We might as well fight.”

‘Aren't we already?’ Ochako is smart enough to resist quipping, and settles for straight business. “You mean like, sparring?”

“No, I want to have a frigging argument,” he snaps with a familiarity that guts Ochako even more than her own body’s gutted her already. “Who screwed your head on backwards today?”

‘You, asshole!’ Ochako doesn't actually say, but it's a damn close call.

Ochako is revising the notion that Bakugo likes her in any meaningful way, in large part because he is clearly trying to destroy her.

Maybe he's still pissed about being thrown up on, or it's because Ochako has been too out of it to make their Zero-G practice useful, or maybe just for the sheer goddam hell of it. Whatever the reason, Bakugo’s firmly committed to the cause of obliterating Ochako from the face of the earth through a non-stop beating like he's kicking a can down an alley. Okay, maybe not quite as bad as that, but it sure feels that way when he socks Ochako like he means it. He always means it, but today he seems to mean it extra.

Yet even when she's writing a three-line last will and testament in her head – to whom it concerns, I don’t have any stuff, but whatever’s left give to my parents – Ochako doesn't doubt that Bakugo is doing this for her own good. Because he isn't actually trying to kill her, but for a pro hero that's exactly what villains will be out to do; so she needs this. To know how much punishment she can take, and then be able to last a little bit longer than that.

Bakugo affirms this just once, printing an indelible mark of understanding on the exercise, the very last time he sends her reeling. Too tired to land well and taking a rough spill onto her knees, Ochako stays on all fours for a moment, breath too big for her chest and the pinpricks of pain throughout her body the main thing telling her she isn't dead yet.

“Uravity.” Bakugo’s behind her, unseen when he fires the name like a warning shot. He's never said it before, not that she can remember. “What kind of hero do you want to be?” Ochako isn’t looking at Bakugo, but doesn’t need to in order to picture his posture; fists tightened like vices, iron-wrought frame suspending every disciplined inch of him. The model of what a hero who kicks ass – real ass – needs to be. What Ochako wants to be. “Get up and fight me!”

Ochako pulls a deep breath like it'll be her last, clenching her hands into fists until her knuckles
Pushing herself up on prove-him-right-wrong-and-everything-in-between adrenaline, Ochako pivots and dashes for Bakugo, raising her fist as he lifts one of his own. Ochako’s punch never makes contact, but that’s because she feints, bending around Bakugo’s counter-blows like she’s actually turned to jelly. Ochako ducks Bakugo’s arm and dives into his space like she’s coming off a springboard into a pool full of hot-tempered teen.

Before he can do anything to remedy the situation, Ochako brings her hand to Bakugo’s tense arm, like he’s packed full of iron-filings sandbags, and presses down with all fingertips. This is cheating, she knows, but she’d never lift him with her meagre remaining strength, and if this were for real she’d damn well be using everything at her disposal to finish this fight once and for all – in her favour. This is the kind of hero she wants to be, more than she’s ever dared to admit, at least outside of fighting Bakugo.

Ochako activates her quirk as she pulls hard on Bakugo’s arm, and without his weight he flies like a balloon that Ochako whips over her shoulder with a mind to pop, dropping onto her knees and slamming him into the ground with everything she’s got.

Now completely spent, Ochako slumps, falling down onto her hands, then slowly onto her elbows. She sinks like her joints are all fixed with melting wax, bringing her fingers together and breathing, “release,” over her bowed arms.

Bakugo’s first sound isn’t verbal, but a strangled gasp for air. That’s when Ochako realises she winded him. Around the time the shock of that wears off, Bakugo gets his first word out.

Understandably, it’s a hoarse, “Fuckin’,” only to be followed by a slightly better enunciated, “cheat.”

“You wanted to see what I could do.” Ochako’s got nothing left, not even the energy to let her voice waver from a single note. “This is it.”

Ochako hears Bakugo sit up, but she doesn’t bother to look. She doesn’t bother to do anything, except stay folded up against the ground like a piece of outdoor furniture, so it’s a shock when she feels Bakugo’s hand touch against her back.

It doesn’t do anything… Bakugo’s hand, that is. He just places his palm to the back of her shoulder, burning with a heat that floods through her body, and leaves it there. Bakugo doesn’t do anything after that, either, the touch remaining for a few peaceful breaths before he pulls his hand back with – another – sigh. Then he gets up like that’s everything – enough, even a frigging start.

If Bakugo were wearing a shirt Ochako would be tempted to grab him by it, drag him back with the strength she doesn’t have and ask him exactly when he forgot how to use his words. Not that she’d be one to talk. Literally.

“We're done here.” For a horrible moment, Ochako thinks Bakugo means it more permanently than he does. That he’s seem her best and wants to cut the loss. “You look stupid, sit up already.”

Ochako picks herself up and rests back on her heels, remembering that she and Bakugo have something and even if it's a little… lacking in definition, it's not going anywhere.

“But there's still time before school,” Ochako points out without the energy to care if Bakugo obviously knows that.

“And you're already finished,” Bakugo says less kindly than he could afford, though Bakugo's not
exactly one to overpay on courtesy. “Besides, I wanna take a goddamn shower.”

“Oh, right.” Just in case Ochako forgot her shame for too long. “I'll wash your top.”

“Don't bother,” he grunts, relieving Ochako of her discomfort – one of them – when he pulls on yet another plush looking hoodie: he's got a larger wardrobe than her, based on what she's seen. “Forget about it, thing's too frigging small anyway.” True, not that Ochako’s minded one bit. It could even be said she appreciates that trait most of all.

“You can't just leave it,” Ochako argues, recovered enough to get up and cross over to the where Bakugo's sad, soiled tank top lies. “It's fine, really, I'm used to it.”

“Alright! Do whatever you want, weirdo.” Bakugo zips himself up, and Ochako never expected herself to be so grateful to no longer be looking at an un-ignorably attractive torso bereft of clothing. Bakugo’s physical assets could – and have, a few times – made her think up is down and vice-versa. It's just not always helpful.

“No weirder than wasting good clothes,” Ochako half-heartedly scolds, bagging Bakugo’s top in a plastic bag she’s stashed in her kit bag for eventualities such as this.

“Whatever,” Bakugo grunts as his hands dive into his pockets, and Ochako can't help the feeling he's trying to get away. A feeling that proves to be right on the money. “See ya.”

Bakugo leaves Ochako with a full watering of doubts to shower her uncertainties, sprung up like weeds among spring flowers.

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It's perhaps an inevitable hazard of dealing with Bakugo on a regular basis that for every step up she takes with him, the ground drops a little farther from under Ochako's feet. This doesn’t make it any less frustrating, but admittedly a hot shower, then a quick second breakfast to replace the one she lost on Bakugo’s drying-on-her-balcony tank top, make her feel a little more balanced about the whole issue.

Less balancing is the notion, which of course occurs to her while she’s in the shower, that Bakugo might even be doing the same thing at the same time. And that begs the question of exactly what Ochako thinks she’s going to achieve from thinking about Bakugo in the shower. Some boxes are better left shut, at least when she’s expected to look said box in the eyes with a straight face later.

It turns out not to matter, because Ochako, as ever, underestimates the ability of her classmates to make her want to drop off the face of the earth with a simple conversation, seeming hellbent on ensuring she can’t ever look at Bakugo straight again. Not that she was doing very well with it by herself in the first place.

“What happened to you?” Mina springs on Ochako during a slightly extended intermission before classes as Aizawa naps behind his desk.

Even the ever-diligent class President and V-P have agreed to leaving their teacher to sleep a little longer, on the basis that he clearly needs the extra rest. Only yesterday Present Mic posted purportedly the world’s only selfie featuring his fellow teacher, by merit of the fact that Aizawa was fast asleep on Mic’s shoulder in the teacher’s lounge. Ochako sympathises, knowing all about those awkward moments. Even with the limited view Aizawa’s students have of his activities as a hero, it’s clear he’s already burned the midnight oil, got through the two-ended candle and is now just straight up semi-catatonic while the class sort-of starts the lesson by themselves. But not really.
“What do you mean?”

“Uh, you’re kinda bashed up.” Tsu is fulfilling the role of sort-of shelf for Mina to peer over, but it doesn’t impede her ability to point out the obvious.

“I am?” Ochako thought she’d done a pretty good job of steaming herself like a dumpling until the wear and tear of sparring with Bakugo was sufficiently faded. Today was a little rougher than usual, but only because so much of it was them fighting physically rather than verbally – for once.

“Yeah, look at your knees.” Mina rests her face on her hands, which are stacked one on top of the other on top of Tsu’s head. Ochako looks down with an overly conspicuous rush, openly surprised by the yellow-purple blushes coming up on her knees after this morning’s sparring session. “What did you do to them?”

“Oh, nothing,” Ochako says awkwardly, crossing her ankles and wishing she’d had the foresight to wear tights instead of socks. If anything, a hot shower seems to have sped up the bruising process. Though now she sees the damage all at once, at the time it’d been spaced out and tolerable enough that she’d been able to push through. If anything, Ochako’s proud of the punishment she can take without giving up or passing out, but it’s not something she can explain without revealing the truth she’s still promised to keep secret.

“Nothing doesn’t leave bruises like that, ribbet,” Tsu counters, and she’s totally right and simply stating facts, but Ochako has a wild thought about grabbing her by the tongue to stop the sounds she’s making with her mouth right about now.

“Bruises?” Iida’s head turns so fast it’s a miracle it doesn’t keep on spinning all the way around, and Ochako’s gut informs her that it’s time to take an anxious trip back to nausea town. “Have you been hurt?”

“No! I mean, yes, but only… it’s fine, I’ve just been… going at it pretty hard in my gymnastics training lately.” There’s a knot in Ochako’s gut that tells her she hates this, that it feels wrong with every fiber of her being. But even if she wants to tell the truth, the real truth, this isn’t the way or place to do it.

Then as if she’s been enjoying the beach, and only just looked up to see a tsunami towering over her head, Ochako realises she’s going to have to tell everyone at some point. For real.

“When?” Mina queries with perfect innocence, because it shouldn’t be a shady question. “We were busy yesterday, and they look pretty recent.”

“Sure, they’re, uh, it’s just…” If Bakugo has caught wind of this conversation, his acknowledgement of it is at a strong zero percent. Hell, he might be napping, the way his head is tilted down, chin to his chest and an open book on his desk. Not that Ochako’s looking… much.

“Is it…” Iida looks like he’s testifying against a crime boss moments before being whipped into witness protection, and it hurts Ochako to see him trying so hard when he’s clearly struggling on the inside. “You know who?”

Ochako wants to laugh while she cries, both because of how utterly ridiculous it sounds hearing Bakugo referred to like a storybook villain, and because of the worried slant to Iida’s expression. The one that makes her want to give him a huge hug and tell him how sorry she is for ever letting him worry like this over her, and how much she doesn’t deserve his concern after everything she’s kept from him.
“Who knows *who*?” Mina queries.

“He means Bakugo,” Tsu puts in when no one needed that extra information; least of all because the open introduction of Bakugo and Ochako’s wellbeing in the same conversation can only go one way.

“Wait, you mean *Bakugo* gave you all those bruises?!” Mina says entirely too loud, and the buffer of classmates between them and the far side of the room clock it like an early bell for lunch.

All at once, Ochako’s front and center of the circus ring.

“No! Well, *sorta*, yes, but it’s not… it’s not anything… bad.” Ochako is trying not to dig her own grave, but the shovel seems to fit so easily in her hands, and she can’t quite stomach an outright lie after she turned her conscience inside-out trying to blame it on gymnastics training.

“So Bakugo *is* the reason?” Mina’s thirsty to confirm, and it’s not hard to blame her for wanting the facts. Even Tsu is looking suspiciously perturbed, to say nothing of Iida’s quiet torment. Ochako knows he must be genuinely worried, understanding better than anyone how important it is to have an open hand for a friend to reach out of a dark place. She hates that someone she’s usually so close to fears she could be in such a bad situation, when really she’s never felt better. Well, maybe not today specifically, but generally for sure.

“Wait, what’s Bakugo done to Uraraka?” Kaminari is the first step of the quickly spreading ripple effect across the class. Because one by one, conversations start to drop off like leaves falling from a tree as summer fades into fall.

“It’s nothing,” Ochako tries to insist.

“If it’s just bruised knees then I suppose you’re right,” Tsu points out with refreshing ambivalence. It’s not like Ochako’s on bloody crutches or anything.

“Hold on,” Jirou finally catches wind. “Why are Ochako’s bruised knees Bakugo’s fault?” She turns from looking in Ochako’s direction to address the next part to the guilty party himself. “What were you two doing?”

Measure by quiet measure, the classroom has finally fallen completely silent, until this enquiry is the only audible sound. The collective of the class turn their heads turn slowly, lacking subtlety, until every set of eyes – Ochako’s included, are training on a singularly uninvolved Bakugo.

He lifts his head like he’s only just noticed the world is happening around him, but if he didn’t seem to be paying attention it was a false signal. Because Bakugo sounds like he knows *exactly* what’s going on when he rocks back in his chair and – with just a hint of a smirk – says, “You don’t wanna know.”

Chapter End Notes

Rated T for Teen Gossip that’s *waaaaay* ahead of reality, aka the authentic schoolyard gossip trope. I feel like this happens a lot at school and is as such more realistic than anything *actually* happening. KIDS eh???

This is actually a pretty cute and meaningful chapter (the first half at least), and it does seem like there’s an under-served market of ‘Ochako actually being a badass wants-to-
be-a-hero-and-GETS-to' out there. One I hope to do some service to, because LET MY GIRL HAVE DREAMS OF BEING MORE THAN A SUPPORT/MEDIC, LET MY GIRL DREAM OF KICKING ASS AND DOING IT. Just let her be GOOD, yanno? More action-packed-butt-kicking hero of my dreams Uravity. MORE I SAY.
Getting weird

Chapter Summary

Bakugo has a way of dragging things into the open… eventually.

Chapter Notes

This is an early Friday update for Easter as tomorrow will be my Saturday so today’s my Friday even though it's still Thursday. It makes sense to me, I swear.

Oh also: this chapter is fuckin dynamite. *throws flashbang and dashes out of the room*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

By the time school ends, Ochako’s well aware of what a certain proportion of her class, and presumably even beyond that, think she’s been doing on her knees with Bakugo. She doesn’t like that they think that, nor is it even remotely true, though that’s not to say she wouldn’t ever… but if she did, it wouldn’t be under any such circumstances as everyone else seems to think. Really, the less thought about the whole thing the better.

In no small part due to her renewed infamy, Ochako’s so keen to get the hell out of school that she’s halfway out the door before the final bell even rings, ducking and weaving like a pro to hotfoot it around her peers and get the hell off school property in record time. She almost makes it, about to dash past the main gate when she hits a – proverbial, if not literal – tripwire.

“You trying to get away from me or something?”

Ochako doesn’t so much freeze as leap fully into the air in uncontrollable shock. Bakugo seems to come out of nowhere, like he’s been ducked around a corner just to pop out at her.

“Where the heck did you come from?!” she yelps, and then it’s Bakugo’s turn to jump. This is alarming enough on its own, but Ochako’s not sure she’s really seen Bakugo properly startled before. He jerks and then stops dead, like he’s caught himself in the act and is immediately furious about it. Really it just means he wasn’t expecting her to yell, or maybe be surprised by his presence at all, but the way he scowls makes Ochako think there’s a way he’s surely found to twist it into being her fault. Maybe even Deku’s.

“I was waiting, idiot.” Bakugo doesn’t say waiting for who, but Ochako knows. She’s the only one here.

“I… wasn’t sure you were going to come.”

Bakugo swings his bag over a shoulder and starts walking, encouraging Ochako to fall in step beside him. “Then you’re a double idiot.” He gives her a narrow, sideways look. “You gonna get your shit together this session?”
“Do you have to be like this all the time?” Ochako’s mouth runs like a dog fresh off the leash at the dog park, already a speck in the distance when she catches up enough to realise what she said.

“The fuck’s your problem today?” This might be an active insult on another occasion, but today it feels low-energy, almost half-assed. Like Bakugo doesn’t think what’s wrong with Ochako is worth getting mad over anymore.

“Nothing.” Ochako knows this sounds like a terrible cliché, but she’s not looking to place exactly why she’s feeling so annoyed about – if not directly at Bakugo right now, and mostly just stalls for time.

Ochako’s expecting a follow-up from such an obvious untruth, because if she were with her friends – non-Bakugo friends – they would want to know what’s really going on, try harder to get her to talk. But she’s not with anyone else. She’s with Bakugo; who makes a point of telling her he doesn’t care what she thinks, and doesn’t go prying into shit he doesn’t want to deal with in the first place.

“Fine,” Bakugo scoffs as he shoves his hands in his pockets. “Don’t tell me.” He sounds like he’s happier that way, as Ochako should be – because it’s technically what she wanted, but with the plate in front of her she’s realising that she placed a really bad order in this conversation.

But instead of trying to back out, and not least because there's nothing she feels like telling Bakugo in his current extra-snappy mood, Ochako just rolls with it. Maybe shutting up for a while can be the best thing sometimes too.

After a stressful day, Ochako finds it all too easy to zone out, and practically sleepwalks after Bakugo all the way to the gym. That short journey is the most peaceful moment she’s had since waking up, just hanging in Bakugo’s shadow, not saying a damn word.

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Like Bakugo’s question cursed her, Ochako's training with Coach Nikiforov is going about as well as a robbery in a police station. It's not all her this time at least, Bakugo’s also fumbling and even outright drops her once – like she needs any more bruises to get awkwardly misinterpreted.

“There's one thing you were right about, hotsauce,” Coach Nikiforov announces when Bakugo and Ochako collectively botch yet another move. “I can tell tell when you two are fighting.”

Is that it, Ochako wonders? Could all this uncertainty and being and tricky with one another be the reason their usual synergy isn’t working? Even Aizawa has told them to sort out – or at least set aside – their personal issues before, but that's what Ochako thought she was doing with all this not talking about it.

“No for much longer,” Bakugo says with cold frustration, like a lake frozen solid instead of his usual temper. His hand closes firmly around Ochako’s wrist, tugging her like a child needing to be cajoled out of a toy shop. “I’ve had enough of this.”

Ochako’s not sure what this Bakugo’s talking about, but it won't be long to find out as he pulls her like he’s doubling as a tugboat until they’re outside the gym, stomping into the echoing shiny-floored corridor that wraps around the main hall before grinding to a halt. A whiplike look over each shoulder: checking they’re alone.

“So,” Bakugo starts with weary exasperation, like this is a conversation he's indifferent to having, but has accepted he has to anyway. “What is it?”

It's a small victory that he asks this way, without an implicit suggestion that Ochako's wholly
responsible. No ‘what crawled up your ass this time’ but a simple observation that they have a problem, something getting in the way of progress, and as such to be ploughed through at any cost. Nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of their training, not even themselves.

“It's… silly,” Ochako says, feeling very on the spot all of a sudden, and wishing that she'd spent a little more time actually working out what the problem is more articulately than all the vagueness she has in her head so far.

“Never stopped you before,” Bakugo grunts.

Ochako appeals to an alternative route of not-dealing-with-it. “Can't we just agree that today's been weird and leave it at that?”

“Weird?” Bakugo echoes like he's never heard the word before, even when he calls Ochako it every other day. “Like how?”

“I don't know!” That Ochako's getting aggravated first is a classic example of today's weirdness, like there's something Bakugo knows that she doesn't. “Just, yesterday was so… you know, and then it's different back in school.”

Bakugo’s face pinches like it's threaded on a drawstring. “What's different?”

“This… I mean, us,” Ochako starts spilling like a bath starting to overflow. “Everyone thinks we're doing things we aren't, but sometimes we are and I can't figure out if you really like me or it's just for show because one minute you want something and then the next you don't.”

“For show?” This is what Bakugo singles out of the information splurge, and it's not a kind accusation. “You think I'm faking it?”

“Uh, well I… didn't mean that exactly,” Ochako back pedals, sensing she's walking with a basket full of snakes on each foot. “It's just… hard knowing what you want.”

“It really isn't,” Bakugo returns in a deadpan, standing a short distance from Ochako, who's a similar distance from the wall.

“Says you,” Ochako accuses a little more than she means to. “This morning it was like you didn't-”

“Cause you threw up on me, dipshit,” Bakugo bites before Ochako can put words to what she's trying to express. “Did you expect me to wanna suck face right after?”

“No! I just…” Ochako's horribly distracted by the casual suggesting of Bakugo wanting to ‘suck face’ under any circumstances, and also feeling increasingly conscious of the emptiness of the hallway this latest row is taking place in.

“You're the one getting sick whenever I lay a hand on you,” Bakugo states, and Ochako’s stunned to find him putting it in those words – that he's drawn conclusions that way, noticed, hung onto the connection between her getting nauseous and him touching her.

“Not every time,” she replies. “Just if I'm using my quirk and we get a bit… close.”

“We have to be ‘close’ to do that,” Bakugo returns with his frustration clearly rising. “Wasn’t an issue before.”

“That was… before,” Ochako says with her gaze drawing to the floor like it’s magnetic.
“So you’re saying what, you can’t anymore?” Bakugo puts with a wholly dangerous edge. If he had to choose between their training and the rest, Ochako’s sure she knows which Bakugo would pick.

“I can, probably, I think…”

“Real vote of fucking confidence there,” he growls, and if anything Ochako feels like this conversation has just made everything worse.

“I’m sorry!” Ochako bursts, “it's just this, this whole thing is really doing my fucking head in, okay?!?”

Bakugo doesn't respond right away, perhaps astonished by the bad language bursting from Ochako like a burst tyre, but it's not for lack of understanding anymore. He's focused, eyebrows scrunched together as he figures this out like a new acrobatic trick.

Bakugo completes the manoeuvre. “Because you think it's hard to work out if I like you?”

This is exactly it, what Ochako's said herself short moments ago, but hearing it from Bakugo makes a frightening difference. Maybe because now he knows, he can work out all the rest. What it means Ochako feels about him, if it's so important to her what he does in return.

If she were doing this with anyone else, Ochako might find it easier from this point – reading their expression and tone. But with Bakugo both those things just report pure, indignant anger.

“You dumb fucking idiot.”

“Hey! That's-” Ochako doesn't get any further, because Bakugo takes one sure step forward and ducks, dropping the head’s worth of height difference between them to be right on the doorstep of her mouth; a convenient position to be in for what comes after, which is that he kisses her.

At any other time, except moments like this, Ochako can easily believe Bakugo doesn’t care for her in any special way. He’s pretty good at not showing preference if he doesn’t feel like it, and today he especially came off like he had a long-running grudge to settle with Ochako rather than any fond feelings. But when he kisses her, Ochako feels like a glass of water in a desert. Like Bakugo’s never wanted anyone, anything as much as he does this. It's his intensity: the fervent way he leads first from the mouth, followed by the rest of him, to press against her as if no amount of contact between them will ever be quite enough.

Ochako lets herself be edged back until she meets the wall, her hands half-lifting, stopped mid-way through but with an intention to return the embrace. But then Bakugo stops, placing his own hands on the cool brickwork either side of Ochako, like he needs it to push himself away.

Bakugo lifts less than two inches off Ochako and takes a deep breath that blows humid across her skin when he exhales. “Clear enough for you?”

Ochako’s more than tongue-tied. Tongue double-knotted, glued and then dipped in metal plating might about do it. But it’s not always necessary to use words, she’s learning, so she just nods, then finishes the interrupted thought of her arms; raising them up to link around Bakugo’s neck.

Bakugo’s resting scowl cracks, probably because he already expects Ochako to close the small distance between them and be the one to kiss him this time. She can feel it in the smug shape of his mouth, before it softens to meld with hers. One of his arms wraps around her waist as they fall into open-mouthed exchange, cut with the most intoxicating edge of desperation, like all this has been a long time coming.
The sound of a piercing clap cuts through the corridor like a boxcutter across cardboard, echoing off the hard surfaces so sharply that Ochako and Bakugo both jump apart like someone’s run a shock of electricity through them.

“While I don’t fault your conflict resolution technique, neck on your own time, naughty children,” Coach Nikiforov announces from the doors with a gravely amused smirk, hands pressed together palm-to-palm like he’s praising the heavens for this reconciliation. “Come along and try the last sequence again, I have a feeling you’re going to get it right this time.”

Ochako feels her head superheat, but at least she’s not on her own – Bakugo’s going red from the neck up. But his voice is quiet, muffled as if he’s thrown a blanket over it when he asks, “Whaddya say?” in his best only-us-here look. “Wanna give it another go?”

Ochako’s so used there being more than one meaning to the things said between and about her and Bakugo. So it seems perfectly natural that this too should mean something else, something more.

“Yeah,” Ochako answers without needing to think about it – whatever, anything Bakugo wants her to try. She’ll give it a shot. “I do.”

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“So let me get this straight.” Bakugo has one arm up, hanging from a handle on the train carriage for support. Ochako can’t reach the handles, so she hangs from Bakugo instead. “None of the times before?”

“Well,” Ochako considers the proposition, “kinda.”

“Kinda?” His eyes narrow. “Thought I made it pretty damn clear.”

“You did, I just… I don’t know,” Ochako rambles. “I figured the first time was mostly about Deku.”

Bakugo looks like Ochako’s thrown up on him, again. “Why the fuck would it be about that shithead?”

“Hey.” It’s a flat admonishment, like a reminder of the company he’s keeping and what does and doesn't fly. “You can’t blame me for not being sure, you said yourself it was supposed to be better than his.” Typical Bakugo, needing to be the best and first at everything.

“I said you deserved better,” Bakugo specifies, and a looking-back conversation on all the times Bakugo’s kissed Ochako before getting her to simultaneously accept and realise he likes her is not something that even made it onto the list of things Ochako considered possible, which makes it even weirder to be discussing on the train back to school. “The dumbfuck who let you down before was just an add-on.” But it is a bonus to him, the implication runs like an underground river.

“He didn't let me down, he's just… not like that,” Ochako says without wanting this to turn into a fight.

“Seems pretty goddam interested now if you ask me,” Bakugo mutters in an inherently selfish way.

Ochako's stomach does a flip. “What do you mean?”

“Shows how much attention you pay, angel,” Bakugo slips in so easily that it doesn't feel like anything special, adding fresh nicknames to the roster along with the old favourites. “Anyone breathes a word about us and he's a foot behind them listening.”
“Really? But he hardly ever talks to me about it… us,” she corrects herself, the feeling and sound of it not getting any less strange in her mouth or mind.

“Cause he knows what's good for him,” Bakugo threatens lazily. “So what about the rest of it, like you meeting my fucking parents?”

“You tried to avoid me meeting them!” she retorts. “I had to introduce myself, you said I was just a friend from school, and…”

“And after that?” Bakugo responds with a dirty, lukewarm-but-not for long look. Ochako remembers what happened later when she and Bakugo were in his room, maybe a little too well.

“That was…” Ochako’s thought about it to the point of not knowing anymore how much is her remembrance and how much is rose polish buffed out over time. “Well you didn't say anything.”

“Didn't think I needed to.” His arm presses a tiny bit tighter against her back, an indiscernible squeeze against him to anyone else on the train. “So fill me in on how you decided I didn’t like you after that.”

There’s a statement to be drawn out of Bakugo’s not-exactly-a-question – more of a mandate – which is that he’s very-almost said it: that he likes her. Ochako wonders what it’d take to get him to say it straight.

“It wasn't like that, just… things started getting weird after we got back to school, didn’t they?” she points out. “Especially when everyone’s making crazy assumptions about us.”

“Assumptions?” Bakugo plays back with an amused tilt to his expression. “Ain’t they true?”

“Not all of them,” Ochako says as the pink of her cheeks deepens ever-so-slightly. This isn’t helped any when Bakugo spontaneously ducks in to steal a kiss from the softest part of her cheek, like he can stamp an invisible Bakugo was here on her skin.

“Who gives a shit what other people think?” he says still close to her, surely to the mortification of their fellow travellers. But Bakugo’s never been one for moderating his behaviour based on the comfort of those he doesn't know or care for – so basically everyone. Almost everyone.

“You,” Ochako puts simply as she pulls her cheek bashfully away from the dangerous range of Bakugo’s mouth – distancing temptation, for both their good. “Isn't that why you went to study in your room?”

“I couldn't concentrate with those assholes buzzing around, that's all,” he replies. “Besides, you'd cooled off by then.”

“What does that mean?”

“Means you don't like being seen with me,” there's a sharp edge in there that Ochako might nick herself on if she's not careful. “Getting all bent up over what those dumb fucks think of us together.”

“So do you, at least a bit,” she counters.

Bakugo scoffs, “How’d you figure that?”

“You don’t want people to see us being all… you know,” she explains without referencing specific examples, like the umbrella-shield kiss or the hand that finds its way to her butt when no one’s around and retreats thereafter. She's sure Bakugo knows.
“Because it’s none of their over-interested, under-sexed fucking business,” Bakugo spits in clear evidence of the fact. “I’m not putting on a frigging peep show.”

“Then what do you call this?” Ochako mostly teases, secretly reeling from the notion of Bakugo talking about anyone being ‘under-sexed’ like it’s something he’s bothered to think about – or could be considered a problem, though one he perhaps doesn't share.

“Tch,” Bakugo scoffs with a grin that could surely be described as shit-eating, giving her another possessive squeeze. “Like you’re complaining.”

Ochako sure as hell isn't.

Chapter End Notes

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh it had to happen *eventually* didn't it?

I actually forgot that this chapter came with my bonus favourite scene in any shipping fic: the post-feelings-admission breakdown. Like give me smooches against the wall, but give me THEM TALKING ABOUT PREVIOUS SMOOCHIN *faints into a dumpster*

We graciously welcome the return of: 3rd wheel (3rd person) Deku. I don't know about y'all, but I missed him dearly.
The Makeup Fakeup Breakup

Chapter Summary

Things getting simpler between Ochako and Katsuki makes everything else more complicated.

Chapter Notes

Alright *cracks whip* it's time to work this bitch of a fanfic. We ain't even nearly done being just getting started.

Shoutout to bisexualkacchan/katchako for literally livetweeting reading this story on twitter, I had a blast reading all of that. Also to people tweeting about this fic generally! It tickles me pink knowing people are reacting to my lil' kacchako fic like a tv show or something, I really love the 'serialisation' feel of a regularly updating fanfic, and as such, I bring you this one for the weekend!

Unrelated but if anyone ever gets shit for liking this ship and/or yelling about this fic on any social medias just let me know and I will personally go yell at strangers from your lawn because wow uncool.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Hey, Uraraka.” It's a rare occasion to find Deku in the common room these days; it means he's not training or with All Might. Typically both. Increasingly they’re not really training, but putting Deku in the huge footprints left by a more fragile Symbol of Peace than of years before. Although All Might is no lesser in spirit for the exhaustion of his physical form, the continuation of his symbolic heroism comes with a fragility those close to him regularly lose sleep over. It exhausts Deku on a near-daily basis, especially in this age where the best way for a Villain to make a name for themselves is an attempt on All Might's life. Not that Deku lets it show. “How was your gymnastics training?”

“Uh… interesting,” Ochako replies with a cagey roll of her eyes, following the distant figure of Bakugo heading straight to his room rather than over to the common area sofas like Ochako does. She slings her workout bag at the foot of the couch and plops down next to Tsu, sitting across from Deku working on some homework together. It gives Ochako a peculiar pang of guilt that she's not been around, though Deku’s surely a much better study partner than Ochako anyway.

“Is Bakugo still going with you to those sessions?” Tsu throws in casually. “I can imagine he'd have a pretty disruptive effect.”

Ochako freezes, reviewing her last ten conversations with Tsu and trying to remember if or when she said Bakugo had been going with her, then concludes: she hasn’t.

“Kacchan’s been joining your training?” Deku’s eyes shine like someone’s lit a candle inside the lantern of his head, and Ochako finds it really hard not to think about what Bakugo said only a short
while ago on the train. “That’s wonderful!”

“It… is?” Ochako’s not super-sure; today’s session in particular was more of a car wreck than a mark of steady progress.

“Yeah! He’s got such a naturally acrobatic style it makes a lot of sense for him, but he never stuck with that kinda stuff when we were young.” Deku starts unloading like he’s about to fit their combined life stories in there without taking a breath.

“He did gymnastics when you were young?” Ochako finds herself asking instead of trying to bury this topic good and fast. Though Bakugo clearly taught himself much of what he’s built into his own unique style, he had to get the fundamentals somewhere.

“Not for very long,” Deku replies, drawing thoughtful puppy-eyes down into his lap, where he folds his hands neatly as origami cranes. “He and the coaches had a… uh, personality clash.”

“I can believe that,” Tsu comments quite rightly. Bakugo and the world have a personality clash sometimes. “So he quit?”

“Oh no, he got banned,” Deku shoots back, then stops himself. “Well actually, it was his mom who they wouldn’t let back on the premises.”

“His mom?” Tsu queries.

“Now I can believe that,” Ochako remarks without thinking about it, and it’s like she’s snatched the tongues right out of their mouths – reeled like pulling in a fishing line in Tsu’s case.

“You met her already?” Deku deduces in a way that seems perfectly innocent, but Ochako feels her insides clench like a part of her is trying to crawl out of her own body.

“Uh… yeah,” Ochako says awkwardly, because she can’t very well deny it after clearly demonstrating that she knows exactly why Bakugo’s mom would amplify his son’s problems tenfold and get banned from setting foot in a place ever again. “It wasn’t a special occasion or anything, just… happened by chance.”

“That’s right, I heard you and Bakugo left the group date early to go back to his place,” Tsu recounts unhelpfully, and Deku looks like he’s opened a box full of puppies on his birthday.

“Really? I didn’t know about that.” It’s not the strangest thing in the world for Ochako’s friends, any of them, to be interested in her supposed-but-also-kind-of-real-dating life. But it’s the way Deku smiles, the hint of a blush under freckled cheeks as he adds, “I’m so happy things are going well for you two,” that makes her wonder just why he’s so extra-specially pleased.

And none of this helps the awful feeling of wrongness that possesses Ochako whenever she feeds these half-potted truths to the friends who have done nothing but support her. Tsu and Deku most of all have never doubted her and Bakugo’s relationship, and what’s Ochako done for them in return? As good as lie to their faces, letting them believe something that’s not true – or wasn’t true, even if now maybe sort-of is. But it’s not the same, and doesn’t count when they tumbled into this without talking about it, not properly. Ochako’s relieved and thrilled to know how Bakugo really feels, but blurring the lines of fake and real anymore than they already are can only be bad news.

With a sudden flash of clarity, Ochako remembers the way Bakugo always talked about coming clean after Aizawa’s assessment – the subtle ‘if you wanna’ she’d always skimmed over, thinking he was being contradictory as usual. It never occurred to Ochako that a fake relationship would be anything like a good way to start a real one, but perhaps Bakugo had thought it was enough; a way
of getting what he wants without having to make himself vulnerable to being rejected. Ochako wonders how long this has been going on.

Finally, a bolt of lightning passes from the clouds of conjecture into the grounds of solid thought Ochako’s mind, and she realises something important; that she can’t possibly go on the way Bakugo suggests, where they let fiction become reality and she carries this insincerity inside her forever.

No, Ochako has to come clean and tell the truth: she owes it to everyone who’s done their best to support her even when they had doubts, even when it seemed like maybe Bakugo wasn’t good for her. And if she and Bakugo do become something real, it has to be with a fresh start on solid ground, no misperception or sandy foundations for what they have to sink into.

But it means something Bakugo’s not going to like.

They have to break up. At least, if they’re ever going to really go out.

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Ochako’s been giving herself whiplash the way her head turns every time she hears footsteps from over her shoulder, but so far the person she’s waiting for hasn’t come through the door. Just her friends, who she feels guilty for not being happy to see instead of satisfying the dreaded itch in the back of her mind that’s waiting-for-Bakugo. She wishes that tiny inkling of anticipation would just settle down and go away, because it’s not helping and makes her feel terribly self-conscious, especially when everyone surely notices and knows who she’s waiting for.

Ochako tries to ignore the niggling feeling and focus on studying, a process that gets slightly less productive every time someone new traipses up and joins the discussion of which sentences in Present Mic’s homework require the use of who, whom or whomst.

Finally, just when Ochako’s forgotten who she’s waiting for, in he strolls a few steps after a boldly laughing Kirishima.

“Jeez, did we miss an invite to the party?” Kirishima announces with all his brash, everything’s-awesome energy, and though he’s mostly scrubbed clean, the traces of sooty residue in some easy-to-miss places – like behind his ears – suggest he’s been training with Bakugo.

Ochako’s horrified to discover her gut has an opinion about that, which is a bizarre, petty shock at the reminder that, obviously, Bakugo finds time to train with other people. Friends who can give him something – push him in ways – she can’t. There’s nothing wrong with that, but a possessive squeeze in Ochako’s stomach makes her feel just sick enough to look away.

Bakugo follows mutely behind Kirishima as they approach the great crowded mass of their class around the sofas and return to an acceptable sphere of Ochako’s vision; Bakugo looks relaxed, or perhaps just tired. Same thing, usually.

“We’re arguing about Mic’s homework,” Mina explains, smooshed onto one of the sofas between Kaminari and Koda.

“Yeah, all this whomsoever stuff is making my head hurt,” Kaminari bemoans.

“It’s easier if you follow this rule,” Yaomomo pipes up from the floor with her eyes on a grammar dictionary in her lap, sitting cross-legged to avoid the hard-mash of fighting for space on the sofas. “Who refers to the object of a sentence, whom the subject of a verb or-”

“See what I mean? I’ve got a headache already,” Kaminari groans. Yaomomo huffs with a frustrated
pout, like explaining this is a creation she can’t nail the formula for.

“Yeah, *whomsoever* understands it must be a genius,” Sero declares as he strikes a vaguely theatrical pose, at least as much as one can accomplish when wedged between Shouji and and Tokoyami. A Mexican wave of sighs rolls around the table, which has become scattered with an assortment of peoples’ notes that will be an Iida-worthy task of sorting out when this group-study-hangout is over.

“Your usage is still incorrect,” Tokoyami observes dryly.

“Think about it in terms of the relevant pronouns,” Deku offers. “If you can substitute he or she, then it’s *who*, if you could swap it for him or her then use *whom*.”

“That’s a whole extra thing!” Kaminari protests. “How do I know which of those to use in the first place?!”

*Here we go…”* it sounds a lot like Shouji sighs behind his mask.

“Budge up already, I need all the help I can get.” Kirishima’s standing at Kaminari and Mina’s end of the sofa, across from the Ochako-containing scrum on the other.

“Budge up *where?*” Kaminari retorts. “If you wanna seat you’ll have to get in my lap, man.”

Kaminari thinks he’s joking, which immediately becomes a joke on *him* when Kirishima shrugs and parks himself solidly across Kaminari’s legs, with some overflow onto Mina’s too, who lets out a high-pitched, “Stoppit you’re *heavy!*”

Bakugo is watching the whole spectacle like he’s come home to find all ten of his puppies have left messes on the new carpet, which Ochako knows because she’s watching him, though it’s a while before his gaze finally rolls around to her. The look holds for a second, like a snag in fabric through a machine, but nothing more comes from it before a fresh shriek-groan from the combined form of Mina and Kaminari underneath Kirishima draws his attention back with an irritated flick of his eyes.

Turns out, Ochako’s not the only one who notices.

“Are you just gonna stand there giving everyone evil eyes, or actually *say* something to your girlfriend, Bakugo?” Jirou goes for Bakugo’s life without mercy, immediately attracting the heat of his death-laser glare – not that she cares in the slightest.

“Oh, that’s still happening?” Todoroki seems to have materialised like settling condensation, appearing cross-legged on the floor next to Yaomomo, perhaps specifically for the purpose of disemboweling Bakugo yet again.

“Didn’t you go on a group date with them like, *yesterday*?” Hagakure points out from Ochako’s side, Tsu still parked on the other. Hagakure’s been first in line at the complaints desk of the ‘*didn’t get invite to the group date*’ department, and as such is trying to insist on coming along to the next one – a big *if* that Ochako’s trying to impress on Hagakure, not that it’s dampened her enthusiasm one bit.

“I wasn’t convinced then either,” Todoroki replies like he’s not interested in even having a deathwish, let him meet his maker right here in the common room.

“Meeting his parents sounds pretty convincing to me,” Tsu does that terrible, innocent thing where she offers information she thinks is open knowledge, not realising that she’s pouring gasoline on a campfire.
“You met Bakugo’s parents?!” Hagakure leads with a tone that could shatter glass, or Ochako’s eardrums at least. “Why didn’t you tell me, Ochako? That’s like, super serious!”

If Ochako weren’t slotted inbetween her friends like tetris blocks, she’d be out of here already. She’s kind of tempted to activate her quirk and just launch herself out the nearest window.

“I, uh…” Ochako finds herself looking at Bakugo, like that’s going to help. Bakugo takes what seems like an age to cross his arms, a lift to one side of his face like he’s saying, ‘get yourself out of this one, chubbs/princess/something-cheeks.’

“Uraraka’s under no obligation to share the details of her… private life with us, Hagakure.”

Nevermind, Ochako’s still got Iida to save her when the going gets tough.

Only this clearly rubs Bakugo the wrong way, even if Iida’s only endorsing the very attitude that Bakugo himself practices and enforced so strongly not so long ago. But he’s Bakugo, so being contradictory runs through his veins like an extra mineral in his blood.

“You’re right, prez, but I don’t know why it’s such a big secret,” Hagakure replies. “They’ve been going out for ages, right?”

Wrong! Ochako wants to yell as loud as she can. Except she can't, or not right now, anyway.

“Cause it's none of your damn business, cellophane,” Bakugo remarks in a clipped-short tone.

“It may not have occurred to you,” Todoroki begins, and low-level chatter dies off fast in anticipation of the killer blow that's no doubt about to fall, “but this relationship with Uraraka concerns more than just you.”

“How’d you figure that?” Bakguo replies like they should lay out an arena across the short distance between him and Todoroki and just let them go at it.

“No, Todoroki makes an important point,” this comes from Iida, who wriggles out of his cramped space on the sofa and stands, hands coming to point down in tightly-balled fists like he’s missing a judge’s gavel. He speaks as if he’s exorcising long-held demons. “It’s one thing to respect your wishes for privacy, Bakugo, but we have a right to be concerned for Uraraka if we have reasonable grounds.”

Bakugo’s looking at Iida like he’s only just remembered who he is, but all he does is lean back until he’s resting by the top of his shoulders against the wall he’s backed to – not like he’s being put against it, but chooses to expend the least possible energy during this exchange.

“You got some reasonable grounds, assface?” Bakugo puts to him. “You even fucking asked her?”

“Bakugo-” Ochako moves for emergency intervention.

“Leave it, short-stack,” Bakugo interrupts. “If they got a problem, I’m all goddamn ears.”

A little dazzled by the podium of Bakugo actually letting him speak, Iida hesitates for a second before beginning to plead his case. “It was always you who didn’t want Uraraka to speak about your… relationship,” Iida’s unloading like maybe this is something he’s thought about for a while, perhaps even talked to others about – Todoroki seems a likely party right about now.

Bakugo’s got one hand raised, fingers curled over as if inspecting his nails, like watching them grow might be more interesting than this conversation. “If you think I can make her do anything she doesn’t want to, you’re the one with your head up your ass.”
“Is it true, Ochako?” Hagakure turns to Ochako in question. For a moment she thinks it’s about whether Bakugo can make her do things she doesn’t want to – not really – or maybe even whether Iida has his head up his butt – only slightly, about this one thing – but she’s wrong on both counts. “You really don’t want anyone asking about you and Bakugo?”

“I… it’s just… complicated,” she says awkwardly, feeling like her skin is going to start crisping under the heat of this spotlight.

“Why is it complicated?” Yaomomo addresses like the missing $x$ in an equation. “You certainly seemed comfortable together at the weekend.”

Yes! That’s half the damn problem! Ochako’s screaming in her head, and part of her wishes Bakguo would just be Bakugo and yell at everyone so she doesn’t have to. But he’s looking at her like he’s watching a spaceship launch, like he knows how it’s going to have to go and he’s not bailing her out this time. She remembers his voice as clearly as if he repeats it to her right now – you suck at boundaries, bubble-head.

“Were we on the same date?” Todoroki asks with apparent sincerity. “I saw no signs of affection between them.”

“Then where the hell were you looking?” Jirou gasps with staggered disbelief.

“Yeah, they can’t get enough of each other!” Kirishima stops semi-wrestling Kaminari and Mina to offer this pearl of wisdom, then gets right back to trying to wedge himself between them ass-first.

“They never seem that comfortable at school,” Sero suggests with a wry edge – second in line at the complaints desk of being left out of yesterday’s fun, not to mention his perceived missed chance to ask Ochako out first. If he only knew she’s never been asked out in the first place.

“Unless they’re asleep,” Koda contributes meekly.

“Yeah, ‘cause they can’t argue if they’re unconscious,” Jirou quips, and there’s a few malcontents in the process of adding their own oars when something inside Ochako just goes snap.

“Since when did I owe everyone a fucking explanation?!” A second later, Ochako claps her hand over her own mouth, not that it’ll undo what she just did.

Faces are blank. Mouths hang open. Iida looks like he’s been kicked in the shins and also told his birthday and school have been cancelled until further notice. Even Deku looks a terrible kind of tortured, like if he could rip his heart out of his chest and hand it over to make things better, he’d do it without a second thought.

Ochako stands up, and the first thing about to come out of her mouth is almost ‘I’m sorry’ when she hears that Bakugo-voice in her head admonishing her for apologising over things she’s no need to. The whole damn class were pushing her and she snapped, is that really so terrible?

So all Ochako offers instead is, “I have to go.” She starts walking, barely less than a run, to be honest, for the door. But there is one thing, “Bakugo.”

It’s all she says, or even has to. Glancing quickly over her shoulder as she’s almost out the door, Ochako watches Bakugo pick himself up off the wall, shrug at the astonished wall of eyes from their classmates, and then turn to follow her out.

Chapter End Notes
Rated T for TWISTY EMOTIONAL PLOT TURNS.

No lie this chapter ending is like, one of my *favourite* moments/endings in the fic so far. It's not even smooching and I think I like it more anyway.
Faking it

Chapter Summary

Ochako finally opens her eyes.

Chapter Notes

So this is just a great update.

Yeah, that's it, that's all I gotta say.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There are a few signs of the rare occasion where Ochako’s gotten herself seriously twisted, and when it’s Bakugo who catches up with her as they pace around the dorm building to ‘their spot’ out back and asks, “You alright?” it doesn’t take a genius to work out that this is one of those moments.

Ochako sighs, stops, and then without knowing what in the hell she thinks she’s doing, just turns to Bakugo and presses her face into the ridge of his collarbone, head hanging low like a dog caught tearing up the curtains. Doesn’t say anything, but doesn’t think she needs to. A hunch that’s confirmed when Bakugo simply sighs, then one of his arms lifts and curls around the back of her shoulders, hugging her to him like he somehow knows it’s what she wants or needs – what’s the difference anyway?

“Never seen you give it to anyone like that,” he murmurs, and then very, very quietly adds, “Except me.”

Ochako keeps breathing against Bakugo, filling her chest more deeply with his presence and scent with every inhale, and feels herself unwind just a little bit more. Her hands find his t-shirt and ball into fists, while a part of her wants to just throw a punch of something. Work the tension out.

“Yeah, well now you have.” Ochako finally pulls it together enough to reply. Bakugo’s other hand rises to cradle the back of her head, his fingers weaving through her hair. He gives another of those sighs, or maybe a huff of impatience, it’s hard to say. Although Bakugo came after her without question, she’s sure there’s a hundred things he’d rather be doing than consoling her over losing her temper with her dipshit friends, as he’d surely put it.

Therefore, it’s so far off the expected range of responses Ochako anticipates from Bakugo that she is completely bamboozled when the next thing he says is a low, slightly throaty, “Kinda hot.”

Ochako takes a second to review the comment, decides she must still be far too crazy if she thinks it means what it sounds like. Can’t be. Yet somehow she still asks, “What?”

“You cussing out those assholes like they deserve.” Ochako’s suddenly really very extra-aware that she’s got her face basically pressed to Bakugo’s chest, and anyone with an ounce of sense can verify that it’s a very nice chest. She of all people would know that. “Guess you can call it a turn-on.”
It hits Ochako like a gong, lingering reverberation after the fact, that Bakugo just described something – something she did – as a turn-on. She wonders if Bakugo can feel her face warming against him, then decides he’s far too warm on his own to notice. The night air would be a little chilly, if not for being wrapped up by her own personal heat blanket.

“I… suppose they did deserve it a little,” she admits, purely because she doesn’t have a coherent response to the other thing. Thinking about Bakugo’s turn-ons feels like sneaking sips of beer from her dad’s open cans at the end of a long day on-site; enticing, and fun in small doses, but she’s not sure if she’s ready to snap the tab on one entirely for herself.

“We know they did.” Bakugo’s adamant. “Just because they can’t get something through their caveman skulls doesn’t put it on you to explain it.”

The fingertips Bakugo has nestled in Ochako’s hair are moving slowly back and forth, dragging heavy across the back of her neck. Ochako doesn’t know if it’s intentional or if he has any idea how good it feels, but if she had a quirk that made her melt into a gooey puddle, that’s what would be happening right now.

A laugh originates deep in Bakugo’s chest, coming out in a breathy scoff that Ochako feels against her cheek. “What?”

“Just remembering the looks on their dumb fucking faces,” he snorts, and Ochako’s fists tighten in his shirt.

“They’re not dumb, they just… don’t understand,” she says. “Which is our fault, by the way.”

“Since when were those fucksticks a part of this anyway?” Bakugo replies. “It’s like just ‘cause you’re friends, they think they got this claim on you.” Bakugo naturally makes this sound the way he sees it; that he’s the only person allowed to have a claim on Ochako. It’s a nice sentiment, if totally unachievable. People are born with too many connections to ever be devoted wholly to one person, but Ochako doesn’t mind Bakugo’s ambition to try anyway.

“If they knew the truth, maybe they wouldn’t be so…” Ochako’s not sure this is a conversation she should be starting here and now, but she’s been carrying all these secrets so long it’s like they’re pushing each other out.

“Bullcrap,” Bakugo’s sure, standing as firm in words as form in front of Ochako, clasping her to his chest like a supporting column. “It’s me they have a problem with, changing the story won’t do shit.”

“Because they think you’re-”

“I know what they think of me,” Bakugo shoots straight, with pinpoint accuracy right to the centre of the target set somewhere in the middle of Ochako’s sentence. “If they knew the rest then there’d be some other damn problem to get bent up over.”

Ochako doesn’t have the confidence to argue against that, because she’s not so sure it wouldn’t be the case. Bakugo has an innate ability to divide people. It’s not like the fake version of things between them is so terrible in the first place, but with their classmates’ persistence it’s still come to Ochako yelling and storming out on the best friends she’s ever had.

“I still want to try,” Ochako says. “I can’t keep on lying to everyone.”

“Lying about what?” Bakugo’s a little sharper now, and Ochako lifts her head out of the groove in his torso she’s been occupying like a burrow.
“Not everything, but just the… little things,” she tries helplessly to explain. “Like when Hagakure said we’d been going out for ages.”

Bakugo gives Ochako an entirely perplexed look. “We haven’t?”

Ochako blinks heavily, like she needs to check this is the right timeline. “For real, I mean.”

Bakugo’s face doesn’t flicker, to the effect of remaining the surly side of confused. “So you telling me this isn’t real?” Ochako has a feeling of ice cracking underneath her feet.

“No, that’s not what I, it’s just… how it all started, with us training being a secret, and letting everyone think we were going out instead.”

Then Bakugo shines a light that Ochako never considered on the whole hot mess. “What’s the frigging difference?”

Like flipping a switch, Ochako sees what he’s been seeing – why Bakugo’s been so comfortable acting like they’re a real couple for so long. He truly doesn’t care what other people think, because their deception isn’t what he classifies real and fake by – it’s what he feels.

“Well it… matters to me,” Ochako says delicately, knowing how sore these nerves must be, and not wanting to set her greatest comfort right now against her as well. “Even more when things between us are real.” With careful steps, Ochako lands on each stepping stone of affirming the right things – not stirring that sleeping hydra of insecurity dressed as ego.

Bakugo doesn’t get it, but rather than getting angry, he knows he can just ask, “Why?”

“Because I… want to tell the truth about all the amazing stuff we’ve learned how to do,” she reveals like laying out cards with a fortune teller. “How much you’ve helped me, and that I’m sorry I lied to them before and caused all these problems.”

“No,” Bakugo busts in like he’s counter-attacking before Ochako’s even landed the hit. She thinks he means coming clean, but then like rain falling from his mouth he says, “It’s not on you.”

“It is, at least partly,” she contests. “You wanted it to be a secret first, but I agreed and went along with it, letting everyone think something that wasn’t true and lied to keep it going. And we did pretend.”

“Maybe you did,” Bakugo’s voice is colder, and Ochako feels panic climbing her throat with sharp, clawed hands, “but I never faked it.” Ochako feels like she’s got a weight on her chest, her limbs bound to stop her taking it off, and struggles to take a steady breath – an effort that fails when Bakugo asks simply, “Did you?”

Ochako stares at Bakugo, like his eyes are a mirrored portal to let her scan back through everything they’ve gone through and divine the truth. “I…” Did she? Didn’t she? Why’s it so fucking hard to tell anyway? “-don’t know.”

Bakugo’s face pulls the wrong way; to anger, and resentment at feeling unequal, perhaps even embarrassed. “You don’t know?”

“It’s confusing!” she bursts. “I… I think I did, but everything’s been so mixed up, I hardly know what I want anymore.”

Bakugo’s pose stiffens, until Ochako’s hugging a statue that doesn’t return the embrace. “Better work it the fuck out then, huh?”
Ochako senses the fuse has almost burned, and desperate measures are needed to stop the explosives blowing. This is emotional do or die, so there’s no time for holding back.

This is why it’s necessary, in the heat of the moment, for Ochako to use her double-fisted grip on Bakugo’s t-shirt to shove him back a step – he actually moves, perhaps surprised by her snatching control that had been up for the taking – until he hits the wall. Once Bakugo’s back hits the concrete, Ochako pushes up on her toes and strains to cover his mouth with her own. Ochako kisses Bakugo like she means business, and a second of stunned inactivity later he reciprocates.

It feels, like everything, unassumingly right, as if there’s nothing more natural in the world than kissing the stuffing out of Bakugo. Now it’s happening, again, Ochako realises with a click like moving clockwork that it always has, right from the start. Whether in training or the pretence of being together that was apparently only fooling Ochako, being close to Bakugo has always felt like second nature. She’s just been too short-sighted to see it clearly – at least, until now.

A few wildly ambitious kisses later, Ochako’s got her answer. She pulls away from Bakugo’s mouth like breaking an airtight seal, the quiet smack of their lips parting. His eyes are half-lidded and drowsy, as if inebriated.

She tells him, “I meant it.”

Being Bakugo, he responds, “Mean it more.”

This is why they’re, no ifs and buts – one-hand-twisted-through-her-hair, the other heading down her back, Ochako’s got a pretty good idea of its final destination – macking hard against the dorm wall when voices and footsteps penetrate the hazy fog.

“Bakugo? You’n Uraraka still out here talking?” It’s Kirishima, obviously, though there’s more than one set of footsteps crunching around the building.

Bakugo’s mouth lifts off Ochako’s just far enough to mutter, “Fuck,” and Ochako just pants, sharing the sentiment but not having the coherency to communicate it. He pulls further back and his gaze rolls skyward – or at least as high as Ochako’s veranda on the fourth floor. “Let’s get out of here.”

Ochako takes a deep breath, oxygen and common sense – or something like it – flooding her brain, as if someone’s running around banging pots and pans together to wake up a unit of group-napping lil’ Ochakos in her head. “Agreed.”

Without breaking their embrace, Ochako activates her quirk on herself and Bakugo – who she super-conveniently happens to be holding anyway – and then goes limp, dropping with Bakugo as he bends at the knees and pushes the two of them off. They soar up the face of the building – at least Jirou’s probably still in the common area with everyone else debating what’s become of them rather than in her room as they pass it on the way up, because her room is empty and that would be a hard one to explain.

Catching the edge of Ochako’s balcony railing and pulling themselves over it in tandem, Ochako terminates her quirk with a quiet, “release.”

Simultaneously, she and Bakugo turn around and peer over the balcony edge, watching silently as Kirishima and Deku of all people come ambling around the corner in search of them.

“Nosey assholes,” Bakugo murmurs, whipping back from view with a second to spare when Kirishima looks up, maybe catching Ochako pulling her head away, but hopefully not Bakugo. When they take a step back, Ochako notices Bakugo’s top is still hanging over her railing from
earlier in the day, and it finally occurs to her where they are – again.

Out of sight and alone once more, Bakugo turns to face Ochako wearing an unashamedly devilish smirk. “So where were we?”

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For the second time in as many days – amazing how much can happen in a day, much less two – Ochako’s in a bedroom, hers this time, being kissed utterly stupid. At Bakugo’s place they’d been on a couch, but Ochako’s only got the bed, and they’re not tired so napping was never really a consideration. No, this is plain and simple making out, again. Or maybe still, after their interruption at ground level.

They’re twisted together like warped rails, Ochako slightly under and Bakugo slightly over, and whatever good kissing is meant to be – nothing really to measure against – this feels pretty good all the same. Regardless of where they started out, it’s like all roads lead back to here. Ochako’s not exactly complaining, but she does worry about the distraction from the point she’d been trying to make.

“I still think we should tell the truth,” she announces in a brief respite that permits actual talking.

“Nah,” is all Bakugo declares on the subject, but when Ochako steers her lips away from his he just uses the opening to go for her neck. Unprepared for the hot-and-wet sensation of his mouth against sensitive skin, Ochako makes a squeaky sound, shocking in its neediness. Bakugo lifts only to shush her – though that just sends a cooling rush of air over the damp marks left behind, and she must be technically a liquid at this point.

“I’m serious,” Ochako hears how this comes out as a whine, yet seems powerless to stop it.

“So am I,” he replies throatily, and the next time Bakugo drops his mouth back to Ochako’s neck a scrape of teeth does the most dizzying thing to her.

“Bakugo,” as soon as Ochako says his name, Bakugo’s mouth picks up once more and she almost lets a protestant moan slip.

“Call me Katsuki.” It’s a direction, not a request.

Ochako gasps, and not just because Bakugo’s hand’s pressing to her side in a place that’s only just not her breast; the inescapable recollection surfaces that he has touched her there, if not intentionally, for long or under any circumstances that’d make it enjoyable.

Now the opposite of all those things is happening, but only after Ochako tries the first breathy, “Katsuki,” does his palm finally shift.

Ochako’s finished, past saving, completely googley for Bakugo – or Katsuki, rather, something she’ll have to get used to, when a knock at the door gives her such a fright Bakugo’s hand moves lightning-fast from her chest to clamp over her mouth, muffling the shriek that would’ve come out without his intervention.

“Ochako?” Tsu’s voice comes from the other side. “Are you in there?”

Ochako stares at Bakugo from under the seal of his especially-sweaty palm over her mouth with wide-eyed shock, and then without another thought closes one of her hands in a tight grip around his bicep. She presses down on all five fingertips and watches his disorientated squint as she activates her quirk and gravity alleviates itself from Bakugo’s person.
His eyes widen, and Bakugo only has the time to look cross before Ochako shunts him at her ceiling like a badly flipped pancake. Ochako gets up in a hurry as she hears the thump of him coming to a stop and then silence – he might be mad, but Bakugo’s not getting in trouble. Then it’s a quick scrubbing of Ochako’s neck and cheeks and dragging her fingers hurriedly through her hair as she dashes across the room.

“Uh, yeah! Just a minute.” Ochako’s jog to the door turns into an outright sprint when it starts to open – holy shit, they hadn’t even locked it?

“Are you oka-aaay?” Tsu yelps as Ochako flings herself against the edge of the opening door and catches it from fully opening. “Everyone’s been looking for you, they’re really worried.”

“What?” Ochako’s not sure if she’s just make-out stupid, but that doesn’t make a lick of sense. “But I’m fine.”

“You sure?” Tsu tilts her head, finger to her chin thoughtfully. “You look a bit…”

“I was… napping,” she says super-mega awkwardly. “I just needed a little time alone is all.” Ochako swears she hears a Bakugo-ey scoff from somewhere behind her, and hopes to all heck Tsu doesn’t pick it up. Ochako can certainly picture the floating smirk somewhere up on her ceiling.

“Everyone feels bad for making you yell. It’s none of their business what’s going on with you and Bakugo,” Tsu lays out with the same de facto good sense she usually does, but Ochako’s feeling Bakugo enough that, ‘oh? You don’t fucking say?’ is the first thing that pops into her head.

“That’s… sweet of them, really,” Ochako replies, still running her fingers through the back of her hair and really hoping Bakugo hasn’t left any marks on her neck. He totally would, now she thinks about it. But Tsu isn’t staring, so maybe she’s gotten away with it – this time. “I understand why everyone gets concerned, I totally do, it’s just…” she stalls, but it turns out not to be necessary.

“It’s okay, Ochako,” Tsu interjects. “You don’t have to explain, that’s the whole point, ribbet.”

Ochako’s feeling extra-friendly for some totally-unidentifiable (yeah, right) reason, and darts forward to give Tsu a hug. “Thanks,” she says as Tsu returns the friendly embrace. “Sorry if I made you worry.”

“Oh, it’s not me who worries,” Tsu replies easily, patting Ochako’s back with one of her lilypad hands. “I know you’ll kick Bakugo’s butt if he gives you trouble.”

Ochako laughs and squeezes Tsu a little bit tighter. “You betcha I do.”

“So do you wanna come back downstairs? I think Iida’s going to start wearing a groove in the floor if he paces much longer.”

“Uh… sure.” Ochako ignores the disapproving sound she pretends not to hear from the back of her room as she pulls out of the hug. “But in a bit, okay? I just wanna… finish something up here, then I’ll come down.” So would Bakugo – from the ceiling, that is.

“You said you were napping,” Tsu points out, ducking to one side and peering past Ochako into her room – thankfully, nothing to see there, at least at ground level. “What’s there to finish about that?”

“Oh,” Ochako replies as she feels her cheeks pinken, hoping dearly Tsu doesn’t put the pieces together – or if she has, at least chooses not to open her big mouth about it. No offense to her, but it is on the large size. “I’m just… still waking up.”
Ochako hasn’t felt so awake in days.

Chapter End Notes

Rated T for TOLD YOU I DIDN’T NEED SMUT TO MAKE YOU SUFFER.

Welcome to one of the spicier scenes of the story, as I’ve ranted on discord many times, the thing that makes a scene sizzle is actually more about the tension and emotional investment than the specifics of the activity. This is why badly written smut is dull and hand-holding in the right context is LIFE AND DEATH. Or a T for Teen Appropriate over-the-clothes touch (*cough* broodlebob knows what I'm about *cough cough*)

Warm thanks to my partner in crime who blessed this chapter with her editing skillz.
By the time Ochako goes back down to the first floor, which is... a while, most of the class have scattered to their own devices.

Wrapping things up with Bakugo Katsuki when he doesn’t want them to be wrapped is a mean feat, and Ochako practically has to throw him off the balcony to get him to commit to actually leaving. And that’s after already taking a good long while to conclude their latest impromptu makeout session. Ochako wants to go and make amends with her friends as much as any well-intentioned girl, but an amorous-inclined Bakugo – Katsuki, she supposes, though it feels strange referring to him as such outside of those specific activities – is one hell of a force to resist. And Ochako’s only human.

As it is, most people are probably in bed or on their way by the time Ochako arrives back in the common room, finding Deku and Iida in close-knit conversation on the otherwise-vacant sofas.

“Uraraka!” Deku sounds like he hasn’t seen her in years, rather than an hour-give-or-take, and Ochako’s glad she checked her neck thoroughly for marks before she came downstairs – it was another mean feat getting Bakugo not to give her hickeys, especially knowing exactly who she was planning to go and see after him. A battle she suspects she’ll be having again in the future, given the possessive streak that burns through him like wildfire.

Yeah, Ochako’s really got her work cut out for her with this one.

“I’m glad you’re both still up,” she replies, relieved to see the signs of comfort rather than anxiety characterising her best bear-hugging friend’s face. “I wanna talk about earlier.”

“Midoriya has been telling me about you and Bakugo,” Iida offers like he might as well put his chopped-up heart on a platter next to the statement, and what Ochako would give to know the sonnets Deku’s fed Iida about the fiction of her and Bakugo’s supposedly wonderful relationship. “I believe apologies are in order.”

“They are,” Ochako intercepts, “but not from you.” She takes a deep breath. “It’s me. I’m sorry.”

“But you don’t have anything to apologise for,” Deku tries to insist.
“No.” Ochako’s firm, and even though Bakugo’s not on board with truth-telling just yet, Ochako’s had *enough*: the lies end here. “I do.” Fixing her gaze on Deku, the staunchest advocate of her and Bakugo’s fake-relationship, who seems to want to believe in the relationship so much that it slants his own perception, Ochako sets the record straight. “I don’t know what you’ve been saying about me and Bakugo, but Iida has every right to be worried, because… it’s true.”

“What’s true?” Iida’s usually happy to be right, but now he looks like he just passed a test he was mean to fail, and it’s got him scared.

“It was Bakugo who didn’t want me to talk about… *us,*” Ochako begins to explain, and it feels like tapping a pocket of pressure inside her chest that’s been growing for weeks until all her organs were crushed and choked out. “And it’s because we… well, I haven’t been honest with you, with *everyone,* actually.”

Deku looks like the floor, walls and building foundations have all been blasted out from under his feet. “Really?”

“Aha! I knew it!” Iida cries, one fist pummeled to the flat of his hand, in a freeze-frame of pyrrhic victory. “Wait… how so?”

“I… see, the thing is, I can’t really tell you *why* right now.” Ochako bounces her forefingers together, knowing this is going to be one hell of a thing for the boys to swallow, but this is the best compromise she could find between them and her other boy. The difficult one, whom she’s managed to get stuck with anyway, superiority complexes and all.

“Because of Bakugo?” Iida suggests like he might pick up a jousting pole and go after Bakugo here and now.

“Yes.” Ochako forgot how good and easy it feels being honest, and it strengthens her resolve even more. “But you have to believe it’s nothing bad, I just… need some time, okay? I’ll explain everything soon.” With feet that feel like they weigh fifty kilos each, Ochako walks over and sits on the sofa next to her friends. “All this… *stuff,* it’s been making me a little crazy.”

“Are you sure that isn’t just Bakugo?” Iida points out, and Ochako tilts like a building on sandy foundations, until she’s leaning against his strong, sturdy form.

“It can be both,” she sighs, doubly-relieved when Iida shifts an arm to lay gently around her. It feels different to when Bakugo’s touching her, and even when she’s admitting how much damn *trouble* he’s made for her, only cements Ochako’s feelings about… her feelings. Although it doesn’t stop Ochako thinking for a wild moment about how her life would be a whole lot easier if she could just like someone who *isn’t* the personality equivalent of riding a rollercoaster holding a five-tier cake; inexplicable at best, and an icing-covered disaster at worst. But still kinda delicious.

“I don’t understand,” Deku leans around Iida to look closely at Ochako, hands to his face, worrying at his mouth with a look in his eyes like he’s trying to recalculate a whole projection of the future that’s suddenly changed; as if Deku had their kids’ names picked out already – as *crazy* as that would be. “I thought you and Kacchan were *so-*” Ochako holds her breath for what he’s going to say, “…good for each other.”

“That can still be true.” As soon as she says it, Ochako realises she dearly hopes that it is. “It’s just that things are a teensy bit more complicated than I let everyone believe.” She loops her hands around Iida’s arm and squeezes. Similar to Bakugo, but also *not* in an entirely implacable way. “But I’m going to fix it soon, so please don’t worry. Just wait a little longer, okay? I just need to-” Ochako’s otherwise-smooth explanation hitches, but as always there’s someone there to catch her.
“Convince Kacchan, right?” Deku adds like he knows, even though he can’t, surely. Or maybe he can just see into Ochako’s head and heart like looking through glass.

“Yeah,” Ochako can confirm that much, at least.

“Then you must have your work cut out,” Iida observes neutrally, which Ochako understands. This has to be a lot for him to process.

“Don’t I know it?” Ochako laughs silently against Iida’s tree-trunk arm, relieved that she can still find a funny side to this frigging ten-car pileup of an emotional wreck. “Anyway, if he doesn’t come round on his own then I’ll make him.”

Ochako doesn’t yet realise how right she is.

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Bakugo’s ever-changing roster of nicknames has never much bothered Ochako, because anything beats ‘hey’ and at least they tell her something about how he’s feeling, like using cloud patterns to predict the weather. This morning’s is a vaguely sarcastic, but mostly sleepy, “Mornin’, sunshine.”

He’s waiting for her out front of the dorms, thick hoodie with the hood pulled up, so only the front portion of the chaotic mess he calls hair sticks out the front as he sits hunched up on the bottom step.

“G’morning.” Ochako knows she needs to tell him about her talk with Iida and Deku, but it’s a conversation requiring a delicate touch, so she’s going to choose her moment more carefully than spewing it all first thing. She just touches a hand to his shoulder, around hip height when she’s on the step next to him but rising as he gets up, her palm ascending like riding an elevator.

Bakugo turns as he stands too, an arm moving behind Ochako and then closing like a turnstile bar against her back, pulling her into him so they’re hugging before she even realises it happens. He's usually got a good deal of height on her, but in the sleep-soft morning he drapes over her more like a blanket than a person, face a warm stamp pressing to her neck.

Somehow, Ochako doesn’t expect him to be so friendly after she’s delivered today’s unpleasant reality, so a selfish part of her is terribly reluctant to deal that blow. She clings to her resolve by her fingertips, no easy task when Bakugo’s basically nuzzling her neck.

“You smell good,” he murmurs, and Ochako feels her grip tighten instinctively on the back of his hoodie – just when she started clinging onto him like they’re about to get lost at sea escapes memory at present.

“So do you.” It might be an obviously, probably-dumb thing to say, but Ochako’s never made a reputation for herself as offering dazzingly intelligent insights at times like these. It doesn’t appear to matter, as Bakugo makes a non-verbal sound that’s more of a grunt than anything else and gives her a tighter squeeze. Ochako’s got a feeling training will be extra-hard to concentrate on today.

Or maybe not. Like a dog dropping a chew-toy to chase after a different amusement, Bakugo extricates himself from Ochako and shakes as if he can cast their touchy half-awake intimacy off like water. “Let’s take the fast way over,” he announces through a yawn, and one of Ochako’s primary thoughts is, ‘That’s it? No kiss?’ but she keeps her thirsty tongue in check.

“Fast way?” She falls into step behind him, noticing the change to the way he walks – almost like he’s lining up for a straight-line shot across the grounds, launching from a less-visible position. “You want to fly there?”
“Na, thought we’d wake up your pal Sonic the Nerdhog and climb on his frigging back,” Bakugo deadpans, and Ochako slaps his arm with the strength of a particularly meek kitten.

“Don’t call him that,” she scolds. “What if we get in trouble?”

“Because the fun police are on patrol at six in the goddam morning?” Bakugo suggests caustically. “Besides, they’d have to catch us first.” He holds a hand out to Ochako, fingers wiggling temptingly. “And if we get there faster, we’ve got some extra time for the good stuff.”

“What stuff would that be?” Ochako echoes half-knowingly, half-hopefully. A smirk from Bakugo catches her gaze like hooking a prize at a fairground game.

“You know it.” If Bakugo knows what she’s thinking of, he lets it remain an unspoken promise. “So c’mon already.”

“Alright, fine,” Ochako heaves like it’s a whole lot of work that it isn’t; a play that’s at least three-quarters a game, because it’s without resistance that she settles her hand in Bakugo’s and lets him reel her in, her arm curling around herself as he wraps her against his front.

“Keep breathing,” Bakugo says quite literally into Ochako’s ear, and she shivers all over at the proximity and all this knowledge, like phantom hands plucking at her, of how he’s touched each part of her at times other than now. Bakugo sticks his other hand out behind them, and Ochako activates her quirk. “Reactivate after the first drop and we’ll cruise.”

Ochako gets what this means somehow, a nod her only confirmation before Bakugo blasts from his back hand and they go wind-tunnel airborne with their first slingshot of the day. She remembers Bakugo’s instruction and fights the air resistance to take a breath rather than keep holding onto the same one, slipping her hand out from under Bakugo’s – which stays locked firmly around her waist – and then touches her fingers together. “Release.”

The incredible rush eases off and they start to curve, before a quick dig of Bakugo’s fingers into the soft flesh of Ochako’s waist signals her to reapply her quirk to them both once more. Then just like Bakugo said, they’re no longer falling or accelerating with rocket-force speed, just cruising straight and true through the air, school grounds a rolling backdrop beneath them.

“Good girl,” Bakugo murmurs way too naturally, and the simple pair of words has such an impact Ochako gulps and releases her quirk on herself before she gets first-thing sick. “Hey!” Bakugo barks a little less appeasingly at her back. “I didn’t say drop us!”

“You can’t just lay something like that on me with no warning,” Ochako explains as she gathers her ball-bearing insides, reactivates her quirk and they continue cruising a little lower and slower to the ground.

“Lay what?” he replies crossly. “All I said was good job.”

“Not in those exact words.” Ochako feels a renewed tightening of her Bakugo-arm seatbelt, and then just about loses it when his mouth deliberately seeks out her ear.

“So you like that, huh?” As if that wasn’t bad enough, the next moment Ochako feels the wet of Bakugo’s tongue and jerks like a bucking horse.

“Katsuki!” she squeals as his attempts to keep her close come up against Ochako’s best evasive wriggling, fortunate that the boundaries of the training area are approaching to catch them like a catcher’s mitt. Ochako manages to get a foot against his thigh and pushes, turning head over heels into an all-limb pinwheel as she springs off him and launches herself away. “Release!”
Ochako’s planning on somersaulting all the way to the ground, but never makes it when missile Bakugo takes her from behind, sweeping her up in the trajectory of a fresh blast and flying them both into the nearest building facade like darts into a board.

“Thought you could get away from me, didja?” Without thinking about it – acting so unconsciously she’s puzzled by the fact that they’re not falling first of all – Ochako’s turned her quirk back on the both of them, so they float against the wall rather than sliding down it.

She’s got a glut of nausea that’s nothing to be sniffed at, but as far as quirk-strength training goes, this is a particularly unique form of it. Because when Katsuki kisses her while weightless, Ochako feels a fierce kick of her quirk against the double-dose of her deliciously-twisting gut, but she’s distracted enough by the slip of his tongue against hers that the two things very-almost cancel each other out. They remain at some immovable-force unstoppable-object impasse that lasts as long as they can stay wrapped up in Zero-G makeout-land. Which is, like always, a while.

Only when Ochako realises they’ve drifted off the building face and are just getting blown around like a couple of tangled-together balloons in the wind does she get it together enough to acknowledge that they need to get back down to the ground.

Catching her drift, literally, Katsuki pushes her up gently to send himself down, and Ochako releases her quirk when he’s close enough for a safe landing, arms outstretched to catch Ochako like a falling star with only a restrained grunt of exertion.

“Gotcha,” he heaves against the brunt of her weight, leaving Ochako in the enjoyable position of hanging princess-style across his arms. Locking gazes for a moment, Ochako moves in for a peck on the lips that she can’t place the thought behind, more of a reflex than conscious action, then with a heave-ho heft that’s entirely Bakugo he tosses her onto her feet. “Enough fooling around, let’s get started.”

This is it, Ochako realises as she lands and straightens up to face Bakugo – dangit, Katsuki – she’s not going to get a better moment than this.

“There’s something I’ve gotta tell you first,” she leads into, and exactly as predicted a crease of irritated frustration flashes across Bakugo’s face; he’s not going to like this, but she has to do it anyway. “It’s about us.”

Chapter End Notes

a/n corner this time: This story is deliberately constructed to play out conflict through differing opinions, but it is the author’s opinion that Ochako’s stance on her and Bakugo’s relationship, what it is and what it should be, is the dramatically more healthy and sensible approach.

In other words, if you think Ochako’s being unreasonable and doesn’t need to/shouldn’t break up with Bakugo, that it would be better to just say ‘oh we’re actually going out now’ or that Bakugo’s position is anything but lazy minimum-effort garbage, then you’re on the losing side, my friend. If you think insincerity, deception, and letting Bakugo get what he wants without ever having to make himself vulnerable enough to ask for it (aka risking rejection/admitting how much he cares) is a reasonable price to pay for a relationship worth having, then you’re setting the bar too low. Boy needs to man the FUCK up. It’s not that hard.
Oh also, regarding the argument that we all know is going to happen next chapter: Prolly not gonna be what you think? I'm prepared to be wrong, but I also think I gotcha with this one. Find out at the weekend!
Ochako's long-brewed storm finally breaks.

Here's the thing.

I love writing arguments, so I hope y'all enjoy this one.

The two sides of Bakugo Katsuki are as distinct as those on a coin, and change about as easily as flipping one. Ochako’s even starting to think of them like such: for as wonderful and even sweet as Katsuki can be, when he wants to, he’s still a hundred-and-twenty percent Bakugo the rest of the time, and that comes with a certain, often ragey, territory.

So there’s no doubt that the boy who roars, “You told them WHAT?!” is all Bakugo.

“I never said what we’ve really been doing, or that we only pretended to go out in the first place.” Ochako’s trying to contain an explosion, which isn’t exactly easy – like trying to shove a giant cork in the top of an erupting volcano to stop the blast. It's madness for her to even try, but she's having a go anyway. “I don’t know why you seem so surprised, I already said that I want to tell everyone the truth.”

“But we had a deal!” Bakugo’s gone from his best to his very worst in the space of about ten seconds, and it’s intimidating, but Ochako holds onto the Bakugo Katsuki she knows can be tamed, and tries to appeal to that part of him – it's in there somewhere.

“The deal was before,” she counters. “Things have changed so much since then, and I… after I yelled at everyone, I had to say something.”

“Bullshit,” he snaps. “You didn’t even ask me!”

“I tried!” Ochako feels the pang of guilt, and knows if she’s going to get anywhere with him, she has to own up to her own mistakes too. “But you… okay, you have a point, I should have explained… harder.” She drops her head, cursing herself for screwing up again. She just couldn’t keep the truth – part of it, at least – from Deku and Iida any longer. “It's not like I planned it, I just had to tell them something that wasn’t a lie. Please understand.”

“Because we’re a lie?” Some training session this is turning out to be.

“No, of course not.” Ochako takes a step towards Bakugo, but his rage-aura is enough to push her right back; he doesn’t want to be approached, not that way, at least not now. “I just… I don’t understand why you’re so desperate to keep this a secret.”
“You know why.”

“No I don’t!” Ochako’s suddenly the one going off. “I’ve been working my ass off for you for weeks, when am I going to be good enough?!”

“When we hear it from a pro,” Bakugo knocks back without so much as a blink in the face of her own rising temper. “If you blab now and Aizawa tells us it won’t work, then we look like assholes in front of everyone.”

“Do you really think that’s going to happen?” Ochako returns. “We can fly and bring down buildings, idiot.” Ochako can’t believe Aizawa’s just going to shrug and tell them to dump that in the trash, and understands the root of Bakugo’s uncertainty – that he's afraid of not being good enough to meet his own insane standards – but that doesn't make it any less frustrating.

“When the fuck did you get so cocky about it?” Bakugo fires. “What if he says it’s too dangerous?”

“We’re going to be heroes, aren’t we?” Ochako throws up her hands. “It comes with the territory!”

Bakugo’s rage incarnate, and Ochako almost forgot what he’s like this deep into the fire-tornado of anger he can draw out of himself. “So what if you get hurt?! ”

“I’ll deal with it!” Only after Ochako’s yelled this piece does she notice the way Bakugo said it – not we, but her. If she gets hurt. “Is that what you’re worried about?”

“I’m not worried!” he sends Ochako’s concern back with a heavy-booted kick. “There’s just a million factors that we can’t control yet, and you want to go running off bragging because you can’t keep something to your-goddam-self for five-fucking-minutes!”

“That’s not fair!” Ochako yells. “I’ve been lying for you for weeks, but it’s never enough.” The boiling point has been reached, and Ochako finds herself putting into words things she didn't realise she felt, but the moment they're said – screamed – are true nonetheless. “Nothing I do for you is ever enough!”

Bakugo gives her a fresh razor glare, like she could shave her legs – if she bothered to do such a thing – on it. “You’re getting hysterical.”

“Look who’s talking!” Ochako doesn’t demonstrate her calm particularly well, but Bakugo’s hardly a model of restraint himself. “You’re the lord-frigging-master of overreactions! All I told them was that I haven’t been entirely honest, and that I’m going to tell them the truth soon, once I get your moody ass on my side!”

“Good luck with that. You’re making great fucking progress,” Bakugo puts up cruelly.

Ochako’s so frustrated she just covers her face with her hands and just screams into them, “Why are you making this so hard?!” The moment the cry ends, Ochako feels her anger cooling, never hot for long, and hates that her eyes are already starting to brim with furious tears. She drops into a crouch, balling up and pushing her fingers against her temples, forcing herself to breathe in and out calmly, resisting the urge to hyperventilate until she makes herself dizzy.

“You only had to wait a few days.” Bakugo’s calm – calmer at least – this time, which doesn’t actually make Ochako feel any better. In fact, she just feels like crying more. “Even then, you shoulda at least told me that’s what you were going to say to them.” There’s a short pause, and Bakugo speaks with a solemnity that’s more disappointment than anger. “I thought we were supposed to talk to each other about that shit.”
When he puts it like that, Ochako has the awful, sickening realisation that Bakugo’s point is valid. Although she did try to talk to him about it, it was half-heartedly, while they were making out; when everything seemed so great and Ochako let herself get stupid, thinking she could do anything she wanted without consequence. Even if telling the truth to her friends was in itself a right act, doing it against Bakugo’s wishes was a violation of the promise she made to keep their secrets. Her impulsive decision to come half-clean to Iida and Deku without talking to Bakugo first denied him a chance to consent to it – not that he would’ve anyway, but that’s not an excuse because it affects them both. It’s the same thing Ochako used to yell at Bakugo for, but now it’s her just doing what she wants without consulting him or really listening. Shit.

“You’re…” She breaks off, a lone hiccup like some despairing emotion is trying to flee her chest riding passenger on an air-bubble. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Something worse is in Bakugo’s voice this time: pity. “Stand up for fuck’s sake. You look ridiculous.”

Instead Ochako slumps to the ground, messy legs spilling to one side on the concrete that’s still cool and slightly damp from morning. She takes another breath that’s much less controlled, and blinks out of necessity, which sends the first streaks of hot brine down her scalding cheeks.

The magnitude of Bakugo’s sigh could point to a latent air-control quirk, and through her swimming teary-eyed vision Ochako can still see the signs of wild fury in him. But there’s an attempt to temper it as he takes a couple of steps towards her. “Don’t cry, goddammit.”

“It’s not your fault.” Ochako doesn’t know why she feels the need to state this, and neither does Bakugo, apparently.

“I know that, dipshit,” he snaps, squatting down next to her and then kicking his feet out to sit with a force that suggests he’s mad at them. His hand goes to the middle of her back and pulls Ochako into him like bending a sapling. “Just get it over with.”

It occurs to Ochako, in a rational corner of her mind that’s not connected to anything she’s saying or doing right now, that Bakugo’s exactly the kind of person to understand what happens when the cup of emotions runs over. How it’s not about who was right in the argument and what or who made who cry, but the primal need to let it out. They had to lock him up on that sports festival podium two years running for a reason. He sets the seasonal trends in highly-strung emotions.

So Ochako leans into his neck and just sobs, one hand balling in the clingy skin-tight sheath of his vest, exorcising the emotions she doesn’t have any space for in her already overcrowded chest. “I just wanted… to tell… the truth,” she slips in between the shattered pieces of this totally embarrassing crying jag.

“I know,” he replies only half-irately, palm rubbing gently across her back like he’s physically trying to smooth her out.

“It’s not that bad, I hardly even-” Ochako chokes off with another squeaky sob, “said anything.”

“I know,” Bakugo repeats, a little less comfortable than before. “I blew up at you.” She knows that has to be hard for him to admit, even if it is like admitting the moon comes out at night. He mumbles something that is almost certainly a rushed, awkward, “Sorry,” that Ochako chooses to leave as unacknowledged in the hearing as Bakugo tries to make it in the saying; like they both know he did and that’s enough.

“You did kinda lose it.” Ochako sniffs. “But I should have talked to you properly about it.”
“No shit,” he scoffs, and she tugs on his top in pretty pathetic protest. Eventually the tears wind down, and Ochako feels her breath even out, the desperate screaming awfulness leaving her body, primarily in the form of liquid from her face. She manages to lift it from the soggy curve of Bakugo’s neck and meets his gaze dead on.

He just sighs, a veritable factory of them by this point, and Ochako winces and fidgets like a toddler as he brings the back of chemical-fragrant hands to her cheek and blots away the tear-tracks. “You’re such a mess.”

“Look who’s talking.” Ochako’s the one to sigh this time, tipping her head forward until her forehead rests against his; this is the Katsuki side of the coin, who Ochako feels at peace with enough to let him lean in and lay the lightest ‘I’m sorry’ kiss at the corner of her mouth.

“Makes us one helluva match, then,” he says even more softly, and after a moment of consideration, Ochako turns to align their mouths more fully, pressing her own sorry-kiss to Katsuki’s resting frown. It’s still too soon for more than this, but the indication that things are – or will be – okay is there.

“This is probably the worst time to say it,” Ochako begins shakily, and this is a sure waste of a training session, but the morning sun is warming and no one is hurrying her on, so she’s content to stay like this awhile longer. “But I really do want to break up.”

Bakugo doesn’t go off, which means he must understand, confirmed a moment later when he says, “The fake shit, you mean?” That he’d consider it could be anything else is an unpleasant shot to Ochako’s gut, and it’d be so much easier if she could just be okay with this, the way he is… but she can’t.

“Yeah,” she sighs. “It’s just too-”

“I get it,” he interjects. “Don’t fucking agree, but I get it.”

“So you’ll go along with the breakup?”

“Piss off,” he retorts, and Ochako darts back as if wounded, but Bakugo’s adamant. “I’m not breaking up with you, real or fake.” His expression shifts an inch in a positive direction, tiniest hints of a smirk coming through like flashes of sunlight behind the canopy of leaves. “You wanna get rid of me, you better be prepared to do it your-goddamn-self.”

Ochako, for the uncountable-th time in the morning, heaves a deep, spirit-exorcising sigh of frustration tangled with relief and sheer frustrated exhaustion. It's a bumper package sigh, and she's always liked a sale bundle. She re-accepts her fate like the joke entry in a gift exchange: she’s going to have to break up with Bakugo.

But maybe, Ochako caveats as she glances up at him through her eyelashes and finds him watching her with such peace, like he’s not resentful in the slightest for all the screaming they just did at each other, because that’s done now and – flip – he’s back to Katsuki. Maybe it doesn’t have to be just yet.

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Aoyoma starts the snowball rolling at the very top of the mountain by clocking Ochako the moment she walks in the door for homeroom with a deceptively simple, “Mon amie, you look a little sad. Qu’est-ce que c’est?”

“Oh gee, Ochako, are you alright?” Hagakure boards the bandwagon at once, and happens to be too insightful by halfsometimes. “You look like you've been crying.” Make that entirely too insightful.
“I… I’m okay,” is all Ochako finds herself capable of replying under these circumstances. She’d thought the rest of the training session had been long enough for her severe case of ugly-crying to subside, but as usual her overly-disposed to blushing face and puffy eyes betrayed her. That and racing around at high speeds in a self-perpetuated wind-tunnel isn’t great for stopping her eyes from watering or fixing that she looks like she’s been ugly-sobbing on Bakugo for longer than she’s cried in a while; it’s been stressful, draining, living this awful insincerity and double-life of making sure people think one thing when she means another. Some of that had to get out sooner or later.

“What happened? Are you still upset about yesterday?” Ah yes, when Ochako flipped her lid and yelled at all her friends. One of her finest moments of late.

“No!” she rushes, though heads turn around to peek all the same. “I’m fine, it’s nothing to do with yesterday, really…” It is in a way, but Ochako’s trying to avoid that landmine for now.

“Let me guess,” Tsu hops uninvited into the conversation, loitering in between the rows of desks on the way to their seats. “Trouble in paradise with you-know-who?”

Ochako’s not sure when homeroom became the official discussion period for drama in her semi-real relationship, and resists the urge to sigh and bang her head against the wall. The compromise is she just sighs.

“Oh no! Have you and Bakugo been fighting again?” Mina chips in for the latest episode of Girl Talk: Classroom Edition.

The thing is, Ochako’s on a new policy with regards to lying about everything that goes on with her and Bakugo, so although she can see his head cocked slightly in her direction, she bites the inside of her cheek and just goes for it. “Yeah, but it’s okay now.”

This simple statement of fact instead of her usual evasion detonates like one of Bakugo’s grenades. Even he bristles, returning caustic glares for the accusatory ones that instantly start flying his way.

“You two have been going at it again, huh?” Jirou suggests like she’s got a clear idea of how Ochako and Bakugo like to ‘go at it’.

“Bakugo!” Mina turns on him fiercely. “You’re meant to make your girlfriend feel better, not make her cry!”

Bakugo shrugs. “Like I can control what makes her cry.” Obviously, this goes down like a lead balloon.

“Dude! That's no way to treat a lady,” Kirishima scolds, and Bakugo finds this verbiage terribly amusing.

“Lady? Coulda fooled me,” he mutters, and Ochako’s inclined to agree – Bakugo did blow up at her, but she sure gave it back in equal measure. Screaming at her semi-increasingly-real boyfriend before ugly-crying on his shoulder isn’t top of the ‘good ways to behave’ list, and Bakugo's influence on her isn’t all good all of the time.

“Wow, that’s… kinda harsh,” Sero comments like he’d never do such a thing and Ochako should have gotten in on him when she had the chance. Maybe she should’ve.

“Yeah, making girls cry isn’t manly,” Kirishima seconds – or thirds, Ochako supposes. Bakugo remains nonplussed, but she feels obliged to try and stem the onslaught of disapproval all the same.

“C’mon, I said it was okay now,” Ochako intervenes, realising this kind of situation is exactly why
she’s avoided the truth before now – way more trouble for way less peace.

“Well, I guess if you made up already,” Mina consoles herself, it seems like. “But I hope you apologised, mister!”

“Like fuck,” Bakugo spits with a mouth full of wall-tacks, even though he did and they can pretend he didn’t but Ochako’s watching him with a knowing look he deliberately avoids. “Sniffles over there is the one who said sorry.” Ochako would ask Bakugo why he’s suddenly dishing all this unnecessary info on their most recent spat, but she knows his answer without needing to; because she started it with all her ‘truth’ nonsense by admitting they’d been fighting in the first place. One more point in the ‘none of their frigging business’ column in Bakugo’s eyes. Ochako would surely reply that it’s so obvious when they’ve been arguing she might as well admit it, so really they’re screwed any way she could’ve played the situation.

“Seriously?” Hagakure’s astonished. “You mean, you were in the wrong, Ochako?” Compared to Bakugo, the unspoken rest of the statement runs.

She shrugs bashfully. “It can happen.”

“Then why’re you the one who was crying?” Mina follows up. “Bakugo must’ve done something if you got that upset.”

“No, I was just… it’s not that simple,” Ochako tries awkwardly to explain. “Can we just leave it? I said things are okay, and I don’t wanna talk about it anymore.” Now she’s more cranky than awkward, but it does the trick.

“Oh! You’re right, sorry,” Hagakure – and the others, by the looks of it – remember a little late how appreciated it isn’t when they make a spectator sport of Ochako’s relationship, and scatter awkwardly to their desks like a flock of birds that a toddler runs through the middle of. Ochako’s not used to the looming threat of her losing her temper being an intimidating factor over her friends, and isn’t sure she's thrilled with it, but at least it works. Bakugo, of course, looks positively proud. Or perhaps just smug.

He’s still keyed in as Ochako tries skulking over to her desk with a low profile, catching her eye as she passes through his line of sight – which is naturally directed right at her like a bullseye.

“Honesty’s working out for you, huh?”

“Don’t you even start, Katsuki,” Ochako shoots before she remembers they’re not on their own, where it’s okay to just fire angry shots at each other as an easy means to busting off stress. Or where she calls him Katsuki. In front of everyone. It’s like Ochako’s set off another grenade in the room this time, though Bakugo just looks even more amused, and he – he actually – winks at her, like it’s easier than saying ‘told you so, princess.’

But then, smugness personified outright says, “Told you so, princess.”

Ochako feels herself blush with equal proportions annoyance and embarrassment – Bakugo’s called her that in front of people before, but not in an arena quite like this. And boy, do people notice.

“You went on a date with them, is there ever a time they're not like this?” Ojiro turns over his shoulder and asks Kaminari with genuine wonder.

“Nuuuuuh, that's pretty much what they're always like,” Kaminari confirms.

“Such passion,” Aoyoma professes like he’s actually getting a little misty-eyed about it.
“Passion? Seems kinda sketchy to me,” Ojiro replies.

“It’s like, fireworks, yanno?” Mina tries to explain enthusiastically. “Sparks flying and all that stuff.”

“Yeah, but I don't think it's meant to be that literal,” Ojiro contests.

Honestly, Ochako’s half tempted to start yelling at Bakugo all over again. Not that it’s his fault or because he deserves it, but it’d make her feel better, and he’d let her.

“If you wouldn’t mind terribly saving these disputes for outside my classroom.” Aizawa’s not just-woken up, but propped over his desk with his face in his hand like he’s been watching this for longer than Ochako – or Bakugo, for that matter – would like. “Please take your seat, Uraraka, I’d like to do some teaching today.”

Yes, Ochako decides as she discovers a Deku-sponsored puppydog stare coming hot across the classroom at her, silent mouthing of the question ‘you okay?’ at her with a little furrow of worries wrinkling his forehead – Iida’s surely no better off, though he sticks to his books like the dedicated student he’s distracting himself by being – her day is off to a flying start.

Chapter End Notes

PSYCHE SHE DIDN'T EVEN BREAK UP WITH HIM PUNK'D Y'ALL.
Choosing other partners

Chapter Summary

If Ochako plays with fire around Bakugo Katsuki, she’ll get exactly what she deserves.

Chapter Notes

Having a right old chuckle about how divisive this thing I call a plot is. Like, y'all *realise* the point of this story is me yanking your chains about insane highschool dating drama, right? Like you know that's what I'm here for, and if there's two contrasting opinions or points of view that each hold some validity but are still at odds with other... that's the plot talking... shh, don't disturb it too much, it's not time yet.

“The principal has contrived a new morale-boosting event to promote unity among Hero Academies.” Aizawa has the unique ability to make this sound like the least interesting thing to have been proposed in his teaching career to date, but then tips his head back to apply a few eyedrops, which has the unwitting effect of making him look like he's overcome with emotion for the next part. “An inter-school, all-years tournament, taking place next month. UA will host the first round. Prior to that there will be qualifying matches within each year and class to decide the strongest teams to put forward.”

“Strongest teams?” Iida identifies like a detective cracking the world’s most solvable case. “Then it’s a group event?”

“As part of demonstrating the…” Aizawa pauses and sighs, “spirit of unity, the competitors will be pairs. You have until the end of the week to submit your partners to me. The qualifying matches will begin next week.”

This naturally sparks a cacophony of activity across the room, ended with a stiff clearing of Aizawa’s throat.

“Before getting ahead of yourselves, I remind you that each couple will be competing against not just your peers in the other classes and senior year, but the best of other schools’ hero courses. Your partner should therefore be chosen for quirk and combat compatibility, and not just dictated by,” he pauses again, and Ochako is mortified to find herself singled out with a gaze, “personal chemistry.”

Someone – Ochako can't be sure who, but could take a few educated guesses – sniggers, and Ochako has the sensation of just discovering she’s knee-deep in a hole she's been naively digging for weeks.

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The primary advantage of Aizawa’s announcement is that it quickly supplants Ochako and Bakugo’s last quarrel as the hottest topic of schoolyard discussion, though there is a certain area of overlap that
could be considered a danger zone.

The stage this scene plays out at is the canteen, where Ochako starts out safe in the nucleus of her usual companions. But in this brave new era of unity between factions, there's no doubt that Ochako will find her bubble of Deku-Iida-Tsu-generated calm soon encircled by an entirely more vigorous committee.

“Alrighty then, who's everyone thinking of partnering with for the all-star all-school couples tournament?” Mina announces joyfully over her lunch, and it might be an informally appointed title, but certainly does the trick.

“A decision like that requires careful consideration,” Iida lectures just a little, “Aizawa was clear on the importance of considering the best-suited partners carefully, rather than making snap decisions based on instinct or personal preference.”

“But instinct is important too!” she insists with a dynamic grin that radiates cheer. “You gotta click with someone, not just make all the numbers add up.” Ochako only knows it because she’s right next to him, and it’s not very much at all, but she swears Iida flushes.

“Ashido makes a good point,” Deku affirms while Iida is in a sudden state of temporal speechlessness. “Aizawa did include personal chemistry as a factor.”

“I thought he was saying it didn’t matter,” Ochako puts in thoughtlessly, and catches a momentary glance from Bakugo several places down the table from her, before it returns devotedly to his meal.

“No, I think he was saying both battle and personal compatibility are of equal importance,” Deku replies. “I feel like he wants us to see this as an exercise in matching ourselves with a partner based on all the factors, including setting aside personal clashes if it means the best possible match.”

“Oh, you mean kinda like, Bakugo and Ochako still going together even if they're fighting?” Mina suggests.

“Right! Exactly like that,” Deku says enthusiastically.

“Who said we're going together?” The voice of dissent is naturally Bakugo’s.

“It's a couples tournament, duh!” Mina returns, and it's not totally clear if she's joking or not.

“Not that kind of couple,” Tsu reins her in.

“Well, who else would Bakugo go with?” Mina counters.

“They’ve got the personal chemistry part down at least,” Kaminari observes with the security of being at least an arm’s length away from Bakugo, and therefore in the moderately-safe zone, “as long as they can stop fighting each other long enough to focus on someone else.”

“And their quirks would combine very effectively,” this dazzling insight comes from Deku, and though it's not like he's been told – it's actually quite obvious if given reasonable thought – Bakugo still fires off a glare that would put a hole through him and Ochako in the same shot.

“No one asked you, nerd!” he comes out with classic Bakugo aggression. “Making us fight in teams is fucking stupid. Working with any of you assholes will only hold me back.” He declares this, as Bakugo does many things, with a degree of absoluteness that makes it feel impossible to deny.

“You're really channeling the spirit of unity there, Bakugo,” Kaminari digs like a penknife prying out
splinters. “No wonder Kirishima said he doesn't wanna team up with you.”

Bakugo’s target changes, redirecting the same glare to puncture a hole through Kirishima, who’s making a strong attempt to innocently eat his lunch, a mouthful of noodles his excuse for not replying right away. Finishing with a long slurp, he looks up at the table and says, “I never said I wouldn't, just that it's hard work.”

The overwhelming accuracy of this observation rings so true that Ochako bursts out laughing, which is exactly the wrong reaction for the moment.

“You can shut it too, chuckles!” Bakugo spews callously. “I never wanted to carry your chubby ass through the contest in the first place!”

“Yeah, because you're all sunshine and fucking rainbows to work with,” Ochako returns with a silly, eye-rolling tone, and it occurs only after she’s said it – when she clocks the concerned-come-awkward expressions of her friends – that no one else knows the context to the phrase or nickname she uses, or that sometimes this is just how they talk to each other.

“Easy, you two.” Kaminari’s provocateur instincts are holding strong today, as they are most days to be fair. He's friends with Bakugo, of course he’s used to trash talk. “Do you need some alone time to resolve these personal issues?”

“Bite me, sparky,” Bakugo mutters.

“I would, but I don't want to make Uraraka jealous.”

Kirishima chokes on his noodles and needs his back thumped, while Ochako rues ever trying to mend the rift between Bakugo and Deku if this is the outcome.

“I think anyone would be lucky to team up with Uraraka,” Deku produces as the result of some internal musing, a heart-wrenching sincerity to his tone that makes her glad to have him as a friend. “There’s a lot of amazing opportunities her quirk opens up for a partner.”

“Thanks, Deku,” Ochako says warmly, offering him a mile-wide sunshine grin, which promptly turns stormy when it becomes a ‘see?’ look she flings at Bakugo like throwing darts.

“Then you fucking ask her,” Bakugo growls. “See if I care.”

Ochako doesn’t believe him for even a second.

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This time it’s Ochako who waits for Bakugo at the main gate after school He comes storming up with his kit bag swinging like a wrecking ball from one hand and a noncommittal grunt his meagre offering of a greeting as he strides right past her.

Ochako addresses this in a way that could be called ill-advised, but she doesn’t find herself all that concerned with the potential fallout – if they’re gonna argue, so be it. “So what’s up your butt today?”

Bakugo shrugs. “Nothing.”

“Haven’t we been through this before?” Ochako remarks. “Like, literally yesterday?”

“Yeah, but I mean it when I say nothing,” Bakugo murmurs in a way that’s powerfully
counterintuitive to the point he’s trying to make.

“Wow, I’m so convinced,” she sasses, then catches the crook of his elbow in her hand, tugging him slightly to face her, making him pause for a step. After initiating the all-important physical contact, never dragging her where she won’t go, Bakugo stops and turns to watch her expectantly. A few seconds under the heat of his gaze and never mind, maybe she doesn’t want an argument after all. “C’mon, I’m sick of fighting.”

“We’re not fighting,” he snaps, then tugs her back into walking with him in a way that jostles her arm to sit through his, linking with the inherently-squeezable grab-bag of his arm as they fall into step. “Do I always have to be in a good mood for you?”

“No,” Ochako backs off proverbially if not literally, wrapping herself around Bakugo’s bicep so they’re touching as much as is comfortable while still walking. The contact is comforting – at least for her. “You can tell me if it’s something I did.”

“It isn’t.” Bakugo ploughs stubbornly onwards.

“Is it about the tournament?” she guesses. “You don’t… we don’t have to be partners, if there’s someone else you’d rather team up with.” Obviously it bothers her if that’s true, but Ochako doesn’t want that to be his reason – like Deku once said in a different context, Bakugo has to want to do something of his own volition, or it doesn’t mean the same.

“There isn’t.”

Ochako’s stomach triple-flips, and she can’t even do that in real life yet. “Really? You coulda fooled me earlier.” Ochako makes a special attempt to hide the annoyance that threatens to seep through in her tone, and it seems to work.

“That was in front of those jackasses,” Bakugo supplies in a low tone. “Getting pushy and chatting shit like we gotta make up our minds right away.” There’s a short pause, only the sound of their synchronised footsteps on the pavement. It’s typical Bakugo, saying the opposite out of pure spite, a contrarian through-and-through. “I just wanna think about it, okay? See what Aizawa says about us first.”

“That’s okay,” Ochako says quietly, hoping he’ll come down the way she wants him to, but it has to be his choice. Bakugo’s not a mule that can be dragged anywhere he doesn’t want to go, and she’d only build up resentment trying to make him. “At least no one’s going to find it hard to believe if we break up at this rate.”

“Oh,” Bakugo makes a distant, uninvolved sound. “You’re still dumping me?”

“As long as you’re still against telling the truth,” she replies.

“Mhm,” he confirms like it’s not even a discussion, and then after a little pause. “When?”

“Oh… soon, I guess.” Ochako finds it hard to sound enthusiastic about it, which would be because she’s not. “I’d rather we just explain everything, you know, it’s not like I want to do it.”

This is by no means an ideal fix, but Ochako’s never going to feel right until she’s buried this weird fake-start relationship and wiped the slate clean; she needs a fresh start, so she can have at least one relationship that actually gets off the ground the right way – that’s assuming Bakugo even asks her out for real, but there’s a river for crossing when they get to it. He won’t even admit to being her training partner in front of their friends right now, and until that’s fixed Ochako’s reluctant to keep playing house just because the perks are fun. Even if they’re super fun.
"I want you to cool your tits and stick to the plan like we agreed," Bakugo retorts with a tongue like a whip, followed with a narrow sideways look. "But we can’t all get what we want.” He’s got a point, Ochako realises with an unfamiliar pang of guilt; Bakugo doesn’t want her to break up with him either, but he’s stopped opposing that because it’s better than losing his secret. She’s frustrated he still cares about it – their preciously-guarded style – just a little bit more than her.

“How do you know the tournament isn’t how Aizawa expects to assess us?” she queries to get quickly off the topic of her tits in any capacity. “Has he said anything to you?”

“No.” The hint of a worrisome line appears between his eyebrows. “I’ll ask him.”

“Better do it soon,” Ochako warns. “If you don’t want to team up for the tournament I’ll have to find someone else, and I can’t wait forever for you to make your mind up.”

“Alright! I said I’d do it.” Bakugo’s temper flares, but Ochako just squeezes his arm and he settles. “Let’s make this session a good one.” He pauses for a moment, mulling something over like a fruit pip in his mouth. “No more attitude.”

Ochako scoffs – another bad habit she’s getting off him – and turns her grip on his arm to a two-handed squeeze, leaning her head against his shoulder for a few steps. “Stop giving it to me, then.”

“Same to you, sniffles,” he retorts – nickname for the day, perhaps – and Ochako laughs silently against him.

“Deal.”

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When Bakugo said he wanted to make this session with Coach Nikiforov ‘a good one’ he should have specified that he meant ‘let the coach torture her,’ because that’s what’s been happening so far. Bakugo’s only just out of his comfort zone with the moves Nikiforov sets him, but today Ochako’s been punching up so hard she might crack the sky.

“You start here,” Nikiforov lays out with a straight gesture of his cane-like arm, “backflip backflip layout, double for Hotsauce, rotation for Mochi, then swing down and up – and hold it! This is a balance pose, which means control, naughty children. Aoi will demonstrate with Hotsauce first.”

Aoi is the enviably petite gymnast helping them today, who Ochako keeps catching making eyes at Bakugo when she thinks no one is watching. Not that he seems to have noticed one bit, but Ochako sure does.

In fact, it’s hard to stop herself outright scowling as she watches the tiny gymnast make everything Ochako’s being challenged to do look so frigging easy. She flips like a wind-up toy, grabbing Bakugo’s outstretched wrists as he bowls her between his legs before flinging her up in the air and into the desired balance pose – locked in a single hand-to-hand grip. Bakugo holds the dainty Aoi up on one arm as she forms and holds a splits pose above him without even having the decency to look like she’s not enjoying it.

Bakugo’s wearing fingerless gloves to stop him turning everyone he touches into a walking fire hazard, and executes the whole sequence like he does it every day for breakfast – rather than having a screaming match with Ochako, like that makes her feel any better. So when it’s finally her turn to give it a shot, Ochako’s determined to get it right. And she almost pulls it off.

The flips and layouts are fine, routine, even, and the swing-and-launch portion of getting into the balance pose is okay, but Ochako’s not a featherweight waif of a girl, and struggles to keep her
balance and hold the pose. She manages only a couple of seconds before wobbling so badly Bakugo has to drop her – not neatly, with a tuck and turn like Aoi demonstrated, but a messy drop into Bakugo’s arms like a catch in their own style.

But perhaps Bakugo remembers they agreed to no fighting, because he doesn’t say anything when Ochako looks at him from the comforting cradle of his arms – and maybe she clings a little tighter than she needs to, and maybe he squeezes a little more than he needs to in return. But no one ever told Coach Nikiforov about the deal.

“Mediocre! You weigh much more than Aoi, Mochi, so you have to be even more disciplined to hold the pose for long enough. You can practice on the gym equipment, Hotsauce will try it again with Aoi.”

Ochako grits her teeth and nods, forcing a smile that’s the perfect opposite of what she really feels. Dishonesty makes her as sick as her quirk these days, like the two things have gotten into a terrible mixup that makes her grin more of a scowl. “Yes coach.”

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Ochako tries – not always very hard, but at least makes a primitive effort – to overcome her more base, petty instincts. Most of the time. Not this time, but usually she at least gives it a shot.

“Hey,” Ochako announces with buckets of intention, after making damn-well sure the probably-doesn’t-deserve-it Aoi is also in the vicinity when she approaches Katsuki in the gym cooldown area after the conclusion of death-by-balance-pose training.

“Wh-” is exactly as far as Katsuki gets through the semi-intrigued ‘what?’ he was trying to get out his mouth before Ochako stops it with hers. Just grabs the collar of his tank-top, hops up on her toes and lays a floodlight billboard of a kiss on him. Screw the giggling she can hear from around the lockers, Ochako wanted to do it, which by Bakugo rules means go all-out.

When Ochako backs down, Katsuki looks part-dazed, and the rest really damn amused. “What was that about?” he asks with a devilish slant to his expression.

“Just… sending a message.” After she’s done it, like tapping an abscess, Ochako starts feeling guiltier about it – indulging jealousy that probably exists entirely in her head; although, Aoi is pretending not to look their way – and, if Ochako’s not much mistaken – is even a little red in the face. So are most of the people in the space, to be fair – were there seriously this many?

Katsuki gives a toothy grin as his eyes dart after Ochako’s line of sight, catching the what and who she’s watching and presumably putting the pieces together. Great.

“Messages can get lost in transit,” he suggests in his best dark hot chocolate tone of voice, and lifts a hand to let a lock of Ochako’s hair slip over one outstretched finger, before lifting it up, and with a certainty that feels like he’s done this many times before and not just this once, tucks Ochako’s hair behind her ear. Yeah, Katsuki knows, and he’s loving it. “Better send it again.”

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Chapter End Notes
Oh! So this final scene is the one that I ended up working in after being reminded of the 'jealous!Ochako' precedent we get with her 'whodatGIRL' radar for Deku when she's crushing on him. See, I really do incorporate input from commenters.... thirty... chapters... ago...

Ya win some ya lose some.
Chapter Summary

Ochako finds sanctuary… sort of.

Chapter Notes

Happy update day boys and girls, this is a slightly longer than usual chapter, but it's got a few treats in it I wonder if y'all will like ;)

Ochako doesn’t want to do this. Okay, that’s not strictly true. She wants to do this more than any of the alternatives Bakugo will agree to, and she’s half convinced he only agreed because he doesn’t actually expect her to go through with it. That’s certainly the impression Ochako had last night, when they got rather more intimate on the train back to school yesterday than good manners would dictate. This appearance has only been bolstered by this morning’s training-related activities: a heady mix of working out how to land their building-takedown move, which Bakugo’s been referring to as ‘punching it,’ and making out in a truly weird assortment of places.

But really, that’s exactly why Ochako has to do it. She wants this, him, everything, not for fake or because it got easy to let a fiction become reality, but the whole, totally-legit deal. Maybe that’s selfish and indulgent, but Bakugo Katsuki’s hardly the pot to call the kettle black about that kind of thinking.

Ochako also knows sure as the sky is blue that Katsuki’s never going to ask her out properly if he feels like they’re going out enough not to need to ask. That does also mean she should probably stop acting the part too, but… small steps.

Speaking of which, Ochako did talk to Bakugo – Katsuki, both, it’s weird keeping up with both sides of him like this; Bakugo in front of other people, Katsuki when it’s just them together, but she’s working on combining the two. And she did talk to him about it during this morning’s training, which was one of the best sessions they’ve had in ages. Pulling that crazy-ass move into shape and getting a great feeling out of every wall Bakugo obliterates before coming flying into Ochako like a ball into a catcher’s mitt.

They’re getting better at variably-safe landings, usually on some desolate slab of concrete in the training area Cementoss isn’t bothering to render for anything but destruction anymore – Ochako feels like he’s stopped trying with the details of these environments since she and Bakugo have been training here, dropping basic shapes overnight with the delicacy of an anvil tied to an anchor. If ‘punching it’ goes well, that’s usually when some making out happens, though if it doesn’t it’s merely followed by a short squabble before the making out. Hell, it’s been great.

So naturally, that means Ochako has to have some new spanner to throw in the works. She sure likes causing trouble for herself.
Because when Ochako warned Katuski she was ‘really seriously’ going to go through with breaking up with him during their post-warm-down makeout, all he’d said was ‘yeah, yeah, we’ll see about that,’ like he didn’t buy it for a second. He probably doesn’t, when she’s making out with him so much.

It’d certainly explain why Bakugo looks legit surprised when she marches over to him first thing after arriving for homeroom and announces, “I didn’t want to have to do this, Bakugo, but… it’s over between us.”

The classroom falls deathly silent before she’s even finished saying ‘us’, and Deku even makes a squeaky sound of poorly-concealed dismay. Ochako might as well have detonated a flash grenade.

However, after Bakugo’s momentary lapse of shock – maybe not realising when Ochako had warned him she was still going to do it, she’d meant right-the-heck-now before her nerve fails – he tilts back on his chair and offers up a smirk that’s meant to be a cover for his more sincere annoyance.

“You’re breakin’ up with me, chubbs?”

Right, he’d definitely go for that nickname at a time like this, and it only now occurs to Ochako that he might have prepared for this occasion. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“I would,” she counters, “and I am.” Ochako takes a breath, and hadn’t expected this to feel quite so real or nervewracking. “I’m breaking up with you.”

Nor had it occurred to Ochako that she might be risking real things between them, a reality that seems a lot closer when Bakugo puts one hand flat on his desk and leans over it like he’s going all-in on a hand of cards. “Better be ready to prove it, then.”

Ochako scowls, and a twitch in Bakugo’s face makes her think he almost finds it funny. Then he stops himself because he’s trying to be annoyed at her. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Means no more planting one on me ‘cause you get jealous I’m holding hands with other girls,” Bakugo returns nonchalantly, and he just had to say it like that.

Shit, Ochako thinks too late, realising what Bakugo reckons his leverage is: the makeouts. That’s fine – well, not really – but she was on board with it in theory when she committed to breaking up with him in the first place. Yet she still feels slightly cheated by the move, enough to say, “You didn’t say anything about that before.” They’re meant to talk about this stuff, and not making out definitely counts as something that affects them both.

Bakugo leans further over his desk, laying both hands flat and rising in his seat slightly, like a cat arching its back to look bigger. “And what the hell did you think breaking up was?”

Fuck, Ochako considers way too late in the process, he’s got her there, little miss wants-to-tell-the-truth-all-the-time. But then, Ochako’s not the only one with certain impulses.

“Same goes for you then,” she returns tit for tat; if Bakugo wants to play real breakups over the fake one, he can forget about ‘the good stuff’ too. See how long he lasts. What he wants to use against her works just as well on him, and Ochako reckons she has enough willpower to out-stubborn even Bakugo on this one.

Bakugo doesn’t like that, but he hasn’t liked a second of this from the start. “Fine,” he says exactly like it isn’t.

“Fine,” Ochako echoes, crossing her arms and about to conclude ‘we’re done here’ when she’s
reminded where they are.

“I’m sorry,” Aizawa doesn't sound one bit sorry, “Is the curriculum getting in the way of your personal lives? Please continue, I’m sure your classmates don’t mind delaying their education for this.”

“Actually,” a voice of dissent that sounds a bit like Mina puts up, but Ochako’s already whirled around to duck her head apologetically.

“Sorry, sir! It won’t happen again.”

“Just sit down, Uraraka,” Aizawa replies with – oh dear, an eyeroll. “I find it harder to believe that promise every time you make it,” Ochako catches a ‘tch’ from Bakugo behind her and tries to let it roll off her back, though Aizawa doesn’t miss it – thankfully any further resentment is short-lived once Ochako’s plonked her butt firmly in her chair.

“Anyway,” Aizawa leads into his opening speech with his head tilted back, one bloodshot eye stretched wide as he floods it with eye drops, which is one of his more classic looks of recent. “Some of you have already submitted your partners to me for the Spirit of Unity tournament,” he eyerolls again, maybe just trying to wash something out of his ever-dry corneas, and then Aizawa either takes a micronap or pauses for dramatic effect. “You chose wrong. Pick again. Final partners will be confirmed in homeroom on Friday. You have until then to rethink and make better choices.”

Aizawa’s wearied gaze sweeps the room like a janitor who’s been on the job ten years at the end of a twelve hour shift, and hones in on Bakugo for a long, hard look before jumping across to Ochako. “That means all of you.”

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Ochako's fully expecting to be swamped by overly concerned friends in the wake of her latest public blowout – full on breakup, technically – with Bakugo, but she's somehow unprepared for their relationship’s number one fan to be first in line. Maybe she should have expected it, but then, the shock when Deku zips up to her in the first recess between classes wouldn’t have been like an arrow to the heart, and Ochako’s feelings can’t have that.

“Hey Uraraka, can we talk?” Because he's Deku, he starts with only the purest essence of what he needs to say, at least in front of anyone else – Bakugo included, and if Bakugo doesn’t hate that, glaring tiny knives across the classroom square into Deku's back.

“Of course, what’s up?” It’s a little innocent, pretending the thick-spined volume of concern written into Deku’s face could be so easily answerable as a cheery ‘what’s up,’ but Ochako gives it an overly optimistic shot.

“Not here,” Deku replies, shouldering his backpack a little uncomfortably, as if he feels the request is out of bounds. What Ochako would have given once for Deku to be rushing up to talk to her privately – not that she minds now; there’s just all this needless anxiety about keeping her and Bakugo’s secrets out of Deku’s tiger-striped fingers. “Can we walk to All Might’s class together?”

“Of course, nerd,” Ochako says brightly, only to get a pang like a pinched nerve when she thinks of the playfully combative nickname being a really Bakugo thing to say. “I mean, yeah, I’d like that.” Ochako stuffs her things into her bag like she can shove her embarrassment in there along with pencils and notebooks.

Amazingly they make it out of the classroom without attracting any tagalongs, perhaps held back by
the metre-round solid bubble of worry Deku projects from under his brushy mop of hair.

Once they’re walking, Deku starts, as is natural to him, by reaching carefully down Ochako's throat to clasp her heart in his gentle hands. “Does what happened with you and Kacchan have anything to do with what we talked about yesterday?”

It'd be easy, in a way, to absolve the guilt Deku is ready to stencil his name all over by hiding the truth, but that would defeat the very purpose of Ochako unraveling this whole ugly sweater from a single thread.

“A little,” she admits with a hand that reaches for Deku's arm without informing her brain that was its plan. “But please don't feel responsible. It's something I had to do.”

“You had to, huh?” Deku muses as Ochako reels her over-touchy fingers back in line. “It was a little… unexpected, that's all.”

“Really?” Even Ochako feels like she doesn’t do much more than argue with Bakugo in front of others; if she saw them from the outside, Ochako would probably believe she and Bakugo are better off broken up too.

“I just felt like you were… growing together.” Deku looks up at Ochako and her heart bangs on the hidden trapdoor to her chest, like it’s going to pop out of the cellar and just announce ‘remember me?’ because Deku just has to look at her like that and say exactly the right thing. At least to start with. “I just wanted to make sure it's not anything I did.”

Deku drops his gaze with what may just be the traces of a blush across freckle-scattered cheeks, but how he thinks he could be a reason for Ochako and Bakugo to break up is a fascinating piece of mental gymnastics. It leaves Ochako torn, guessing how much is Deku's inbuilt instinct to shoulder every burden like the world makes problems just for him. On the other hand, how much is their history, combined with Deku’s peculiarly personal interest in this infamous trainwreck of a relationship? The one Ochako keeps pretending not to see being talked about in the class groupchat.

Such is Deku’s fascination with Ochako and Bakugo, it’s like he can’t help involving himself anymore than he can stop breathing or stop helping others. As if he sees them like a super-form of two people he cares for deeply, turning into an even-more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts bona-fide couple. Then Ochako stops herself thinking about this a moment more, like ripping a television set out at the plug rather than switching it off with a remote.

“Don't be silly,” Ochako ends up lightly scolding. “It's got nothing to do with you.”

Deku’s face drops slightly, and how such a simple, obvious fact can be hurtful to him is a testament to how twisted into Ochako’s emotional nooks and crannies Deku remains. Then another sharp bolt of guilt shoots through her gut when she hears the dismay in his voice. “Oh, in that case then it’s…” Ochako doesn't know what Deku is trying to say, and isn't sure he does either. “I just wanted to be sure.”

“That you're not the reason I broke up with Bakugo?” Ochako tries to make this sound comedic and wry, but it just ends up coming out… loud. Louder than she would have liked to say anything as wildly easy to misinterpret as that in a busy school corridor. “Yeah, right.”

Ochako laughs, but even to her it sounds a little forced.

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Groupchat 2-A: Groupchat Harder
[12:03] TouchMyStickyBalls: so… Uraraka back on the market???

[12:03] Get_Jacked: she’s IN this group you know

[12:03] TouchMyStickyBalls: she dumped HIM what’s she got to feel bad about? ＿(๑’• ๑)＿

[12:04] Alien-Queen: I knowww I’m still in mourning

[12:04] Get_Jacked: you are way too into this

[12:04] Get_Jacked: ...so what was up w/that stuff Bakugo said about holding hands with other girls?

[12:04] Alien-Queen: I DUNNO?? TSU?? He better not have done something bad!

[12:04] JustCallMeTsu: why do you assume I know?

[12:05] JustCallMeTsu: I mean

[12:05] JustCallMeTsu: he's been going to that gymnastics training with her

[12:05] Alien-Queen: Oh no! So you think like, Ochako caught him with a girl who goes to the same gym???

[12:05] JustCallMeTsu: why is that the first thing you assume?

[12:06] Alien-Queen: it must have been bad if she broke up with him over it!

[12:06] Get_Jacked: They do argue nonstop but I just figured that was flirting for them

[12:06] Greased Lightning: RIGHT

[12:07] Darkness-my-old-friend: Dark Shadow tells me Midoriya was the reason Uraraka ended things with Bakugo


[12:07] TentaCool: *I* told you about that…

[12:07] Darkness-my-old-friend: Yes, but Dark Shadow is the only one of us who believes it

[12:07] Alien Queen: BELIEVES WHAT

[12:08] TentaCool: I… may have heard Uraraka telling Midoriya it wasn’t his fault on the way to hero ed

[12:08] Get_Hard: but if she was saying it wasn’t his fault why would that mean it IS?

[12:08] Greased Lightning: Bakugo talked about her being jealous way before the thing with Midoriya happened

[12:08] Get_Jacked: i sure hope she doesn't see this

[12:08] Alien Queen: noooooo we need answers! Ochako!!! WHAT'S GOING ON??

[12:09] TouchMyStickyBalls: call me if u want a rebound fling (_≈3 ≈3_)
Ochako wishes her classmates wouldn’t abuse the group chat like this.

“Is something the matter?” Iida shakes Ochako out of a phone-eyed daze in the line for lunch, and she notices her instinctive frown with a guilty rush.

“No, it’s nothing.” She hurriedly puts away her phone and attends to her lunch instead. Iida doesn’t press further, at least not now – while they’re still on their feet in the busy canteen, no place for heart to hearts. Ochako catches sight of the long line of heads that signifies the largest assembly of their classmates at one of the tables, and before they even start walking she finds herself saying, “Hey, can we… sit somewhere else today?”

Iida looks a little puzzled at first, but it doesn’t take him long to figure it out and he stretches his concerned grimace into a pretty convincing smile.

“Ah yes, why don’t we join Yaoyorozu?” Iida makes the suggestion as if he’s merely reaching an independent conclusion that just so happens to be exactly what Ochako’s asked for, looking over to the small stack of empty bentos and the thick encyclopedia Yaomomo has elected to bury herself behind this particular lunchtime. “I’ve been meaning to speak with her about some presidential matters.”

The seriousness with which Iida announces this makes Ochako burst out laughing, and she’s instantly grateful to have such a good, reliable friend who will never fail to bring a smile to her face, whether he’s meaning to or not.

Yaomomo waves to them without interrupting the trajectory of her chopsticks, which are pinching a fried prawn from her lunchtray into her mouth, eyes riveted to a molecular diagram that makes about as much sense to Ochako upside down as right way up. It’s not long before Todoroki worldlessly joins them, sitting down next to Yaoyorozu, who gives him the same chopstick-hello with a dumpling this time.

“I assume this is the sanctuary, then,” Todoroki declares without context, as if it’s supposed to make sense to anyone except him and the army of tiny Todorokis in his head patiently running messages
back and forth in the long corridors of his mind.

“Sanctuary? From what?” Iida queries.

“Talking about Uraraka and Bakugo,” Todoroki delivers in perfectly clear-cut words that spare the drama. He looks straight at Ochako, and she gauges from his trademark cool exterior that Todoroki’s interest level in her and Bakugo’s breakup is probably hovering around a low zero, even if he’s hardly been Bakugo’s biggest fan throughout this ill-fated affair. Especially then, maybe. Good riddance, he probably thinks, if a thought from Todoroki could ever be made so simple.

“It is? Oh thank goodness,” Ochako heaves a huge sigh that’s only a little exaggeration, leaning down over her lunch as if she’s been deflated. “I’ve had just about enough of that bullshit today.”

Yaomomo finishes her dumplings and pats her mouth on a napkin, then muffles the release of what Ochako can imagine is some serious speed-eating air in a way that manages to remain remarkably dainty. Behind the delicate silk of the napkin Yaomomo’s smiling in a peculiar way. So much so that when her gaze lifts from her food, Ochako asks, “What?” with some deeply-buried impulse that tells her she does not like the grin on Yaomomo’s face.

“Oh, I wouldn’t want to break the sanctuary rules,” she suggests with a more playful smile, a quick glance at Todoroki like she’s entertaining him out of fun rather than as a favour. “Just an interesting choice of words.”

But that’s all Yaomomo needs to say, because it doesn’t take an idiot to know a pre-Bakugo Ochako wouldn’t have said it like that.

The conversation moves on a moment later, launching into an enthusiastic discussion of student committee business that perhaps only Iida and Yaomomo would both care about in such large proportion. Todoroki comes up a surprisingly passionate runner up, at least at first, but checks out after a few pages of protocol. Only Iida and Yaomomo could make a conversation of such administrative detail sound as exciting as an undiscovered All Might fight from the years before his physical retirement.

Ochako couldn’t keep up with it even if she wanted to. So she follows the trend set by Todoroki of drifting approximately 1000 miles away in a contemplative bubble, and starts to consider what Yaomomo really meant by her comment. Should it be such a bad thing for Ochako to be a little different because of Bakugo? He’s a piece of work all right, but he’s not all bad.

Sitting opposite Todoroki, staring at his soba like the mysteries of the world can be divined from the patterns read in cold noodles, Ochako can’t help recalling his objections, or at least the way he challenged Bakugo on them. The issue was always that he never saw evidence of Bakugo treating her a way he deemed appropriate for a relationship. Which, no offense, isn’t exactly a concept to be held up as a typical case, as Todoroki’s sensibilities seem to be more rooted in the medieval times when it comes to dating.

Not to mention, Ochako happens to know the photographed kiss on Yaomomo’s hand from the photobooth is – and Ochako doesn’t like gossip, but Yaomomo offered the information up herself – the grand sum total of kiss-related things Yaomomo has to show for the loosely-defined ‘date’ between them; the hot-and-cold prince remains the same puzzle as ever, while Ochako’s experience was so hot the curtains practically caught fire.

Because Bakugo spends plenty of time around Ochako acting in ways that would persuade even the most staunch sceptic of their having an amorous interest in each other – a fact that can be very astutely derived from the fact that they make out a lot when no one else is around. Not that it helps
with their training one bit.

So suppose Bakugo’s not bluffing and they are ‘broken up’, and presuming everything else between them is still happening – Bakugo might be annoyed with her but he surely can’t be that mad with her – Ochako considers that at least they’ll be able to focus more on their training, right?

Wrong.

Chapter End Notes

TACTICAL GROUPCHAT special shoutout to my incredible writing partner Penzie who long ago came up with the first of these dumb but what-they-actually-go-for instead of bad fandom jokes screen-names for the kids. The sticky balls belonged to her first.

I'm not going to go on a Mineta rant suffice to say that I value what he brings to the dynamic of the class without absolving or excusing things he's done, but point out that (much like this story) sometimes things aren't always what we like, want or think is for the best, but we should at least think critically about them before dismissing them entirely.

To that end, if you think Ochako made a mistake breaking up with our Bakuboi, then it's a good thing I'm writing the story (°﹏°)
Ochako bluffs, Bakugo bluffs harder.

Well I for one am glad they're broken up now, it's much better off this way. Allow me to demonstrate why.

Ochako doesn't find Bakugo waiting for her at the school gates after classes end, but not wanting to attract questions of why she's waiting for her ex, she leaves straight for the station and pushes the feeling of disappointment down a little lower with each step. The firestorm of gossip about her and Bakugo's breakup — bit more Ochako’s than his, really — surely doesn't need any more fuel. She ought to be glad Bakugo’s respecting her choice to end the public face of their romance — even when it’s against his own wishes.

But she isn’t.

Instead, Ochako’s surprise is packed full of ecstatic relief when she finds Bakugo waiting for her at the train station instead. Not that he admits it; when asked why he’s there, which is admittedly a slightly silly question, his response is, "To take a fucking bike ride, idiot. Let's go."

That tells Ochako all she needs to know about his mood, and they travel the rest of the way in prickly silence. Ochako is disarmed to discover the strength of Bakugo’s pull on her is no lesser for this cooling of diplomatic relations. If it wasn't for the thought of his satisfaction if Ochako buckles at the first opportunity, she wouldn't be managing to stay so on-the-rails professional around him — that and the fear of making a reputation for themselves as serial PDA train criminals. But oh she thinks about it.

This challenge of indifference gets a little tougher once they get to the gym.

"Where’s that tiny chick from yesterday?" Bakugo announces as he tightens the straps of his gloves after they’ve assembled in front of the coach, and Ochako has to stop herself biting the inside of her cheek.

"Aoi doesn't train on Wednesdays," Coach Nikiforov answers blithely. "But we have Alina visiting from my old club back in Russia. Perhaps she can assist if Mochi still can't hold the positions long enough."

Across the gym, Ochako sees a fawnish girl with blonde hair look up curiously. She instantly thinks 'hell no.'

"Works for me," Bakugo grunts.
“No!” Ochako yells way more than she needs to, and for once Bakugo and Coach Nikiforov are a united front of giving her subtlety-lacking looks. “I can do it,” she insists, electing to look at the coach instead of acknowledge Bakugo’s presumably smug, shit-eating grin.

“Prove it.” Bakugo’s hands are outstretched to Ochako, the stark contrast of the black mystery-material against the skin of his forearm, hints of colour showing from his veins.

Ochako reaches out and rips back one of the velcro straps that tightly bind Bakugo’s wrist with a harsh crackle. “Take these off then, it's easier for me without them.”

Bakugo is giving Ochako a look of such intensity it puts shame to even his usual levels. Her best guess is that it's the audaciousness with which she unfastened even an innocent piece of his clothing; also as good as telling him she prefers to touch him skin-on-skin, which she does – risks and all. Ochako feels she's surely experienced the worst of accidental ignition around Bakugo already, and the payoff's worth all the lingering scent of liquid explosive that clings to her gym clothes, so much so it's like they've all taken on a different smell completely. Especially if Bakugo's been working up a sweat around her.

Which, he is. The startings of a flush at the base of Bakugo’s neck deepen like a jug filling with fruit punch, and have spread all the way to his cheeks by the time he says, straight-faced even if he is lighting up like a fireworks festival, “Then you take them off.”

Bakugo rests his hand in Ochako’s grip like a lion waiting to have a thorn removed from its paw. Truth be told, Ochako was largely acting out when she tugged on the first strap, a way to get Bakugo’s attention without having to make herself look like the needy one – to be demanding instead. It certainly works in the sense of making Bakugo more passive, though what that truly achieves is questionable, because Ochako's dizzy as she follows through with pulling back the rest of the straps. When snarl by velcro-ey snarl has torn through the air and all the straps are unfastened, Ochako tucks her fingers past the mystery-material and unsheaths Bakugo’s hand like drawing a katana.

Katsuki, it could easily be said, isn't watching his hands as Ochako moves onto the other hand. No, he's staring dead at her, gaze unwavering, because they both know what's happening – no more miscommunication.

“Quickly, Mochi, we haven't got all day for you two to make bedroom eyes at each other,” Coach Nikiforov interjects with as much genuine impatience as amused mockery, and Ochako's cheeks colour a shade pinker even more than they already were as she hurries through the other glove.

Bakugo got a red hot flush from the ears to neck, but the focus in his eyes changes after Ochako whips off the other glove and offers both to him. He takes the gloves and stuffs them in a pocket, then steps back to offer his bare hands out to her, one palm up and the other turned down.

Ochako turns her back to Bakugo and reaches behind herself to take his hands first, a deep breath second, and then hops off the floor, tucking her legs and balling herself as tightly as she can as she swings down between Bakugo’s legs. In a seamless, fluid movement, Bakugo brings her up like releasing a catapult – a ruthlessly disciplined, totally controlled catapult that only stops when she's exactly vertical to him.

The inbuilt twist of the way their hands are joined means Ochako turns as she ascends, unballing herself and stretching up like she's part starfish – if starfish could do one-handed handstands on each other’s palms. Because Bakugo’s other hand slips away as soon as she's in place, and Ochako is left reminding herself to breathe as she fights with every muscle in her body to keep the precarious balance she's been placed in, delicate as threading a needle.
Bakugo is looking straight up at her, the purest distilled form of the *only-us* look Ochako has ever experienced. Just the view of their hands linked together at the centre of the universe, everything else that exists coming out from that point, as if Bakugo’s palm against hers is the source of the big bang. For three seconds – contest requirement – Ochako holds the position, but it feels more like years; as if she's older and wiser when she finally exits the pose with clean execution, swinging back down between Bakugo’s legs before he sets her gently back on her feet.

“Wonderful!” Coach Nikiforov congratulates. “Whatever the two of you are doing to get results like this, keep it up.”

Ochako doesn't think they can – not if the hungry look Bakugo’s giving her is any indication.

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Over the course of the session, Ochako would swear she needs to take Bakugo out back and count his hands, because he *must* have more than two going by how often she feels him gripping her in a way that's only half necessary to their training. Ochako's used to having Bakugo grab and move her around with a certain self-confidence that makes an awful lot more sense now they’re actually making out – or used to be. But today it's like the intention is different. Because Bakugo *could* touch her without that charge if he wanted to, simply focus on the exercises from Coach Nikiforov, and if they were doing Zero-G style then he’d probably keep it above board so as not to make Ochako sick double fast, but it’s *not* what he’s doing.

Now it's almost like he's… screwing around. As if this is a game to keep reminding Ochako what she’s supposedly missing out on by breaking up with him, played deliberately when she’s unable to respond the way she’d like – not without scandal and possible grievous injury.

Except Ochako’s not the only one to notice.

“You do not need to catch her by the ass, hotsauce,” Nikiforov announces when Bakugo’s definition of ‘waist’ gets decidedly creative. “In fact, points are deducted for it.”

“Fuck the points,” Bakugo responds with his hand positioned no-so-coincidentally on Ochako’s butt, as he steadies her from a perch on his shoulder – practicing a move that takes her from a princess hold in Bakugo’s arms and spins her around his torso until she’s seated on his shoulder.

“There are younger children than you here. I think their parents will be asking me some difficult questions after today,” Nikiforov remarks as if he's only just having the thought, then a mere moment later throws up his hands like it’s past solving. “... Oh well, I'll just tell them that's what hot-blooded young love is like,” he declares brightly another second later, the full spectrum of concern and resolution passing in a blur.

Ochako reaches for Bakugo’s hand and pulls it sharply back to the appropriate territory on her waist, spurred by an instinct that's half mortified embarrassment and the other petty vindication, stopping Bakugo because he's the one who instigated this ridiculous contest over the real/fake balance of their current breakup in the first place. “We're not actually going out,” she thinks about it and then adds, “anymore.”

Bakugo, being Bakugo, has to find a way to contradict her, and corrects this to, “She means right now.”

Ochako sure fucking hopes so.

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Boiling point comes with the first break Coach Nikiforov permits in the session, allowing Katsuki and Ochako five minutes to ‘take some air’ – like that’s what they’re about to get. Without really questioning the finer details they both walk out to the hallway in silence. There’s a few other gymnasts in it, so they carry on as if super-innocently taking a gentle stroll about the place – instead of the heated, one-spark-will-blow-the-whole-arsenal silence – until they find an uninhabited turn of the hallways bordering the gymnasium and supplementary training rooms.

Several things happen all at once, but some of the most important are that Katsuki’s hands close around Ochako’s hips to lift her an important couple of inches, and her legs bend and then come back together hooked at the ankles behind him. She throws her arms around his neck and pulls tight as Katsuki takes a couple of steps, until Ochako’s back is to the wall. Not a hard press, but enough to keep her supported between the building and him; just enough pressure to make Ochako’s pulse throb like she’s running all-out on a treadmill, and not hanging very still with her legs around Katsuki’s waist.

Katsuki’s face is almost a reflection of Ochako’s in profile, just barely nose to nose as he makes the distance between them small but surely still there. And then Ochako gets a measure of the look in his eye – there’s nothing even remotely pure about his grin. Which almost always means trouble.

The space between Ochako and Katsuki gets a tiny fraction smaller, until he’s so close… but when she stretches the rest of the way he pulls back like a darting lizard. Shit, Ochako thinks as the mean grin turns into a self-satisfied smirk. He has been trying to get to her. She’s about to find out why.

“You broke up with me,” Katsuki tells her like he’s been holding this vendetta longer than they’ve known each other, and it doesn’t need adding that he doesn’t like it one bit. Real or fake, it’s plenty clear that Katsuki does not take well to being broken up with.

Luckily, Ochako has a fix.

“So ask me out,” she returns without flinching, feeling even more secure in her position with Katsuki’s hands acting as a very effective and comfortable seat for her right about now.

Katsuki’s actions aren’t very in line with his words, because a bare centimetre over her mouth is a weird place for his to be when he tells her, “No.”

“No?” Ochako blurts in genuine surprise, though a negative reaction is largely mitigated by the fact that Katsuki’s still got Ochako to the wall with an air that’s difficult to mistake. “Why not?”

“When did you switch off your ears?” he snaps, not particularly soft even though they’re still face to face – and oh yes, Ochako’s got her legs wrapped around his waist. “You broke up with me.” It’s only with repetition that Ochako realises how utterly unacceptable this fact is to him, and that he might intend to make her pay for daring to dump the one and only Bakugo Katsuki – sort of.

“But we… weren’t really going out.” She puts up her traditional defence.

“Says you,” he retorts, and then his face tilts to one side, craning into the negative space around Ochako’s jaw and neck without actually making any contact. Katsuki says very quietly, “You dumped me, you undo it.”

“It’s not the sa–aame,” Ochako’s voice wobbles higher up the register when Katsuki’s mouth finally lands on her neck.

“Bullshit.” His lips move right against Ochako’s skin, vibrations from the cuss hitting her throbbing pulse, and she squeezes arms and legs around him. A hand makes a desperate bid for greater
leverage by diving into the back of Katsuki’s hair, grabbing a tight hold on him as if taking a puppy by the scruff. This has an unexpected reaction, as the noise he makes is more animal than man; when Ochako pulls his hair again a little more curiously, Katsuki presses her harder to the wall with another grunt that makes Ochako’s liquid core start to boil.

When bared teeth dig tentatively into her neck, Ochako lets out a whimperish squeak, a faintly muffled voice in her head reminding her he’s going to leave marks, but hell if the rest of her cares. She tightens her grip and tries to steer Katsuki’s mouth to hers more insistently. He allows her to line them up, like he’s going through with the kiss she’s dying for, but then his already half-lidded eyes narrow and he turns to the other side, nuzzling Ochako’s jaw to open up a new portion of her neck to his roaming mouth.

Even Ochako can admit this is a really liberal definition of ‘broken up’ by anyone’s standards. Yet Katsuki’s game is utterly merciless; surely worse than Ochako deserves for fake-dumping him in the first place, even if she’s also not quite at the place of complaining about it.

With all this in mind, it’s totally understandable that someone turning the corner into this hallway would be confused by the scene they come upon, especially any someone who watched Ochako dumping Bakugo in somewhat-spectacular fashion only this morning.

Just Ochako’s luck it’d be the last person – or at least in the top five – she wants to discover her in such a situation.

“Uraraka?” the person’s voice permeates a level of Ochako’s consciousness that is much lower in the chain of command than the one responsible for working out how to steer Katsuki by the hair into finding the sweetest spot of her neck, which is pretty much anywhere that’s usually covered by her hair.

Because at some point, Katsuki has plied Ochako’s hair back with his fingers and threaded them through it so deeply that when they both flinch at the intrusion, tightening their grip on the other’s hair, Ochako’s on fire for a moment before she recognises Iida’s voice. “Your coach said I might find you around- Oh.”

Yep, Ochako’s royally screwed.

Chapter End Notes

Me: they need to break up
Everyone: nooo they should just get/stay together
Me: BUT THE DRAMA

If any of y’all are expecting the path into this relationship to be anything except a rollercoaster-into-meandering-back-into-coaster ride then the rest of this fic is gonna come as a BIG surprise. So before you give me any crazy accusations of who’s being ridiculous or acting badly, recall that this is a story about two superhero teenagers who are doing all this Feels stuff for the VERY FIRST TIME, and sometimes their decisions are less ‘smart’ and more ‘Bakugo’ than a well-reasoned and on-the-outside reader would advise. To that end, if you think Ochako and Bakugo are being dumb, that's literally the point.

On the other hand, if you LOVE the off the wall drama (and I know a lot of y’all do)
then high five me you messy drama loving bitch.
Caught in the Act #2

Chapter Summary

Ochako training with Bakugo twice a day would prepare her for curveballs. It hasn’t.

Chapter Notes

So thanks to the kind person who put this fic on tvtropes ficrecs, and hello to anyone who’s just hopped onboard this story having come in that way. THINGS ABOUT TO GET REAL BUMPY. ENJOY THE RIDE.

In the ranking of people Ochako really wouldn’t want to walk in – or around, technically speaking – on her and Katsuki in the middle of a heated ‘discussion’, Iida is a strong contender for the #4 spot after Ochako’s parents, Katsuki’s parents, and Deku.

All those contestants occupy their place on the list for radically different reasons, and Iida too makes the list for a unique one. Though it’s never been openly admitted, Ochako’s sensitive to the fact that her friend’s concerns for her might involve an implicit imbalance in the platonic/romantic quotient of their relationship.

Having been on the heart-achey side of those scales before, she feels plenty of empathy and even once tried to channel her own feelings into matching Iida’s tentative interest. Except feelings don’t work like that. As easy and perfect as it would’ve been to take Ochako’s unrequited affection for one friend and apply it to another who was actually open to reciprocating, all she ended up doing was feeling guilty for trying to make the person she did like jealous (didn’t work). And doubly-worse for taking advantage of one of her best friend’s sincerity at the worst possible time. She cut the whole botched job off before it ever got off the ground. Before it even became a blueprint.

Ochako did explain this much to Iida, at least, when the whole ugly mess didn’t even happen – but there’s a degree of separation between ‘maybe I’m not ready to go out with anyone’ and ‘sorry I just don’t want to go out with you.’ Ochako never actually said the latter out loud, just the hidden implication of insisting they’re ‘better off as friends’.

Maybe Iida understands that, but Ochako still feels an itch of responsibility now and again over the fact that she never said it in complete honesty. It would be so great in so many ways if she’d just… felt like that about Iida, but she doesn’t. Ochako’s life would be inarguably and unobjectionably better if she did, she’s run this scenario before; taken care of, structured and organised without ever needing to yell at each other for no damn reason. She’d be super productive.

But now there’s Bakugo, who does all those things for Ochako but in an entirely different way. Who blasted his way in from left-field and makes subtlety seem like last season’s outdated trend, seeming purpose-built to defy the notion of Ochako not being ready to date. Even though she dumped Bakugo literally this morning, they’re certainly looking pretty un-broken-up right now.
This impression *really* isn’t helped by the way Iida skids into view and stops just short of bumping into the Ochako-sandwich Bakugo’s made with himself and the wall. Iida’s close enough and they’re… them enough… that it’s entirely clear what’s been going on, even if it technically hasn’t been going on. Ochako can’t even *have* the heavy makeout she’s meant to be caught in the middle of.

This impression is *especially* not helped when Ochako’s grip on Katsuki’s hair goes from encouraging to *back the hell up,* but Katsuki’s only reaction is a mere pause in activity. This is followed by an incremental turn to the side that lifts his mouth from the airtight seal over her skin, and the question, “What the fuck do you want?”

Iida’s mouth opens, but for a moment no sound comes out. His hands hang uselessly by his sides, like a puppet with the strings cut. It somehow doesn’t occur to Ochako to make Katsuki put her down, so she’s still bolstered by him when her friend’s voice finally returns.

“It’s Deku.” Iida’s tone says everything he doesn’t take the time to put in exact words, and *now* Ochako’s fully geared up, pushing Bakugo away like she actually means it and dropping to the floor.

Ochako asks only what she needs to. “When?”

“A… About twenty minutes ago.” Iida’s hands come together to worry each other furiously, and his face might be several degrees redder than it usually is, but *It’s Deku* means more than any embarrassment or awkwardness put together. “Todoroki is on his way already, I said that I’d… come and get you.” There’s a pause in which Iida’s eyes move from their rest on Ochako to the pillar of salt just behind her. “And Bakugo, apparently.”

This implication hangs in the air like a lampshade so ugly it could be wondered why anyone would hang it in the first place. Ochako doesn’t even know where to start, but *Bakugo* saves her the trouble.

“Deku,” Bakugo echoes like pulling the trigger on the first round in a revolver, so blunt he’d put a hole through sheet metal at twenty paces. “Is he with All Might?” Bakugo always draws the most essential things he needs out of any conversation, and this is no exception.

His possessive aggression over Ochako has faded fast. Now he simply stands behind her asking the new most important thing in the world to him. It could easily be argued that Bakugo couldn’t care less about Deku, but – and hell if he likes this fact, but Bakugo’s at least *admitted* it – All Might and Deku go together more and more with each passing day. It’s no secret Bakugo idolises and occasionally tears himself apart over the downfall of All Might. So she hasn’t seen it often, but Ochako’s got no doubt Bakugo would put his life on the line for his hero without a moment’s hesitation. This might be one of those times.

“I think so,” Iida answers simply. They may clash or fail to understand each other operating as points to a poorly drawn love-triangle – more of a polygon at this point – that doesn’t even bear trying to map, but they are classmates united by and for something far more important. The whole *reason* they’re here in the first place: to be heroes.

Bakugo, maybe better than anyone, understands this. “So what the fuck are we waiting for?” He strides past Ochako in one step and then beyond Iida in another. Another split second they’re all moving together, just about as fast as they can walk without *running* out of the gym, no excuses, not even a bye to the coach. No time for that.

“Where do we need to go?” Ochako asks as she takes a step-and-a-half to keep up with the longer-legged boys on either side of her.
“It’s the place we…” Iida starts and then stops – the sentence, if not his pace. When Ochako turns to check the source of this pause, she finds Bakugo returning a dead stare-out with Iida; his best poker face. “The site of All Might’s battle with All-for-One last year.”

Ochako wasn’t there – a fact she now regrets, even with the mess of trouble it got everyone in – but she knows enough about it to understand why Iida hesitates with his gaze fixed on Bakugo.

“That ain’t too far,” is all Bakugo mutters in response, flexing his fingers in and out of fists – a habit Ochako’s watched too many times to count now. “We can get there fast.”

“I can run, but I’ll only be able to carry-”

“Not you,” Bakugo interrupts, phone already in his hand and a map under his fingertips. “Me and her.”

“You don’t mean-” Ochako starts in as they’re coming out the front doors of the gymnasium.

“Going somewhere?” This voice comes – as it always does – out of left field of frigging nowhere, and Ochako doesn’t even remember to close her mouth as she realises the undertaker figure leaning on a car parked right outside the gym is, in fact, Aizawa.

He looks questionably pleased to see all of them – a feeling that runs both ways – but a curtain of hair like a dusty set of drapes obscures whether Aizawa’s eyebrows lift. “I would advise saving your strength for now.” He reaches for the car door without breaking his gaze on them and pulls it open. “Get in.”

Ochako moves, Iida moves. Bakugo doesn't budge a single step.

“Are you taking us there or back to school?” he asks stiffly. Ochako hasn’t thought that far ahead yet, just doing what her teacher tells her. Bakugo probably would too, if he knew what was good for him. But if either of them knew what was good for them, then they wouldn’t have been necking against the wall when Iida dashed up in the first place.

“You're all licensed, and those naive fools will kill themselves without backup,” Aizawa delivers not like a teacher to a student – not right now, at least not to Bakugo – but like one pro to another on-the-scene hero. “I took the liberty of putting your costumes in the trunk.”

The window rolls down on the driver-side to reveal a smushed shock of canary yellow hair. “Isn't this meant to be some kind of an emergency?! Get your moody asses in this car already!!”

Bakugo goes to the boot of the car while Iida gets in the back seat, followed fast by Ochako and finally by Bakugo – well, Bakugo and a couple of pretty sizable suitcases containing their hero outfits. Wait, their outfits. Bakugo pushes Ochako's case onto her lap without explanation as Aizawa gets into the passenger seat.

“Alright! Let's punch it!” Present Mic hollers way too loud for inside a car, revving the engine before they pull away with a squeal of tires, and it finally sinks into Ochako's thinking brain that this is all actually happening.

What's also happening, it can't be ignored, is that Bakugo’s taking off his clothes.

“How did you find out, if I might ask?” Iida asks about as comfortably as can be expected for someone crammed in the backseat of a car with his best female friend and her on-again-off-again boyfriend stripping naked beside her. “About Midoriya, I mean.”
“You think I don’t know what my students are up to at all times?” Aizawa poses with a how-dare-you streak of intimidation. This is followed by a wry look that finds and accuses Ochako of all kinds of things she’s not prepared to admit to, most of them involving the half-naked boy literally sitting next to her. Unfortunately, Mic bursts into laughter a second later.

“The cheek! He insisted on Toshi- on All Might carrying one of those alarms they give to the elderly.” Present Mic swerves around other cars with alarming audacity. Aizawa’s knuckles are blanched completely white on the edge of the seat, and Ochako keeps getting jostled into Bakugo and Iida respectively. “You know,” Mic adds with a swirly-eyed glance into the rearview. His voice pitches high and quavery, “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!”

Unlike Iida – who allows Ochako’s jostling with a passive, I-have-no-idea-what’s-going-on stupor – Bakugo shoves Ochako back each time she even nudges him, set as he is on stripping off his tank-top and then going for his sweatpants before putting anything else back on. Ochako’s trying super hard not to stare (a failure) and even harder not to blush (a partial success). It seems everyone is too polite to comment on this, or maybe has the foresight to realise what’s happening. Than again, in the present company…

The tinted shades of Present Mic, reflected in the rearview mirror, hone in on Ochako in the backseat. Why he’s looking at her she’s no idea, until he says, “So did I pay extra for the striptease or what?” The comment catches her so off-guard Ochako chokes on a botched laugh. Iida’s face becomes devoid of a whole new layer of emotion, leaving him somewhere around blank-terror, and Aizawa just sighs.

“You could get in trouble for saying things like that, even if you’re only doing it to be an idiot,” Aizawa drones like this is the number one thing he cares the least about in the entire world.

“Why?! I didn’t ask the kid to start taking his clothes off!” Mic defends over-loudly, so, exactly like himself. By now Bakugo has finally popped the case on his outfit and starts putting some clothes on thankfully, though Ochako’s face is nonetheless pinker for the experience.

It occurs to her when Bakugo’s cargo pants are somewhere around his knees – before he bucks to lift his hips from the seat, washboard abs straightening to drag the waistband the rest of the way – that as awkward as this experience is for everyone else, it’s the most professional thing to do in the situation. They don’t know what’s going to be at the end of the car ride, let alone if there’ll be time to change.

With her own bulky case in her lap, Ochako realises she’s about to do something she’s never going to live down, and her voice takes on its own Present-Mic-trademark over-loudness as she announces to the all-male occupants of the car. “Please look away, everyone!” and then starts to wriggle out of her leggings.

Bakugo actually stops for a second, while Iida seems to be frozen in time itself, staring determinedly out the window while Aizawa buries his face in his hand with another long sigh.

Ochako’s head feels like it’s about to inflate until it bursts, but she’s pretty good at wriggling around in tight spots, and has made a national sport out of getting in and out of her overly clingy jumpsuit in record time. So it’s only about a minute of awkwardness and wriggling her butt in a way that feels really inappropriate in a car with two of her teachers, much less squashed between Iida and Bakugo, before she’s got her suit up to her hips and her modesty is as protected as it gets in this outfit.

Ochako leaves her vest – well, it’s not actually hers, but that’s another story – on under the upper portion of her jumpsuit. Another layer won’t do too much harm, and she’s not taking her top off in this car. Bakugo can, does, and is still doing as it so happens, so he’s got enough naked torso for everyone to enjoy – avoid. She means avoid looking at at all costs.
But there’s another predicament coming, which is that Ochako can zip herself up when she needs to – usually she’s got a helpful female friend on hand to take care of that little awkwardness – but it’s not so easy in a cramped space like this. Which leaves her with one option from two sources, and it’s a harder decision than she cares to admit. Because won’t Bakugo just love to be asked for help with something so utterly ridiculous?

When Ochako’s got her jumpsuit on up to her shoulders and the time’s come for asking, Iida’s still staring pointedly out the window with his fingers in a complicated tangle, while Bakugo’s eyeing her up like a cat outside a fishmonger’s stall. She sighs and turns to face Iida, Bakugo at her back. “Can you zip me?”

Putting business before pleasure, Bakugo doesn’t quibble like Ochako’s fearing – he’s more of a pro than that, she must admit – and starts to pull up the zipper that draws Ochako’s suit closed, but he only gets half way. The touch is a little confusing at least, the association with Bakugo and the squeezing sensation as the suit pulls tight around her body, and it’s not helping Ochako’s blush at all until he stops.

Bakugo’s hands move higher, alighting at the top of Ochako’s neck so suddenly she jumps, and Iida’s head whips around in instinctive concern, only to meet Ochako’s gaze with a tortured look that truly and simply says – help me. Unfortunately, Ochako can’t even help herself.

“This is my top,” Bakugo finally notices, pulling back the neck to check the label now he’s finally up close and not otherwise-distracted enough to pay attention to Ochako’s choice of workout gear today. “I knew it.”

“You said it was too small,” Ochako counters – after all, she washed (her own) vomit off it, and Bakugo would have just left it there otherwise. Finders keepers. Or barf-ers keepers.

“Doesn’t make it yours,” Bakugo sounds legit annoyed for a moment, then he lets the fabric go and pulls the rest of Ochako’s zipper up so fast it makes her wheeze, leaning over her shoulder with a terrible promise. “Guess I’ll take it off you later.”

Ochako’s broken eye contact with Iida by the time Bakugo comes out with this pearl of a line, thankfully, but he’s still here. They’re all still here and Bakugo’s talking like this again – maybe Ochako’s not so keen to start going out with him again anyway, when he’s clearly not learned enough of a lesson about spreading false pretences through overly suggestive language around others. Or making her friends super uncomfortable with his outrageous flirting.

It occurs to Ochako that she could try and get Bakugo back the same way he was doing with her not so long ago, if she didn’t think she lacked all self-control to actually resist kissing Katsuki when he’s right there, wanting it. Shit, she can hardly even handle thinking about it.

“Whoa, whoah, let’s keep it PG in this car, okay?!” Mic sounds out in alarm. “What happened to the innocent children of yester-year?”

“Leave them be, Hizashi.” Aizawa might actually be described as scolding. “You don’t want to even get started with those two.”

“Just because you have the front row seats!” Present Mic retorts enthusiastically. “Some of us would kill for tickets to that gig.”

“For the last time, student dating is not your personal soap opera,” Aizawa groans.

“And I thought you two broke up.” This comes as a surprise interjection from Iida, and as such the
mood in the car takes a nosedive back to reality.

“We… did,” Ochako says with a quick glare at Bakugo over her shoulder – he’s grinning like a demon, which seems about right for the situation.

“According to her,” Bakugo contradicts, maybe just for the sheer, petty hell of it. Because one minute he blows hot and then the next he won’t kiss her, but he will chew on her neck and imply all these right now’s like the status of being fake-broken-up-with can just be reversed with a word from Ochako.

It could, Ochako supposes. But until Bakugo sees what the difference is to her, if he can’t even just say it to her face, still wanting to hide behind the pretence and keep secrets because they make him feel safe… maybe he’s just not ready. Maybe she has to wait and let him come to the conclusion on his own, instead of forcing him to come at her pace just because she says so.

Maybe they can still be… close in the meantime, but try – emphasis on the try – to keep it low-key until he’s ready to go public and actually just come clean with everything; them, Zero-G, the whole lot. Which might be sooner rather than later, so they damn well better be ready.

“Wait, so are they dating or not?” Present Mic asks Aizawa in sincerity, and if Ochako could only melt into the car seat and stop existing like Iida is right about now.

“Don’t know, don’t care,” Aizawa retorts gruffly as he checks the tracking gadget and adds, “We’re almost there.”

“TBC, listeners!” Mic riffs as they take a corner so fast the back wheels slip a little, sending Iida into Ochako, who then crashes into Bakugo as he’s trying to lace one of his boots.

“Watch it!” an all-business Bakugo snaps as he shoves Ochako back the way she came, pushing Iida who immediately rights himself to the point of almost throwing his too-big-for-this-car torso against the inside of the car window. “Stop messing around! We have to be ready for this.”

“Bakugo’s right.” Aizawa’s knuckles are bone-white on the edge of the seat again, but his focus is still sharp. “This isn’t a training exercise.”

“I understand.” Iida peels himself off the window and takes off his glasses, producing a small cleaning cloth from his blazer pocket – not so easy to get into his costume in a backseat – and cleans the lenses. “I apologise for the imposition.” Formality hurts a little, at least from Iida. But Ochako understands why, and doesn’t begrudge him that armour while he’s still waiting to suit up as Ingenium.

“Let’s just get this done,” Bakugo says like he’s chewing on ball bearings to turn them into iron filings – like he might seriously spit nails. “No fuckups.” It’s not meant to be a negative statement, Ochako reads like a scattering of runes; he’s just making the deal with himself by saying it out loud.

“We’re all on the same side here,” Ochako breaks into the tense atmosphere.

“Course we are,” Bakugo doesn’t really snap, so much as spit and run to the other side of the playground – at least tonally. He butts the sole of one of his big boots up against the inside of the car door and starts lacing it so viciously it’s like he’s trying to choke out his own ankles. Ochako watches the focus in Bakugo’s face; his brows pool, mouth twisting like he can knot the laces hard enough with the power of a scowl. Maybe, for him, it’s okay to wait a little.

After all, just like Deku says – he’s worth it.
Chapter End Notes

Real story my editor/writing-life-partner penagainstsword(penzie) wrote one of those Present Mic jokes, I won't tell you which (unless you guess). This also marks the start of another 'group date supplot' comparable arcs, you could probably call it... my new favourite subplot. Not least because I can finally stop hating myself by not writing Present Mic chapter after chapter: NO MORE.

I also added a BUNCH of stuff in what I thought was going to be a quick proof-read of this chapter, discord got me all hyped up about the mortal torment of poor poor Iida Tenya. RIP my good son.
“Hold it.”

Ochako and Bakugo might be be broken up, but it only takes two words in that tone for her to stop dead in her tracks, awaiting further instruction.

Iida is frantically suiting up into his armour round the back of the car, while the cordonned-off ruin Present Mic pulled up beside beckons with every second. Distant sounds of conflict send a single, unified message: get over here now.

Bakugo, though Ochako ought to call him by his hero name in this setting really, must feel this urgency most of all – in this place, for this reason. If he's stopping them from charging straight in, it has to be important.

Ochako turns expecting Bakugo to be walking up, but he's already here. He reaches without hesitation for her waist, and only after his gloved fingers press confidently into her belt and she hears the click does Ochako get the hint. She really ought to have read the notes from support on her recent upgrades more closely. Or at all.

“Handles, duh,” Ochako says quietly to herself as Bakugo pops out the concealed handles that have been cleverly built into her costume. Not a lot, but just wide enough for Bakugo’s hand, like the width of his grip was the measurement – it probably is. She stares at Bakugo – no, Ground Zero, technically – behind the mask, then draws her attention to the statement piece of his metal collar. It’s hard to deny that up close Ground Zero makes a hell of an impact, big bracers and a literal explosion headpiece that makes him seem larger than life. He’s got more flair than Ochako, that’s for sure.

Ochako soon finds what she's looking for on Bakugo’s neckpiece, reaching for the faint outline on the collar and pressing until she feels a click, the unseen mechanism pushing a handle out of the flat surface, identical versions on each side of Bakugo’s steady gaze.

“So we're gonna do this?” Ochako asks simply, because they never got time for their assessment, to be or feel ready and show what they can do in a safe scenario. Now it's just real life, and a question.
“If it's no good here, what's the fucking point?” he returns with an almost-shrug, and it's as good a point as any. So it's happening, then. Iida rushes to be ready, just about suited in his armour when Bakugo raises a hand to the chained up fence they’re parked next to and blows it open with an unflinching stare.

Aizawa – Eraserhead, even as unenthused as he is about titles – sweeps the area with a set of high-tech binoculars, while Present Mic punches the air and bounces incessantly on the balls of his feet, so ready for action it’s like he’s vibrating.

“I’m going for All Might. The rest of you help Deku.” Eraserhead lowers the goggles. “He's got company.”

“Wait, so I'm on babysitting duty?” Present Mic exclaims with an ‘aw nuts’ snap of his fingers.

“I babysit them all day every day,” Aizawa retorts, shifting the binoculars again to scan an abandoned building that isn’t totally blown open. “And it’s your turn.” Mic throws up his hands with ‘whaddya’ gon’ do?’ carelessness and they start walking.

“Alright, kids, time to make your mommas proud!” Mic cheers as Aizawa cuts away from them in a different direction, while in the distance the bangs and crashes get steadily louder.

“Uh… understood,” Iida – who ought to be Ingenium as it happens – announces from the tinny confines of his helmet, sounding more confused by this ordeal so far than anything.

“Bring it.” Bakugo is a whirlwind of fire most of the time, but Ground Zero is like Bakugo in absolutes mode only. If he seems calm, it's only because any emotive action has been discarded – only the essentials are kept. So Ochako's stunned in the best possible way when the next thing he says is, “Uravity, stay on me.”

Ochako nods as someone who wants to be a pro: as Uravity. But she notices the twist in one of Bakugo’s vest straps as Ochako, reaching instinctively to flip it back with the idle thought ‘that's what changing in cars will do for you.’

Bakugo’s eyes flick sideways to catch Ochako’s gaze for a moment, then wordlessly back to the front. Then just as Ochako’s saying it again, Bakugo begins his own, “Let's go-“ and they stop, startled to be saying the same thing to each other at the same damn time.

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Eraserhead wasn’t joking about Deku's company. In the age of quirk manufacture and designer-fusions that impart incredible power at the low cost of sanity and free will, it's getting easier and easier to build an assassin the likes of which would have made past generations tremble. Not everyone can be All Might, or even Deku, but the gap between the top ranks of heroes and villains has never been smaller. No wonder the principal wants this generation of heroes working together. No wonder it's still so important to protect the Symbol of Peace at any cost.

Todoroki has already arrived, going by the shattered chunks of ice scattering the trail. They get more frequent as they get closer towards the heart of the conflict, laid open like a patient on a surgeon's table for open-chest surgery. Iida just took off ahead of Ochako and Bakugo, who pursue at a jog but don’t take to the air just yet – they need a target first, Mic keeping a watchful eye on all of them from a little further back.

Ochako and Bakugo come to the crest of a crater that he may well remember; Ochako wonders about his memory for the details of his first kidnapping experience during his time at UA. Not his
only, unfortunately. Being at this place, the iconic battleground where All Might took his last stand, is an unwelcome reminder of the forces that covet Bakugo’s power. Ochako recalls what he asked her to do – stay on me.

Ochako will do it or go down trying. After all, she’s a sure thing.

“Pinball up, then I’m gonna punch it,” Bakugo announces like he’s placing a lunch order. His head tilts, and Ochako can follow his gaze to one of the hollowed-out building husks that haven’t been touched, the site of All Might’s permanent retirement too hallowed to be redeveloped. “Ready?”

Ochako turns to face Bakugo, hands relaxed by her sides. Calm. “Ready.”

She takes two running steps and then plants a boot into the cradle of Bakugo’s hands, one of hers pressing flat to the bulge of his shoulder as she activates her quirk at just the right moment so they both go soaring into the air.

Bakugo is by all admissions pretty dang good at moving Ochako around now, and has learned the perfect fine-tuned force needed to draw them level with each other in the air. Their eyes meet as he closes his fingers around one of Ochako’s hip-handles, and there’s only focus in his gaze. She remembers him telling her ‘we’re gonna nail it’ – not about this specifically, but not under circumstances so different it doesn’t apply. So she smiles at him: we’ve got this.

A second later, as if Ochako’s smile is so powerful Bakugo has to push her away as fast as possible, Bakugo hurls her in a straight line across the compound, heading for the building he had been checking out. A second after that, when Ochako’s far enough away only to get knocked back a small distance by the blast radius, Bakugo launches himself at the ice-encumbered enemy at the fight’s center.

Ochako makes it to the wall fast enough to grab a hold and take a view of the battle; Todoroki is on the fringes trying to keep the beast in place, while Deku’s laying in the bottom of what looks a lot like a fresh crater.

Ochako’s stomach drops another few feet on top of the existing nausea, though her support gear is in full overdrive to mitigate the side effects even this early. She fights the temptation to temporarily vacate her post to check on her friend. Not yet, when Bakugo’s colliding with the hitman like explosive ammunition – the enemy is hard to make out at this point, but so far big and evidently strong.

Bakugo goes in with a bang, scorching a devilish once-human shape across the concrete. The creature has the wrong number of arms, going by the profile cast like a reversed shadow. But Ochako can tell from the way its burned flesh regenerates as soon as it’s charred away, it’s not just arms that this not-human-anymore-hybrid has more than one of.

Ochako doesn’t have long to consider it, because Bakugo’s coming back out as fast as he went in. So she skirts along the building to line up as straight a shot as they’ll get and launches herself off to meet him, fingers steepled together to release and reactivate her quirk just as Bakugo’s hands wrap around her wrists. And then they spin. The momentary drop of gravity gives her a second’s break, as well as bringing some of Bakugo’s speed down to a more manageable level, though he sends that flying out the window in no time.

“Again!” Bakugo doesn’t yell in anger as they spin, just trying to be as clear as possible.

Ochako yells back for the same reason. “I’m gonna get Deku!”
Curiously, Bakugo doesn't argue with this. But then, he doesn't exactly have time to. He might have agreed that Deku is in his way, but the more likely reality is that he's focused on nothing but his target.

Ochako’s thrown back against the wall as Bakugo rocket-launches at the enemy once more, but this time the beast throws a punch to meet Bakugo. The same kind of punch that put Deku in the crater. Ochako swallows her dread and launches herself at Deku a second later. Bakugo will have to take care of himself for a moment.

From the middle of the battlefield, the blast that kicks like a horse with dynamite shoes and indicates the heat he's packing. Ochako lands over Deku with her fingers already pressed together, while Bakugo is on his way to the stratosphere after an uppercut that meets his explosive punch and sends him flying dangerously fast and high.

Yes, Ochako’s got a real set of problems on her hands, one of which flutters his eyes open as she brings her fingers together and utters a frantic, “Release.”

“Uraraka?” Deku's eyes are glassy, his tone all slanted and blurry, like he's only just woken up in the morning and can't remember what day it is yet. Then his gaze slides past Ochako into the sky, and he gives a weak smile. “You brought Kacchan, that's great…”

“Oh, it's just super,” Ochako replies with a little too much sarcasm as she reaches for Deku and pulls him up to sit. “We gotta go, okay– How bad are you hurt?”

“Not so much,” Deku says, but he sounds concussed as fuck and in his books not so bad still means his bones are only slightly broken. “But All Might-”

“Eraserhead's got him.” Ochako is pleased she remembers to get the name right, even if she's got no idea if what she's saying is true or not. “We gotta-” Ochako looks up, and considers that what goes up must come down, and given the time that's passed since she released her quirk, Bakugo must have a lot of down to be taking into account, “... go.”

There's also the not-so-small matter of the monster now towering over them, realising that Deku isn't quite dead enough and coming to finish the job.

The beast stands as tall as about three Ochakos on top of one another, two sets of arms and a face that's like plastic surgery performed by a Picasso fanatic. Dead eyes that gaze straight through Ochako to Deku, like there's one purpose carved into its brain and Ochako's the only thing standing in the way.

Ochako offers an inelegant, “Shit.”

That curse is the last thing Ochako gets out before she and Deku are snatched like grocery bags on a supermarket sweep, whipping them away from the monster – the only word that could fit such a horribly modified… not even person, but people – under the arms of their knight in shining armour. A wall of ice chases them to block the creature off. It shatters a moment later, but buys them the time to get some distance between a heavily-concussed Deku and the people who want him dead first, then All Might second. Because the only way Deku would allow All Might to be killed is over his own dead body. They’ll just keep on trying, because every day the Symbol of Peace carries on there’s hope, and only by dousing that light will villainy take hold in people’s minds.

“Where's Kacchan gone?” Deku asks groggily, eyes turned skyward.

A sonic boom shatters the remains of Todoroki’s ice wall, shaking all Ochako's teeth in her head.
“WOOOOOOOOOW YOU SURE ARE UGLY! WHY DON'T'CHA PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE, FUGGO?”

Ochako's less concerned with Present Mic’s echoing insults and more so with the falling star that's meant to be her partner. Bakugo is further away than she could hope to reach alone, and the panic grabs her by the scruff, a desperate voice as clear in her head as it was in her ear – stay on me.

“Deku,” Ochako declares boldly, “I need you to throw me.”

“What?” Oh, to have been able to talk to Deku before he had the sense boxed out of him. Ochako will chew him out something fierce for only contacting them when things went south after this is all over.

Ochako grabs Deku's shoulders and gives him a shake. “Right now, Deku! I have to get Kacchan!” Truthfully, it feels utterly weird to call him that, but she's trying to get Deku to understand her and that means making it easy for him to process.

Deku blinks, and a layer of consciousness seems to come back to his gaze, which moves from Ochako’s face to Bakugo free-falling some several-hundred metres above and away from them. He blinks once more, and then he's back.

There isn't time to say more, Deku just nods and his eyes drop to Ochako's easy-grip handles like he's meeting her for the first time. One of Deku's heavily reinforced gloves closes around a handle and Ochako breathes out, bracing herself for the next second. Deku whips her like she's a clay pigeon, sending Ochako hurtling through the air almost as fast as she moves with Bakugo in Zero-G, and she doesn't even have her quirk activated.

Neither does Bakugo, so although Deku's aim was perfect – it would be – the collision is still hard.

“'Bout fucking time!” Bakugo snarls over the rush of air as they tumble and then stabilise, one of Ochako’s hands gripping Bakugo’s collar while he returns the hold on her hip, using the hand he's got left to blast them on a new path back over the battlefield.

Ochako waits until they're moving in the right direction and then activates her quirk so they're cruising instead of falling; a bird's eye view over the battle as Todoroki regains the monster's attention by melting the flesh off its back, which the beast reacts to like it’s a slight itch in need of a back-scratcher.

“Fucker regens faster than anything I've seen,” Bakugo spits, reaching for his belt and snapping off a grenade, which he shoves at Ochako like she's meant to have somewhere to put it – something to pick up with their designer, no doubt. “Take this, we gotta get that shit mountain in the air.”

Ochako figures out she can clip the grenade over one of her hip-handles, only posing a small risk of exploding if she manages to unpin it by accident. Below them, Todoroki and Present Mic keep the monster contained to a small area. Mic trades with Todoroki, so the beast alternately grabs its three ears and howls when not encased up to the neck in ice – which shatters moments later, only to revert back to blood-curdling screams that tell of the latest attack on the Symbol of Peace.

“Back in a sec.” Bakugo sees an opening and doesn’t hesitate, pushing away from Ochako and using a starter-blast to give him enough Zero-G acceleration to bounce off the monster’s head with an explosion that interrupts the creature’s newest attempt to close the distance between itself and Deku.

Bakugo’s rebound propels him up quickly enough to rejoin Ochako as they finally reach the wall of an abandoned warehouse where things like this monster used to be made. Ochako releases her quirk
with a guttural gasp as Bakugo grabs a windowsill and wraps an arm around her waist to hold her – 
screw the handles, apparently.

“How’s this gonna go?” Ochako asks, reassured by the feeling of Bakugo’s arm like a sling around 
her – she’s basically in the crook of his elbow. Bakugo’s bulky bracers take up the parts of his arm 
Ochako would usually rest against, so she’s extra-especially tucked into the recesses of his body, like 
pieces that fit together, but that’s hardly the point now. Or maybe it is.

“I’ll wear it down first, then when it’s slowed up trying to heal you come in and send the fucker sky-
high.” Bakugo sounds a little out of breath, but there’s no doubt or worry – this is the plan, and it’s 
his plan so it will work if they stick to it. “I can finish it once that thing’s in the air with me.” There’s 
a short pause before he spits, “Just get the fuck out if you can’t handle it.” This sounds rude at first, 
but it’s not meant that way – Bakugo’s gaze is focused intensely on the clash taking place down in 
the bowl beneath them.

Bakugo hangs from the building with his bulging, fully-pumped arm folded around Ochako’s waist 
and total certainty that he can and will hold her for as long as she needs to force down her quirk’s 
side effects. If they were in training, they’d probably be making out as of about thirty seconds ago.

But this is serious, and never more acutely so than when Ochako sees Deku launching himself back 
into the fray, shaking the ground with every fresh kick that blows the organs out of a creature that 
has plenty of spares to keep it going while the first set regenerates. It occurs to Ochako that Bakugo’s 
telling her to keep herself safe first, that if it’s too much she needs to get out of the way and he’ll take 
care of the rest himself. Like hell.

Ochako shakes her head, squeezing Bakugo tighter in the instinctive grip of her hand around his 
bicep in a way that’s momentarily something more than sheer practicality. She believes in more than 
Bakugo or herself alone now; that they’re more together than apart. “We’ve got this.”

Chapter End Notes

My editor told me this chapter gave her chills multiple times, so I'm guessing it's a pretty 
good one. *Shrug* I mean, if you're into that stuff, I guess. There's no kissing (ew) but 
this has always been a multi-genre fic, and this whole sub-arc is designed to come out of 
nowhere and remind us that on top of their ridiculous teen drama, and even their 'who's 
gonna pick who for the tournament' or 'who likes/liked who', all these kids are strongly 
devoted to being heroes, which is actually a really wonderful and uplifting thing.

This development is also a nice natural counterbalance to the escalating highschool 
drama built purely on nonsense, to remind ourselves that these characters *can* set aside 
their personal issues and focus on being heroes, which is a very universal concept in 
some ways. We can choose to let drama become the be-all end-all of something and 
literally be unable to comprehend something more important beyond it, but we can also 
just choose to drop it when there IS something more important. You don't even have to 
be a hero to do it!

Life skills and fanfiction, brought to you by Chunks.

Oh and also THEY’RE TOTALLY FUCKING DOING IT. Y'all (should) know 
which 'it'.
The tennis-ball-bounce happens to be one of Ochako’s favourite Bakugo training exercises, not least because she’s pretty damn good at it. Except in this variant of the game she’s not competing with Bakugo – at least not in the usual sense. In this scenario, Bakugo is the tennis ball, and they’re going for a high-score.

Ochako’s platform is a vertical, or almost vertical, warehouse wall that she jumps off of to meet Bakugo each time he comes hurtling back from a fresh blast at the monster they’re tasked with wearing down. The point at which they meet varies, but the pattern is the same – Bakugo goes between the monster and Ochako, who goes between the wall and him, spinning around with a Zero-G trapeze exchange that moderates speed and adjusts the next angle of attack, throwing Bakugo back out for another hit.

It’s a sickening blur, but runs like clockwork – too bad Aizawa isn’t here to see, though there’s the matter of the others who are here and are inescapably seeing what Bakugo and Ochako can do. Except this isn't the time for reactions, and all the acknowledgement Ochako and Bakugo get is inclusion in the same safety-guarding they all extend to each other. Mission objective: keep everyone alive and out of hospital. That means keeping Fuggo the Monster busy enough being repeatedly-exploded not to kill anyone.

The recoil from launching Bakugo back towards the enemy throws Ochako off course at one point. But in the nick of time Todoroki crafts a curved ramp that a high-speed Ochako skids around, her metal boots scratching across the ice so that she comes flying back out just as speedy as she went in – right on target to snatch Bakugo back out of the air and extend the barrage for another round. Because without even seeing their style before, it's understood; Todoroki, Deku, even Iida… they already get it. As will the only Pro Hero on the scene, so at least Present Mic might be able to vouch for them to Aizawa.

That’s assuming they can pull all this off, instead of getting up close and personal with the grim face of their own mortality. Todoroki is already at the limits of his quirk, bright red on one half of his face and a sallow purple on the other; who knows how long he was the only one here with Deku before the rest of them showed up – without fail the first in line of Deku's backup. Sometimes Todoroki is just as bad as his best friend when it comes to putting it all on himself; shouldering the entirety of Deku's burden after Deku collapses is not a sustainable backup strategy, and consequently the reason Iida came to get Ochako in the first place.
They've learned their lesson, which is telling everyone in their first-response group: better to have more of them than need to be here than less. With the addition of Bakugo, it's actually a pretty killer line-up – at least now Bakugo is cooperating with one of them, Ochako acting as the universal adaptor that plucks him into not being completely at odds with everyone else.

And with Ochako staying on top of him, Bakugo might just be the fastest of them out there. Iida is fast by definition, Deku's possibly faster, but Bakugo is like a large, angry fly that changes direction in the air every time the creature tries to swat him. Almost every time.

Ochako’s stomach punches straight through her back and hits the wall several metres behind her when Fuggo finally clips Bakugo with one of its four wrecking-ball fists, sending Bakugoooff at a screwball angle with Zero-G still engaged. Ochako's already planning, triangulating, manically figuring out how the hell to get him when out of nowhere a green blur leaps up and tosses Bakugo back to Ochako like returning a shuttlecock.

“Thanks Deku!” Ochako hollers as Bakugo’s returned to her – not that he looks anything but fucking pissed about it.

“A few more hits and then you’re up!” Bakugo barks at Ochako in that window of time when they’re changing places – conversations that they have while spinning like fan blades in mid-air. “I'll give fuck-ugly a piece of my bracers, but we have to be high up or everyone’s toast.”

This is the thing about Bakugo, it strikes Ochako in that second of time where everything is paused. One second, sliced thin enough to be put between glass in a slide to be studied. Bakugo’s challenge isn’t how to be strong, it’s how not to be so strong he obliterates the people he cares about as well as the villains he defeats. Ochako catches herself on the implicit assumption that flows through her head like a stream – Bakugo cares about them. At least enough not to risk burning them to a crisp as collateral.

“I can do it!” Ochako returns with confidence that pales against Bakugo’s, but no more than anyone else’s. She doesn’t hope it works, she believes. “I'll blow that shithed sky-high!”

Ochako swears there’s a crack in the mask Bakugo’s made of his face, something that’s vulnerable enough to be relief. To feel that means he has doubts, which means this creature is stronger than Bakugo’s letting on. But then the corners of his mouth lift, and Ochako swears as Bakugo lets her go she hears, “That's my girl.”

The things Ochako needs to do in a very short space of time are not all that much, when broken down into their individual pieces. The trick is just pulling them all off in the right order, without dying in the process.

Ochako’s flying at Fuggo’s back while Deku goes blow for blow with all four of the monster’s arms, but he’s taken several rounds of beating already and he’s amazing. Ochako will literally never get over how incomparably almighty Deku is, but everyone has a limit. Deku surely hit his limit well before Ochako even showed up, but there is a point where burning bright becomes burning out – and that means helping each other.

When she’s close enough to trigger whatever senses Fuggo has that detect fast-moving girls coming out of his blind spot – make that not-blind-a-tall spot, as Ochako sees two small, pushed-in eyes opening in the back of the awful monster’s head – one of the beast’s arms swings at her.

Luckily, that’s just what Ochako wants. She reaches for her waist with one hand as she grabs the monster’s arm with the other and wraps her legs tightly around the massive trunk-like limb. After picking up the trajectory of Fugo’s wild punch instead of going against it, Ochako moves in a
disorientating blur – though it’s not so bad after what she’s gotten used to – and presses all five fingers into unsettlingly rubbery skin. The monster barely misses punching the ground, fist swinging like a wrecking ball. Ochako springs off its arm, leaving one hand against its creepy reanimated flesh.

Ochako flips a quick half-turn to press her back to the cracked concrete, one arm still clinging to Fuggo as she braces herself and lifts the giant as easily as waving around a comically malformed pool noodle. With her other hand, Ochako grabs for her hip and sharply pulls away, hearing the click of the detaching pin and clatter as the grenade bounces to the ground.

Using the ground to bolster Ochako’s still-weightless body, she shoves the floating Fuggo upwards then all-out hollers, “Look out! Th-ere’s a grenade about to blow us all to pieces if someone can’t get us out of here. That’s what Ochako would have said, if her friends aren’t the incredible, talented heroes they already are; who already see what needs to be done and are doing it before she even gets through the first word.

Iida whips Ochako and Deku away in a last-reserves Recipro dash, just in time for the grenade to blow and send Fuggo shooting even faster into the air. The bottled Katsuki that explodes behind Ochako’s group knocks them off their feet as they speed away from the blast, Ochako and Deku each supported under one of Iida’s bough-like arms.

But Ochako pulls Iida’s grip off her hip-handle and flips, grabbing back hold of his arm after she’s turned enough to be shooting freely through the air at Iida-speed. Ochako faces belly-up to the sky, watching where Fuggo and Bakugo are before she brings her fingertips together and prepares to let it all go.

The moment has to be right, which means making sure the flaming Howitzer Bakugo brings into Fuggo has Zero-G acceleration right up until the second he doesn’t need it anymore: impact.

A boom so loud it shakes the ground under Ochako’s feet buries her desperate “Release!” like a teacup under a landslide.

When Ochako and Bakugo first started trying out this insane team-up, he had almost destroyed buildings just learning the ropes and the limits of what he could do. When Bakugo started bringing Ochako into that devastating, we’re-gonna-take-that-building-the-fuck-out moveset, they’d made Cementoss give up on putting effort into his training areas for how quickly they obliterated any structure he dared to pull up with anything interesting about it.

Now, Ochako finally watches Bakugo take an entire building out in one hit. Their surroundings light up like a festival’s worth of fireworks have been torched with a flamethrower. Bakugo blasts Fuggo with a cone of fire so large that Ochako feels the heat even from this far away. It's fucking insane.

Fuggo slams into the dilapidated warehouse that once housed his progenitors with an impact that takes out every remaining wall, like Bakugo’s settling a score by erasing every last physical manifestation of the experiences tied to this place. When he was captured, made so immobile he had to be saved; the same day All Might lost the ability to be the kind of hero he once was. Except now All Might is a different kind of hero, and Bakugo is different now too. Not worse, just changed. Because the past doesn’t need to stop existing to make the present acceptable. Bakugo can be better, having been worse in ways he tries not to repeat. He does try, because that’s what all Heroes have to do. Strive to be the best they can be, in as many ways as possible.

The force of the blast Bakugo unleashes on the monster is so great, it’s expected that he recoils in the other direction pretty hard. But Ochako only realises how much force when she sees Bakugo position a hand behind him, preparing a counter-blast to break his backwards-shot into an abandoned
office block. The fire sparks, but then the explosion *stutters*, botched because that’s *it*. Bakugo’s
given everything he’s got in one hit and finally – *finally* – his limit has been reached.

But Bakugo’s still moving way too fast, so fast Ochako’s sick even without her quirk activated
anymore. Sicker than if she was lifting a herd of elephants and hippopotamus with all their luggage
after the flight over from Africa. Including the *plane*.

Scrambling to her feet, Ochako’s primary directive loops at the forefront of her mind – *stay on me
stay on me stay on me*. She doesn’t know *how* to get to him, but she *has* to, she has to do *something*
or he’s going to-

“*HOT STUFF COMING YOUR WAY, BABY!*”

Ochako almost leaps out of her jumpsuit when Present Mic’s shout blasts a gaping hole in the wall
Bakugo’s heading for. But before Bakugo goes into it, bandages come *out*.

Jelly legs give way and Ochako drops to her knees with a guttural gasp of relief, as Aizawa’s
bandages lash around Bakugo and jerk him to safety. She leans forward on her hands and blinks
heavily, realising only then her eyes have watered so much that hot tears streak down her cheeks.

But Ochako's still got strength left, so she scrubs her cheeks on the way down to setting her hands to
the floor and raises her hips like she’s about to start a 100 metre sprint. She sorta is, just not along the
ground. Ochako activates her quirk and leaps up in an arrow-like line, aiming for the opening into
which Aizawa had pulled Bakugo.

On the inside of the building, about four-or-five stories up – there’s no ceiling *or* floor above their
heads, so it might be a case of both – Ochako brings her fingers together and drops onto her feet with
a clunk against the grimy floor. There’s a ring of spotlights and an empty chair in the middle of the
room, the torn duct tape that must have kept its occupant in place remaining around the edges.
There’s a smashed video camera, knocked over with its tripod, and next to it a mummified cocoon
that starts wiggling when Ochako asks, “Is everyone alright?”

“*Under control, Uravity.*” Aizawa kicks the bandage-wrap bundle at his feet and it stops moving
again.

The gaping hole in the wall next to Aizawa demonstrates just how much more growing they all have
to do as heroes. Because this is how in-tune the *real* pros are with each other – able to pop a hole to
catch Bakugo before he can hit the building, all with such split-second accuracy. Beside Aizawa
stands one roughed-up All Might, looking like he’s terribly sorry he couldn’t clean the place up a bit
more before everyone arrived to save him. And over one of his mantis-like arms lays one loose,
maybe not-all-that-conscious Bakugo, like a ragdoll with too little stuffing in it.

But the sound of Ochako’s voice stirs him, Bakugo’s head lifting to show dazed, low-lidded eyes
that seem to struggle at first to focus on her. Then, once he does, Bakugo lurches forward with
staggering, unstable steps that barely lift his sluggish feet from the floor. Ochako raises her arms to
catch him as much as anything, clunky bracers awkward as Bakugo brings his hands to her face with
intensity of purpose too fierce to resist. He takes her cheeks under each hand, tingly-hot rubber-and-
chemicals palms to hold her up to him like an indecipherable passage of poetry. Bakugo’s slightly-
fuzzy gaze desperately scans Ochako for signs of something – no, not something. She knows what.

“I’m okay,” Ochako says without an inch of doubt that it’s what he needs to hear. “Everyone is.”

And then – this is the bit she doesn’t come prepared for – a noise slips from Bakugo’s throat,
escaping through his mouth as he takes a deep breath like he was drowning before this point. He
keeps moving forward, which with Ochako standing almost on the edge of a four-storey drop with a huge-ass hole right behind her, means she stays right where she is, and just lets him press against her like a blanket clingy with static.

Ochako feels another deep, just-dragged-up-from-the-seafloor-and-finally-been-given-CPR breath from Bakugo’s heaving chest. His arms drop, wrapping around her back as he buries his mask-spiky face into the groove of her shoulder. He’s heavy, but she sure doesn’t have it in her to complain.

Ochako doesn’t know exactly why the words that come next are the ones that do. Perhaps that it’s something he’s said to her before, that it’s the only thing she can think of to say or do – because it would be utterly mortifying to kiss someone she’s (technically) not even dating in front of her homeroom teacher and All Might, for flip’s sake. It is what it is.

“I’ve got you, Katsuki,” Ochako tells him quietly, and he just squeezes her tighter.

Chapter End Notes

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh... yeah.

This is how it's gonna go.
Getting into Katsuki’s clothes

Chapter Summary

Ochako learns how success can come at a cost.

Chapter Notes

Ooooweeee how exciting, y’all? I wonder what's gonna happen next!

Jk here it is...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I didn’t know young Bakugo and Uraraka were-”

“Shh,” Aizawa interrupts. “You’ll ruin it.”

It being the boy clinging to Ochako. It could be the fact that he’s drenched in sweat, or it could be a little more than that making Ochako’s neck so damp as Katsuki presses his face into it and just kind of hyperventilates. This was a close call for him, maybe closer than it’s been in a while. And it’s not just himself on the line – this time Katsuki gives enough of a shit to worry, really worry, about someone else here too. It’s sorta a new thing for him, at least where Ochako’s concerned.

It also occurs to Ochako that even though she’s basically unscratched after the fight with Fuggo – who's hopefully being locked down by Present Mic, along with what remains of Iida, Todoroki and Deku – Katsuki had to throw her into the arena without knowing exactly what was going to happen. Unlike in training, where they’ve drilled every input and exact output what must be must be hundreds of times by now; where the control Katsuki needs to feel safe reigns supreme.

So even though Ochako’s clearly fine, the fact that she might not have been is no less. Katsuki had to put her in the ring anyway, with a creature so strong it took every last spark out of him to knock it down. It must be a lot for him to deal with all at once. In the heat of the moment, Katsuki’s unyielding. Fiercely dedicated to his mission, refusing to let himself give even an inch to doubt. It’s only after it’s over that whiplash sets in.

Katsuki’s not the only one. That overwhelming we-did-it rush happens to them all; every time Ochako’s called out with her friends, making sure the good fight has all the help it can get. But reaching the extremes of any emotion is second nature for Katsuki, and this is no exception.

The anaconda grip of Katsuki’s embrace finally lightens. He raises his head, quickly rubbing his face like it'll stop Ochako seeing the gleam in his eyes. Even if she'd never tell another soul if he didn't want her to.

“Scare me like that again and I'll fucking kill you,” Katsuki cranks like Ochako’s got something to be sorry for.
“Like what?” she bursts. “It went perfectly!”

“You didn't have a way out!” Katsuki accuses like a bomb going off – Ochako thought he'd actually run out of explosives for a moment there, but it's never too long with him. “Where the fuck was your exit strategy?”

“Iida-“

“What if he'd screwed up?” Katsuki butts in. “You can only rely on me!”

“Are you hearing yourself right now?” Ochako yells back. “We pulled it off!” Ochako trips up on her own certainty like a kink in a rug, looking back over her shoulder at the ruins around what remains of Katsuki’s blasted monster. “At least, I hope so.”

“I cooked that porkchop to a crisp. Fucker ain't getting back up,” Katsuki asserts. They've slipped into that bubble of only-them by accident. Being a bubble, it’s inevitably going to pop.

“Are they always like this?”

*Right,* Ochako is having a *domestic* next to a recently-freed All Might and her teacher. Classy.

Aizawa sighs for years. “Unfortunately.”

“Sorry!” It's an instinct Ochako can't help anymore, whipping around to apologise for the hot mess that is her and Katsuki on pretty much any day of the week. It's been her *thing* of recent, at least in school gossip: non-stop drama with Bakugo frigging Katski. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

All Might looks like he's seen days much better than this, even before his retirement from hands-on heroics. In a true call to the times, the Symbol of Peace has got rather a lot of blood on his shirt. There’s only a small cut on his face, like one of his cheekbones has simply sliced through the paper of his skin, so Ochako guesses he’s been unable to cover his mouth during some coughing fits. There’s still a few scraps of duct tape clinging to his shirt, and Ochako dreads to think what would have happened in front of the video camera if Aizawa hadn’t been here. Especially after taking a detour on the way.

The thought is simultaneously paralysing and amazing that Aizawa spared long enough on the way to rescue All Might to actually *get them*; because they were useful, *needed*, even. Katsuki practically won the goddam fight for them,. Or they both did, Ochako realises with a weird afterthought.

Now more than ever, Ochako feels the rush of the ever-nearer future approaching; doing all this as pro heroes, for real. Ochako has never thought about what's going on with Katsuki more than a week in advance, yet a future with him doing what they just did feels… alarmingly believable? Like they just took Zero-G out for a spin to defeat a monstrous bodyguard, and helped thwart the latest assassination attempt on the Symbol of Peace. They kicked that hitman’s creepy-monster’s *butt*. So this might… actually be a thing.

All Might is watching the two of them – Ochako and Katsuki – with a funny look on his face, the piercing light of his eyes as strong as ever. So when The Symbol of Peace smiles and breaks into the gentlest chuckle, Ochako feels herself starting to blush from the apples of her cheeks outward.

“I'm alright now, thanks to all of you.” All Might sounds like he’s got the biggest fire lit inside of him. It makes even the dingy, hollowed-out husk of this building seem brighter, like there’s hope for the world as long as he still sees it, and he’s looking right at it.

“We can use your quirk to get out of here, Uravity.” Aizawa hefts the still-writhing mass of bandages
over one of his shoulders. “If you’re-”

“I’m fine,” Ochako jumps in eagerly. “Then if you don’t mind?” She holds her hands out for the mummified villain on Aizawa’s shoulder, and he shrugs the mystery-figure like an old carpet. Ochako catches the bundle before it hits the floor, activating her quirk and then turning around as if holding a sort of pool float.

Present Mic stands at ground level watching the entryway. Ochako catches sight of him and for some really bad reason she has the notion to yell, “Special delivery!”

She hears Katsuki loose a coarse laugh of scorn and flicks a wry look in his direction, but Present Mic waves an arm, clearly thrilled with the stunt. “Where do I sign?!”

Ochako lobs the villain at Present Mic, who catches the oddly-shaped package like it’s the world’s weirdest frisbee. Then Ochako turns around and holds her hand out to All Might like she’s asking him to dance. All Might seems tickled by this offering and Ochako’s cheeks flush even more. He’s her teacher, but All Might is still, yanno, All Might. Ochako’s not the only person in a 1m radius who looks up to him.

In fact, it could be said Ochako’s standing right next to one of the all-time biggest All Might Fans. One that’s glaring a molten hole in Ochako’s back right about now, and actually has the nerve to mutter, “Since when did you take over this operation?”

Ochako whips around to fire another glare at Katsuki, and he returns his own brimming with pure murder. She considers that he’s probably feeling a little… volatile right now, though that’s not really her problem. So the first response according to the lil’ Ochakos manning her control centre is to announce, “Not now, hon.” She grabs Katsuki by one of his handles and activates her quirk as she whips him off his weightless feet.

This manages to catch a worn-out Katsuki so off guard he sprawls and yelps, thrashing around in a pretty hilarious way as Ochako tosses him at the ground. Waiting for his ego to permit her to run a simple evac job is a waste of time he’ll acknowledge once he’s cooled off on the ground for a bit. Hopefully.

As Katsuki drifts furiously away from the opening in the building, Ochako swears Aizawa might have actually sniggered before he steps up to offer a lax hand. “All yours, Uravity.”

Ochako takes All Might and Eraserhead by the hand with each of hers, and then trailing them like a couple of kites throws herself backwards off the building. She doesn’t activate her quirk on herself, acting as the weight to pull both her teachers down in a way that seems to catch them both a little off guard. They might have been expecting to travel like the previous passengers on the Ochako delivery service. But this works just as well; Katsuki’s do-the-most-outrageous-thing-first-time confidence is starting to catch on.

Ochako activates her quirk on herself for a moment to slow her fall just before she lands, steepling her fingers at the same time she drops into a Katsuki-trademark heavy landing. Their training has drilled Ochako like hell to build up a dense mass of shock absorbing strength, which she swears has been making her butt bigger. Her jumpsuit wasn’t always this tight over the ass. Tight, yes, but not seam-splitting. “Release!”

Ochako’s feet have barely touched the ground when from the other side of the crater-inside-craters of this backdrop she hears an ecstatic cry. “Uraraka! That was incredible!” How Deku still has all this energy is beyond Ochako, but he’s emoting strong even when he’s slung between Todoroki and Iida like a funny kind of scarecrow. “You too, Kacchan!”
Deku slams the full force of his adoration spotlight onto an especially cranky-looking Katsuki, who appears to have accepted he was being unreasonable halfway down to the ground. He’s set on looking really fucking disgruntled for the time being. “Is that what you’ve been working on together? It’s so-”

At almost, like, very almost the same time, Katsuki starts yelling, “You said you didn’t tell them!” a mere second before Ochako jumps in with her own, “I didn’t tell them!” They’re so in-sync that they finish together at the end of the sentence.

A second after that, Ochako adds, “They have eyes, duh.” She very nearly says idiot, but then decides Katsuki’s had a tough day and she can ease off a little – for everyone else’s sake, more than hers. She’d have a screaming match with Katsuki about this in a heartbeat, if she didn’t want to make everyone else feel uncomfortable. One of them has to be reasonable enough to stop things going too far.

“It’s… very impressive.” Iida sounds like he’s discovered the laws that govern the world have all just changed, and he suddenly realises why day is night and up is down.

“Yeah! I figured you’d been training together, but nothing like this,” Deku starts to gush as soon as he gets a new opportunity. “It’s so-”

“Not finished,” Bakugo butts in like he’s swinging a shovel for the back of Deku’s head to concuss him bad enough to forget he even saw what he saw. “So keep your shitty opinions to yourself, Deku, I didn’t ask for your fuckin-”

“Language, Katsuki! Not in front of All Might!” Ochako does this without thinking for a second about whether it’s a good idea – it’s just this kneejerk impulse that catches her too much by surprise – and doesn’t even have the control to stop herself from lightly slapping his arm as she delivers this belter of a scold.

Present Mic lets out a laugh like he’s swallowed a parrot, managing to declare through the ensuing hysterics, “If you call that unfinished, put me in a reinforced concrete booth for the main event,” until Aizawa slaps his arm.

Ochako realises one disadvantage of her newly installed handles when Katsuki yanks her toward him. She even squeaks, because he sure pulls hard enough – Katsuki’s got the power to hold Ochako up on a single palm, this is nothing to him. So when she moves from an arm’s length away to practically in his pocket in the blink of an eye, it’s a not-so-subtle reminder that he doesn’t need a quirk to move Ochako around like she’s weightless.

“Say that shit to me one more time.” An unexpected side-effect of the nature of Ochako’s relationship – of whatever weird shape that currently is – with Katsuki is that more and more these days his threats sound… kind of flirty. This is an atmosphere Katsuki seems to want to exploit, a sure don’t-you-wanna-kiss-me raspiness to his voice as he adds, “I fucking dare you.”

Somehow, Katsuki almost makes Ochako want to do the frigging thing. How the hell has he pulled that off? But in turn, that makes Ochako resign herself to no other choice than stubbornly biting her tongue and returning her gaze to the front. Trying not to think about what Katsuki would do in ‘revenge’ if she sassed him again. She got a taste of Katsuki’s idea of retribution earlier, and must confess it’s not all bad. Hell, sign her up for the rest of the semester.

Now that they’ve reprimanded the villains, and with no less than Eraserhead and Present Mic on standby, Ochako makes a call for comfort and starts grabbing for her zipper at the back of her jumpsuit – swinging around with Katsuki burning the bio-engineered regeneration quirk out of
Fuggo worked up a bit of a sweat, unsurprisingly.

“Tch,” sounds Katsuki’s iconic epithet. He reaches without hesitation to push his fingers past Ochako’s and yank her zipper down so fast it makes a really noticeable noise. All Might literally looks round. Deku is… already looking. “You’re helpless without me.”

“Pretty sure I just proved the opposite of that,” Ochako replies quietly, feeling like their conversation is being slightly less obviously listened to now. It’s still being listened to, but not quite so what-are-they-doing as before.

“If you cut out that risky shit, sure,” Katsuki murmurs unequivocally, like he’s handing out Ochako's post-session notes. “You’re…”

Ochako sighs in anticipation of the lecture as she peels her jumpsuit off from the shoulders, dragging it down to her waist and tying the arms together behind her back. She pinches the front of her – Katsuki’s, technically – vest-top and flaps it over her clammy skin, which sings at the caress of fresh air. It gets hot in there. Ochako glances over to Katsuki curiously when he doesn’t continue listing her faults, and discovers it’s because he’s glaring at her with an intensity that could only be described as publicly embarrassing.

By the time they get back to the car Present Mic ‘parked’, Ochako’s newly-bared and still-pretty-sweaty skin – plus a breeze that stops being quite so refreshing after the initial liberation – has left her a bit on the nippy side. Literally, as it happens, though her sports bra is doing some worthy work at concealing her body’s reaction to going from far too hot to altogether too cold in such a short space of time; her cheeks are starting to burn too, like her internal temperature can’t work out what it wants to be. Ochako needs to talk to support about the material her jumpsuit is made of if she's going to be flying around like this in it all the time. She's got some heating and cooling issues that ‘skin-tight rubber-something’ really aren't helping with.

Their car has been joined by two police cars, whose officers are rapidly setting up a controlled area as Ochako stops for a moment to survey the whole bizarre scene – right down to Present Mic signing an autograph on the statement he’s supposed to be filling out. Stood with her arms wrapped around herself, tingly hot and cold in all the wrong places, Ochako's startled out of her this-is-all-real daze by the slam of a car door. Before she knows it a luxurious hoodie is flying through the air, literally catching Ochako across the face when Katsuki outright flings it at her.

“Put it on.” It’s practically an order, and Ochako’s taking a moment to figure out, yes, this is Katsuki’s hoodie, but no, he doesn’t appear to be mistaken. She picks it up properly and looks at him in perplexity – after all, she has a hoodie of her own, albeit not as plush as this one.

“What’re you looking at!?” Katsuki spits lava at her wide-eyed stare. “You’ll catch a cold.” Ochako wonders how aware Katsuki is that he might be the one most concerned by her stripping, though she was getting chilly. Angry caring is still caring.

Still, why it has to be Katsuki’s hoodie stands to question. “But I’ve got one.”

“It’s shit,” Katsuki puts to rest, but is already grabbing back his own hoodie. “Don’t bother then, jeez.” Aizawa and Present Mic are chatting to the police along with All Might – Deku’s over there too, in fact – and Iida just has his back turned like it’s coincidence, so thankfully there’s not too many spectators to this little domestic.

“It’s okay, I’ll wear it.” Ochako snatches her haul into her chest precisely – after all, this is a Bakugo Katsuki hoodie. “Thank you.”
“Tch, weirdo,” Katsuki plays one of his more classic tracks. Ochako quickly flips the hoodie around just her shoulders and slips both arms into it easily, only a little drowned by the size and only utterly overcome by how much it smells of him, like a hug from memory.

It has to be admitted that covering herself up in Katsuki's hoodie doesn't have the slightest dampening effect on the intensity of his stare at Ochako’s general being. Maybe the exact opposite, because Ochako has a notion she's only just popped the cork on the champagne of Katsuki’s feelings about all this. Even as he takes off his bracers and gloves to pack into the boot of the car, Katsuki’s still gazing ever-so intently in Ochako's direction, like he's concerned she won't exist anymore if he stops looking at her.

So when Deku comes trotting right into the trajectory of the only-us ray with All Might in his wake and announces, “So I think we're ready to go back to school now. Would you two mind coming back in the car with us?” Katsuki looks like Deku spat in his breakfast.

Before Katsuki can blow his lid in any memorable way, Aizawa is there too, like he sat up from a micro-nap in their shadows at the opportune moment. “It's not a question. Midoriya was just being polite.” There’s a thunk as Aizawa opens his passenger-side door, his look across the top of the car at Ochako and Katsuki all business. “Both of you in. Now.”

Ochako is forced to consider that sometimes, success comes at a cost.

Chapter End Notes

A million people a while ago in discord: but when will she wear his hoodie
*Me, jumping up and down and waving my arms at the screen without saying anything because I don't want to give it away*

All good things in time. Speaking of good things, we've got some *great* ones coming up.
Ochako in the middle

Chapter Summary

Ochako's life has gotten a little weird lately.

Chapter Notes

People last chapter: there will be so much drama and tension in that car!
Me, leaning back in my rocker and cracking my knuckles: challenge accepted

jk I had all this drama and tension written months ago. Super hype to be sharing it with y'all finally!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

If Ochako had to give a report on her experience of sharing a car with Katsuki so far, the section detailing 'worst people to share the backseat with' would only have one entry above Iida. Obviously, that top spot is occupied by the ever-groggy, swears-he’s-fine-so-he’s-definitely-not Deku climbing into the car on Ochako's left right now. Their driver is different for this trip too: the Symbol of Peace – obviously.

All Might clears his throat with a chesty cough and then starts an engine that sounds much healthier than his lungs. Slowly they pull away, passing by Present Mic as he’s taking a group selfie with the policemen. This is all legit happening.

It should be incredible, a real highlight. Except on Ochako’s right sits thunder personified. Everything about Katsuki screams that he’s mere sparks away from the sky tearing apart, and it puts a bit of a dampener on the mood. Ochako understands; emotions run high, and it’s not something you can turn down like volume. Katsuki especially puts the same excessive amount of energy into every feeling he has, and he’s just a little unstable right now.

“So,” Aizawa breaks the silence as easily as sugar glass. “You want to talk about what happened back there?”

“No.” Katsuki is stiff, Bakugo-esque, eyes boring out the window like he can melt a hole in the glass and escape through it. Ochako would probably go with him if she got a chance.

Because this is all wrong, not how anyone was supposed to find out what they can do, even though it was inevitable from the moment they decided to use their style out in the real world. Bakugo’s just… shorted out, or at least he’s not ready to start talking yet. Ochako knows this pattern. At least what he does say, if anything, will be all truth.

It’s no help that the last place Katsuki wants to start this conversation is in a car with Deku. Not to discuss the thing he’s been guarding so preciously, so vulnerably. Not even with Ochako sitting between them. Ochako knows Katsuki would’ve wanted to reveal it to Deku on his terms more than anyone else, but that chance got ripped away in the heat of battle. They did what they had to do.
“Tough.” Aizawa’s tone is like solvent, stripping layers of flaky *not-ready-yet* and *until-then* excuses back like old paint. “Assessing you now seems a moot point… so I'll be expecting a full demonstration tomorrow.”

Ochako has a wild thought about whether Aizawa can be persuaded to call Coach Nikiforov and excuse her and Katsuki’s vanishing half-way through their session today – as well as skipping tomorrow’s training if they’re actually going to *show* this damn thing once and for all. They’ll have hell to pay with Coach Nikiforov on Monday at this rate. Assuming they’re still going.

Katsuki just grimaces, jaw tight and his fingers flexing anxiously as he takes Aizawa’s ultimatum once and for all. “Fine.” In the unbearable closeness of the car, Ochako notices small blisters forming across Katsuki’s upturned palms, like a scattering of dew.

All Might speaks next. “Do you have a name for it?”

Ochako realises what All Might is asking about probably a second after Katsuki does, which means Katsuki’s been deliberately silent this long. It’s a few seconds longer than that before Ochako decides to take up the baton.

“It’s uh… Zero-G,” Ochako tries to make it sound like she’s interjecting, coming in over Katsuki so he doesn’t get a chance to speak – as if anyone in the car would buy it.

Deku’s head lifts from a near-drowsy wobble and turns to Ochako with a face like exhaustion and relief have stripped him to the bare wires. “You mean like your quirk?”

“Oh, sure,” Ochako replies with hesitant glances at Katsuki, who doesn’t look thrilled about this, but he’s also not stopping her. “But it’s a play on both, obviously, Ground Zero… Gravity, you know?”

Deku’s gaze slips from Ochako to Katsuki, who is conveniently staring out of the window like this is a public bus he didn’t mean to take.

There’s something about the *way* Deku looks at Katsuki through his exhaustion, the shiny-eyed *Kacchan-came-to-help-me* kind of gaze that makes Ochako’s stomach dash for the door. One of the big puzzles of Deku that no one’s ever been able to arrange in a way that makes sense: why he still adores Katsuki.

Ochako thinks she’s starting to understand. Or to put it better, to see the thing in Katsuki that Deku sees. Fraught and conflicted as the cracked ego he’s built up around it, Katsuki has an inspiring greatness to him. Look what Ochako pulled off just going into battle with him *once*.

Deku’s smile could light up a whole city so bright it’d be visible from space. “It’s like you’re meant for each other.” *Wow,* Deku just wants to punch Ochako’s heart right out of her chest and all the way through the back of the car, apparently. That’s what it feels like, at least.

Katsuki turns to glare at Deku like he's just proposed to Ochako, diamond ring and all. There's plenty of anger burning in Katsuki’s eyes, maybe even some resentment and jealousy – over *what* Ochako has no idea – and his lips barely move from their disgusted frown. This version of his fury where his face could be a demonic mask of painted wood.

“Why do you care so much?” It's a caged, how-*dare* of an accusation. Katsuki asks tough questions, ones that anyone else might edge away from for fear of the answers. Or at least for fear of turning it into a backseat brawlin a car with their teachers.

Deku chokes up for the shortest moment, then continues to be the most terrifyingly strong person Ochako’s ever known, like he was *all of this* and more right under Katsuki’s nose this whole time.
“Well… I care about you both.” Deku makes it sound like the obvious answer it is. “I just want you to be happy.”

Katsuki looks disgusted. “You had your shot, so bit late for that now, huh?”

“Hey.” It’s an old school nag, Ochako considers as she nudges Katsuki’s leg with her own. “He didn’t mean it like that.” Not all caring is Katsuki’s kind: the sort where wanting veers between healthy and un- as many times as the ping-pong paddles of his head and his heart can keep an emotion bouncing back and forth. And Deku said both.

“When did you become the frigging expert on what he means?” Katsuki turns on Ochako sharply. She’s not a Deku expert by any measure of the word. But a Katsuki expert?

“What do you think happens if you just accept that someone is happy for us?” Ochako’s acquiring her own knack for tough questions, cornering Katsuki as her and Deku’s gazes rest on him like he’s the witness up for cross-examination. Ochako catches the angry fear in Katsuki’s eyes, and decides to show him a little mercy, given the day they’ve had. “Like, does the world end or something? I’d say fire rains down from the sky, but you already did that today.”

There’s a twitch in the corner of Katsuki’s face, a tiny ball of tension tussled up between the edge of his jaw and mouth that pulls into a thin, almost invisible jerk of amusement. Like he hears the thread of sarcasm in Ochako’s tone and knows he’s safe, that they’re still okay.

“Pretty much,” he grunts, wiggling the fingers of an upturned palm and turning to stare back out the window. Ochako only resists the urge not to put her hand in his because he’s got blisters and she knows it’d hurt him. Also the teachers.

“I’m sorry, did you think this talk was for the purpose of updating All Might on the state of your relationship?” Aizawa steps in with a needling tone, like he’s not just been micro-napping. Perhaps he isn’t fully aware of the fact that he’s just woken up, and has simply lost a little bit of their time somewhere along the drive. No wonder Aizawa has been even more tired of late; this operation could have been running for weeks for all they know.

“Please don’t stop, it’s all very enlightening.” All Might ducks and tries to reorganise himself behind the steering wheel in a way that fits. He doesn't achieve it.

Aizawa sighs, and then turns around to hang a look that pegs Ochako and Katsuki’s ears to the same long clothesline. “You two have an important decision to make.”

“We do?” Ochako has a feeling this isn't a where-to-eat-on-the-way-home kind of choice. She’s kind of starving, actually.

“Do you mind if I-?” All Might manages to interject himself into the exchange like he opened the wrong door by mistake, but will stay for dinner all the same.

“Go ahead.” Aizawa flops back in the seat, like he’s instantly tagging out of having to do this. “It's your drum to bang.”

Ochako likes the mood in the car less and less every passing second, an air of worry radiating from Deku like he knows where this is going and fears for the outcome. “What is?” she asks in a much smaller voice.

All Might’s angular form in the driver seat shrugs and compresses like he's reordering the differently sized scalene triangles that make up his body. A deep sigh leads into a splutter that doesn't assuage Ochako's worry one bit. Aizawa hands him a tissue.
All Might wipes his mouth, frowns at the tissue, and then begins with a careful grace, “We’re always stronger together than apart, but there’s a reason that Hero teams are seen to be ill-fated.”

“Really? But I thought UA wants us to work in teams,” Ochako replies simply, while Katsuki is ominously silent. Ochako can’t help thinking he knows where this is going too, he’s just not letting on.

“The Principal’s… enthusiasm is in part to remedy the decline in Pro Heroes choosing to form serious partnerships,” All Might explains, eyes on the road rather than looking right at Ochako or Katsuki, and that makes it easier somehow. But not by much. “Back when I used to… when the threat of villainy was lesser, it was one thing, but the shift towards sidekicks has changed the landscape over time.” All Might sighs over the steering wheel as the car comes to a stop at the end of a line of traffic, like he’s had one hell of a day at the office and it’s still not done. “There’s a lot of different reasons, including the perceived… risks.”

“Of heroes working together? Isn’t that safer?” Ochako queries.

“Get with it, angel,” Katsuki snaps, and he did not just call her that in front of these people. “Bunch of heroes put everything into working as a team and one of them gets screwed, it’s worse than if they’d all learned to stand alone. That’s what you’re saying, right?” Katsuki’s got rather a lot of accusation for someone addressing his personal hero, but he’s been stripped back to wires too, so even brushing All Might’s going to generate some sparks.

“Yes, that’s part of it,” All Might concedes gently. “But-”

Katsuki doesn't give him the chance. “And it’s even worse when you go down to a duo, because one of you drops and you’ve got less than nothing.” Is that what she’d be without him, Ochako thinks? Nothing?

It doesn’t seem right. Ochako feels like she and Katsuki are stronger together, but still complete when they’re apart. Their quirks just… fit. Meant for each other. Deku was right about that too – always is, almost. Even if some of Deku’s intentions can be misplaced when they finally work their way out the long hedgemaze of his mind. Ochako has a sudden worry over whether nothing is how Katsuki feels without her, before deciding that’s an utterly insane conclusion to draw about Bakugo Katsuki’s feelings for Uraraka Ochako.

“It’s not just that.” All Might’s long, spidery fingers wrap tightly around the steering wheel, like he wants to tie them in a bow to make sure he doesn’t forget to hold onto it. “It complicates matters further when the heroes working together are… involved.”

“You think I don’t know that!?” Katsuki snaps with a crack like a well-worn whip. Ochako jumps in her seat, as if the edge of his tone nicks her on the way past. It’s certainly news to her, because she sure hasn’t thought about it. Why’s it worse if they’re sorta-dating?

Deku is musing hard, like the mushroom cap of his hair is a fungi literally grown on worrisome thoughts. This isn't the time or place to harvest that particular crop, but no one told him that.

“Kouta’s parents were a hero duo, so when the same villain killed them he didn’t have anyon-”

Deku never finishes this sentence because Katsuki lunges across Ochako and grabs Deku with his blistered hands by the collar of his jumpsuit and roars, “You saying we’re gonna get taken out by some two-bit chump like a couple of fucking weaklings?!” Katsuki blasts the car in a way that’d put Present Mic to shame, bellowing past Ochako's ear as she awkwardly tries to part Katsuki and Deku and achieves it not at all. Ochako can’t even stop Katsuki screaming, “You might be All Might’s successor, but you ever disrespect us like that again I'll kill you with my own goddam hands, Deku!”
“That’s enough!” Ochako gets a hand against each boy and pushes as hard as she can. Katsuki could have resisted her if he wanted to, but that he lets her shove him back is a relief: still rational, or just enough to listen to her.

“Sorry, Kacchan.” Deku actually sounds it, looking forlorn with Ochako’s palm flat against his chest. Heart racing. “I didn't mean it like that at all. We were just-”

“Who the fuck is we?” Katsuki snarls, never good at being cornered. So maybe he doesn't have to be alone on his side of the field.

“Actually, yeah.” Ochako draws her hands back together in her lap, shifting her focus from the juvenile boys on either side of her to the adult ones up front. “I thought we did a good job, why’s it like we’re in trouble?”

“You aren't,” Aizawa answers with implicit seriousness, but Ochako isn’t finished yet.

“Then stop beating around the bush and just-! Oops-” Ochako zips her hands over her mouth, stopping herself from shooting ‘fucking say it’ at her teacher at the last possible moment. After a stunned moment of silence, Katsuki lets out a short laugh.

“I'm with her.” Katsuki aligns himself with Ochako like that's all he needed to hear. “Ain't no place safer than next to me.” For others that statement might be debatable, but for Ochako truer words have never been spoken. She blushes a little. Okay, a lot.

“Yeah.” Ochako doesn’t reach for Katsuki’s hand, conscious of the sweaty, now-weeping blisters he split from collaring Deku like that. But dammit she wants to. “So whatever it is you’re getting around to, just say it.”

“This could be a turning point for both of you.” Aizawa cuts through, the rusty box-cutter to All Might’s scalpel. “Forging a style together, planning for the future – your careers after graduating UA, it all changes.”

“Like it wouldn’t change anyway?” Katsuki snaps, frustrated because he doesn’t really understand why this conversation is happening. Neither does Ochako, as it happens.

Then All Might adds quietly, “And there’s the fact that you could lose each other.” Ochako loses her appetite. “If you want to pursue this, you have to be sure.”

“Where the fuck did you get the idea we're not sure?” Katsuki puts coarsely.

“Wouldn’t we be in danger anyway? Why’s it worse if we’re together?” Ochako tag-teams, and swears she sees a proud bristle from Katsuki, like he’s validated by her.

“Didn’t you… break up?” Deku hops back in meekly.

“What the fuck would you know about it?” Katsuki snarls. “Everyone in this car already knows exactly as much as they need to about me and Uravity.” Katsuki gives Ochako a sideways look, like he means her too. Because she finally – finally – understands how he feels, no more questions.

“Which is what, Young Bakugo?” All Might asks. Because he’s All Might, and this is Katsuki, he’ll get an answer when no one else could. Except Ochako, maybe.

Katsuki doesn’t even look at Ochako when he speaks, eyes fixed forwards like he’s trying to burn his meaning into All Might’s headrest. His tone is absolute. “We’re in this together.”
“And you, young Uraraka?” All Might questions like he needs to ask. If she hadn’t agreed with anything Katsuki said, they’d know about it already. Then again – boot on the other foot, as weird nostalgia takes Ochako back to the first conversations she’d had with Katsuki about this – maybe they don’t know that.

“You heard him,” she replies with quiet calm.

“Then you’ve made your decision,” Aizawa settles, pausing for a moment as he digs in the corner of one eye with a fingertip. “Good. Now; that worked, but it was sloppy. Where the hell was your exit plan?”

“That’s what I said,” Katsuki gripes.

“You owe it to your partner to leave them with a way out of anything you put them in,” Aizawa returns like the punch of a rubber stamp on papers, some extra line in his head that’s not just about being their teacher. This is Eraserhead giving notes on a collaboration with a new force on the scene. “That goes for all of you.”

“Ohh, ease off them a little,” All Might interrupts gently. “It wasn’t too bad for a first time out.”

“For amateurs, perhaps,” Aizawa replies with the unspoken implication of their being the opposite. Crap, Ochako just pulled off a mission to rescue All Might from a hostage-assassination-attempt with two Pro Heroes. On a school night.

“Okay first of all, I- Ingenium was there, so I had a plan,” Ochako starts after a moment’s hesitation, like pausing at the beginning of a bridge before crossing. Just long enough to think about what the world might look like from the other side, before putting what she knows behind her and taking the first step.

Chapter End Notes

Hey did someone say... I'm fucking ot3 trash......

oh yes it was me.....

Also the whole seriousness of hero teamup things is a very much unplanned development that I stumbled into and was like 'wait a second this is REAL GOOD' so that's fun.
Must be love #1

Chapter Summary

Ochako and her slippery tongue.

Chapter Notes

Me: talking to discord about how much I love OchaBakuDeku, a complex I gave myself literally in the process of writing this fic
Me: wait that reminds me I should update
*evil laugh*

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After beating down a Frankensteinian hitman, it seems somewhat ironic that a traffic jam should be the thing that brings this car full of Heroes to a standstill. Ochako’s head can’t keep up with all this stopping and starting – one minute moving so rocket-fast reality is a blur, Katsuki the only thing in focus beside her – and then the next boxed up like action figures and left on a shelf. Or in gridlocked traffic; same difference.

Katsuki doesn’t like waiting at the best of times, so this is an all-over itch underneath his skin. The struggle as he keeps trying to clench his hands only to hiss and stop, keeping himself from making the blistering any worse before he can get to Recovery Girl. It’s superficial damage at worst, but it must be pretty damn annoying for anyone as tactile as him to be unable to grab at the things that bother him. Or maybe just the things he wants. Ochako’s own palms are tingling with the not-contact, like she’s picking up his discomfort from empathy alone.

“Be quicker if I fucking walked,” Katsuki mutters into the dead silence at one point. The conversation in the car ground to a halt around the same time the traffic did. This is in no small part due to the fact that Aizawa has put his chair back and is now so deeply asleep All Might has held out one of his stork-like arms to check his colleague’s breathing once or twice. All Might seems just about content with what he finds, frowning like it could be worse but it could be better. He’s one to talk.

Deku is looking more asleep than awake too, though he keeps glancing over at Ochako and Katsuki. Like he’s checking they’re still here and this hasn’t all been part of his still-kinda-concussed dreams. Deku has been slipping in and out of making, like complete sense. Another factor for the sparse conversation.

“Just… try to relax,” Ochako tells Katsuki quietly, reaching – well, she can’t go for his hand – to curl her fingers around the pale stretch of his upturned wrist, feeling his never-restful pulse throb through it and timing the beats like a clock’s ticking.

“Fine,” Katsuki huffs, but what comes next isn’t – surprise surprise – what Ochako’s expecting. Because Katsuki carefully tucks a bundled up ad-hoc pillow that turns out to be her damn hoodie.
into the curve of Ochako’s shoulder. Then he drops his head onto it like he’s been cleared to nap on her at all times. Then again, Katsuki is most relaxed when he’s asleep, so there’s a kind of logic at work. Not good logic, necessarily, but very much a Bakugo logic.

Not that Ochako’s complaining, in any case. Though it does make her stomach feel a particular kind of weird when Deku glances over at them in his dozy-half-woke state and smiles at the sight of Katsuki with his head on Ochako’s shoulder. She feels the bite of that ‘why the fuck do you care so much’ question. The one that for every time Katsuki asks it the answer gets a little farther away.

It’s a matter of minutes before Katsuki’s breath evens out, so by the time the car has moved about four inches forward in traffic, he’s fast asleep. Ochako realises like the strangest afterthought that she still has her fingers wrapped around his wrist.

The traffic lets up for a brief moment, the gentle murmur of the engine as they finally get through a junction and make a turn. No shade to All Might’s driving, but he might be a rusty or unfamiliar with the car, because they take the corner a little hard. This doesn’t disturb the sleeping lion Katsuki, but a bobble-headed Deku lolls to the right as they turn left, making Ochako the first thing he comes into contact with to stop him faceplanting in Katsuki’s lap – and no one wants that.

Deku’s slipped back under the surface of not-conscious compared to just-barely conscious, and responds reflexively to the accidental smush of Ochako’s shoulder against his cheek. He burrows into the pillowy layer Katsuki’s oversized hoodie adds to Ochako’s shoulder like a woodland creature of sorts, before suddenly coming to perfect stillness; as if needing to stop the exact moment he assumes the position of rest. A second after that Deku starts snoring.

Ochako doesn’t mind, technically, but it means coming to terms very quickly with the fact that she’s got former and current crushes napping on each of her shoulders, and this is all still very much actually happening in her real life.

The silence breaks again when the last conscious occupant of the car, thankfully the driver, reaches the back of the next queue of traffic and glances over his shoulder to check on the most-likely-suspicious state of peace in the backseat right now.

“Oh my,” is all that slips All Might’s cracked lips – Ochako wants to fish around in her bag for some chapstick for him, but it’d disturb the dog pile she’s somehow ended up in the middle of. “I think that’s the calmest I’ve ever seen those two around each other.”

Even though she’s literally talking to frigging All Might, Ochako feels informal enough to quietly reply, “Tell me about it.”

All Might has a soft laugh that feels like it could spout spring flowers from the ground in the middle of winter. “You have a unique effect on them, Young Uraraka.”

“I just wish they could get along,” she replies with the softest sigh of knowing how not-there-yet that relationship is. “They’re so alike, at least in some ways.” There’s a few caveats to the parallels between Katsuki and Deku, some as relate to Ochako specifically. Some of her favourite things, as it happens.

“They struggle to understand each other,” All Might remarks like it troubles him as much as it does Ochako, and it's comforting somehow – not being the only one. “Young Bakugo has that difficulty with a lot of people.”

“He just… sees things his own way.” Ochako doesn’t know when she became Katsuki’s translator, but here she is. “It never occurs to him that anyone would think differently.”
“You’re very good for him, you know.” All Might might have gaunt cheeks and frizzy hair, still can’t quite seem to find a piece of clothing that fits his bunch-of-garden-rakes-taped-together scarecrow body, but he’s still exactly the hero he’s always been: the Symbol of Peace.

“He’s… good for me too,” Ochako says not because she needs to hear it out loud, but because it deserves to be fucking said. She already knows it, has known it since the first damn time she fought Bakugo and thanked him for taking her seriously when almost no one else would. For as much as Ochako’s tempered Bakugo like a brittle blade to have more flexibility, he’s hardened her in return. Makes her less afraid of calling someone out, or even just cursing someone out. Ochako trusts in her feelings more, and cares less what other people might think of them. “He makes me braver.”

All Might clears his throat with a dry cough that he somehow steers into a laugh, and his eyes find Ochako’s for a moment in the reflection of the rear-view mirror. “I think you were plenty brave already.”

Maybe she was, to take on all this, snoozing against her right shoulder – hell, the left too. Ochako sure feels like her already drama-tinged relationship with Deku is taking on a new form as Ochako and Kacchan become an ever-more-established being in Deku’s one-of-a-kind mind.

All Might's gaze settles on Katsuki for just a moment longer, then returns to the road to progress all of three inches before stopping again. “He clearly thinks the world of you.”

‘I know,’ Ochako agrees with a silent nod, due to a kind of existential shock that makes her unable to respond right away. Still reeling from hearing the indisputable, unlikely-yet-true fact put into such clear words.

Perhaps by the sheer factor of having Katsuki’s head on her shoulder, Ochako's filter between her head and mouth is a little flimsier than usual. And maybe the fact that it's Bakugo to have been tamed this way – still wild, but not with her – factors into it too. These are some of the reasons Ochako says what she does, though the honest truth is it's for no more reason than she thinks it. “They say love works in mysterious ways.”

All Might lets out a low, purring hum of consideration. “They certainly do.”

Ochako realises what she just said, glancing at a sleeping Katsuki with a whole new knot tied in her gut. Because it couldn't be love. Could it?

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Katsuki snores. Deku drools on her. Ochako has a minor panic attack where all the lil’ Ochakos in her head run frantically around the conference room bumping into each other and denying it was them who said the l-word first, but someone did, and that’s bad enough.

At least the only person to take note of Ochako’s intense blush and total gibbering speechlessness for the rest of the ride is All Might, and he certainly doesn’t comment on the fact that Ochako’s turned into a hoodie-wearing sundae with a cherry on top. Eventually they do make it back to school, and the majority of the car is still fast asleep. Good. No witnesses.

“We’re back,” Ochako announces as she turns to the side and shrugs her Katsuki-bearing shoulder gently. His eyelids lift a fraction, just enough to catch Ochako in a groggy crimson gaze. Then his eyes flit to the mulberry bush of Deku’s hair, as it threatens to swallow half of Ochako’s face in its verdant foliage on the other shoulder. Katsuki’s scowl starts to pull into his features as he wakes
yet the rage-cycle gets interrupted by some weighted protocol that supersedes his initial reaction. Katsuki’s mouth unravels from a frown to lift and press against Ochako’s in the smoothest hit-and-run kiss she’s ever experienced. That’s some achievement when it comes to Katsuki. It’s no more than a peck really, not even enough to return the gesture, that sly difference between reciprocal and being kissed. But it’s certainly Ochako’s favorite way so far for Katsuki to cope with the competitive-jealous impulse of catching Deku in the act of reckless snoozing.

Then again, Ochako should be so lucky.

“Wake up, **Deku,**” Katsuki spits unkindly the second his lips aren’t pressed to Ochako’s. “Get your own girl to sleep on.”

“Wh- ahhh!” Deku goes from deep in the embrace of dreamland to alarmingly awake instantly, recoiling from Ochako like she’s an electromagnet that’s just been turned on. “Sorrysorrysorry! I didn’t- it wasn’t-” He’s going redder than a ripe tomato, and Ochako looks over in perplexed wonderment.

“It’s okay, you didn’t know you were doing it,” Ochako rushes in before steam starts literally pouring out of his ears. “Besides, it’s not like I mind.” It is only a **shoulder,** after all. Compared to what she does with Katsuki on the regular, this couldn’t be more innocent if Deku tried. She feels for him being so mortified by such a modest amount of intimacy, like he’s sorry or ashamed of himself for letting it happen.

Well, Katsuki doesn’t like that very much at all, but what he does or doesn’t like isn’t the law of Ochako’s universe anyway. Katsuki can scowl all he likes and she’ll just shrug away from him – he can’t even grab her to stop her going right now – shuffling along the backseat to get out of the car after Deku as he scrambles for the door and dashes out like he’s worried about the air inside it igniting.

“If you could all head over to Recovery Girl’s office,” All Might directs as he climbs out of the driver side and stretches like a seabird drying its wings. Aizawa is still knocked out in the passenger seat, but All Might merely lowers the car window before shepherding Ochako, Katsuki and Deku towards the main building door like a trio of lambs entrusted to his herd. His wayward flock of protectors.

“Is it okay to leave Aizawa like that?” Ochako queries with a quick glance over her shoulder at the haphazardly parked car.

“Well **I’m** not waking him,” All Might replies with a harrowed shake of his head.

“Oh… right.” It didn't need further explanation really – Ochako's seen Aizawa when he's just woken up. “Good point.”

“Some things are best left to Mic,” All Might murmurs as he ushers them inside. Present Mic doesn’t need to be close to Aizawa to wake him, for one.

“Where are the other two?” Katsuki’s grunt echoes with their footsteps more than usual around the empty corridors. With the traffic on the way back it’s practically dark already, the school itself seeming asleep, blissfully unaware that things of any importance have happened.

“If they escaped the traffic perhaps they’ve already arrived,” All Might's musings sound more to himself than anyone else. True to his judgement, when they get to Recovery Girl’s ward, the first
sight upon opening the door is of Todoroki lying on one of the beds, Iida in a chair next to him. Both are reading. Iida rests a notebook on the edge of the bed alongside Todoroki, which he writes in as he reads from the textbook in his hand. There is the impression, at least upon just arriving, that they’ve been silent for a while.

Recovery Girl appears in a dressing gown, cold-cream on her face as she bustles over in slippers with an air of ‘not this again’ as she seizes Katsuki by one wrist and Deku by the other before steaming off with both of them in tow.

“For goodness sake, Toshi,” Recovery Girl nags. “Do you have to keep dragging your students into this?”

“Please ma’am, we dragged ourselves in,” Deku defends, voice getting more distant as Recovery Girl leads them away – that Bakugo’s patiently going with her is a testament, but it might be because he’s waiting for his damn hands to be healed. “All Might had already been kidnapped when we got involved…”

Their voices fade out and Ochako’s left with All Might at her side. For lack of a better idea on what to do, Ochako heads over to Todoroki and Iida, an anxious energy making her hesitant to be away from Katsuki.

Ochako feels there’s something big coming, like the air before a storm, but hurricane Katsuki is off getting his hands fixed so it’s just her with the rest of Deku’s babysitter club.

“I’m glad you’re alright, Uraraka,” Iida opens up, and Ochako feels a pang of frustration that anyone would dare to doubt her for relying on such a good, rock-solid friend.

“You too,” she sighs as she drops into a chair next to him. “Some evening, huh?”

“I wasn’t expecting Bakugo to show up,” Todoroki offers, setting aside his classwork and folding his hands over his stomach. He’s in bed, but possibly only as a precautionary measure after pushing himself so far with his quirk.

“Yes it certainly, uh… surprised me,” Iida replies. Ochako bets it did.

“I may have misjudged the nature of your relationship,” Todoroki’s musing, and Ochako almost says, ‘ya fucking think?’ but decides better of it. “The combined style you were using was extremely powerful.”

“Yeah, about that,” Ochako says uncertainty, putting her hand to the back of her head. “Could you two, just like… pretend you never saw it?”

In a single unified voice of befuddlement, Todoroki and Iida reply, “What?”

“I’m sure he’ll explain when-” Ochako breaks off as the he in question reappears, walking back into view rubbing his newly-healed palms together, still slightly-dazed Deku by his side – like he’s reverted to the childhood habit of blithely following Kacchan around.

“Alright, fucksticks,” Katsuki announces with a mouthful of broken glass. “We gotta talk.”

Chapter End Notes
Penzie@me when editing this update: I SAID I'M DEAD ALREADY GOD
“You’re all gonna keep your mouths shut about what you saw today, or you’ll have me to answer to,” Katsuki makes this announcement to the spectrum of emotions that Todoroki, Iida and Deku personify, ranging from deeply suspicious to what’s Kacchan mad about now?

Iida leads the first line of query. “Why?”

“Because I fucking said so!” Katsuki snaps, instantly frustrated that this order hasn’t been directly accepted.

“We’re still waiting to show it to people,” Ochako tries to explain with a softer touch, which Katsuki naturally resents, but at least allows without outright denial.

Todoroki heads up the next line, even if it is the same question. “Why?”

“Mind your own business, dip-dye,” Katsuki snarls. “It ain’t yours to talk about.”

“You’re assuming I want to tell anyone,” Todoroki points out levelly. “I’m merely surprised you’d want to keep the most constructive thing I’ve ever seen you two do together a secret.”

“Who asked for your opinion in the first place?!” Katsuki snarls, and Ochako gives a wearied sigh.

“Now, now, Young Bakugo,” All Might intercedes from the chair he’s folded himself into on the other side of the room, making it seem more like a preschooler’s chair than one designed for normal-sized adults with the way his limbs spill over it in comically oversized proportions. “There is a time when one must let go of perfectionism in order to move forward.”

“I get to choose when!” Katsuki roars with fierce pride. He whips his gaze across to his hero, then drags it back as if surfing a rough tide to Ochako, like the true north on his compass. “We do.” A small correction, but one he makes without reservation. Katsuki still thinks of himself first and foremost, but actually remembers other people are part of his world now: Ochako is.

“Yeah, why’s it such a crime to want to be sure?” Ochako tries to elaborate, softening the blow of Katsuki’s anger like letting someone punch into a training pad. She’s gotten so used to the truth being
a secret that it’s become a daunting body of water she’s a little afraid to dip her toes into. At least, not without Katsuki being sure too.

“You seemed pretty sure out there,” Deku offers groggily. “But we’d never talk about something if you weren’t comfortable with it, so you don’t have to worry.”

Katsuki naturally looks annoyed that it has to be Deku who leads the enlightened way of thinking, reacting the way Katsuki wants them to. But it’s getting late, and they have better places to be and things to do than be in Recovery Girl’s office debating the right time to debut their Zero-G style. Hell, Ochako wishes she could just curl up with Katsuki on one of these beds and fall asleep.

“If it’s truly what you want, then we can… act like today never happened,” Iida suggests like there might be a few things he’ll put into that category. If they were going for what Ochako truly wants there’d be a whole lot more to tell, but for now she doesn’t want to twist things any further out of shape. Just let the situation be as it is until she’s had longer to think about – and sleep – on it.

“Thanks, guys.” Ochako feels a weight lifting, like there’s a small slice of stability left to cling to. Not everything will be wildly different tomorrow, even if that’s been most days for the past two weeks. She glances at Katsuki, and has the most massive urge to hug him, just not in front of all these people. Later, maybe. Hopefully.

“Do you think we can still get something to eat from Lunch Rush at this time?” Deku tries to sound upbeat, but also looks like he’d also be totally up for curling up and falling asleep with her and Katsuki too – Ochako has got to stop getting involved in all this ambiguous group-napping of late, it’s just getting strange.

“Ah, Iida and I collected Soba on our way back to school.” Todoroki points at a neat pile of boxes in a bag on the sidetable.

“Really? Thanks so much.” Deku’s eyes start to water, as if he’s thrilled even now that his friends would ever be considerate of him, even though it’s what they’ve been doing for a while. Maybe it’s just as important to him every time as it is the first. “I’m starving.” Deku crosses the room first and pulls over a chair to join Iida, Ochako and Todoroki, and then like it’s just the easiest thing in the world for him to do, turns to Katsuki and asks, “Are you going to join us, Kacchan?”

Because she’s sitting opposite to him, in the cluster of chairs next to a medical ward bed that constitutes the Deku Protection Society’s first-response team, Ochako can see the flurry of emotions in Katsuki’s face taking off like a flock of angry crows. At first it’s a panicked fluster, brows screwing up in incredulous shock, like he’s trying to work out the trick or hidden insult in Deku’s question.

But then from the collective unit of the group, Katsuki’s gaze hones in on Ochako alone. She tilts her head to one side and smiles, watching him curiously, just waiting to see what he’ll do. She’s sure as heck taking a free portion of noodles after what feels like an eternity since the vending-machine snacks she’d loaded up on while they were on their way to gymnastics training.

There is one thing that Ochako’s sure of, which is that whatever Katsuki does choose will be what he actually wants to do. So that he’s paused this long suggests he’s giving it serious thought. It’s actually a decision for him, which already says plenty.

When Katsuki heaves a putting-up-with sigh, his characteristic ‘don’t like it but okay’ huff of relenting, Ochako has a feeling she already knows what he’s going to do.

“Just don’t get the idea this is the start of something,” Katsuki grumbles as he snatches a chair for
himself like he lost someone dear to him in a chair-related incident.

Iida’s already starting to unpack the portions and hand them along the line of chairs with his inbuilt organisational habit, holding a box out without looking at the recipient, though it’s clearly for Katsuki as he pulls up a seat. “Here.”

After only a small hesitation, Katsuki takes the offering. Then after a slightly longer hesitation. “Thanks.”

Ochako grins so hard her cheeks hurt.

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Finally back in her room at the end of a long day, Ochako heaves a deep sigh and then puts herself immediately under a hot shower. Dinner in Recovery Girl’s office turned out surprisingly alright in the end, dissecting their experience with Fuggo – different points of weakness and tactics within the battle from a purely analytical standpoint. Deku frantically scribbling notes while Katsuki almost seemed to enjoy listing everything that each one of them did wrong in his eyes. Usually right, too.

In fact, there’s an awful lot said about the role Katsuki played as a new contender in this arena, and even more for Zero-G style with Ochako. At times, Katsuki and Ochako argued their case together and it seemed to soften some of his harsher edges, presenting a consistent face mediated somewhere between the two of them, rather than too far to one side or the other. All evening, Katsuki cooperated enough with everyone not to make it any more awkward than that particular collection of people were going to be in the first place.

But although Katsuki was on some of the best behaviour he’s been in her memory, the Bakugo he is around others is still different to how Katsuki is alone with Ochako. She’s trying not to think about that part of him, because maybe she is missing the thought of one-on-one time they’d literally been in the middle of when Iida arrived in the first place. Ochako’s fully admitted to the reality of having a condition for Bakugo Katsuki like an itch that won’t be scratched, and tonight she’s feeling extra sore for a fix.

Even so, Ochako doesn’t expect to get text messages from Katsuki. Like, that isn’t a thing they’ve been doing, not least because they spend most of their free time together anyway, and most of that definitely not spent looking at their phones. So the basic level of communication by message isn’t even there, let alone established enough to count as a precedent for what kind of things she and Katsuki would text one another.

Not that this really justifies or helps prepare Ochako for a text that arrives just as she’s getting ready for bed from Katsuki reading only, ‘Come over.’ It just means heart leaps in about five different directions all at once.

It’s only once she’s got her shoes on that Ochako seriously considers what in the hell he thinks he’s doing. ‘Seriously?’ she texts back, not knowing if it’s the best way to ask, but she has to follow her gut or risk over-analysing to the point of being rendered speechless. Textless, technically.

If Katsuki agonises over the words to choose at all, he certainly does it very quickly, because his reply comes within thirty seconds. ‘Bring my stuff too, thief.’

Ochako knows how Bakugo expects her to do this – what he’s expecting her to do – and maybe she’s absolutely already down with doing it. But that doesn’t preclude a little teasing, so she sends ‘I can’t believe you’re making me do this.’ He’s not, but it’s tabled and Katsuki wants it, so that most certainly means Ochako will come through.
‘Say that to my face.’ Right, like this is gonna be their unfinished business when they’re face-to-face.

Ochako pulls Katsuki’s hoodie back on over her pyjamas and stuffs his recently-borrowed vest top in the pocket, quietly opening her veranda door to a rush of cold night air. She has a thought and sends one last message. ‘You better catch me.’

The answer comes immediately. ‘Always.’

Activating her quirk so the only thing Ochako’s wearing with any weight is her light, plastic-soled shoes, she hops onto the balcony rail and springs from a crouching position into a moon-jump flip, throwing her head back and kicking her feet up into the air – the only weighted part of her – so the rest of her body follows afterward, like throwing her shoes over a power line with herself still in them. Ochako’s carefully calculated trajectory has just enough turn so she soars up past the fifth floor in a rounded circle. Her heels cross the path of a bright moon overhead, and Ochako controls her spin with the merest adjustments so she passes over the building like a ticking second hand, feet coming back down as she closes the squashed-circle arc all the way around the dorm building, adjusting as best she can to come down in front of the right balcony.

Going by the familiar hands that reach out to break Ochako’s descent and help her transition smoothly into perching on his railing, Ochako's hit her mark. No one else can handle her like this, so her legs instinctively straddle on either side of his body – a slightly off-technique take on the things they do in gymnastics. At least when they’re not finding time to neck against the wall.

“Release,” Ochako whispers, knowing this isn't even close to a good idea and she's done it anyway. That’s how desperate she is for a little more time with him. “Hey.”

Katsuki doesn’t respond, not verbally at least, but what he does is lock Ochako into a tight hug. His chin hooked over her shoulder, arms looped like a steel brace around her back. She hugs back, and hell – Ochako’s a hugger. She's been a hugger for a long time, but she can't even begin to explain how good this particular one feels. It's like pressing to a blessed rock, some magical property that makes every second they're touching tight enough to feel that important pressure – the weight of Katsuki’s body against hers – becoming some kind of enchantment that drains the tension from her whole being.

Ochako takes a deep breath, and reminds herself she’s got to go back to her own room sooner or later – there's risks and then there’s straight up asking for trouble – but this has already been worth it on the basis of this hug alone.

“Some fucking day, huh?” Katsuki rasps softly into the curve of Ochako's neck.

That about covers it, but Ochako doesn't say anything, just moves her face in coordination with Katsuki’s until their mouths find each other. The kiss she's been waiting for since the gym wall, and if she wanted it then, that's nothing compared to how much she wants it now. She's not the only one, though.

Katsuki kisses Ochako like she’s the only thing in the world he needs to live. Forget food and water, who cares about good grades or being a hero – at least, right now. Katsuki wants with such completeness that the things he needs eclipse each other as they each pass from waxed to full and then wane, falling into self-sustaining cycles. The moon of his desire for Ochako is full right now. Probably because he got to taste what it was like to risk her in the heat of battle, to feel that real-life bite of knowing there was a chance they could all get hurt. Now there’s someone out there who Katsuki cares for enough to scare him, whose blood he’d also see on his hands hands should any harm come to her.
Katsuki kisses her like it’s the only way he can think of to be sure they’re both still alive, hot and hearts racing as they make out on his balcony until one of them decides to take a break – and it sure isn’t Ochako.

Newly remembering the ability to breathe through his mouth, Katsuki takes deep, humid breaths that feel warm against Ochako’s skin. “Go out with me.”

It’s a pretty… Bakugo way to do it, all things considered. So although it’s huge, monumental, literally a frigging massive leap forward in his own progress toward the goal Ochako hopes they sure as hell share, it’s still not… quite right.

“I will, once we’ve told the truth.” Ochako feels the tension knot back through Katsuki’s body as he doesn’t get exactly what he wants yet again. Like it’ll soften the blow, Ochako kisses him again, and Katsuki’s reciprocating at least until he puts his hands on her shoulders and wrestles her back.

“You gotta be fucking kidding me,” he starts much louder than he finishes, dropping his volume when Ochako brings a finger scoldingly over her lips. They’re still like, trampolining all over the rules right now. “But I asked.”

“You call that a question?” Ochako poses, and it wasn’t. Katsuki knows that, but just scowls like he’s not ready to admit it. “Ask me again when it’s all out in the open,” Ochako translates the whisper from the quiet corner of her mind where it’s been echoing for a while now – that the only true fresh start comes when the chaos of until-now is put to rest. “Zero-G, letting them think we were going out when we weren’t, everything.”

The not-that-funny thing is Katsuki can’t yell right now, and maybe it makes this a really good time to deliver a statement like this to him. By the moonlight she thinks she can make out the clench of his jaw, but certainly feels the flex of his arms, the slightly increased pressure as he grips her a tiny bit tighter.

“So that’s a no.” This is the edge of the razor, but Ochako hasn’t been training on a balance beam all month for nothing.

“It’s a not yet,” Ochako replies, leaning back to be able to look at Katsuki as she tries this high-wire balancing act over the boiling pit of lava known as his temper. He braces her as she tips back four floors up, but who are they to worry about falling out windows? “After everything that’s happened, don’t you think you owe me at least one?” Katsuki’s had her bound with not-yets since the very start.

Besides, if Katsuki had asked Ochako out earlier at the gym – when she told him to – then she would’ve said yes. He was the one who wanted to be stubborn back then, just like Ochako’s doing now. She hopes they’ll be the better for it all the same.

“Fine,” Katsuki delivers with the same vitriol as one of his ‘tch’ sounds. “Didn’t want to have to be nice to you during school anyway.”

Ochako smiles, feeling the loosening up of Katsuki’s body as she comes back in closer, hooking an arm around his neck and pulling herself up to his mouth. But when he moves forward to kiss her, Ochako darts back the way he had at the gym – making him prove he wants it. Wants her. She’s got him on the ropes now. “You don’t mean that.”

Katsuki smiles as he comes in close, so Ochako feels the curl of his lips against her cheek rather than sees it with her eyes. But rather than heading for her own lips, Katsuki ventures all the way to the threshold of her ear. With a quick movement his hand lifts from Ochako’s shoulder and he brushes her hair back, pushing it behind her ear so he can get his mouth right next to it. Katsuki says too
quietly to be heard any other way, “Prove it.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey so if you're thinking of leaving me a comment that expresses how bad or wrong Ochako is for her choices in this chapter, don't do it unless you're prepared to bare-knuckle box me in the parking lot because SHE DESERVES ONLY THE BEST AND THAT AIN'T IT. Also things are just *complicated* with them right now not least bc they're stupid teenagers.

So please understand that and also avoid pursuing the notion that my goal here is for these two to get together in any way but an ugly tumble down a very long staircase. We're just going round like, the third *bend* in the staircase y'all, there's still a whole other flight to sprawl our way down next.

To wit, I mean, we're not done yet, naughty children.
There’s a *lot* to be said for making out with Bakugo Katsuki on his balcony at a risky time of night for an even riskier amount of time, but the sensibility of it isn’t one. Perhaps it would have made sense to go into his room, but Katsuki never invites her, and Ochako never asks. They just remain on the balcony for long enough to actually get bored with making out, which as always, is a *while*.

“Kinda disappointed you aren’t still wearing the rest of my stuff,” Katsuki murmurs with a bullfrog croak that makes Ochako wonder just what the reason he’s not invited her into his room is; like the main problem with letting Ochako in is having to make sure she actually *leaves*. Ochako sure wouldn’t make him, which isn’t a great start. Certainly not when Katsuki’s pushing his hoodie off her shoulders with a breathy, “Off,” that sounds like it *wants* to be misinterpreted.

“But it’s cold,” Ochako protests, already more in love with Katsuki’s hoodie from the short time she’s been with it than she’s ever loved a piece of clothing before.

“Then take this one.” Katsuki’s already got an answer, pulling off the replacement he’s wearing and swinging it around Ochako’s shoulders, pulling the hood down over her face until she giggles and shoves his hand away.

“You’re making me *swap*?”

“This is my favourite,” Katsuki defends in a way that makes him seem hilariously childish, and as such entirely *him*. “You can keep that one.”

“Really?” Ochako looks down at the new hoodie she’s draped in, warm with Katsuki’s body heat. “What’s wrong with it?”

“Nothing!” he snaps. “It’s better than yours.” He’s right, which makes it trickier for Ochako to argue with him. She’d *love* one of Katsuki’s hoodies to keep; even his second-favourite clearly hasn’t come out of end-of-sale bins a number of years ago, for one. So Ochako would’ve denied it makes any difference, but for the fact that it does. It’s *his* stuff, and if he’s giving it to her…

“Thanks.” Ochako pushes her hands through the sleeves and holds them up with the ends still dangling over them, grinning from under the edge of the hoodie as Katsuki tugs her back into a cuddle. A soft chuckle sounds from his chest that ought to be a worry – what reason does Katsuki
have to be *chuckling* on his balcony at this time of night? Then again, maybe everyone knows already. Maybe it doesn’t matter either way.

“T’ll give you a boost to get back,” Katsuki announces out of nowhere, like maybe it matters a *little* bit after all. Any a top-flying student has got to at least *try* keep his nose clean. And nothing unrelated to training can hold Katsuki’s attention infinitely. Not even makeouts.

“You're making me go?” Ochako asks in their secretive lovers’ whispers. There she goes again, getting *way* ahead of herself with her latest crazy train of thought.

“You wanna sleep on the balcony like a dog?” Katsuki’s teasing, but there’s a clear line that he obviously doesn't want to cross, at least not tonight. Makes no *plum* sense in some ways. Katsuki's been in her room twice already. But then it does make sense in others, so luckily *one* of them is managing to be reasonable. “Don’t make that face at me,” Katsuki scolds when Ochako's pout comes to his attention. “I got in enough trouble because of you already.”

“Likewise, mister,” Ochako responds, and then they're back to kissing again, like it just takes a single lapse in thought and they're done.

Katsuki draws this new spate of making out to a close by taking Ochako’s hands firmly in his. A gymnastics grip if she's ever felt one. Finally, he lifts his mouth off hers enough to say, “Get out of here before I change my mind.”

“*Fine,*” Ochako concedes, and if she hadn't paused for a second swears she would've let slip something it's way, *way* too soon to even *think* about saying to Katsuki; like there's a wild hockey puck banging around inside Ochako's head waiting to score a goal before the match has even started. “Goodnight.”

With a final peck on the lips Katsuki is finished. “Night, babe.”

Never mind, Ochako’s finished too.

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All Ochako wants – aside from a few extra hours sleep, preferably next-to/on-top-of Katsuki – is for things to get back to normal. *Some* kind of normal.

So when Ochako wakes up and the sun is rising as usual, she’s a little stiffer than most days, but no worse than the last time Katsuki *really* took it out of her in training. Ochako grabs a quick breakfast before meeting Katsuki by his perch on the front steps. He’s taking in early sun like he needs to photosynthesise instead of eat. So far, so normal. Ochako dares to relax a little, stepping behind Katsuki as he rises so her arms rest over his shoulders, pretty much just draping herself over his back like a cat trying to get a sit up there.

Astonishingly, or maybe not so much anymore, Katsuki allows Ochako to ride him until her feet lift off the ground – look ma, no quirks – as she rides him piggy-back. Whether it’s instinct or playfulness, why not a bit of both, when Ochako brings her knees up Katsuki catches them and shifts her higher up onto his back. He sets off with a long stride like a ship launching to sea.

“So I just carry you around now, is that it?” Katsuki suggests with a sun-warmed grumble that’s plenty more fun than malice, and Ochako bounces a little with each step, arms wrapped around Katsuki’s neck, tight to his shoulders.

After an initial greeting squeeze, Ochako shifts to lean over one of Katsuki’s shoulders, moving around his neck and pushing up until she’s able to prop one elbow on his shoulder. She drops her
chin into her hand, as if resting deep in thought.

“I guess so,” Ochako remarks like a lighthouse keeper gazing out to sea, and Katsuki scoffs like he can’t believe she’s for real right now. But he doesn’t put her down.

Ochako’s lulled into the rhythm of Katsuki’s footsteps for a peaceful moment, until he spontaneously throws Ochako around him like he’s trying to hula-hoop with her. Understandably, Ochako squeals when she’s spun around so violently, but quietens up when she finds herself face-to-face with Katsuki instead. Learning paired gymnastics with him is a whole mess of different blessings, but Ochako doesn’t reckon she can call any of them bad right about now.

“Hey you,” he says against her mouth, the precursor to a lingering peck before Katsuki finally pries Ochako off him like a kitten that’s been climbing all over him. Though he takes a minute to fully let go, once Katsuki has released Ochako he snaps back to business like he’s made out of rubber; Ochako can stretch and bend him all she likes, but his true shape and purpose haven’t changed. “This shit has got to be on point for Aizawa, so we can’t screw around like usual.”

“I know,” Ochako replies rather than launching into an argument about what Katsuki considers ‘screwing around like usual’ entails in the first place, and swings out a hand to brush with his. He takes it. No complaints about walking to the training area today, knowing their practice will have to be focused. “I think we’re ready, though.”

“You always think that,” he returns, and then a beat later, timed to their footsteps. “It can be better.”

“You always think that,” Ochako echoes right back at him, and they carry on like this – quibbling, saying things that don’t really mean anything and are wonderfully unimportant all the way up to the training area. They’re arguing – loosely speaking – about the best landing for a particular combination of moves when the voice they dread to hear sounds out clearly across the training area.

“If you’re this comfortable with each other, I hope I’m about to be impressed.”

Ochako looks wildly left and right but can’t see or divine the origin of the deadly call. Everything looks just as it should be.

Katsuki seems similarly perplexed by it. “This a game of hide and seek?”

“For starters.” In the concrete jungle, a distant voice could be heard as coming from anywhere, but the first step in any search mission is get a bird’s eye view on the location.

So when Katsuki meshes his fingers together and braces the step-up against his stomach, Ochako’s on the same page already. She takes a single stride before stepping into Katsuki’s palms, feeling the boost kick in just as she activates her quirk on the both of them. They pinball up fast and stop once the tops of faux-buildings pass them. Ochako chirps a a quick “release,” and reactivates her quirk.

“There.” Katsuki spots him first, mostly because it’s the direction he’s facing, loosely back-to-back with Ochako to scan the area like a drone. This is all the warning Ochako has before Katsuki whips her like a frisbee; a squeak of alarm becomes a yelp when Katsuki comes up fast from behind. He scoops Ochako up with a small blast, a mini-slingshot before coming to land after she releases them, dropping into Katsuki's arms princess-style for an uninterrupted second before he tosser her onto her feet.

“If that was supposed to impress me, try again.”

Why Aizawa is on a pseudo-rooftop overlooking the campus in the first place is one question, but another is exactly how long he's been there. Ochako spots a few empty cans of beer, even a couple
of crushed cigarettes, and it doesn't seem like he was entirely lacking in company somehow. The sleeping bag is here too, but hopefully Aizawa’s companion for this darling of a rooftop date got to go home rather than sleeping on a barren slab of concrete in the training area like Aizawa did. Not all the faculty decide they need to be so on-the-job that at six am they’re waiting to catch their students’ pre-class training session. Ochako is the first to admit, her teacher is kinda weird sometimes.

Aizawa’s standing with his arms folded over his chest, trapping the unruly mess of bandages Ochako almost wants to run a giant comb through – then take it to his hair next. Never mind time to prepare and perfect; the one normal thing she and Katsuki had going today has been snatched away already. Ochako's trying not to scowl about it, so can’t imagine how Katsuji’s feeling.

“Let's get this over with.” Never mind, Katsuki’s made himself perfectly clear. Maybe he had an idea it was coming after all.

“Just act like I’m not here,” Aizawa starts, then pauses in a way that makes it clear he’s not actually done – revising the thought as his gaze flicks between Katsuki and Ochako. “On second thought, don’t.”

“Smart choice,” Katsuki mutters with a hot undercurrent, turning an eye to Ochako like he’s got plenty on his mind – juggling more than one thought isn’t that hard for him, at least not compared to the struggle Ochako seems to find it. He takes a deep breath, watching Ochako so carefully she feels an instinctively reassuring smile spreading across her face.

This is a big moment for them, or Katsuki built it up to be, but he doesn’t look tense right now. In fact, Katsuki seems about as annoyed by the change to his planned morning as a missed bus; annoying, but not the end of the world. Maybe after using Zero-G in a real battle, with real stakes, doing a demo in front of their teacher isn’t such a big deal anymore.

This most definitely seems the case when Katsuki announces as casually as a trip to the convenience store, “Alright, bubs. Once around the block.”

Ochako rolls her eyes, sure she’ll never be free of stupid nicknames at Katsuki’s whim, not even in front of their teacher during the assessment they’ve been anticipating for so long. But like everything else in their lives, the assessment’s come up to snatch careful deliberation away from them at the last minute. All this buildup and they’re just here in the morning basically doing their warmup.

“Here goes nothing,” Ochako announces a tad ironically, taking a few steps back from Katsuki to get a run-up before he launches her. She’s not worried anymore. After last night, Ochako believes wholly and truly that they’ve got this. Katsuki’s wearing the hint of a smile at one corner of his mouth, the crack in his braveface mask, like he knows it too.

Katsuki launches Ochako like a cannon that fires itself as well as the ball, pushing her into the air but following faster. Without handles, Katsuki’s got no choice but to grab Ochako firmly by the hip as he pushes her through the air like firing a pool ball. The path Katsuki sets Ochako on sends her close past Aizawa, but that’s on purpose – he needs to be close to watch their demonstration. They didn’t get time to practice, but Ochako heeds Katsuki’s words all the same – shit has got to be tight. She wants to do them proud.

Katsuki form is stronger than ever, coming after Ochako with a few blasts, nothing too big, just enough to get him moving fast, and hits Ochako straight on. Their hands connect with each other’s wrists and they both move the ways they need to in order to spin around and come back out going straight up and down respectively; Ochako for the sky, Bakugo for the ground – but not for long.

A second later Bakugo blasts himself back up at Ochako. She brings her fingers together – posed
like some kind of ascending spirit – to call out, “Release!”

Gravity returns to Ochako after a moment of stasis midair, but Katsuki’s already launched the Zero-G slingshot a moment before she let go. Katsuki pulls Ochako along for the ride with absolute confidence, like all the uncertainties are finally gone and this is seriously – actually – what they are now. Katsuki blasts the two of them from Aizawa’s rooftop to another on almost the opposite side of the training area. It feels great.

In no time they’ve made it to the edge of the training area, returning in a series of quick-bounce throws off buildings, like they’re both the tennis ball now. After what happened yesterday with Fuggo, all this low-stakes just-doing-it type of exercise seems easy by comparison. No one’s life is at stake, and that’s how Ochako accidentally starts having fun during the assessment they’ve been sweating out for two weeks – over nothing, just a fling around the park.

Katsuki chooses to end the run by sending Ochako up high directly over Aizawa’s rooftop. She drops her quirk and begins to fall, only intersecting with Katsuki as he zips across the roof barely a foot from the ground. Somehow – well, Ochako knows how, but can’t possibly put it into words – Katsuki converts their gyroscopic spinning mid-air into a piece of gymnastics, landing hard and swinging Ochako between his legs before she even realises Katsuki’s feet are on the floor in the first place.

Balled up tight and sick as a dog, but hell if she’s fumbling the landing, Ochako lets Katsuki keelhaul her into the air and somersault like three-to-five times to suck up that excess energy. She opens up into a straight-backed shape on the final flip, slowing a little before Katsuki’s hands come up under her arms to brace her for a clean dismount. He’s smiling at her; normal, nothing’s-wrong-and-we-did-it-like-I-wanted Katsuki with a smile on his face because this is a big moment and he’s nailed it. They both have.

Ochako would kiss him, but for the spilled ink walking that constitutes their nearby teacher.

“Fine,” Aizawa drones like he could be mistaken for being pleased as well. “I’m impressed.”

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact I was often puzzled when people expressed nervousness about Ochako and Katsuki getting assessed by Aizawa. Like y’all WORRIED A LOT when I’d never been too concerned bc they were OBVIOUSLY going to ace it and Katsuki was just being stressy over nothing. That was always my assumption, so I should probably call the fact that people did feel worried about it means I musta done a good job making it seem like a way bigger deal than it was actually going to be. Kids be so DRAMATIC sometimes.
Crazy in love

Chapter Summary

Ochako and Katsuki get more than they bargained for.

Chapter Notes

So this marks the beginning of what I've dubbed the 'wandering around the garden' part of this story. To which I mean, we're getting towards the final part, like the end is... in sight, but at this point I can add in scenes for no other reason than they give me pleasure, or I can push on through to the ending.

And I choose a lazy meander through the golden fields of end-game storytelling, so I truly hope you enjoy this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

‘I’m impressed.’

Aizawa hasn’t said anything since, which could mean a couple of things; one, he thinks that covers it, or two, he’s taking another of those eyes-awake-micronaps. Perhaps he’ll rest a little easier now this latest threat to All Might has been put to bed, though it doesn’t seem like Aizawa has hit the sack yet. In truth, Aizawa appears to be running on fumes and pure ether, especially evident when he blinks and then glances between Katsuki and Ochako like he’s expecting a response… maybe?

“It can be better,” Katsuki offers first, hedging their success with the important caveat that he’s not done being an insane perfectionist yet.

“Of course it can be better,” Aizawa replies with the same absolute certainty that Katsuki offers the point, but then goes quiet again. “I’m considering how.”

It’s weird, when it actually strikes Ochako. Aizawa hardly saw them during yesterday’s fight – caught up as he was with saving All Might – but he’s seen bits of what they can do. Probably a lot more than he ever lets on.

He’s seriously mulling over what they’ve shown him today, because this isn’t a joke, or some snap pass-or-fail decision. It’s much trickier than that, because an assessment was never really about failure – that was never likely, not with what they can do. As their teacher, Aizawa just needs to see what they’ve got so far, so he can help them grow even more. The stakes were all in their head – well, in Katsuki’s head mostly. Ochako only got the heebie-jeebies from all his after-we’re-assessed dramatics in the first place.

“Your greatest weakness is that only one of you has propulsion,” Aizawa concludes after an only slightly nerve-wracking pause, and it’d have to be something Ochako can’t do – not that she denies it. “What can the support department offer?”
“Uh, we haven't really…”

“I designed the handles,” Katsuki jumps in before Aizawa can even question them, snatching the reins like he thinks Ochako’s going to steer the horse into a ditch or something. She doesn’t really blame him: it could totally happen. “Support didn’t know what they were for.”

Aizawa is thoughtful, or maybe just dead on his feet, if not for the rhythmic scrape of his fingers against the stubble of his chin. “Then whose idea were they?”

“Mine,” Ochako answers as Katsuki says, “hers” at the same time, talking over each other to the same purpose. At least they're on the same page.

“You can’t expect support to maximise your equipment when they don’t know what it’s for,” Aizawa lectures dryly. “Set up that meeting. Balance your dynamic.”

“Balance?”

“Bakugo has all your firepower right now, so you’re an engine and a cart rather than two locomotives.” Aizawa continues scratching at his chin, like it's itching for a bi-monthly – that's every two months – shave. “There's nothing wrong with having a solid set of basics you can use without equipment mods, but it's going to hold you back soon.”

Ochako keeps a straight face because this is only what they deserve to hear; Aizawa isn't here to baby them and say well done, and Ochako is the weaker link. As usual.

“You're right,” Katsuki says firmly, then offers, “We'll fix it.” Something in Ochako's chest swells at the effortless ‘we’ in Katsuki’s promise. That something lacking in Ochako is for them to solve, because they're in this together. It’s strange to realise how truly Katsuki believes it, even when she has her own moments of doubt.

Ochako’s hand seems to yearn for Katsuki’s like the pull of powerful magnets, but they’re literally standing in front of their teacher so she just curls her fingers like it’s even close to being the same thing.

“See that you do,” Aizawa replies before breaking into a yawn. “There are some changes and manoeuvres you can tighten up, but I expect you know that already.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki answers surely. “What else?”

“If you were to consider using this style in any of the group exercises in class, I’d be prepared to give you a shared score.”

“Really?” Ochako chirps along with Katsuki's, “seriously?” Coming out in mismatched stereo by mistake. Ochako suspects it might be better news for her than Katsuki by the law of averages, but then again, working with others has never been his strong suit. Ochako dares to dream she might boost the one area of Katsuki’s development as a hero that's lacking: playing nice with others.

“However,” Aizawa caveats like returning a serve with a hard slice, “I would understand if you choose to keep it under wraps.” Ochako stifles a giggle at ‘under wraps’ before catching glares from Katsuki and Aizawa in tandem.

“Why would we still want to keep it a secret?” Ochako tries to save face by trying to ask an intelligent question, but might just come off like she doesn’t get something the others are taking for granted.
“There’s value in having something up your sleeve, especially among your peers,” Aizawa replies a tad ominously.

“That stupid partners contest is coming up,” Katsuki cuts in, but when Ochako would have queried ‘oh, we’re doing that together now?’ his business is all elsewhere. “Aren’t you going to get on us about the personal shit?”

Ochako’s lost as to what Katsuki means by that, but maybe she's the only one.

“That’s more All Might’s thing,” Aizawa declares. “I could warn you again about the complications, but I don’t care for hypocrisy and I think you two understand the factors well enough already.” He pauses, perhaps only for dramatic effect. It's hard to tell with the master of deadpan. “Do we need to go through it again?”

“No,” Katsuki says surely. “We’re clear.”

“Good,” Aizawa returns. “Then I’ll let you get back to work.”

With a glance at Katsuki, who’s eyeing Ochako like a freshly cut slice of steak, she’s not convinced work’s the only thing they’ll be getting back to. There’s a silence so tense it could be strung across a door and used as a tripwire while all three of them stand there looking at each other in some kind of bizarre Mexican glare-off.

After what feels like years, Aizawa is the one to move, turning away to trudge over to his impromptu camping site. With the expediency of a tortoise that’s not in a hurry, Aizawa rolls up his sleeping bag, then sticks the cigarette butts into one of the empty beer cans, which he crushes and puts into his pocket. Ochako’s seen her teacher in battle – where he moves like the end of a whip – so she knows what he can accomplish when he wants to. This isn’t it.

Aizawa moves over to the building edge and gazes all the way down the five-odd stories with the enthusiasm of a slug heading to an unwanted appointment at the slug-dentist. Ochako and Katsuki are still watching in a silence that’s increasingly more perplexed than awkward. It’s a rare sight to catch their teacher this much in disarray: maybe even hungover. Ochako wonders why Aizawa even decided to come up here, much less hang out for beers and a smoke in a post-battle fatigue. And with who – Ochako thinks with a secret notion of the answer.

“Would you like a lift?” Ochako finds herself offering before her mind can do anything about her mouth. “To the ground, I mean.”

Aizawa considers it for a short moment, or perhaps just considers the stairs. “Alright.”

Ochako moves sharpish towards her teacher and taps his outstretched, dangly-limp hand like his bones are all slightly soft. She activates her quirk as she pushes Aizawa out over the edge, then with a quick whip of the wrist sends him shooting for the ground like a Zero-G elevator, bringing her fingers together and readying for a, “release,” when he’s reached – thereabouts – the ground.

It’s entirely possible that a grabby Katsuki could be part octopus-quirk for all Ochako knows, because Aizawa’s barely out of sight, still technically in Ochako’s sight, though not looking up at them, when his arms slide around her waist. He’s silent at first, like he's hardly realised he's doing it while so lost in thought, though he sure snuck up on her quick enough.

“I think that went okay.” Ochako turns away from the edge into a half-hug to Katsuki’s side, her shoulder fitting into the groove under his arm like they’re pieces to be stacked on top of each other.

“Went fine,” he murmurs into her hair, still lost in that intensely thoughtful tone. “Good job.” Right,
Katsuki only manages to compliment Ochako when he’s hardly paying attention. Shame it’s still difficult to get from him when he’s actually tuned in to her. Or maybe that’s not fair – he doesn’t give praise lightly, and that means Ochako should recognise when it’s deserved.

“What’re you thinking about?” It’s deceptively easy, in the end, to just ask Katsuki what’s drawn him into a lax, default-huggy state of consideration; like he doesn’t want to talk right now, but that doesn’t preclude their touching.

“Support,” he murmurs like it’s barely a word. When she looks at him, Katsuki’s eyes are focused in the distance well past Ochako’s head. It’s been a while since she’s seen him so wholly consumed this way – not since the early days, when he was first trying to get a hold on their combined style alone and she had to negotiate for him to even talk to her in full sentences.

“You wanna… talk about it?” This is that interesting definition of ‘back to work’ Ochako was thinking about, but there’s plenty of work happening right now, it’s just entirely in Katsuki’s head.

“One sec.” Katsuki’s still staring into space, but now it’s like he’s angry at space for not staring back. Then again, he’s always had a cranky thinking face.

“Okay.” Ochako says this in a conciliatory, I-can-be-patient way, but it only lasts so long. She shakes Katsuki a little – or at least tries to – from the tight loop she’s made with her arms around his torso. “C’mon, what is it?”

“Just gimmie a fuckin’ minute,” Katsuki bites, one corner of his mouth still twisted into an iron scowl. Ochako realises they’ve been holding each other tighter and tighter, until now it’s kind of more like a bear-hug-to-the-death than a relaxed cuddle. Bakugo and Uraraka: intense as usual. So Ochako waits. Then like the break of rains from an overcast sky, Katsuki rumbles thunderously, “I have an idea.”

But then before he even gets it out, Ochako's struck with a notion so hot it’s like lightning. She excitedly thwacks Katsuki on the chest with her hands, and he looks kind of stunned by it.

If Katsuki’s thinking anything like what Ochako thinks he’s thinking, then her idea ought to work perfectly. “So do I!”

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“What makes you so sure she’s even going to-” A large crash cuts off the sound of Katsuki’s voice from the other side of the Support department’s main workshop door.

“Told you so,” Ochako butts in after the large-object-falling-into-several-smaller-ones noise stops. “She’s always here.” Another fanatic, for whom more time with her beloved babies is the only thing she can never get enough of.

“This better fuckin’ work,” Katsuki grumbles with defensive ego, because this is mostly his idea, but then Ochako came and screwballed it by suggesting just who they could talk to in the Support department to make things happen right away. Katsuki’s plan is still going to work fine for it, probably.

Ochako knocks on the door and hears a shrill, “Yeah yeah! Come in!” from within, which is enough of a signal for Katsuki to snatch the handle like he’s got a grudge against doors and toss it open. “Whoever you are, I hope you brought coffee because I’m…” Hatsume Mei slows her torrent of chatter when she zooms in on just who’s stepped into her workshop on a Friday morning before Lunch Rush has even served breakfast.
Because Uraraka Ochako and Bakugo Katsuki don’t just wander into the Support department workshop together by accident. “Oh… it’s you two.” Hatsume announces this as if out loud to herself more than for anyone else’s benefit. Ochako’s starting to think it’s not such a great idea anymore.

“Eh?” Katsuki grunts coarsely.

“You two,” Hatsume repeats like it has any more significance when she says it in a more exaggerated way, crosshairs in her eyes darting back and forth between Katsuki and Ochako, before breaking into a delighted grin. “What can I do for you?”

Hatsume stares at them like she’s adding up the numbers with insane calculations sprinting madly in her mind, putting the two and two together that until recently, not so many people at UA have thought about. So far: Katsuki and Ochako of course, then Aizawa, and Present Mic, All Might technically but it feels like a dodgy point, and then obviously Deku, Iida and Todoroki. And the policemen. In about three seconds time, Hatsume Mei too.

Katsuki strides right up to her, and because he’s Bakugo, Hatsume stops what she’s doing and watches him. Just to see what he’s gonna do.

“I want you to make her boots rocket-powered,” Katsuki announces like he’s placing a restaurant order, and then without further warning reaches into his bag and pulls out one of his refill-grenades and dumps it on the workbench in front of Hatsume. “Fuelled off these.”

“I’ll do better than that.”

“You’ll do it like I fucking said,” Katsuki comes back instantly, and Ochako rolls her eyes – if he’s going to come in fighting, Katsuki better know his opponent.

“Well no one made you the top student in your course yet, so why don’t you leave the big decisions up to the number ones?” Hatsume returns with vicious enthusiasm. “You won’t get enough pressure from those grenades to refuel quickly, and unless bubble-butt over here wants to haul around a shit-ton of extra weight in her boots you’re gonna be needing fast refills instead of a big tank.”

“I know that already,” Katsuki returns adamantly. “Tell me something I don’t, if you’re so fucking smart.”

“We’ll put a connection on your bracers,” Hatsume announces like she didn’t just get this brief thirty seconds ago, but has been working on it in secret for years. Ochako would believe it. Hatsume probably knows Katsuki’s equipment better than he does – not that he’d ever admit it. “Hot from your hands to her feet, you two are into all kinds of kinky stuff, huh?”

Katsuki looks like he wants to explode. His eyes dart to Ochako’s with a resentful this-was-your-idea panic-fury.

“I guess that works too,” Ochako says just to find a way to break into the tension. Alarming as the notion of the bracers that usually shoot incredible destructive blasts instead being used to power the rocket-boots Ochako’s just coming to terms with, she trusts that if Hatsume is behind the idea, it’s got to be decent. “How long do you think it’d take?”

“Why, you gonna use it at the all-star couples tournament?” Hastume’s eyes narrow, and Ochako wonders how that name got round so fast.

“None of your agenda-pushing business,” Katsuki butts back in. “Yes or no.”
“Yes, duh,” Hatsume replies with an incredibly over-the-top roll of her eyes, like she’s sighting a new target. “I’m loving all this by the way,” she adds as an aside that’s directed at Ochako, flicking a finger back and forth between Katsuki and her like he’s not standing right there. “I’ll have these done in a flash, so if you use my babies in the tournament. You sure as hell better win and then drop my name on the podium, ‘kay?”

Katsuki raises an eyebrow at Hatsume. And for a minute Ochako feels the hairs on the back of her neck rise; like if Katsuk’s giving that look to anyone it ought to be her, especially when she’s standing right here. Even if that’s nuts, and she needs to get her crazier impulses under control. Katsuki’s just in work mode, and if that happens to be super attractive and makes the jealous goblins in Ochako’s head get agitated, that’s just how it has to be.

“Cocky bitch, ain’t you?” Katsuki says to Hatsume with a tone like curdled milk, and Ochako remembers who she’s dealing with all over again. Still 100% Bakugo.

Then again, Katsuki knows who he’s dealing with, so Hatsume just laughs and chucks pink curls over her shoulder. “Takes one to know one, prom king. Come with me to check your stuff out of the lockers.” The two of them – Hatsume and Katsuki take a step, before Ochako remembers she’s meant to be doing something other than watching in perplexed-jealous-knee-jerk surprise. “You too, cutie!” Hatsume peals like a bell.

With a quick shake of to stir her head like a cocktail that’s separated, Ochako tumbles into step behind Katsuki and Hatsume. It feels like every ceiling Ochako blows through with him turns out to have yet another ceiling behind it. But maybe the next will be the one that opens onto blue skies, she considers as she draws level with Katsuki.

For a moment when they’re walking – not for too long, but just as their hands naturally swing close to one another – Katsuki latches Ochako’s fingers in his and gives them a light squeeze. No reason for it, other than he can. A small reiteration of his affection.

Ochako has the terrifying resurgent thought again, the feeling that gets drawn out of her into Katsuki in moments such as this, like a morning sun burns off mist: she loves him.

But that would be crazy.

Chapter End Notes

Me: I could have a scene with Mei
Me again: do we need that?
Me also: *slaps both of me in the face with the same fish* FOOLS!

The answer is *always* have a scene with Hatsume. Oh also guess this another exciting one for their quirk teamup, but tbh that's just like so fucking OP that I don't make the rules and Horikoshi would be bonkers not to run with this bit but hey I don't make the rules I'm just sayin' I think it'd be p great ;) :)

OH OH! The beer and cigarettes thing with Aizawa and Mic! I wrote a new fic in the 'DADT' series/verse that explains just what happened that evening ;) It's 'third' in the DADT series. It's called 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' and has all the stupid Erasermic shitposting domestic interaction I could ever need (until my next project). Thanks y'all!
“Uravity’s booties are the harder part of this, no surprises there.” Mei is leaning over her workbench scribbling frantically on a piece of sketch paper that she pulls off a long roll; if Katsuki hasn’t noticed the knockout integrity-questioning shot of her cleavage this position offers, Ochako sure has. She’s never been so indiscriminately envious-yet-fixated, and keeps having to redirect her attention from Hatsume’s chest back to the paper.

“This is the position we’ll be in.” Katsuki leans down over the paper next to Hatsume, his open hand demanding her pencil – she passes it to him – and sketching out the pose. It’s two stick figures essentially, but with correct proportions and in the clear position of their basic pinball launch. The rest of their bodies have been summarized with a few lines, but Katsuki goes into more detail on the connection of his hands to her feet, a supplementary sketch that’s more like a side-on cross section. “It needs to happen automatically when we… do something.”

“Something?” Hatsume turns to look right at Katsuki, but he’s fixed obliviously on the paper. Already sketching out another, almost to-scale diagram of the barrel of his grenade bracers.

“Read the goddamn diagram,” Katsuki delivers in a flat, fuck-me-not kind of tone. “This is on a need-to-know basis.”

“Wow, could you be anymore obsessed with yourself?” Hatsume replies like she really couldn’t care less for Katsuki’s sense of secrecy. His twitching scowl is a great indicator of Katsuki’s mood, zig-zagging like the needle of a compass circling a magnet. “You should really give me a demo if you want it done right.”

Hatsume is cool as a cucumber, so if she’s bothered by all that proximity to took-off-his-hoodie-so-tanktop-only-mode Katsuki while he works over the design with her, talking about positions and something-they’re-doings, she sure isn’t showing it. If it were Ochako in that position, she’d already be sweating way more than she’s the dignity to admit. Instead she finds herself awkwardly hovering near the pair of them, just watching the magic happen from the sidelines. It’s… interesting, and something Ochako can easily change.

“Will it only work when we’re both facing the same way?” The comment slips from Ochako’s mouth as she tilts her head to one side, figuring the sketchy drawings out with less ease than her design-minded company.

“Yeah, so the half turns have gotta be tight,” Katsuki confirms like it’s not a dumb question. “We’ll be coming in sideways, like this.” He draws the rotation onto the sketch of his bracers, and Ochako feels an alarming rush of satisfaction. “There’s room to add a connection for fuelling.”

“Typical boy,” Hatsume titters. “You want a new spout for everything. I’ll just modify the one you’ve got.”
Ochako doesn’t think Hatsume’s flirting with Katsuki, at least, not on purpose. She talks to everyone like this, and Ochako’s just got a featherlight balance on the crazy-not-even-real-girlfriend scales in her head right now.

“Don’t fuck with my firepower,” Katsuki delivers ominously.

“Give me some credit, dude,” Hatsume bounces back. “I can put a spring-loaded lock-in on it for ya too.”

“Obviously,” Katsuki growls like he always knew that. “But go easy on the locking mechanism.”

“Light as air, swear it.” Hatsume pulls a blue pencil out from between her hair and goggles somewhere, and once Katsuki finishes the schematic of his bracer just starts working straight over it. “Make sure you don’t set her on fire when you do this, or girl’s gonna pop like a bottle of champagne.”

“Course not,” Katsuki snaps, settling an issue he clearly thinks should be left alone once and for all: he will never do anything to endanger Ochako. “What about the ignition on her boots?” The question seems to sneak out of Katsuki’s mouth without thinking about it, like he forgot Bakugo isn’t supposed to ask questions as if he doesn’t already know the answer.

Only then does it suddenly dawns on Ochako that Katsuki is handling Hatsume with respect to the fact that she has something to offer him, and he can just ask for her input rather than see it as a proof of his weakness. More than that, Katsuki is calm – or thereabouts – while he’s doing it. She’s proud of him.

“I can give you a button, well-” Hatsume sweeps her head from one side to the other to hone her gaze on Ochako. “I can give you a button.”

“Where?” Ochako replies simply.

Hatsume’s smiling like there’s something superbly funny about this situation that Ochako’s not party to. It’s making her feel… funny. “Where’d you want it?”

“I guess in the shoes,” Ochako answers without putting up the filter between lil’ Ochako in the workshop of her brain and the one that checks ‘is this a good idea? ’ before shoving it out the trapdoor of her mouth. “Our hands are pretty busy during all that… stuff.”

“Somehow that doesn’t surprise me,” Hatsume quips with a dirty air that Ochako finds herself blushing over, which doesn’t make a lick of sense because it’s Hatsume. “Hey, wasn’t the latest that you two broke up?”

“Does this look like a date?” Katsuki swings at the question Hatsume pitches to him as if he’s going for a home run. And he hits it into the stratosphere, since Hatsume’s romantic-status inquiry remains unanswered and she offers no follow-up questions as she tears off a fresh sheet of paper and starts sketching one of Ochako’s boots.

“I can put a button in the sole of the boot to fire the mechanism, but it’s trickier to get the hang of operating than using, yanno, your hands,” Hatsume explains with a jazz-handsy gesture as she finishes the initial outline then goes over her first lines with the modifications. “I’ll also have to put in a failsafe for fuelling, so you don’t accidentally set his hair on fire.”

Ochako laughs at the image, which doesn’t go down like the joke she mistook it for, going by the looks on Hatsume and Katsuki’s faces; just Ochako then. “I mean… I’m sure it’ll be fine.”
“Fine’s bullshit,” Katsuki decides with the gravity of a judge. “It has to be the best.”

“I like the way this guy thinks.” Hatsume grins a mile wide, jabbing her thumb at Katsuki like he’s on a shelf for sale from a catalogue. “What was your relationship status again?”

“None of your damn business.” Katsuki slams the lid on that one too. Something in Ochako’s stomach stirs and settles again, like a curled up cat adjusting itself while sleeping soundly.

“Alright, cranky-pants,” Hatsume says with an eyeroll that seems to annoy Katsuki; he’s disarmed by people not backing off when his dazzling manners and polite conversation fail to deter them from shit-talking him. Though his tolerance is rising every day. “I’m going into the back to source some parts. You two can wait here if you want, but don’t even think about touching my babies.”

When Hatsume zips off into a back room, Katsuki’s looking at Ochako like he’s not much concerned with anyone else’s baby.

“You still with the program, bubs?” he asks, softer than the mere words would betray.

“Oh, I’m trying to keep up alright,” Ochako replies just as soft, and Katsuki takes a step towards Ochako that fills her with unusual guilt – his concern is sincere, and she’s being silly. Or maybe not, because silly never stopped them before, so she just comes out with it. “I won’t be able to do this right away, you know.”

“I never said you had to,” Katsuki replies with irritable confusion. “Try the damn boots on before you tell me they ain’t gonna fit.”

“I just mean, this is all super new and fast, I dunno if it’s gonna be ready for the all-star couples… the stupid tournament,” Ochako defaults to a far better name for it as she puts her palm to her forehead, and if that happens to be Katsuki’s, well, so be it.

When she first hears Katsuki’s “tch,” there’s a moment when Ochako fears he’s going to scoff at her for being unsure. But that’s not what happens.

“What, so you’re saying you wanna try it out first, and only let other people see when you think it’s ready?” Katsuki phrases with an edge too sarcastic to be mistaken: he’s burning Ochako – but like, for fun. “What a thought.”

“Fine, I admit it.” Ochako crosses her arms and leans against the workbench with one hip, maybe making a slightly silly face as she pretends this is a tremendous admission and not silly workplace banter. “You’re always right, about everything, all the time. Happy?”

If Katsuki guesses Ochako is feeding his ego to encourage a particular response in him, he sure doesn’t mind it. In fact, the corner of his lip flares as he cuts a wicked smirk, propping his hands on his hips like they’re comparing arms. He always wins, at least in that division.

Katsuki doesn’t stay still long, bursting into a movement so quick it can only come from total confidence. Without a hint of strain, Katsuki takes a step and picks Ochako up, popping her up on the top of the workbench before he takes one more step that turns him into Ochako fully.

“Couldn’t be happier,” Katsuki mutters against Ochako’s mouth, though it’s almost lost as neither of them are in much of a talking mood right now. Ochako just winds her arms around Katsuki’s neck and waits to be kissed, which is what Katsuki does a second after that.

It’s only when they’re literally making out that Katsuki’s words sink in. Couldn’t be happier: being here with Ochako, at six in the morning doing something reckless in the Support Department...
workshop. Like a strange reflex, Ochako remembers they’re not even properly going out yet; although, most of the symptoms are there and she would personally wring the neck of anyone who tried to date Katsuki instead of her. Just let them try.

Ochako takes a thoughtful respite from the kiss, and backs away from Katsuki in an attempt to look at him in contemplation. Should she really ought to be making out with her not-yet-boyfriend when he won’t even ask her out in the first place? Except Ochako never gets that look, because she’s barely moved her mouth off Katsuki’s when he chases needily, drawing her back into another kiss and wrapping his arms tighter around her: lest she get away from him again.

Ochako decides to have another go at withdrawing, but this time purely to find out if Katsuki will chase her again. He does. And after making a frustrated noise that sends a shiver racing up Ochako’s spine. She breaks away one more time and as before, Katsuki ducks close, but then stops his lips a straight hair away from Ochako’s, just to murmur, “Tease,” over them before finishing the claim to his target.

It’s only after their mouths part from being otherwise engaged (so a while) before Ochako says, “Takes one to know one,” and practically speaking it just gets slipped in there between different parts of the same makeout session. Ochako’s not sure she’ll ever get sick of kissing Katsuki.

It’s not something they get to find out, because footsteps cause them to spring apart, and in Ochako’s case this means banging into the irregularly-stacked shelves behind her, knocking something loose from higher-up in the chaotic what-fits-where pile. She reaches out to grab a weighty metal contraption that stops slim inches above Katsuki’s head and activates her quirk. Compared to what could’ve been a nasty knock on the head, instead it bobs away like a beachball.

“Looking a teensy bit more like a date now,” Hatsume teases like she’s trying to craft a pompadour, heading over to the main workbench to dump an armful of parts and somewhat-built other things that don’t seem super relevant to Ochako and Katsuki’s requirements right now, “and be careful with that.” She hops up to snatch the zero gravity ‘baby’ from the air when it drifts within her reach, setting it down as Ochako brings her fingertips together to release her quirk.

“So uh, do we actually need to be here anymore?” Ochako points out with the solid commitment to pretend she’s not blushing like crazy, and neither is Katsuki.

“Not really, but don’t let little old me stop you,” Hatsume baits incorrigibly, flapping her fingers like they should just start making out again so she can tune in and out like a TV drama. “We have a supply closet in the back that’s great for-”

“No that’s alright!” Ochako leaps in before Hatsume can finish that thought. The Support Department is infamous for back-room antics, and Ochako doesn’t think they need to know what anyone’s getting up to in there. Or risk adding further fuel to the rumour inferno that Ochako and Katsuki’s long-running drama has become. “Guess we’ll be heading off.”

“Not so fast,” Katsuki cuts in. “If this basket case is messing around with my bracers, I wanna be here to make sure she doesn’t fuck anything up.”

“You wouldn’t even be able to tell if I was fucking them up, hot stuff,” Hatsume retorts. She starts jabbing one of the chunks of tech-junk she’d brought out with a large screwdriver, prying the pieces apart with the delicacy of a child smashing up someone else’s legos. “But yanno, maybe I’ll do it now just because you said so.”

“You fucking dare and I’ll-” Katsuki moves away from Ochako, but she catches him by the front of his vest and tugs him back.
“Hatsume doesn’t mean that,” Ochako supersedes before Hatsume and Katsuki’s egos start snapping at each other anymore – two dogs that need to be separated after their escalating play-fighting is about to tip over into violence. “Thanks for your help, Hatsume. I knew we could count on you.”

“You’re sweet, hon,” Hatsume purrs with the same flirty twist she was talking to Katsuki with. Ochako knows Hatsume talks to everyone this way – but it’s still entirely flustering to be on the receiving end of. “You just leave it all to me.”

Katsuki’s watching Ochako pretty conspicuously – hard to miss when he’s still parked between her legs as she sits on the workbench. And right now he’s watching the deepening blush in Ochako’s cheeks with much amusement.

“Just do it right,” Katsuki mutters at Hatsume, then finally steps back from Ochako like the illusion of their being consummately professional is that easy to reclaim. Hell, maybe it is. Ochako hooks her fingers around the edge of the bench and swings herself off it, landing just behind Katsuki and falling into step behind him as he crosses the workshop for the door. “Tell Uraraka when it’s ready for a tryout.” Ochako’s not super surprised to find Katsuki directing the necessary correspondence through her rather than having to deal directly with Hatsume, especially when she’s so likely to sass him, but Ochako doesn’t mind splitting the work to suit their strengths.

Because while Katsuki can design in a way that keeps up with someone like Hatsume – and that’s nothing to sniff at – revealing yet another hidden talent from the mine of his personality that Ochako’s been digging for the past month, Ochako can sure handle the people-side of things with far more delicacy than Katsuki’s dynamite-mining sense of tact. It was Ochako’s idea in the first place to go to Hatsume with Katsuki’s solution to this latest challenge: how Ochako shares her quirk with Katsuki, but with the exception of the grenade-incident, she’s never been able to share in his.

At least until now. Between Katsuki’s idea, and Ochako’s quick I-know-someone way of getting it done in a pinch, this might actually be ready somewhat-in-time for the tournament – if they’re even going to be allowed to use support gear. The fact that they might not, but this is just the next big thing, the new leap forward in their growth, is both a comfort and excitement all the same.

“Yeah yeah, I’ll text your girl,” Hatsume returns like she’s rapidly losing interest in this conversation, waving in a way that might just actually be shooing. “You can go make out somewhere else now, mama’s busy with her babies.”

That’s a cue to leave if Ochako’s ever heard one, grabbing Katsuki’s hands to give an indicative tug and quick, “Thanks-bye!” as she bolts for the door with him in tow.

Katsuki actually lets her, which is novel in and of itself. Maybe that’s why Ochako keeps doing it, trailing Katsuki by their interlocked fingers like a kite down the hallway, blissfully ignorant – it is still pretty early – of who might be stalking the corridors.

So of course, that just has to be the moment when Monoma from the other class steps around the corner.

Chapter End Notes

Me@myself: you know how ochako's jealous of other girls?? what if it's just bc she's bi as fuck.
*Hi-fives myself*

Oh and straight up there is a whole piece of this scene that I saw in random discord chatter and thought 'oh boi that's gud' and worked it in. Come hang in discord and I'll reveal which it is!

THIS SUMMARY was brought to you by Penzie, who left the following comment on the final line of this chapter.

"slow clap

we've come full circle"
Making Regrettable Decisions

Chapter Summary

The world turns, regardless of Ochako and Katsuki's actions in it.

Chapter Notes

So after the grand panic one poor commenter incurred (and hilariously recounted to me) after I updated my Bakuvision companion fic 'Count the Ways' on Friday instead of this fic, we return to normal updates... for *an* update...

By which I mean, I have work calls from the hours of 8pm - 11pm on Wednesday (my usual update slot), and then on Friday I will be preparing to go on vacation for 2 weeks, followed by a week abroad for work afterwards. Aside from being another 6.5-7 hours ahead of my usual timezone and in a place where 'good internet' isn't a 100% given, I'm understandably gonna be otherwise occupied quite a lot of the time, and updates may not be on schedule. Or at all. I'm sorry bout that, but don't panic.

Seriously, don't panic. Because there's also... only going to be 10 more chapters of this story (that's right, I know how many chapters it's going to be now!) and so with that combined with my real life demands over the next 3 weeks, updates are going to be more of a wildcard thing than a regular occurrence. We're winding down to the finish, so you can appreciate my taking my time with it a little.

You can probably come to discord and find out more about when I might update next, but the honest answer is I'm not really sure when it'll be - I'd like to get one more out before I leave (probs Thursday) but after that it's really anyone's guess. We had a good run, though.

With that essay over, here's the next chapter - quite a fun and light one, as we continue our garden-wandering after I've been so morose in the rest of the a/n. Whoopise.

For some really stupid reason, Ochako decides to freeze when Monoma catches her and Katsuki holding hands in the hallway just outside the Support Department at a ridiculous hour in the morning. What does this guy do that makes him turn up at these inopportune places at such inopportune times?

Katsuki pauses when Ochako does, but only out of confusion over why she's stopped in the first place. Then he sees Monoma. Ochako feels the finger-crunching squeeze of her fingers between Katsuki's, his palms heating up in real time.

Monoma looks like a bunny that doesn’t fully realise that the headlights are attached to a huge truck, and as such seems kind of shit-eatingly amused with the scene he’s stumbled onto – again.

“Say, wasn’t the latest that you two broke up?”
“The fuck’re you looking at, asshole? Get the fuck out of here!” Katsuki rips his hotplate hand away from Ochako and is advancing on Monoma like he’s got a mind to end his life. It’s a vintage Bakugo they haven’t had in a while, but Ochako’s not sure she needs the refresher on the full extent of Katsuki’s temper.

Monoma’s not expecting a full-rage Katsuki either, going by the way he jumps and a sickened shadow falls over his face. “I… uh- I’ll just be going now.”

“You’re damn right you are,” Katsuki growls, stopping a pace away from Monoma like a full speed cement truck slamming on the brakes. “You never saw us here. Understand?”

“I… understand.” Monoma’s eyes narrow like a weasel that’s fresh out of sly training. “But what’s in it for me?” A second later Katsuki’s hand dashes out and grabs a handful of Monoma’s tie, dragging him a lot closer to Katsuki than anyone who’s not Ochako probably wants to be.

“I don’t rearrange your face, fucknut,” Katsuki’s voice scrapes like he’s dragging a rusty blade across brickwork. “And that’s me being generous, so beat it while I’m still in a good mood.”

It’s alarming to see Katsuki flip back to being full-force-shithead Bakugo in the blink of an eye, and Ochako could’ve almost forgotten he could be like this: the demon-eyed, maybe-I-will-kill-you Bakugo Katsuki who had to be restrained on the podium at every sports festival he’s been in.

Momoma takes a step backwards, then turns and breaks into a full sprint down the hallway away from them. Ochako’s not sure if this is in terror or just to immediately start gabbing, but she’ll have to hope it’s the former.

Ochako turns to Katsuki. “A good mood, huh?”

“Shut it.” Katsuki sounds so bashful that it’s not even rude; he’s a little red in the face, even brighter in patches on his neck that are the first to light up when he’s flustered by rage or romance. “Nobody asked you.”

“Alright, alright, nobody asked me,” Ochako plays back like a record-and-repeat toy in a store, taking a few steps over to return to Katsuki’s side. It’s not that she’s letting him get away with anything, but there’s nothing arguing would achieve at this point that she feels like getting into now. Not to mention, Monoma kind of deserved it. “So what should we do now?”

In their eagerness and in no small part due to Ochako’s insistence Hatsume would absolutely be in the workshop at six in the morning on an ordinary school day, the rest of the training session is a long-lost cause.

“Breakfast,” Katsuki gives his one-word answer, but doubles-down when Ochako’s still looking at him for what happens after. “Homework.”

Bingo.

A fair eyebrow hoists itself up Katsuki’s forehead, dragging the other half-way along with it so it’s like an uneven washing line has been strung across his face. There’s no need for words, because with looks entirely they can convey both what Ochako wants and Katsuki’s response. Several seconds of silence elapse while the wordless conversation takes place.

“Fine, but only because I’m in a good mood.” Katsuki breaks the standoff and buckles first – he always does, at least with Ochako.

“Thanks.” Just because it’s a decent thing to do doesn’t mean Ochako shouldn’t thank Katsuki for
doing it, and he is agreeing to go just a little bit slower, be slightly less productive when he commits
to studying together – helping her – rather than taking off ahead alone.

Ochako pushes up on her toes and strains for his face, but that’s still not quite enough. She activates
her quirk to pull herself the rest of the way, bouncing her lips against Katsuki’s cheek and dropping
herself back to the ground. Katsuki watches her from the corner of his eye, like he’s trying to
swallow a smile instead of show it. It’s cute watching him try not to.

“Let’s go already,” Katsuki mutters like he’s struggling to stay in a bad mood and now that’s the
game, and Ochako realises she just thought of him – of Bakugo Katsuki – as cute, in a completely
serious way. Talk about crazy in love. “Get your shit first, I’m not doing this with you in that
goddam common room anymore,” he phrases like an edict against everything Ochako’s passionately
dedicated herself to; as if she’s not on his side already.

“I don’t care where we do it,” she replies easily, walking next to Katsuki and just managing to resist
the urge to hold his hand or link arms, and only because they’re heading in the direction Monoma
was last seen sprinting off. “It’s always so busy in there.”

“I call it full of nosey assholes, but okay,” Katsuki replies with an amused rasp rather than truly
annoyed, like a dog growling as it pulls on a toy. “Besides, you dumped me. Bit weird if we’re
hanging out all study-club together.” Bit weird that they’re still going out, if not in name. But nothing
about this has been exactly conventional, so Ochako’s not expecting them to start doing it by the
book now.

“You made me do it,” Ochako argues playfully, and she could squabble with Katsuki all day if it
were like this. “Why don’t we just go to the classroom early? No one’s gonna be there yet.”

“Fine.” Katsuki can’t begrudge a good idea, and Ochako’s managed to hook one first try here. “Go
ahead and meet me there.”

“Why?” Ochako puzzles.

“Because those idiots will get full of it if we’re still going everywhere together,” Katsuki snaps, then
settles into more of a well-rounded amenable shit-talking disposition. “You know, I don’t mind you
being clingy most of the time, babe, but you gotta pull it together and do a few things by yourself like
a big girl.” When Ochako catches Katsuki’s gaze, she confirms that he’s absolutely in it for the wind-
up.

“Clingy? You’re one to talk,” Ochako rebutts playfully; octopus Katsuki doesn’t get his name for his
habit of not attaching himself to Ochako like suckers on glass.

“Please,” Katsuki scoffs. “You wouldn’t last a day without me.”

Ochako glances around to check the stairwell is as empty as it looks, and then dashes Katsuki with
her fingers splayed wide. The five-finger press to his chest and quick-flip of her quirk robs him of his
weight, letting Ochako pin him to the wall about an inch off the ground as easily as posting a flyer.

She watches Katsuki swallow, watching Ochako hold him against the wall, like he’s done with her
before and can only get away with because of her quirk, but hell if it doesn’t have its perks now and
again. Ochako feels Katsuki’s heart beating rapidly under her palm as she bends her arm to slowly
bring herself closer to him, setting her other hand on the wall next to Katsuki as he glares at her like
he’s impatient for her to hurry up already without actually breaking his frustrated silence to say it.

Because for a boy who fights and hates being told what to do by most everyone, Katsuki sure
doesn’t seem to mind being thrown around by Ochako.

“Likewise, baby,” Ochako accuses before dragging her Katsuki-balloon down the wall far enough to plant a stake-claiming kiss on him.

Katsuki doesn’t mind one bit.

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A short while later, Katsuki’s clearly regretting his choices a little more – at least as far as helping Ochako with her homework goes. He usually does this halfway in, remembering that studying with Ochako isn’t like training with her. She never reminds him of this fact when he’s agreeing to help her in the first place, or he might stop doing it.

So this fed-up part’s kind of inevitable, but she’s confident Katsuki will pull through if she keeps flashing smiles every time he looks over at her, even when he flat out announces, “You really suck at this.”

“Wow, that’s such helpful feedback,” she replies caustically, and Katsuki bounces her like he’s trying to shake her off his knee. Which is another thing; although she started out in her own chair pulled over to Katsuki’s desk, Ochako’s ended up perched on one of Katsuki’s knees instead. Half-slotted into the desk in front of him to be just a little bit closer, the premise being that it’s easier to both be sitting the same way at the desk than on adjacent sides.

In truth, this mainly serves the purpose of letting Katsuki have an arm around Ochako – always a bonus – and the ability to lay his face against her back from time to time – apparently a bonus for him, as it’s something he’s been doing quite a lot over a twenty-minute ad-hoc cram session. Ochako’s starting to wonder if she’s not the only one of them who’s weirdly into the other’s smell; that or Katsuki’s got a thing for Ochako’s budget laundry powder, the way he keeps burying his face against Ochako. She chooses the more flattering option.

“Just calling them like I see ‘em, princess,” Katsuki just about slurs, reaching across to her work and underlining two sections before returning to his own; when Ochako looks again, the parts where she’s gone wrong. Ochako probably can’t get away with protesting being called princess while she’s perched on Katsuki’s knee as he helps her with her homework, so in the best interests of continuing to do both decides that she won’t dare to try.

Now sure, there are better things to do than homework a half-hour before class starts on a Friday morning, but Ochako still would rather be doing it like this, with Katsuki, than most other things without him. With a weird stroke of clarity, especially when she woke up at half five this morning, Ochako realises that doing just about anything with Katsuki is enjoyable purely because it’s with him. Again that rising thought like heat under a kotatsu possesses her: she loves him. Even if she can’t possibly do anything as crazy as say it, given they’re not even dating… yet.

Obviously, this is the perfect moment for Iida Tenya to walk through the door.

“Oh I- didn’t realise anyone was here.” This is a pretty odd thing to bother saying out loud, a little obvious from the context, you could say, but this doesn’t stop Iida announcing it like an off-screen audience wouldn’t know what’s going on otherwise.

Ochako’s first instinct is naturally an attempt to scoot back off Katsuki’s knee onto the unused chair she has on the side of his desk next to the windows – kinda nice to be right closer to them for a change. But before she’s even started moving, Katsuki’s arm tightens around Ochako’s waist with you’re-not-going-anywhere determination.
“Sure looks like it,” Katsuki grunts like he totally doesn’t have Ochako perched across one of his thighs like a not-all-that-narrow park bench, legs spread so wide Ochako’s knees fit easily between his. “I knew you were a swot, but this is keen even for you, four-eyes.” Though this isn’t exactly pleasant conversation by regular standards, by Bakugo-standards it’s still technically starting a conversation. Which is… plausible?

Iida’s voice sounds like it’s been put under a hot iron and stiffened with starch until it’s brittle enough to snap. “I have some presidential matters to work out with, ah~” Iida steps away from the door to reveal an almost entirely-eclipsed-behind-his-frame Yaomomo. “OH! Yaoyorozu, here you are.” Iida must be pretty uncomfortable, because he’s wringing his hands like an anxious salesman, and keeps describing things that are happening like anyone needs to be told who’s standing at the door.

This time, when Ochako tries to scooch away from Katsuki actually lets her go, slipping from his knee back onto her seat in an almost smooth, never-even-happened kind of way. The success of that remains to be seen, because Yaomomo almost certainly saw Ochako move, so all she’s done most likely is make what she and Katsuki were doing seem less innocent than it was. Then again, Yaomomo almost looks a bit bashful to be here herself, especially twenty minutes early to class only moments behind Iida. Presidential matters, huh?

Luckily, not one of them are the kind of people who’d run around gossiping over what they caught who doing with who and where this morning. Not that there’s going to be a dearth of information in that arena after Hatsume and Monoma’s exposition to Ochako and Bakugos mutual whereabouts at stupid o’clock this morning.

After a nominal good-morning, Yaomomo immediately sets up at Iida’s desk on the other side of the classroom before they dive into to discussing their own work. It’s a relief Ochako didn’t realise she was hoping for until the gratitude sets in, actually being left to her own devices with Katsuki and not dragged into questioning or awkward small talk when they’re clearly just trying to study.

Being in the classroom with the top three academic performers in the class is going to have a certain kind of effect on a room, and right now that’s entirely to Ochako’s tastes.

However, the shorter the time before the actual start of homeroom gets, the more anxious Ochako id in her borrowed-Deku’s seat; Iida’s one thing, Yaomomo’s another, but the understanding opinions aren’t going to last forever. Sooner or later someone’s going to walk in and wonder just why a couple that famously broke up yesterday are still so cozy over homework.

Ochako’s not the only one.

“You should probably go soon,” Katsuki murmurs quietly when it’s only ten ‘til class starts. Ochako can’t help but think about how Katsuki’s not the one who wanted to break up, or who cares what people think of seeing them together. For him to say something like this – hard as it is to hear, like he wants her to go away and leave him alone – it means he’s thinking about what’s easiest for Ochako. Like taking a new, dangerous step onto ice of uncertain thickness, Ochako wonders if, how, what, Katsuki feels for her too.

“Yeah, I guess so,” she replies even quieter, a longing look at Katsuki that wants to crawl back into his lap and curl up there much more than go back to her own desk and pretend there’s nothing between them.

“What, missing me already?” Maybe it’s because Iida and Yaomomo are on the other side of the room, or maybe Katsuki just doesn’t care very much what they hear. Either way, there’s an air of intimacy in his voice that makes Ochako feel very only-us about the place.
The morning sun is picking out all the highlights in Katsuki’s hair, the erratically skewed tips coming up gold as the beams of early-morning light bathe them through the windows. Katsuki feels it too, because his expression softens just looking at Ochako, an absence of a scowl on his face touched with just the smallest curl of his lips at one corner, like the lifting of a calligraphy brush at the end of a kanji. “C’mere.”

Ochako knows what Katsuki wants to do. In fact she's going to help him do it.

It goes without saying that the moment Ochako darts forward to seal a quick kiss over Katsuki’s mouth, like closing a letter with wax, is an utterly foolish impulse that’s ripe for someone to walk into the classroom at that very moment and see them. But that doesn’t happen. The underwhelming reality of it is that they sneak a kiss while Iida and Yaomomo are just as wrapped up in their own work, no one reacts or even seems to notice, and the world just keeps on turning.

Chapter End Notes

This is the chapter I dub ‘how I accidentally shipped Iida/Momo’ because I wrote their awkward-compromising arrival and only later went back and was like hey... wait a minute...

Or hey, maybe they’re up to something else ;)


By the time anyone else arrives at the classroom, Ochako’s in her seat – well, she’s in her chair, but she moves it over to Iida’s desk to weasel in on his and Yaomomo’s presidential matters for not-asking-questions-about-Katsuki purposes and asking-questions-about-the-homework purposes too.

Whatever this Very Presidential Matter is, they hurriedly put it away as soon as Ochako scrapes up. It soon turns into an opportunity to capitalise on their brilliant minds for help with the rest of her homework. She loves Katsuki and all, but he’s not a natural-born tutor, or certainly not when it comes to their classwork.

The double-intentioned cover works, because no one asks Ochako about Katsuki for the first time in ages. It’s been too long since Ochako started homeroom by not making a scene with her on-again-off-again never-really-on and technically-off-right now but still-kinda-on boyfriend. It’s a wonder what fakeishly dumping someone will do for her friends’ propensity to ask questions about them. Especially when they know Ochako might start yelling if they don't watch it.

“Alright class,” Aizawa actually walks into the classroom today rather than getting up off the floor, which Ochako suspects is only because he slept out in that training area rather than in here or the teacher’s lounge. She wonders if her teacher has a home sometimes. He looks a little less rough than earlier, but still a lot like a garbage man warmed up in the sun. He opens a large notepad on his desk and towers over a blank page of it, like he forgot sitting down was an option. Or maybe it helps him stay alert; Ochako knows approximately how much sleep Aizawa has had, and it's not much. “I'll be taking down your partners for the all-star… spirit of unity tournament.”

“You mean, there isn't a single correct arrangement?” Iida sounds out from in front of Ochako with utmost concern. “We weren't supposed to guess the ideal matches based on your judgement?”

“Of course not,” Aizawa replies in a tone so flat it could be considered roadkill.

“But you said our first guesses were wrong!” Mina protests.

“Ah,” Aizawa coughs, and Ochako thinks about the crushed cigarettes along with beer cans. Which in turn gets her thinking about the secrets people keep, and how easily they can be revealed. “It was
a ruse.” The class emits a collective groan-sigh. “Anyone who chose their partner right away clearly
didn’t give it enough thought. Having you choose again made you examine your compatibility with
your classmates on a deeper level, rather than relying on snap decisions or existing,” Ochako swears
Aizawa’s looking right at her for just the moment he says the next part, which could be coincidence
– but then again, “relationships.”

The class breaks into a short-lived rabble while Aizawa stares into space a little, but after another stiff
cough he simply proceeds with calling out attendance, then goes back the other way to take partners.

This means that Katsuki’s being called on before Ochako, which is lucky because she’s got no
frigging idea what he’s going to say; like he might, but he’s unpredictable, so nothing’s for sure. To
be honest, it slipped Ochako’s mind with the whole All Might rescue and unexpected assessment
from Aizawa thing, though she had assumed they were going to do the obvious. She’s about to find
out.

“Yaoyorozu,” Aizawa calls.

“Present,” Yaomomo repeats, like Aizawa was too asleep to hear her the first time she said it a few
seconds ago.

“Your partner,” Aizawa corrects.

“Oh! Ah… Iida.” Yaomomo’s in a fluster that can’t be distinguished between embarrassment over
the misunderstanding or her partner, and the implications catch Ochako like a shock of static –
thankfully without explosive sweat to catch alight on this occasion. Iida is still facing forward in front
of her, stiff as a board: no wonder they put their so-called ‘presidential’ work away so fast. Ochako
feels the corners of her mouth lifting into a grin, wishing them the best.

“Mineta.”

“Ser-oooo!” Mineta stretches forward to knock knuckles with Sero: reunited again almost one year
on, though at least the pairs aren’t fighting the teachers this time. Just each other.

“Midoriya.”

Deku’s head goes up like a rabbit, glancing over his shoulder and then back to the front before he
answers, “Todoroki.”

Because Katsuki’s got his face resting on his hand as he gazes over the sea of classmates he plans to
crush in battle, Ochako can see his face twist in a way that she can recognise and translate all too
well. It speaks to some chain of cursewords about the shitty fucksticks he’s going to crush if they so
much as dare to think they can beat-

“Bakugo.”

For a second, Ochako doesn’t think he’s going to say it, so it’s somehow a pleasant surprise when
Katsuki gives a no-nonsense, “Uraraka.”

There’s a silence in the room that could be shaken up with ice, dumped in a cup with some tapioca
and called bubble tea. Just less refreshing, and more ‘what the everloving fuck’ on behalf of their
classmates’ eerie quiet.

Jirou leans forward on an elbow, folded-over knuckles to her jaw. “Didn’t you two just break up?”

“Irrelevant,” this answer comes from Aizawa. Katsuki just scowls murder, and Jirou has the decency
to look a little scolded for the interruption. “Hagakure.”

“Aoyama, sir!”

Ochako’s behind Katsuki and everyone’s looking that way already, so it’s pretty easy to watch him inconspicuously as Aizawa carries on taking names. More conspicuous is when Katsuki lifts his chin from his hand to stare straight at Ochako like he’s got a laser pointer fixed on the middle of her forehead.

Ochako swears she hears the intake of breath – not hers, but about three people close by definitely suck in a sharp breath when Katsuki sends Ochako a murderous glare, though Ochako knows the meaning she draws from it is going to be unlike anyone else’s. She sees the nuances of Katsuki’s scowls enough to tell this one isn’t angry, or at least not at her. It’s a ‘we better fucking win this’ glare, should such a thing exist.

Ochako gets a fresh hit of that ‘getting into something I might regret ’ feeling again, but is learning to recognise it’s nothing bad; it’s just that something big is coming, and she and Katsuki mean to conquer it.

In that case, bring it on.

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It’s lunchtime, and that means gossip over lunch-tables Ochako’s got no intention of being at, so instead of entering the frantic main arena that the class has gathered around for avid discussion of who-picked-who-for-the-tournament today, Ochako makes a beeline straight for the Sanctuary. Which at the moment, is just an empty table with Todoroki sitting at it. Namely: perfection.

“Welcome back,” Todoroki remarks as Ochako sits herself down opposite him, his voice dry like it could be folded over and again to form the most delicate paper crane.

“Exactly,” Ochako replies, which isn’t totally logical, but it works in turns and so does Todoroki so she has the funniest idea that he’ll get it.

Except nothing that ever, ever happens in Ochako’s life in relation to Katsuki goes exactly the way she expects it to.

“I was surprised to hear Bakugo call your name today.”

Todoroki may not always be the most transparent of people, but he isn’t foolish. So if he’s seen what Katsuki and Ochako can do, and he’s still surprised they’re partnering up, then he must have a reason.

So Ochako asks, “Why?”

“Because he said he wanted it to be kept a secret,” Todoroki answers, and Ochako thinks – duh, right. She forgets that not everyone is as fluent in Bakugo as she is.

“He just wants… to be the one to choose when things happen,” Ochako explains with a wearied breath. She doesn’t relish a conversation like this, but at least it’s something that it wouldn’t be with most other people – honest.

“And what do you want?” Todoroki’s gazing right at Ochako like that unsolved puzzle he laid down and has just come across under a pile of books that fell over.
“I want him to just get it over with already.” Ochako’s reply falls fast, because she does know what she wants. Katsuki, wholly and honestly. It just means waiting for Bakugo to do a bit of catch-up.

“Why do you put up with him?” This isn’t accusatory, and Ochako actually finds it… cathartic, in a weird way. Todoroki understands more about her and Katsuki than most people – he’s been in battle with them, seen Zero-G now it’s fully formed – but has the added benefit of not having a misleadingly positive opinion of their relationship. If anything, Todoroki’s constant state of being unimpressed about the fact that Ochako is going out with Bakugo is a breath of fresh air.

“Well he’s… not always like that.”

“He shouldn’t be like that at all.” Todoroki is firm, and Ochako knows it’s true. Maybe she wouldn’t mind someone else – Deku, probably – going up to bat for Katsuki alongside her.

But Deku’s not here, so Ochako does something else. Starts getting Bakugo with Todoroki. But not classless Bakugo: the refined, smiling-but-about-to-eviscerate you kind. “So what, I just give up on one of the best things that’s ever happened to me?”

Todoroki singles out, “Ever?” like he could almost believe it if not for that part.

“You’ve seen what we can do,” Ochako comes back fast and quiet, speaking with urgency, like any minute someone will come up and end this window where she can just speak freely. “You might be used to being crazy strong with your quirk, but it’s kinda new for me.” Todoroki is looking at Ochako like he’s meeting her all over again.

Todoroki chills, if such a term could be applied to him any more than it already is. “So it’s just about power?”

“It’s about getting better,” Ochako counters fiercely. “I know he’s… hard work, but I would’ve never been able to do what we did yesterday in a million years without Katsuki.” The opposite is also true, but Ochako doesn’t need to say it when it feels so obvious to her already.

“I think you undervalue yourself,” Todoroki observes.

“Maybe, but he helps me with that too.” Ochako doesn’t need to explain, or justify herself to Todoroki. He’s not making her and if she wanted to stop Ochako is sure he’d let it go easily, but maybe it’s about damn time Ochako started explaining herself.

Even if Todoroki looks at her like she’s teaming up with a wolf with the word ‘sheep’ painted on its side in lieu of a disguise. “Seriously?”

“Yeah, seriously,” Ochako comes back a little sharper. “I know what you see and may think of… us,” Ochako corrects instead of defaulting to ‘him’, presenting them as a complete unit – like Katsuki does. “But there’s a lot more you don’t see.”

“I see someone with problems that don’t go away overnight,” Todoroki says, and if it ain’t the truth. They’re both friends of Deku, have tried to tease out of him just how badly Katsuki bullied him in middle school and beyond, but Deku never gives it away in exact words. So it’s got to be bad.

Ochako tries a different approach and just agrees with Todoroki. No need to deny what’s true. “Then why do you think I broke up with him?”

Todoroki considers it for a moment, but only a moment. “Because he’s Bakugo.”

“Mhm,” Ochako confirms, then carefully, like turning the last card on a game of blackjack. “And
why am I still teaming up with him?”

Todoroki hesitates a little longer, as if testing the thickness of the ice he’s ventured onto. “Because he’s… Bakugo.”

“Bingo,” Ochako answers with a canny gin. “Believe me, I know it'd be easier with anyone else, but he’s—becoming a better person in front of me, is what Ochako could have said, probably would have if she'd had a second longer, but she pauses and never presses play when Iida and Yaomomo come up with six lunches between them – two for Iida, four for Yaomomo.

“Oh, don’t let us interrupt you,” Yaomomo tries to console as she detects the sudden death of Ochako and Todoroki’s conversation.

“It's nothing, just breaking the sanctuary rules,” Ochako jokes light-heartedly, beaming at Iida when he sits down next to her as Yaomomo goes around to the Todoroki-side. “So, presidential matters, huh?”

“I…” Iida is flustered and it's cute and funny, but Yaomomo is going positively puce in a couple of distinct spots on her cheeks. The pair of them look like they came rolling out of a vegetable patch full of tomatoes.

“You're hardly one to talk about that, Uraraka,” Todoroki points out without malice; just calling them like he sees them as always.

“Okay,” Ochako admits, holding up her hands like she’s handing herself in to the hypocrite police. “Ya got me.”

“About what?” Yaomomo queries, and Ochako realises she did it again – opened her big mouth too soon.

“Just how Uraraka is still partnering with Bakugo in spite of their… breaking up,” Todoroki jumps in to snatch Ochako from her self-inflicted peril, which she really doesn't expect but is incredibly grateful for all the same. He did put her in it, so fair’s fair. Even if he doesn’t quite sound convinced himself.

“Ah, an interesting test of Aizawa's theory, I expect,” Yaomomo predicts.

“What theory?” Ochako puzzles.

“Mediating personal and physical chemistry to find a functional balance of give and take,” Yaomomo replies like she’s simply explaining two and two make four, and not summing up in one sentence what Ochako and Katsuki have been trying to master for weeks. Harder than it sounds. “To say nothing of your quirk-compatibility.”

“Uh, right,” Ochako agrees hesitantly, feeling cagey even before she feels a familiar shadowy presence at her side. With a blunt clack, a tray hits the table next to Ochako.

A moment later and Katsuki’s sitting beside her, already eating his lunch by the time his butt hits the seat. He only looks up after several seconds of deadly silence, staring around the table like the jury at his own trial. “What, you assholes talking about me or something?”

“Uh, yeah,” Ochako confirms with a cheeky ‘challenge me’ glance around the table.

“Figures,” Katsuki grunts uninterestedly, continuing to attack his lunch instead of the people who happen to be scattered around it. Weirder still is the observation that Katsuki is here in the first
place… just up and sat himself down next to Ochako like a dog coming to lay by her side, supposedly-broken-up and everything. She wonders what people will think about it for a moment, before realising that it matters not at all.

Katsuki knows that too, which is why he doesn’t say anything, just keeps wolfing down his lunch. This not-interested-in-any-of-you silence lasts until the cheery, “Oh Kacchan, I didn’t expect to see you here,” heralds the inevitable approach of the last person Katsuki wants and therefore the most likely person to sit down next to Todoroki.

It’s like they’ve broken back into factions, except instead of being up front of the Baku-squad, who seem to be a table closer to them every time Ochako looks around, Katsuki’s accidentally defected to Deku’s side. Perhaps with the intent to take over, the way he glares at Deku as he takes a seat next to Todoroki, opposite to Katsuki and looking thrilled about it.

“Expect again,” Katsuki mutters, gaze pinned to his lunch, which seems to be the larger part of his focus at this point in time. He’s got to eat somewhere, and Ochako can’t imagine Katsuki loving the interrogation and high-paced chatter of his usual crew if he’s trying to concentrate. Even if it is just on eating. “Hey.” Ochako jumps when Katsuki’s elbow digs into her side suddenly, whipping her head to the side and meeting his fiery gaze. “Hurry up. We’ve got work to do.”

“At lunchtime?” Ochako protests like it’s more of a burden than it is; Katsuki surely knows she’s not serious, but what everyone else at the table – or sitting at the next table, leaning back conspicuously – thinks is anyone’s guess.

“Yeah, so eat faster,” Katsuki urges impatiently, and then with absolute confidence in his purpose announces, “I got us a room.”

Ochako does start eating, kind of shovelling down now it comes up, but pauses long enough to glance at Katsuki questionably as she asks the risky question of, “A room for what?” In Ochako’s head, that’s actually a pretty good question – normally they train outside, so if Katsuki wants a room then it must be for something different.

But of course, that’s not how it sounds when they say the words in the middle of a crowded canteen. Ochako is truly the master of her own demise.

Katsuki’s eyebrow lifts, similar to the split-second at the start of a sparring bout, before she catches the freight train of his right hook coming straight for her. With a finely-tuned sense for it, Ochako anticipates the moment of calm before Katsuki kicks her ass. “What the fuck do you think?”

Chapter End Notes

I suppose this is a naughty moment to leave this update off on, but whayya gon’ do
*scuttles off onto a plane and takes off*

Next Chapter Title Teaser (date tbc…): Getting a Room
Getting a room

Chapter Summary

Katsuki ups the ante.

Chapter Notes

ASIA IS FUN AND I'M HAVING SUCH A GOOD TIME. ENJOY THIS UPDATE. I LOVE YOU ALL.

- Signed, Chunks of the future (aka pacific time).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you two sure you’re not going out?” The voice of disbelief comes, as it always does, from one Todoroki Shouto. But this time it’s not disbelief at the fact of Ochako and Katsuki fighting, but that they’ve actually broken up. Ochako just tried to – perhaps not very successfully – convince Todoroki they are broken up, just moments before Katuski arrived to start undermining that appearance so devotedly.

“Yes,” Katsuki snaps with an angry glare over at Todoroki, as if he weren’t here first of all and somehow it’s still Todoroki’s fault he’s at the table Katsuki sat down at. “This is business, not pleasure, you damn creep.”

“Wait, so you really are broken up?” Deku has to check, like he needs to update his records accordingly.

“What did I just say?” Katsuki snaps at him.

“Oh, I know,” Deku flash-flushes, going from normal to tomato-faced in a matter of seconds. “It’s just you two are still… uh…”

“I don’t know or care how the hell you plan on doing it with Baked Alaska, but we aren’t wasting any more time with this schoolyard bullshit,” Katsuki delivers like Deku’s the baseball pitching machine and Katsuki’s tongue is the bat, each concern emitting a metallic dink as he sends them flying. And there’s never any question what we Katsuki means, because he and Ochako are Solid with a capital S. “All you fuckers are going down next week, and we have shit to take care of to make sure that happens.”

“So you really are just partners for the assignment,” Yaomomo muses out loud; she’s the only one at the table who doesn’t already know what kind of stunts they’re going to be pulling, giving her an angle the others might not have considered. That Ochako and Katsuki could actually be what they say they are, doing what they say they’re doing. The shock. “That’s very professional.”

“Oh yeah, we’re real fuckin’ pros,” Katsuki bounces back to Yaomomo more easily than she expects him to, surprising her like he’s returning a serve she assumed to be an ace so fast it goes whizzing
past her. “But no.” Katsuki casts a stern look across the table, and somehow Ochako’s stomach flutters when he continues, “We’re not together, for your stupid information.” This is a remarkably well communicated point for once, even moreso from Katsuki, who’s been a long-running work in progress of actually stating things clearly enough for others to understand. Then of course he undermines it by elbowing Ochako again, catching her right in the soft part of her waist so she squeaks and almost chokes on her nigiri. “So c’mon bubs, move it.”

“Alright, alright, keep your pants on,” Ochako replies with half a mouthful, which she stops chewing for a moment when she realises what she said.

“No if you can help it,” he jokes back at her, because Katsuki doesn’t care who hears him winding her up about things they understand but others don’t; it’s none of their fucking business in the first place.

Katsuki actually seems to want to keep everyone guessing, contradicting his words and actions like a middle-finger to their audacious attempts to understand him. She thinks he does it deliberately, and kind of understands the instinct. If it’s confusing to people that Ochako and Katsuki say they’re not together while being what they think together looks like – that’s their problem.

Ochako understands now that what other people, even her friends, make of her relationship with Katsuki isn’t something for her to worry about, because whatever she does or says, people will make what they want out of it anyway. She’s finally digested the Bakugo philosophy, like binging chocolate after chocolate, even though anything that delicious can’t always be good for her. But she loves them – him – anyway.

So who fucking cares what everyone else thinks?

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“So, what’s this all about?” Ochako doesn’t mind following Katsuki to one of the private practice rooms after just about inhaling her lunch, but it’d sure be nice to know what she’s in for.

“Nothing, we’ve just gotta hit it hard,” Katsuki says as they come up to the right door, checking the name against the chart posted next to it before he opens up the medium-sized dojo. Ochako peeks the paper on the way in and sees Katsuki’s name scattered across the sheet all week – and a few ‘Kirishima E.’s as it happens. This must be where the two of them come to…

“Hit what hard?” Ochako asks foolishly, only to discover Katsuki has already shrugged off his blazer and is now unbuttoning his shirt.

“Each other, duh,” he answers, totally unfussed by the fact that’s he’s currently stripping for Ochako – or well, next to her. It’s not like he’s doing it for her benefit or anything, but she blushes like crazy.

“If matches start on Monday, we’ve got what? Twenty hours to train.”

“You’ve already worked it out to hours?” Ochako yells a little, she doesn’t deny.

“After school today and tomorrow makes five, not counting stupid gymnastics, and fifteen on Sunday,” he rattles off like Ochako’s supposed to realise that already. “We’ve got a lot to do, so if you want to ask a million annoying fucking questions better do it now because I’m not-”

“You’ve already worked it out to hours?” Ochako yells a little, she doesn’t deny.

“Where do we start?” Ochako cuts him off, but for good reason, because she’s got with Katsuki’s program enough to know what she needs to already; he’s got a plan, and he’s going to show her as they go. “... And gymnastics isn’t stupid.”

Katsuki’s initially irate at the interruption, of course, but that doesn’t last and his mouth just curls into
a grin. He pulls off his badly-formed tie and then takes his shirt off to reveal a steel-grey vest – astonishingly not black this time – and says, “That’s more like it.”

Ochako wonders if Katsuki’s factored time spent making out into his twenty hours, and somehow wouldn’t be surprised if he had.

“I’m gonna need to go change first, you realise,” Ochako points out practically, trying to defuse the ticking air of tension that spawns whenever he talks like that to Ochako.

“Change here,” he counters, but before Ochako’s too mortified, “I’ll go outside.” He’s already moving before Ochako can say that’s not necessary – he could just turn around, though outside is probably the smarter choice – and the door closes with Katsuki on the other side of it before Ochako can get a word in edgeways.

The best thing to do, therefore, is start stripping double-time. Luckily, she never goes anywhere without some workout clothes in her bag these days. Ochako taps the door when she’s done and Katsuki comes back in a moment later. If he’s at all flustered – unlikely, he’s in Work Mode right now – it doesn’t show.

And he starts, as Katsuki likes to, by stomping the throttle to the floor.

“We’ve just been sparring for shits and giggles before, but now it’s gotta be serious.”

“You call that shits and giggles?” Ochako rebounds with her hands on her hips. “Whatever you’ve got in that head of yours, remember I need to be able to walk after all this.” And not having any awkward bruises would be nice, but she’s not holding out on it.

“I’m not here to kick your ass,” Katsuki snaps like he’s insulted she assumes that’s what’s on the bill. “But we’re gonna go up against people with way better combat skills than you.”

“Thanks for the reminder,” she quips. “So you gonna keep talking or fight me already?”

“I’m not gonna fight you, babe,” he replies with a cheeky, doing-it-on-purpose grin teasing the corner of his mouth.

“That’s a first.” Ochako’s got her own cheeky smile going too. It’s tricky to stay on-course when being together is so much fun most of the time. “Spit it out then.”

“Just come at me.” Katsuki flaps his fingers in invitation, and Ochako doesn’t need further instruction. She runs at Katsuki and throws a punch, ass-and-everything-else-he’s-taught-her thrown into it. Katsuki takes her fist into the middle of his palm and stops it there, but Ochako’s ready for the next move and brings her left hand close to press against the paving stones of his abdomen, fingertips pushing against him to activate her quirk.

Ochako draws back her right fist and prepares another punch, but it’s too slow and Katsuki’s able to – even while weightless – catch her arms and then swing himself around her. Katsuki moves with the momentum Ochako puts into him, fist uncurling as it twists behind her back. Katsuki presses up close behind her in retaliation.

“You think ahead in a fight and use your quirk, but you don’t do them together,” he says from behind and above her, his knees pressing lightly into the centre of her back. He hung off her like a baby monkey clinging to mom’s back.

“We never practiced like that before,” she – well she’s not trying to excuse, but it’s part of the reason.
“What do you think this is supposed to be?” It’s now a sure fact that Katsuki’s closer behind Ochako than he’d ever need to be, knees dropping to press more fully against her. His other arm loops around her waist, even with one hand still folded behind her back, keeping it arched as she presses back against him, floating behind her like some kind of human strait-jacket.

Katsuki stamps a kiss behind Ochako’s ear just because he can, then lets go a moment later, waiting for Ochako to whip her fingers together and issue a quick “release” to set him back on the ground.

“Your combos should all be focused on landing your quirk,” he issues like a doctor’s prescription. “Throw a punch after that and they’ll go flying.”

“I know that,” she says with a hint of frustration that makes Katsuki’s eyebrows lift. “You just never let me get there.”

“Well, cause you have to earn it,” he returns playfully. “If you used open hand strikes it’d be easier to activate your quirk when you do land a hit.”

“Won’t hitting like that be weaker?” Ochako doesn’t need to be any weaker than she already is – not in a bad way, but she can’t be under false pretences about how strong she is, or it’ll become even more of a weakness than it already is.

“Only if you don’t know what the fuck you’re doing,” he replies arrogantly, unfurling his fists like he’s about to demonstrate. “Come at me again.”

Ochako does as she’s told, and for her trouble gets Katsuki’s palm slamming into her ribs, though she can tell it’s not even close to his full strength. He stops at the moment of impact, and then in a way that’s way too tactile for this demonstration deliberately digs all his fingertips into her, so sudden Ochako breaks out in ticklish laughter.

“This isn’t meant to be funny, chuckles,” Katsuki says in more of a windup than anything else, sobering up a moment later. “Hit from the heel, palm at a right angle.” He brings his hand back and demonstrates it again, fluttering his fingertips against her demonstratively. “Easier than a fist, right?”

“Yeah,” Ochako admits with a sensation like she’s turning into a flock of butterflies from the inside out. There’s a degree of difference between Katsuki’s training and teaching, but it makes all the difference to her, feeling even more like she’s about to catch a royal case of the giggles.

“Punch the shit out of them after, but you can still hit plenty hard with an open hand even if you can’t get the touch all the way down,” he explains, palm still resting flat against Ochako’s abdomen, just close enough to her chest to make her remember what it was like having his hand a little higher. The butterflies sure have feelings about that.

“So that’s what we’re trying to do?” she checks. “Get them into the air?”

“That’s where we’re strongest,” Katsuki answers surely. “Even fuckers who can get around in the air won’t be as used to it as us.” He pauses for a moment of consideration, which could be about the palm he has pressed to her side or the shop talk, but Ochako has a good guess as to which of them’s thinking about which. “Our matches need to finish fast, especially if it’s out-of-bounds rules. Let me handle most of the combat, okay?”

“Okay,” Ochako echoes easily, tilting her head to one side when Katsuki pauses like he’s expecting more argument. “What?” She’s not going to insist on trying to do more than she’s capable of, and Katsuki should be leading the combat side of things – that’s what he’s best at. Well, one of the things.
“Nothing, you’re just… easy to work with.” He mumbles the last part, like it’s shameful to admit. His hand lifts and he even shuffles back a step, though makes it seem just like he’s squaring up to cross his arms at her like how dare she be so accommodating.

“Gosh,” Ochako replies like it’s a revelation, propping a finger to her mouth thoughtfully, “what would that be like?”

“Yeah alright, asshole,” he rounds back more combatively. “You ain’t all sunshine and fucking rainbows, so don’t get too cocky.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Ochako replies with a mile-wide grin, one that’s mirrored on Katsuki’s face. She wonders again about the makeout-time quotient in that twenty hours Katsuki’s made for them to be alone together between now and the first qualifying match next week.

“What?” Katsuki takes a slug of Ochako’s gaze. Impulsively, she sticks her arms out in front of her, like she’s about to catch him from the leap he hasn’t made. Maybe the combined effect of her expression and the gesture is what makes Katsuki break up into a gravelly laugh, or maybe it’s the sheer presumptuousness of Ochako’s ‘come hither’ pose. “And what’s that supposed to mean?”

“You know what it means,” she says staunchly, remaining in the position.

Katsuki stares Ochako out good and long, long enough to make her doubt he’s actually going to come through; long enough to make her think that he’s still not quite comfortable enough with their relationship to let it override his own pride. She’s about to find out.

It’s with only a soft sigh that Katsuki steps forward, two paces until he’s right next to her and perfectly in place to wrap Ochako in the hug she’s demanded just because she can. She puts her face to his collarbone and breathes in deeply, squeezing him back like a boy-shaped furnace.

“Hey,” Ochako says against the hollow chambre of Katsuki’s chest. “Is this weird?”

“Only now you said that, weirdo,” he replies fondly, and Ochako’s almost entirely turned to butterflies now. Like she’s going to take off all at once around Katsuki’s arms and leave him hugging nothing.

“No, I mean this, us being all… and we’re not even going out.”

“Only because you won’t let me ask you out until after this stupid tournament,” Katsuki rumbles like far-off thunder.

“What?” Ochako pulls her head back to look at him square-on incredulously. “I never said that.”

“Uh, yeah,” Katsuki replies surely. “After we’ve told the stupid truth to all those dumb idiots.”

“That never meant after the whole tournament,” she shoots. “I can’t wait ‘til then, it’s going to go on for ages!”

“Oh, suddenly you want me to ask you out now?” Katsuki accuses candidly. “Changed your tune pretty quick, didn’t you?”

“I did not,” Ochako argues in a way that’s not a real argument, because they’re still hugging and this is just a squabble to find out what the hell’s actually going on with them. “I just want to be able to tell the whole story from the start, how we were training first and just let everyone think we were dating.”
“Even when we were basically dating,” Katsuki dares to point out.

“Basically isn’t actually,” Ochako counters. “So don’t you start in on that again.”

“Okay, okay.” Katsuki sounds out like she’s being a terrible nag and he’s not overreacting massively, but that’s half the game. “So tell ‘em once we’ve used Zero-G in the preliminaries.”

“Really?” Ochako checks, because it sounds like Katsuki’s telling her when he’s ready to come clean with the truth – even the parts that don’t reflect so well on him – once and for all.

“Sure,” he replies like it’s always been that easy, head tilting to one side so it gives him a better look at her. “But only if we win.”

“What?!” Ochako bursts, and Katsuki pulls back with a wince of almost-there laughter.

“If we go down in the first frigging round I’m never working with you again, princess.” It’s a taunt, a wind-up, like negotiating with such ridiculous leverage would ever work or is anything more than shit-talk from a boy with a fast mouth. This is why it’s outrageous but not at all unexpected for Katsuki to boldly announce, “And besides, I don’t date losers,” before he releases Ochako from the hug prematurely, like shoving her out of the plane the instant she’s donned her parachute.

“You’re ridiculous,” Ochako tells him, and by the way Katsuki bristles like a porcupine ready to show all its spikes in full glory, he takes it as a compliment.

“Come at me again,” Katsuki orders, flexing one arm and then the other across his body like it’s meant to be anything other than horribly distracting. “We’ve got fifteen minutes left, so you’ve got ten to lay a hand on me.”

“What do I get if I win?” Ochako asks, and Katsuki loves that question, even though it implies he’d ever lose. Ochako’s a contest he never seems that sorry to suffer defeat to.

“The rest of that hug.” Katsuki sets the terms of engagement, cracking his wrists in anticipation. “But I ain’t going easy on you.”

“You never do,” Ochako answers, gearing up for the challenge of a lifetime.

She’s ready to win against Bakugo Katsuki, fair and square.

Chapter End Notes

Me: This scene isn’t necessary
Also me: *slaps me in the face* DO IT FOR THE FUNSIES, BITCH.
And that’s how all this got wrote.

Next chapter title teaser: Getting a handful
Getting a handful

Chapter Summary

Ochako fights square, but maybe not entirely fair.

Chapter Notes

Just as I leave Myanmar one more update for ya!

We're deep into the 'wandering around the garden' part of this story, which means I'd do things like ask myself 'should I devote an entire chapter to this?' and the answer is ALWAYS yes. Not least because people have so consistently said how much they like these kinds of chapters!

Thanks again y'all, we're getting close to the end but I keep telling people out here 'I have a popular fanfiction with a small dedicated chatroom and 2k+ kudos' and they're always very impressed. Me, I'm just in it for the shipping.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ochako starts out with a flip. If she’s trying to catch Katsuki off-guard, the best way is with something he might not expect: doing a backflip fits that model. Because when Ochako does a backflip, she doesn’t have to come back down. In fact the point is specifically not to.

Ochako’s only done this move in her room before now, backflipping and activating her quirk at just the right time so that instead of coming back down, she just flies straight to the ceiling feet-first. Bending her knees as she lands, Ochako turns her head back for a second to check where her target is. Usually, the times Ochako’s practiced this neo-move in her bedroom, she flips back off the ceiling and brings her fingers together to release herself with the timing and momentum to flop onto her bed like she’s jumping into a pool.

But this isn’t the bedroom, so when Ochako backflips first onto the ceiling and then a second time to launch herself at Katsuki, it’s like taking a homemade kite out on a particularly blustery day. Alright in theory, but she might be blown to pieces.

Katsuki isn’t initially prepared to be leapt at from the ceiling, but by the time Ochako’s coming down on him he’s had the time to work it out. So when Ochako drives a palm for his face, Katsuki just grabs her by the wrist and flings her at the wall.

Ochako lands sideways, bracing herself on an arm and leg as she shoves herself back upright into a bit of a frog-squat, truth be told. She’s vertical to the wall and still weightless as she resets and launches again. This time Katsuki just dodges, lunging back at the last possible moment to make Ochako miss and go shooting across the room; she almost faceplants into the opposing wall.

In the nick of time, Ochako gets her hands up and throws herself off the wall before making hard impact. She flies across the room and lands on the adjacent wall back into another deep squat, using
the pre-loaded tension in her thighs to push off and fire herself at Katsuki once again.

Like before, Katsuki catches Ochako’s wrist just as she’s about to get a hand on him, but this time he slams Ochako to the floor in front of him, almost winding her. He follows with a famous right hook, which she dodges by rolling out of the way at the last moment, his fist slamming the floor right next to her ear.

Katsuki taunts her with a devilish grin. “Too slow, princess.”

Ochako rolls up from her hips and launches herself back at the ceiling with seconds to spare before Katsuki lunges for her again. He snatches at the empty air as Ochako escapes by a hair’s width. “You won’t be able to pull this tricky shit in the arena,” Katsuki accuses with what sounds like genuine frustration, which is a good sign, because it means he’s actually struggling to catch her.

Ochako lands on the ceiling into a crouch as Katsuki stumbles past where she was supposed to be. “I won’t be fighting you in the arena,” she points out as his back opens to her for a clean downwards shot.

When Ochako’s just inches away, Katsuki reaches backwards and snatches both her wrists from behind his head. It’s almost as if he’s got eyes back there, like the monster they fought last night. It’s crazy that so much has happened in less than a day. Again.

Katsuki hurls Ochako by her overarm in the direction of the door with most of his strength – good, she’s pushing him – and she bounces out of it, keeping the momentum and coming back double hard. Over a month of Bakugo-training has gotten Ochako used to heavy landings by now. She’s noticing more and more how her thighs are getting thicker, to say nothing of what’s been happening to her butt.

Ochako’s been bouncing around the room like an elastic-band ball, but even she’s still got limits. The next time she springs towards Katsuki, she brings her fingers together to yell, “Release!” and hits the ground running.

She raises a palm to drive into Katsuki heel-first, but Ochako’s blow is knocked off course by Katsuki’s forearm; and that’s just the start of it. Without hesitation she follows through and they fall into a rapid chain of attempted and parried blows that always keep Ochako’s hands just off Katsuki. And he’s usually so pleased to be touched by her.

Ochako drives a hand for Katsuki’s gut and he tugs her by the wrist again, swinging her around him to change their places before throwing another punch. She ducks and sends a palm-strike at his knees, but Katsuki’s shoe plants into her hand, kicking hard to shove her back before she can get all her fingers down.

“Try again, toots!” he barks victoriously, as Ochako recoils against the force of his rubber-soled heel through her arm. But he’s smiling and wide-eyed as he says it, like a dog going bonkers because their owner just got the leash out of the cupboard. He’s having fun.

The next trick Ochako tries on Katsuki is straight out of their fight with Fuggo, squaring up to hit him mostly so he’ll attempt to hit her back; when he does she lets it happen, activating her quirk just as Katsuki makes contact with the blocking part of Ochako’s forearm.

Ochako swears she feels the strike lighten, like Katsuki pulls back the moment she actually lets him hit her. Maybe that’s because he anticipates her next move, or perhaps he’s hesitant to punch her full-strength. Ochako did specify her need for being able to walk at the end of this.
When Katsuki doesn't punch Ochako as hard as he was going to, she catches a ride on his arm – or attempts to. Katsuki knows it's coming, the anti-punch where instead of taking a hit Ochako allows herself to be swept off her feet. She hooks her arm around the inside of Katsuki's and anchors herself as she swings around him, like he did with her at the start of the session.

The difference is Katsuki was able to finish the move when he did it to Ochako. But he sure doesn't fall for his own tricks, throwing Ochako off him like launching a shotput. Or he would do that, if not for Ochako commandeering the change of direction. She brings her legs around fast enough to roll weightlessly behind Katsuki like some wild new kind of multi-directional hula-hoop.

Ochako has a palm up, literally *so close* to getting a hand on Katsuki when he catches her by the foot. She yelps in surprise when he whips her back the other way. Grabbling at Katsuki is a sensible reaction in any case, and that it happens to be what Ochako’s trying to do anyway is pure coincidence. However, Katsuki’s sole driving purpose, at least right now, is to *stop* Ochako from touching him – at least with her hands.

The most practical way to do this touch-prevention control is for Katsuki to lock both of Ochako's wrists tightly in each of his hands. This is how they come to be facing one another when they untangle like a ball of live wires. Katsuki’s hands are taking Ochako's pulse in each wrist, a slightly wild look in his eyes – the sign of him having a good time, at least when it comes to sparring.

Ochako doesn’t wait long, barely a second before she pulls all her weight back against her Katsuki-manacles and jumps backwards – hell, it’s an all-out *somersault*. The trick is audacious enough it breaks the grip Katsuki has on her, but maybe the move was a little *too* ambitious. Because being right next to Katsuki when Ochako throws herself into the air makes it very easy for him to pluck her out of it, like an extra-combative gymnastics practice.

What Ochako doesn’t quite expect, when she feels Katsuki’s arms become the shadow underneath her, is to keep going down. Katsuki’s primary purpose in this situation is usually to *stop* her hitting the floor, so it's new to find him making damn-well-sure she goes out flat on her back with another thump that almost takes her breath away.

Next, Katsuki ensures Ochako doesn’t have a chance to activate her quirk on him, pinning her by both wrists firmly against the floor, the rest of his weight on top of her to stop her trying to throw him off – not that she could manage it without her quirk in the first place.

“What flashy shit like that will lose us the match.” Katsuki’s a little out of breath, which along with the lonely bead of sweat that shines just past one of his temples, is the grand sum of Ochako’s achievements: she's about as much exercise for him as a morning run. Still, it was hopefully a challenging sprint rather than a gentle jog, and Ochako takes what she can get.

What she can get right now, as it happens, is a good look at the way they're twisted up together. Hell, Ochako could name a dozen different ways to lose a fight she likes much less than this one, and Katsuki’s eyelids drop a little with a glance that draws down her body and back up to her face. Ochako wonders if this is his favorite way to win… at least with her.

Their legs are tangled under and over each other, a product of Katsuki unfurling Ochako like rolling out a carpet after she landed, stretching himself over her to make his body an impassable presence right on top of her. She feels the sweat that pumps off his palms actually squeeze against her wrists for a moment, and realises she might have worked Katsuki up a little more than she originally thought.

Ochako can’t do much, pinned to the floor like this, but one of the things she *can* do is lift herself up and kiss him square on the mouth, like it's the next best thing to throwing a punch.
The moment their lips make contact, Katsuki subdues Ochako like he’s a piano that just got dropped by a crane. Ochako flattens as Katsuki’s face tilts and his hands shift, switching from a non-nonsense restraint to clambering up her hands to squeeze her fingers between his as shifts his weight more pleasingly. He pulls back suddenly when Ochako’s fingers close all the way around his hand in return, but she’s not playing to win or anything, just getting her sugar fix – she’s got a real sweet tooth.

Katsuki pushes even more assertively against Ochako’s hands for a moment, then lifts himself entirely off her – and just when they were getting comfortable. There he remains, hovering over Ochako like it’s more fun to deny her than it is to gratify himself. Or maybe he’s just trying to figure out if he wants to keep training or let it slip – twenty hours, he said, but he never said of what.

Slowly Katsuki makes up his mind, lowering back down over Ochako, dropping kisses on her willing mouth like tossing playing cards off the top of a deck.


Ochako’s guilty as charged.

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Well, it’s been ten minutes, and Ochako’s laid a hand on Katsuki. On his butt, specifically, but that’s not the point. Or maybe it is.

If anyone happens to walk down the corridor of the training rooms and peers through one of the narrow windows, they might spot Ochako and Katsuki just straight up making out on the floor, but they’ll have to hope that doesn’t happen. It probably doesn’t make much difference in any case, because Ochako’s way too busy getting a good hands-on experience of some of Katsuki’s lesser-explored assets. It only seems fair when he’s got one of his hands very assuredly down her top.

Ochako’s heavy-duty sports bra isn’t going anywhere, but after untangling their fingers from each other, Katsuki’s hand goes on a pretty expedient journey from Ochako’s arm down to her neck and then shoulder. His fingertips slip under the strap of her vest from the outset of his palm’s heady descent down the flat of her chest before reaching the fuller parts of it. This shouldn't be a surprise because it's not the first time, or even the second technically – but Katsuki is very on-purposely coping a feel, and Ochako’s mind is about to short out.

Whether they're any better at kissing after all this rigorous practice is surely a subjective more than objective matter. Whichever it is, Ochako's positively giddy for the way Katsuki kisses her now: without urgency or desperation. Just thoroughly, like he's got all the time in the world to really enjoy this. Ochako sure is.

After Katsuki releases Ochako’s hands for his own grabby purposes, she isn’t hesitant about finding purchase for her fingertips along the ridge of his shoulder blades, before heading up her own southbound expedition of his muscular back, and finally closing in on his butt. Ochako's denying nothing: she's looked, ogled even. So it's all kinds of gratifying to get a squeeze that turns into a tiny noise Katsuki makes against her mouth. That's interesting.

Katsuki’s breath is hot and humid over Ochako's lips when his own lift just far enough to get the words out. “We’re wasting time.”

“Stop then,” she baits, squeezing his ass again. This time Katsuki shudders, something Ochako can feel because they’ve only gotten more closely twisted together since they started, and they were literally on top of each other to start with.
“You stop.” Katsuki nips Ochako’s lower lip softly, then makes another of those noises when she does it back to him. Another interesting reaction. They get sidetracked again.

That’s all well and good, until the bell for the end of lunch rings unexpectedly; it’s not actually unexpected, they just clearly got distracted for longer than fifteen minutes. Ochako gets startled in the absolutely worst way, jerking just as Katsuki does without taking into account that any part of his face might still be connected to Ochako’s… by teeth.

Ochako knows something has gone wrong when she hears the, “Fuck!” slip from Katsuki’s mouth, which is only affirmed by the wrong kind of wetness on her own. Though Ochako puts her hand to her mouth quickly, and really does try not to instinctively lick her lips, she doesn’t totally manage it. The faintest tang of iron on her tongue isn’t a great sign.

When Ochako scooches out from underneath Katsuki as he backs up, hand to his scowling mouth, she is still somehow totally unprepared to see the smear of blood when he takes the fingers away. Something must happen in her face that provokes Katsuki, because he snaps, “What?!” way louder than he has to.

“Sorry,” she replies hurriedly, eyes wide and thinking, more or less, ‘How the fuck are we going to explain this one?’

Katsuki scowls harder and turns back to looking at his bloodied fingers, a new drop swelling in the slightly off-centre cut on the fullest part of his lower lip. It breaks down his chin as he turns his gaze onto Ochako and with utter incredulity asks, “How the fuck are we gonna explain this one?”

Chapter End Notes

Diiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiid someone say sparring-turned-sexy-makeouts??????

It was me. I said it.

AND I REGRET NOTHING.

This also marks the last chapter of my 3rd masterdocument! We're getting closer and closer to that end!

I'll be in Thailand next week working and the likelihood of my being able to update is verrrrrry low so make sure this one lasts, but given we have uh, 7 chapters to do (plus the currently-being-finished-epilogue) I'm actually feeling very good about this pacing-down of the update schedule. I write at a snail's pace when it's this last leg of a story, so it makes sense to update at it too.

(A snail's pace in my book still being approx every 1-and-a-bit weeks, so y'all are spoiled anyway).

Next chapter title teaser! Pulling a fast one
There's getting too close for comfort, and there's being close for comfort. Ochako and Katsuki get a little of both.

These are basically just 'golden age' chapters from here on out. I hope you enjoy reading them like I enjoyed writing them.

Oh, I'm back from my travels now but still going to take these last (7 more to go) chapters slowly, not least because I still have to finish the epilogue but also because it's nice to draw out the last leisurely stroll over the finish line. No need to rush to the finish, eh?

Ochako starts with a silly question. “Explain what?”

“What the fuck do you think?!” Katsuki snarls, and it's understandable he's a bit cross; they're late, and bleeding. Well, Katsuki is.

“Okay! You don't need to yell!” Ochako jumps onto her feet like it's to spite him, then quickly rushes over to her bag before whipping her top off.

With his face lighting up from the neck, like the temperature rising in a thermometer, Katsuki barks, “Now what're you doing?!” sounding about as angry as he does alarmed. But then, most emotions get translated into anger when Katsuki’s like this.

“Changing! We're late!” Ochako bends over to grab her shirt out of her bag and considers she could’ve done that step first before taking off her top, especially being in the same room as Katsuki and all, but now is no time for regretting decisions. Anyway, he’s pretty well-versed in Ochako’s sports bra by now, so it doesn’t feel like a huge deal just to see it when she’s changing. “Just tell them it happened when we were training.” Ochako buttons her shirt up quickly and then – heart pounding on her tongue, it feels like – puts her skirt on over her sweatpants then drops them.

“Like anyone's gonna believe that,” Katsuki grumbles and gets up, not that Ochako is looking but she hears him move.

“Since when did you care what they believe?” Ochako points out, turning around just as Katsuki is pacing over to her, his own shirt back around his shoulders and a wad of tissue to the corner of his mouth.

“I don't,” he rumbles like far-off explosions. “But I care if you tell 'em you did it to me in training.”
“Why?” Ochako asks, then guesses the moment she hears it out loud; because Katsuki doesn't want to be seen to have taken the hit. “Seriously?”

“Claim your real victories, angel,” he says much softer than before, and that bell just rang so they need to go and yet Ochako's just standing there staring into his eyes. “This ain't one.”

“Spoilsport,” she teases. “Just say it was an accident, then.”

“That's just as bad,” Katsuki gripes, and Ochako's patience disappears all at once.

“It has to be one, Katsuki! Tell them whatever the hell you want!”

She sees the shock register on his face at her flare-up, but because he's Katsuki the response isn't what she expects.

“Fine.” Katsuki sounds like he gave his friendly mood a buzzcut, all short and no-nonsense, almost a pout teasing the corner of his mouth that usually lets slip his smile. “It was an accident.”

“It was an accident,” she echoes with a coy smile, and Katsuki almost mimics it but winces and stops. “Sorry,” she offers again.

“Whatever, it’s not a big deal,” Katsuki says as he turns his face away from her.

It's only after staring at his cheek for a moment that Ochako realises what he means for her to do with it— an image flashes intrusively into her mind, of Katsuki’s father pointing indicatively to his cheek as he presented it to his wife before leaving the houses on an errand. Katsuki hasn't done the full hand gesture, but the jut of his jaw is a dead giveaway.

Ochako has a wild thought about how Katsuki’s relationship with his parents is clearly… complicated, but she never really considered his parents’ relationship with each other – the template they presented to a growing Katsuki of how a happy couple acts together. Katsuki might be broken in a lot of ways, but Ochako dares to consider if there’s some ways he’s not so broken at all.

Ochako hops up on her toes to kiss Katsuki’s waiting cheek, the substitute after she accidentally busted his lip, and Katsuki nods like he’s content with the offering. “Let’s go.”

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[14:09] Alien-Queen: so… Uraraka and Bakugo?? Status update??
[14:09] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: we ALL *literally* saw her dump him yesterday what’s there to report
[14:09] Greased Lightning: did you change your name AGAIN
[14:09] Sero-to-my-little-friend: is it bc kirishima copied you
[14:10] Get_Hard: I DID NOT
[14:10] Get_Hard: what can I say great minds think alike
[14:10] Alien-Queen: ok but Bakugo and Uraraka are still together for the couples tournament
[14:10] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: that doesn’t mean they’re dating
[14:10] Alien-Queen: oooh and so are Kirishima and Kaminari!
[14:11] Get_Hard: somehow I always thought it would happen like this
[14:11] Sero-to-my-little-friend: that hurts mineta I thought what we had was special
[14:11] TouchMyStickyBalls: srsly??! Look I just don’t swing that way…
[14:11] Get_Hard: rejection sucks I’m sorry my dude
[14:12] Greased Lightning: TO WHO
[14:12] Get_Hard: you ofc
[14:12] Get_Hard: and I’m pregnant
[14:12] Sero-to-my-little-friend: when’s the baby due
[14:12] TouchMyStickyBalls: wtf… you guys!!! don’t joke about that stuff!
[14:12] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: WOW you need to lighten up
[14:12] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: can’t believe who I’m actually saying this to
[14:13] Greased Lightning: so am i crazy or did Bakugo not have a busted lip before lunch
[14:13] Je_ne_regrette rien: he did not! This is a daring new look for him
[14:13] Greased Lightning: bruised by Uraraka’s fist in his face more like
[14:13] JustCallMeTsu: wouldn’t Uraraka have a bruised hand if she’d punched him
[14:14] Alien-Queen: i just checked and she doesn’t’!!!
[14:14] JustCallMeTsu: it’s VERY obvious we’re talking about them when you turn around like that
[14:14] Greased Lightning: maybe Uraraka didn’t use her fist then… there’s still options
[14:14] Greased Lightning: I never said *I* was into it!
[14:15] Veep-Yaomomo: Bakugo said he and Uraraka were training for the tournament this
lunchtime.

[14:15] Alien-Queen: like they actually TOLD you???

[14:15] Veep-Yaomomo: Yes… he also mentioned that they’re not together.

[14:16] Get_Hard: in like… words?


[14:17] Get_Hard: hm… i don't buy it

[14:17] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: what about it is there to NOT BUY

[14:18] Greased Lightning: wait do you mean that they’re together or broken up?

[14:18] Alien-Queen: NO IDEA

[14:18] Get_Hard: either

[14:19] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: having to partner up with an ex is bad enough but imagine BAKUGO as an ex

[14:19] Greased Lightning: yeah what are they gonna do now they can’t argue to flirt anymore


[14:20] Alien-Queen: nooo they should make up

[14:20] Jack-My-Bitch-Up: give it a minute and they probably will

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It’s not until the late evening that anyone catches Ochako and Katsuki in such a position as to question them in person about his lip. Obviously, it’s been stared at and whispered back and forth in the classroom, wildballed in the groupchat Ochako’s this close to just leaving sometimes. Katsuki’s never tolerated that nonsense for a second, and she’s starting to understand why.

There’s also the fact that Ochako and Bakugo haven’t been around enough to be asked about his lip in person. Every spare moment they’ve had outside of lessons belongs to training now: gymnastics practice, then an extra dose of Katsuki training on top of that once they got back to school. The slot that used to be Kirishima’s, or so Ochako reckons.

The common room is empty when Ochako and Bakugo finally quit for the day. Maybe it is getting kinda late, but Ochako doesn’t want to face climbing four flights of stairs just yet – her thighs are killing her. So she wanders over to the deserted sofa and see-saws over the arm, faceplanting against the cushions. Katsuki just scoffs and follows her. Ochako rolls out of the way before getting full-body-slammed as Katsuki also drops himself like a corpse off a bridge, landing on the same bit of the couch she’s on. He’s tired too, which is an achievement she’s shyly proud of.

There’s no one else around, and barely enough space on one couch for both of them to lay down full-length, so that’s how it comes to pass that Katsuki should be flat on his on his back and Ochako just lays on top of him, face to his chest and quietly amazed at how utterly wonderful it feels, like she could just…
“You know, you two’re pretty cosy for exes.”

Ochako wakes up and has a couple of disarming realisations; one, she’s sleeping on Katsuki in public, again; two, drooling on him – she wipes her mouth in mortification; and three, Kirishima looks entirely thrilled to see them in this position. Which is… confusing.

Katsuki is also a little bleary-eyed, so perhaps he drifted off too. He sits up like he doesn’t have Ochako on him at all, which means her being shoved off into a really ungainly sprawl. It’s fully after curfew now, everyone else legit in bed – except Kirishima, who Ochako’s got the funniest idea came looking for them. Well, for Katsuki; it’s easy to notice when his best-friend/neighbour hasn’t come back to roost for the night.

Kirishima’s wearing a pair of utterly psychedelic pyjama pants and – a little distractingly, if Ochako’s going to be honest with herself – no shirt to speak of. His hair drapes like a red velvet theatre curtain around his face, a toothy smile positioned centre stage and playing every night this week. When he gets close enough to the sofa Ochako and Katsuki occupy, Kirishima puts a finger to his mouth, miming the place where the cut on Katsuki’s lip has dried a dark red. Grinning like a cheshire cat over a saucer of milk, Kirishima suggests, “Lovers’ tiff?”

“Piss off,” Katsuki grumbles, swinging his legs down next to Ochako so he’s sitting upright next to her in the otherwise deserted common room. It’s past all their bedtimes, but the rules never mentioned evening naps on the sofas.

“It was an accident,” Ochako offers up instead. “We were training for the co—Spirit of Unity Tournament.”

“Oh I hear that,” Kirishima replies cheerily, wandering up and flopping onto the other sofa like he’s not that shocked or uncomfortable or anything to be around Ochako and Katsuki, even after finding her literally asleep on top of him. It’s utterly refreshing. “Kaminari fried himself again, can you believe I just had to put that guy to bed?” Ochako sniggers and Kirishima’s grin widens, thrilled to find a willing audience. “I even had to brush his teeth for him!”

Ochako laughs outright, hands shooting to her mouth as the image tickles her out of the unplanned-naptime daze. But after the uplifting moment passes a new wave of fatigue sweeps over her, and Ochako’s soon rubbing her eyes with her fingers. If it weren’t for all the drama, the stuff they don’t need, maybe it could actually be this easy being with Katsuki around other people.

Except things aren’t ever quite that easy, so inevitably Kirishima’s gaze settles on Ochako with a quiet magnitude. “Little birdie told me you two ain’t together anymore.”

“Well… we aren’t,” Ochako answers cagily, glancing at Katsuki and suddenly feeling like maybe – just maybe – she’s getting sized up for her intentions, crazy as that sounds.

“For real?” Kirishima’s looking at both of them, and the question is sincere. He just wants it from them straight.

“Yeah, Blockhead,” Katsuki butts in rudely, but then comes in with a way more disarming follow-up. “Is it that hard to believe we get along even if we’re not dating?”

“Oh no, don’t you go acting like I’m the crazy one here,” Kirishima’s adamant. “I’m just calling it like I see it, and you two seem pretty into each other for sparring partners.” Kirishima flashes Katsuki a take-you-out-for-a-fancy-dinner wine-and-dine of a grin. “That or you’ve been holding out on me in our training.” This ends on an almost flirty tone, such that it seems to pull Katsuki’s attention away from the rest of the accusation. Ochako won’t lie: Kirishima is one smooth operator.
“No, dumbass.” A tight-lipped, pouty mumble from Katsuki that reminds Ochako Kirishima’s been friends with him a lot longer than she has. It’s something she’s just got to accept, at least if she ever wants to stop feeling those weird jealous pangs whenever she’s reminded there’s a part of Katsuki that he’s shared with someone besides her.

It’s supposed to be more of Katsuki’s thing, getting defensive over relationships that have been around since long before he blasted his way in demanding all of Ochako’s time and attention to be his, unattainable as that goal might be.

Rationally, Ochako knows she has to set the tone she wants to see from Katsuki by example, which definitely doesn’t mean being weird about or around Kirishima. Even if it makes her feel weird, which could point to anything at this stage. Perhaps the fact that he’s got no shirt on, and whatever exercises he and Katsuki do together – they work.

Ochako abruptly stops thinking about it when Kirishima announces, “See, if you weren’t so obviously crazy about each other, I’d have thought you were pulling a fast one on us.”

“A fast what?” Katsuki sits back, kicks his feet onto the coffee table and Ochako realises they’re actually just going to chill for a bit. It’s weird being around someone else without Katsuki turning right back into Bakugo – defensive and angry at being caught in a position he doesn’t want to be seen in. It’s a good sign, she thinks, that this is normal enough for Katsuki that he isn’t immediately going on the offense.

Then again, Ochako recalls that Katsuki’s explosive reaction with Monoma was because he’d seen them there, in support. It’s the what of their doing rather than the where that fuels his hatefire, and Ochako napping on him doesn’t say shit about Zero-G. And that Kirishima isn’t judging or overreacting to their being nappy together must help, doubled by the closeness of his and Katsuki’s relationship. Again, Ochako wonders just how much Kirishima really knows. Or maybe how much he’s worked out, understanding Katsuki better than most people do. Maybe even better than she understands Katsuki.

“The whole dating dealio.” Kirishima grins like he could cut diamonds on his teeth. “I’d almost say it’s like… you just let that whole thing get way outta hand because it meant no one asked what you were up to in training.”

Ochako feels like her heart stops beating, looking at Katsuki like she’s about to throw a ‘did you tell him?’ dart that he snatches out of the air and throws back at her with a furious scowl. Then again, she didn’t tell Deku, Iida or Todoroki about their style and they worked it out anyway – well they saw it, which is sort of like telling. Kirishima sees things too, just at a level that others might not – the Bakuvision goggles that translate what Katsuki says and does into what he means.

But Katsuki is calm, composed, barely even lifting his eyebrows as he remarks, “That’s what you’d say, huh?”

“Yeah, but if you were only doing it to fool us, I wouldn’t be catching you napping on top of each other, would I?” Kirishima poses with a wicked grin, and Ochako thinks she gets why he’s Katsuki’s best friend.

“Na,” Katsuki returns with – yeah, that’s a grin. “You wouldn’t.”

“So either it was a fast one before it ended up real, or it was real all along and you just wanted us to think it’s over.” Kirishima poses with an steady tone that manages to steer the situation like a sailboat across a still lake, one sure hand on the tiller. As long as Kirishima talks about it like it’s not a big deal, it isn’t. Ochako would do anything to know the secret of his technique. “Or I’m talkin’ a load
of shit.”

“You always talk shit.” Katsuki lifts his arms to stretch them directly up, settling them back down: one by his side, the other – ah yes – the other loosely around Ochako’s shoulders. “But you ain’t all wrong.” Ochako wonders about Katsuki’s intentions here, and if he might be winding Kirishima up just a little bit – and if Kirishima might be letting him.

“Oh really?” Kirishima looks like he’s been told his birthday’s happening twice this year. “Which bit?”

“Keep guessing, asshole,” Katsuki says, but fondly, like with his arm around Ochako’s shoulders they can all guess but for reasons of their own don’t do it out loud.

“Guess we’ll see what you’ve got for us in the prelims on monday, huh?” Kirishima says in that tone again, like he’s looking forward to it as much as they are. “Of course, you two’ve been…” Kirishima subs words for a summative ‘all of that’ gesture with his finger at Katsuki and Ochako, “for longer than this tournament’s been about, so if you have been working on something, it must be good.”

“You talk a lot for a guy pulling things outta his ass.” Katsuki finally drops into insults, surely feeling like Kirishima’s probing has reached the new frontiers of his comfort zone; the Bakugo Katsuki territories slowly give up to neutral ground. “The fuck’re you doing here anyway?”

“Looking for you, dude!” Kirishima shoots with a new burst of energy. “You’re like my grandpa. I expect you in bed by eight and if you go missing I call the police.”

Ochako bursts out laughing again and Kirishima shoots her a grin that does something profoundly combustible to her gut. Just another thing to write off to the factor of Kirishima still being totally shirtless. He leans forward to prop one elbow on a knee, and the line from his collarbone into his pectorals forms a slope that Ochako’s gaze slides down like an olympic ski-jumper, down and then quickly the hell away.

Hopefully Katsuki’s not watching, because Ochako feels an awful lot like she’s blushing, though she can pretend it’s a flush from so recently sleeping with her cheek wedged comfortably against Katsuki’s very cushy pecs. In fact, it’s probably both.

“Alright chuckles, he ain’t that funny,” Katsuki growls possessively, and his hand closes around her shoulder more firmly, squeezing and half-hugging before turning it into a scoop that takes her off the couch as he stands. “You found me already, let’s hit the sack.”

Ochako’s a disappointed, as usual, because she’s always disappointed when Katsuki has to go. It makes ’not being jealous of Kirishima’ a bit tougher to resist, especially when he’s bumping shoulders with Katsuki in a nudge-nudge kind of way as they walk to the parting of the boys’ and girls’ stairwells. If Ochako could reach Katsuki’s shoulder with hers she’d do things like that too. She’s closer to his elbow, which she hooks a moment later, making a crook in Katsuki’s arm as she tugs him a step away from Kirishima.

“Uh-” Kirishima starts and never finishes, because Katsuki reaches his free arm back to shove Kirishima harder in the direction he’s headed in.

“Keep walking.” Katsuki’s facing Ochako but talking to Kirishima, as good as ordering him actually. “I’ll catch you up.”

“Suit yourself.” Kirishima makes it sound unbearably smug even by Ochako’s standards, but his footsteps keep going and Katsuki is currently giving her the only-us look.
Ochako lifts her chin just as Katsuki’s hand flies to it like a bird landing on the edge of a pond, two fingers to perch under her jaw, tilting her face up with quiet familiarity. “G’nite babe,” he slips in quickly before a kiss; it’s so much more natural than Ochako would’ve expected from the mouth of one Bakugo Katsuki.

So natural, in fact, that it doesn’t feel weird in the close-faced moment, just after the chaste goodnight kiss ends, for Ochako to simply reply, “Night baby.”

And Katsuki lets her get away with it.

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Chapter End Notes

Real talks this Kirishima scene has been LONG OVERDUE and I'm personally sorry that it took me so long to write it. He's so important *clenches fist while tears stream down my face*

English comedy reference for a bit of this https://www.youtube (dot) com/watch?v=SrDFGa0juCM
After a couple of days, each of which felt ten years long, Ochako finally has the uneventful school-day of her dreams – albeit on a Saturday. Everyone in class is increasingly wrapped up with their own partners for the tournament, rather than worrying over the exact nature of Ochako and Katsuki’s dynamic. Which remains persistently ambiguous, and only occasionally prone to break into makeouts when no one is looking. It's like a dream come true: normality. Or whatever counts as normal in Ochako's life these days.

At least, outside of Katsuki’s last-stretch training regimen that could get a bucket of blood from a stone. But Ochako accepts it, because – one, it’s good for her, probably; and two, Katsuki’s still nervous about Zero-G being ready. He doesn’t say it, but that’s what the twenty-going-on-two-hundred hours are about, the relentless need to keep working, polishing, trying to finish something that's not finished and might not ever be.

Because growth is a continuum and by definition Katsuki will never be so confident they’ve covered everything that he feels it’s finally done, but he still goes for it like he believes he’ll reach that point. Being done would mean they haven't any way to keep improving, and that the power of this style has finally reached its ceiling. That's what Ochako worries about: outlasting her usefulness to Katsuki, at least in this particular context.

All these factors twist together like a tangle of hairties, and maybe that’s why Ochako behaves the way she does throughout the day. Rather than contest some of Katsuki’s more erratic demands, Ochako lets them slip. She just puts up and remains calm and accommodating, letting Katsuki push them because it can't hurt being extra-ready. Ochako’s perfectly capable of letting Katsuki boss her around a little bit. Especially if it helps him feel confident – in control – then she doesn't mind.

Weirdly enough, Katsuki does.

“What's up with you?” he demands part-way through their final training session of the day (breakfast, lunch and now post-dinner). They’re in the same dojo room as they practiced in last lunchtime. Unsurprisingly, competition for use of the training areas outside of class time has gotten a little tougher since the tournament rolled around. Their morning slot in the training room remains the
only regular booking they can get there, locked down well before the all-star couples spirit of unity
tournament – as the publicity now reflects – was even a gleam in the principal’s eye. Or a tear in
Aizawa’s.

“What do you mean?” Ochako asks as she stretches a sore muscle in her leg – all this Zero-G
sparring has pulled her in some very unusual directions.

Katsuki watches Ochako standing on one leg, pulling her knee up as high as it'll go so it probably
looks like she’s preparing for a high-kick. Then a curl appears at the corner of his mouth. “You aren’t
complaining.”

“What?” Ochako wobbles and regains her balance like a waiter running back under the teetering
stack of plates. “Your problem is that I don’t have a problem?”

“Guess I got used to you having something to bitch about,” Katsuki replies with a crunch to his voice
like gravel underfoot.

Ochako unfolds her leg as if to kick Katsuki, but he just catches her foot right in front of his chest,
repositioning it with a precise adjustment to aim her foot higher – like she’s aiming to kick him in the
throat. Ochako keeps an even keel, bringing her fingers together and activating her quirk on herself
as she throws herself into a backwards scissor-kick. Pushing off from the heel in Katsuki’s palm,
Ochako swipes the other from the floor so close to Katsuki’s face she brushes the front of his bangs,
though he tilts his head back just enough to avoid a hit.

Ochako releases her quirk in time to land the right way up, then flows into another turning high kick.
Her head drops as her foot swings all the way for Katsuki’s throat, a deeper dip to bring her heel up
that little bit higher.

“Flashy,” Katsuki teases as he ducks Ochako’s leg like bending under a limbo stick.

“You’d know all about that,” Ochako replies. She tumbles into Katsuki like a stream over rocks,
more of a routine than sparring. All that gymnastics practice and synchronised movement makes it so
easy, anticipating Katsuki’s indicative punches – not actually trying to hit her, just prompt her to
dodge a certain way – and feeling the natural rhythm for her reply to the questions he asks with his
movements.

Unlike the actual question Katsuki asks, which resurfaces as their latest blend of in-and-out-of-Zero-
G combat drill ends. “So what is it?”

“Is what?” Ochako’s foot is stopped level with her waist, held about an inch off Katsuki’s hip with a
firm grip.

Ochako’s quirk is still active on herself, so when Katsuki pushes her heel away, she spins on her
axis. Her foot rushes around like a clock’s sped-up second hand to catch Katsuki on the other hip.
It’s a gentle bump that won’t do anyone much harm, but Ochako isn’t always trying to do harm.

Katsuki remains nonplussed. “The reason you’re behaving.”

Ochako’s faux-outraged as she pulls her foot back. “I always behave!”

“Yeah right, chuckles.” Katsuki snags Ochako's ankle. Instead of trying to negotiate, Ochako just
picks her other foot up – still weightless – and plants it in the middle of Katsuki’s chest for purchase
as she tries to pull her ankle free. “You’re usually all over me by now.”

One thing that doesn't really change about Katsuki is his sheer audacity. The things he claims and the
completely straight face that he wears to do it.

Ochako’s face, by contrast, blushes deeper by the second, even as she pushes harder to break away from the grip Katsuki still has on her ankle. Her other foot remains planted square in the middle of his chest. “I don’t always.”

“Yeah, I got a busted lip because you don’t always.” Katsuki antagonises for the hell of it, letting Ochako go at just the right moment so she sends herself flying across the room, a hoarse laugh chasing her like the gallop of a horse. Almost like he’s trying to annoy her – or ask for attention. Same thing.

Ochako lands on her hands against the wall and springs back, bringing her fingers together to deactivate her quirk just before she collides with Katsuki. If he had stayed where he was, Ochako would still be a few paces from Katsuki, but he’s taken those steps already so she’s right on top of him. Literally.

Without having her feet on the ground for more than a second, Ochako hops up and into Katsuki’s arms.

“So what is it?” he asks as he catches her, good and close. If Katsuki was missing amorous attention from Ochako, in her bid to actually take training seriously and not be distracted with makeouts, he’s definitely got that attention now.

“Is what?” she demands in exasperation; Katsuki is being persistent, even for him.

“The reason you’re not talking back.” Katsuki plucks a kiss from the plump part of Ochako’s cheek, like picking a chocolate from a large tray.

“Maybe I don’t have anything to say?” she poses.

“Bullshit,” Katsuki growls, hands sure around Ochako to support her leg-lock around his waist – fast becoming one of their go-to poses, this baby-monkey cling that has all the usual perks of hugging but with the added bonus of evening out their height difference. And it feels great. “I don’t know what’s going on with you if you don’t talk to me.”

“Nothing’s going on with me,” Ochako insists, believing it until she remembers the initial reason she took her mood in this direction. “I just want you to feel like we’re ready.”

“Me?” Katsuki sounds genuinely outraged, like Ochako’s just announced she walked on the moon last night. “What about you?”

Ochako answers like it’s obvious, full of absolute surety that’s inherently Bakugo Katsuki. “Well, I know we’re gonna be fine.”

Katsuki grins and jostles Ochako. “You do, huh?”

“I mean, what could we learn to do by Monday that’d make us that much more ready than we are now?” Ochako doesn’t assemble the thought until she says it, after being prompted by Katsuki; it’s always weird when Katsuki’s asking her to communicate instead of the other way around. But it does happen.

“Shows what you know,” Katsuki replies with more of a well-natured argument than grouchy; he better not be sour after Ochako let him whoop her ass like that all day.

“I know a thing or two.” Ochako cranes her mouth down to meet Katsuki’s for a gentle tussle that
stops being quite so gentle when she weaves her fingers through Katsuki’s hair. A little squeeze makes Katsuki shiver in a way Ochako feels through her whole body – wrapped around him as she is right now. If Katsuki wants distracting, Ochako will gladly oblige.

“There is one thing we could try tomorrow,” Katsuki says very quietly in the small space between Ochako’s face and his, like the idea is a deeply-buried underwater log that’s been knocked loose and surfaces in his mind. “Might make a difference.”

“Yeah?” Ochako replies softly, heart racing while also thinking about how much she’d love to just curl up in bed with Katsuki and cuddle. Maybe she can convince him to go back home for a nap tomorrow, like last week. Somehow, Ochako don’t think it’s super likely that’s what Katsuki has in mind for her on their day off together. Just the two of them.

“Meet me at the gates tomorrow morning,” Katsuki purrs like a well-assembled engine.

“For what?”

“Show up and you’ll see, won’t you?” he taunts.

“So you’re saying it’s a surprise?” Ochako plays right back, because at the end of a good day of training actually getting Katsuki to unwind is probably the best thing for both of them. Calming him calms her, Ochako finds more and more as the habit deepens.

“Sure,” Katsuki murmurs like he knows something Ochako doesn’t – aside from what the so-called surprise is. “Why not?”

Well, Ochako’s used to being surprised by Katsuki. He can’t do anything that’ll catch her off-guard anymore.

Or so she thinks.

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“It’s been a while.” The person on the other side of the door isn’t too shocked to find Ochako positioned hopefully outside it after Katsuki declared bedtime. He kissed Ochako goodnight at the stairs for a lot longer than they really ought to go at in the open like that, even if they haven’t been caught yet. Or maybe they have and it makes no difference either way.

“Sorry ‘bout that,” Ochako replies hopefully. “Do you mind if we go through some homework together?” The last couple of days have kinda rushed past her in a disorientating blur, with Ochako hardly able to remember what happened in class between training with Katsuki, saving All Might and committing to build Ochako sweat-powered rocket-boots, much less the homework. And that was just since Wednesday.

“Of course, ribbet.” Tsu’s pyjamas have ducks on them tonight, which Ochako finds amusing for some silly reason. “Come on in.”

Ochako takes a little while to unwind this time. She legitimately does need Tsu to help her through some homework, which is a lot more productive compared to Katsuki-study-time these days. Fewer distractions.

But eventually, inevitably, Ochako’s time around her best girlfriend will unravel her in the end. Ochako never really worries that Tsu will talk about her and Katsuki to others anyway. As such, she feels much more comfortable digging a little into the nature of the time she spends with Katsuki. Tsu has always known there was something a little weird going on with Ochako and Katsuki. But Tsu
has never been much for gossip, or believing what’s assumed about them, unless it’s something Ochako’s told her directly.

But Tsu also asks some no-holds-barred questions. So when Ochako wanders into having plans tomorrow with Katsuki, she’s really just putting herself up for trouble.

“Wait, so you’re meeting Bakugo tomorrow to do what?” Tsu pins down like marking Ochako for dissection.

“I, uh… don’t know,” Ochako answers, realising only under questioning how that might be a bit strange. “I’m meeting him at the gates, so it must be somewhere outside school.”

Tsu contemplates this for a moment. “What are you gonna wear?”

“Gonna wear?” Ochako squeaks. “I hadn’t thought of it… it’s… it’ll be like, training, so I was just going to wear normal… training stuff.”

Tsu sets her fingers to her mouth, and then in all seriousness asks Ochako, “Are you sure it’s not a date?”

“I, uh…” Ochako pictures Katsuki’s face as he told her it was a ‘surprise’ and finds herself even more lacking in answers than when she arrived. “No. I’m not.”

It is, after all, exactly the kind of thing Katsuki would do.

“When are you meeting him?”

Ochako’s face lights up. “That’s a good question!” Her phone is in her hand before she thinks about it.

Tsu watches for a moment before asking, “Do you two text a lot?”

“Oh… a little,” Ochako answers without too much reticence, busy tapping out a question to Katsuki about when they’re meant to meet for the ‘surprise’ tomorrow. “Only for the stuff we really have to talk about.” It’s not like she messages Katsuki about anything except meeting up. The occasional good morning or goodnight mixed in. A few kisses. Katsuki will sometimes send her a single ‘x’ late at night, maybe just to let Ochako know he’s thinking about her. She sends them back.

“With this tournament team-up you must have plenty to talk about,” Tsu observes. “Bakugo takes that stuff pretty seriously.”

“You can say that again,” Ochako sighs. “What about you? I wouldn’t have expected you and Ojiro to team up.”

“Me neither, but Mina and I tried to go together first and Aizawa told us we had to pick again,” Tsu remarks without resentment. “It’s been interesting. We discovered a lot more common ground than we expected once we started working together.”

“Funny how that goes.” Ochako looks back on the time she’s spent with Katsuki through the same lens; it’s been, what, a month? So much has changed, Ochako feels like she can hardly recognise herself.

Okay, that’s not strictly true. Ochako recognises herself, but she can’t quite believe how much she’s grown with Katsuki. How much they’ve both grown, in such a short span of time. Ochako wonders how brilliant they’ll be if they stay together.
She’d like to find out.

Chapter End Notes

A commenter smartly pointed out that when I updated often the slow burn was, well, the slow burn. Now the fanfic is all Grade A Sucrose, but the slow burn is waiting for chapters.

Big shoutout to my long suffering editor who I am surely going to give diabetes at this rate. She's a champ.
Katsuki's Surprise

Chapter Summary

Exactly what’s going on with Katsuki remains firmly up in the air.

Chapter Notes

I wasn't gonna update this tonight but then I figured I would anyway. Welcome back to candytown.

For the first time in ages, Ochako doesn’t wake up at dawn, sleeping all the way through until seven: a lie-in of epic proportions by her current standards. Katsuki confirmed in last night's text-chain that they didn’t need to get up early for this mystery 'surprise' of his. It’s a luxury Ochako might only appreciate more by sharing the experience. Not that she’s got any chances of that happening any time soon.

Ochako’s late-night girl talk with Tsu also lodged a certain doubt in her mind, which unfurls in the morning like a flower’s petals opening for the sun. Until the point at which anyone had asked her about it, Ochako never gave a second thought to what she’d wear to hang out with – train, she means train – with Katsuki.

But of course, now she’s been asked, Ochako second guesses herself every time she puts an article of clothing on – then takes it off, puts it back on, picks something else and so on. Because surprise and surprise date aren’t that far apart, and Katsuki probably isn’t thinking about it as a date at all… but Ochako’s been wrong – like, super wrong – before.

Ochako reaches what she thinks is a compromise – a denim skirt she can take off over leggings, a vest-top that’s actually hers after Katsuki made her give his back, and Katsuki’s old hoodie. But she’s also got a spare set of everything in her kit bag, in case Katsuki wants them to do one of those muddy outdoors assault courses or something. Ochako has a sudden flash of Katsuki covered in mud, and thinks she wouldn’t mind doing something like that with him at all.

Of course, all this carefully coordinated effort achieves is to amuse the shit out of Katsuki. Because when Ochako walks up to meet him at the gates, Katsuki gives a “tch,” that sounds like it’s trying to scare off raccoons, followed by a scathing chortle that amounts to, “What’re you wearing that for?”

Typical: putting an ounce of thought into something is the moment it becomes too much. Because of a normal question from Ochako’s friends automatically means Katsuki would never give it a second’s thought. Ochako shouldn’t have tried to second guess herself. Or maybe it doesn’t matter.

“I can take it off, you know!” Ochako shoots defensively.

Katsuki flushes with the notion, looking around to check the coast is clear before he folds an arm around Ochako’s shoulders and seeks out a transient peck of a kiss that she semi-petulantly grants.
“You’re cute.” He reaches up with the hand he’s looped around Ochako and tweaks her nose to this effect, or maybe just to be annoying. Ochako wrinkles it and pulls away. “But a little stupid if you thought you could get away with a skirt today.”

“I can change,” Ochako reiterates irately, but of course, that only amuses Katsuki more. He can change too, has changed, just not in the spare-clothes-in-his-bag way.

Katsuki doesn’t need a change of clothes to transition seamlessly from fashion into exercise anyway. He makes whatever he’s wearing seem carefully curated, even when it’s just low-riding gym clothes. The crotch of the sweatpants is closer to his knees than hips, not that Ochako can see his hips because the t-shirt ends way past them, his ‘favourite’ hoodie pushed up past his forearms in a way that must be purposely done to emphasise the width of his forearms, or at least in Ochako’s eyes.

“What?” Katsuki bites when Ochako looks him over a little too long to escape comment.

“Nothing.” She hops up on her toes to plant a kiss on Katsuki’s pre-scowling mouth and cancels the protocol before he gets to actually frowning. “I’m just ready for my surprise.”

“Course you are, princess,” Katsuki murmurs with a choked-up fluster, his hand finding Ochako’s and weaving their fingers together as they start walking.

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Ochako doesn’t know what she was expecting.

“This is what you had in mind?” she exclaims outside the front of the building Katsuki finally leads them to at the end of a longish train ride, something with the word Air-something written on the sign in English.

“You wanted something that’d make a difference before tomorrow,” Katsuki announces just arrogantly enough to make Ochako think he’s defensive. To even question if his ‘surprise’ was a way of delaying Ochako’s reaction to what he wants to do until the last possible moment.

“I didn’t even know places like this existed,” Ochako shifts her focus a little, not wanting to set Katsuki at odds by making him feel self-conscious about where he’s chosen to take them on a… off-site training day. Not a date.

“It’s called research,” Katsuki says bluntly, but Ochako takes the point. It’s true she relies on him a little – okay, a lot – to direct their training. He’s just so good at it, though that’s no excuse for Ochako to slack off.

“So what exactly is a trampoline world?” Ochako asks as they walk into the building and there’s a sign she can actually read. “There’s a trampoline at Coach Nikiforov’s gym too.”

“A trampoline, exactly,” Katsuki picks out as they approach the desk, still talking to Ochako even as the teenager behind it tries to welcome them. “Two all-day passes,” Katsuki snaps to the doe-eyed teen – about their age, but not all teenage boys look like Katsuki. Ochako’s especially aware of that fact today; out in public with him, just the two of them.

Almost as aware as Ochako is of what it looks like when Katsuki unquestionably pays for them both. Ochako doesn’t have that kind of spare change anyway, but she did just… assume Katsuki would pay. He usually does, based on their… last date, technically.

Wait, Ochako might be on a date with Bakugo Katsuki.
Ochako takes it back. She’s definitely not on a date. Or at least she sure as hell hopes this isn’t Katsuki’s idea of one.

“You’re on a fucking trampoline, angel,” Katsuki’s voice lacks any amount of kindness. In fact, it could be said he’s trash talking her pretty damn hard. “You can at least pull off a quad.”

“It’s my-” Ochako drops all the way down the padded wall Katsuki’s talking to her from the top of, bouncing on her back and coming all the way up just high enough to the ledge to add, “-first time,” before she bounces again.

“Bullshit excuse.” Katsuki drops to one knee and reaches out a hand the next time Ochako comes up, letting her grab hold of his wrist and pulling her back up like pulling a paper plane out of the air. It must be his first time here too, but Katsuki is as natural to this as he is to… well, most things.

“Show me again,” she requests, and Katsuki gives her a skewed look, like he’d be annoyed if she wasn’t pandering to his ego so well.

“One more time,” he grants stiffly. “Then you’re doing it.”

Katsuki turns to the ledge and jumps off, gaining as much height as possible before he plummets down to the large trampoline at the bottom. He comes up and pushes off the wall with one foot just before reaching the top of his bounce, then kicks himself into a spin. Arms tucked close to his chest, whole body straightened like a rod. Katsuki spins four times, the last turning into a dive as he flips over and curls to bounce across the flat of his shoulders right in the centre of the monster trampoline. The look on the attendant’s faces when the first place Katsuki dragged Ochako to was here was something to behold.

People normally start on the small trampolines, they’d advised foolishly, and Katsuki had breathed fire at them. There weren’t any more questions about whether they were ‘sure they wanted to try the largest one first’ after that.

On his next bounce up Katsuki plants both feet against the wall and kicks himself backwards, triple-flipping on the way back down. On the next one he’s coming up feet-first, and the rest of his body flows like water after his sneakers – Ochako doesn’t want to think about how much those flashy things cost – as he curls into a crouch back on the ledge like someone’s pressed rewind on him.

“You weigh more than me,” Ochako announces in anticipation of her not being able to make it all the way back up like he just did. Maybe Katsuki finds this easier – in fact, she's certain he does – but Ochako’s still coming to terms with these big tricks.

Katsuki draws a lingering look down Ochako’s body and back up to her face, making her feel extra aware of the shape of her legs and butt in the leggings she opted to wear instead of changing her bottoms. Ochako likes the shape of herself just fine, but nowhere near as much as she thinks Katsuki does. It’s a little distracting… how distracted Katsuki is by Ochako, whatever sense that makes.

But why Katsuki has to phrase his response, “You weigh plenty,” is just a little Bakugo detail Ochako just has to live with. She knows how he means it, not least because Katsuki’s palm slaps lightly against the softest, most jiggly part of her butt as he stands up next to her.

It's not a particularly lecherous spank – like something guys do to each other in locker rooms. Ochako would bet her own butt Kirishima has slapped Katsuki like that multiple times before; Katsuki surely got the idea off someone. But Ochako’s not a guy in the locker room, and as such is
appropriately mortified by the gesture.

Going by Katsuki’s smug look, that’s just what he’s going for. Back at his full height, Katsuki leans into Ochako’s space and drops his flag: the challenge for her to meet. “Quad.”

Ochako’s cheeks are pinker than a couple spheres of cotton candy, but that just makes Katsuki even more amused, of course. He’s setting it up so there’s only one thing Ochako can reasonably do in this situation, and it’s a flipping quad.

But she’s not going to do it without getting even.

“Fine.” Ochako whips her palm across Katsuki’s backside so fast it’s barely there at all, but it makes contact and there’s an audible sound that could be timed to the widening of his eyes.

Without waiting to catch another second more of his reaction, Ochako hurls herself off the ledge, like she can drop right through the bottom of the trampoline if she pounds it hard enough. That gives her enough power to come up hard, but it’s not really about power. It’s about daring.

Ochako kicks the wall to launch herself into a spin, counting one, two, three, four rotations before she curls and flips herself back-down for the second bounce against the trampoline. She gets her reliable old trainers against the padded wall and kicks off. Katsuki did full layout flips, but Ochako’s not moving as fast and tucks into a somersault to keep the momentum going, making three head-over-heels turns before she bounces again.

Ochako manages both combos when Katsuki was only asking for the quad, but if she doesn’t try to do exactly what he does then what kind of standard is she setting for herself? Trying to be as good as Bakugo Katsuki is a pretty great benchmark for anyone.

Except Ochako isn’t Katsuki, so she comes up short for the last move – the feet-first curl-up that resembles a slinky going backwards up the stairs. However, Ochako’s got Katsuki. Which means when she stops short of where she wants to – will – be, he’s right there to scoop her out of the air and haul her the rest of the way. Into his arms as it happens.

“Please, you two! Don’t use the equipment that way!!” An alarmed attendant rushes across the space with their arms waving frantically. Katsuki growls, not that the attendant can hear that, but Ochako certainly can. She slithers out of his grip and reverts to a ‘one at a time, wait your turn’ system as demonstrated to them in the health and safety video at the start. Not that Ochako had been able to concentrate on it much; what with Katsuki sat beside her, tracing the pads on her fingertips with one of his the whole time.

Ochako doesn’t even think Katsuki was doing it deliberately, they were just holding hands and he got bored. It’s the one thing her quirk makes physiologically different about her body, so everyone’s curious. Ochako’s let plenty of people prod her ’finger beans’ as Hagakure has insisted on calling them. It’s just the difference of letting Katsuki do it. The careful, curious way he kept fingering – wrong word, wrong word – Ochako’s hands, which made her a little too giddy to remember exactly what the training video said about getting grabbed mid-air by your date. If it’s a date. Might be.

“There’s your quad,” Ochako declares, wishing she’d been quick enough to do it when she was still being held by Katsuki — for maximum drama.

Katsuki gives a scathing smile, like he’s proud of her but she can cut the attitude. Follows it with a liquid, “Good girl.”

Ochako actually bites her bottom lip, thoughts wiped out for a moment as the strangest affirmative
rush crashes through her mind like an especially large wave. Katsuki knows saying it that way gets to her. Unfortunately, flirting with Ochako doesn’t make it any clearer whether Katsuki thinks this is a date or not, because he’d flirt his way through either. As far as Katsuki’s concerned, anytime that’s not literally a fight is valid flirting time: in front of teachers, the back of cars, public train rides. But shucks, Ochako doesn’t really mind.

Katsuki’s got a million-yen grin, with only a light smug streak brushed across his lips. He’s always gratified when Ochako does something he believed she could do and she couldn’t. It’s a pretty harmless thing to be consistently right about. More concerning is the fact that he’s got his phone out, and as such doesn’t appear to be readying himself for a turn of his own.

In fact, it looks more like Katsuki wants to use said phone to take a video of Ochako. A suspicion all but confirmed when Ochako hears the tap of him touching the screen and then the clear instruction, “Do it again, babe.”

Maybe Ochako’s on a date after all.

Chapter End Notes

Soooooooooooooo just as a general rule, given there's literally 5 chapters left of this fic (including the epilogue) I'm going to be taking my time with when I update it. There's a few reasons for this, but one of the most important is that after working really hard for a long time to update this story literally 3-4 times a week for several months, we're almost at the end.

And I'm ready for that! These final chapters are at the golden end of the garden we've been wandering around in for a while, but it's time to bring the story to a satisfying close. And that's not something I want to rush. When it's over, it is over, so rather than pressuring myself and my editor (both with plenty of real life to be dealing with) to push these chapters out fast enough to a literally unsatisfiable audience, I'm only going to update when I want to, and really savour the experience. I'm only going to write - and post the end of - this fic once, so it's gotta be something that feels good to do.

To that end, please refrain from pretend yelling at me or getting on my back about when I'm gonna update next. Even jokingly nagging me about updating is going to make this unfun, which will actually push the update back even further, so it's totally counterproductive too. I know it's sad to think that a story you like is ending, but trust me when I say I'm ready for it to end, and I think when we get there you will all be too. There's a funny knack to endings, and they're best not to rush.

OH BUT ALSO THE NUMBER OF TIMES PEOPLE IN DISCORD TALKED ABOUT IF/WHEN BUTTSPANKING WOULD HAPPEN. You shoulda known I'd have y'all covered all along.
The state of affairs bounces between one thing and another, much like Ochako’s heart.

H-h-h-h-here we go again!

An important part of this process, for parting is such sweet sorrow, is that I drown y'all in sugar. To that end, enjoy the chapter.

Ochako ought to have remembered what all day passes would entail, especially with Katsuki involved. Because when he says, “Let’s break for lunch,” she feels like a prisoner getting out early on parole.

“Really?”

Katsuki seems appalled by her surprise. “You wanna keep going?”

“No!” Ochako zips to attention, shaking her head like Katsuki would actually push through; he wouldn’t, meals are far too important to miss. But she's half surprised he hasn't packed a bag full of protein shakes and bentos so they don't have to waste time going off-site.

However, the way Katsuki poses, “You gonna put your clothes back on first?” to Ochako once they return to their shared locker makes her consider that maybe he doesn't mind a little bit of time-wasting.

“Yeah, yeah, one second,” Ochako rattles off as she steps into her button-up skirt and wiggles it past her hips. There's an inevitable squeeze as Ochako tugs the fits-her-hips waistband over her butt, which she didn’t have to do with this skirt pre- Katsuki.

Only after she's finished doing it does Ochako consider that having her back to Katsuki for the manoeuvre might have been the wrong idea. Or been a huge success, depending on whether she wanted to make him blush like it's going out of fashion next season so he better go all-out with it now. It's highly effective either way. “Ready to go?”

“Mmn,” Katsuki murmurs like maybe he doesn’t have much more in the way of words for her right now. Just grabs onto her hand like a lifeline and squeezes hard, pulling Ochako gently alongside him as they walk out of the building. One point for the ‘maybe a date’ column.

“Where should we eat?”

“I dunno,” Katsuki grunts. He hasn’t thought this far through it, Ochako suspects. That’s alright, they’re only looking for lunch. After a short wander they find themselves in a little restaurant with set...
menus. Katsuki doesn’t get talkative even after his blush retreats down his neck. Not that he’s ever been a prolific conversationalist to start with.

“Why did you want to come here?” Ochako asks rather than sit in weird silence with him while they wait for their food to arrive. Katsuki shrugs. “The trampoline park, I mean.” They’re past questioning lunch choices now.

Katsuki seems quite ill at ease like this with Ochako – one point in the ‘maybe not a date’ column. “You wanted something that’d make a difference in one day.”

“That’s not really what I said.”

“Might as well’ve been,” he replies. “Anyway you’ve still got barriers in your head about the big moves, so this is a good start for the way you’ll use your new boots.”

“You mean using Zero-G like you do?” Ochako knows it is, she’s just saying it out loud because she’s nervous. But Katsuki’s little eyeroll confirms it. “Hatsume says they’ll be ready at the end of the week.”

“We’ve got bigger things to worry about next week,” Katsuki mutters to the tabletop, and Ochako’s secretly relieved. She loves doing what she does with Katuski, and has used jetpacks and hoverboots before. But not ones with Bakugo Katsuki-powered explosions, and definitely not in zero gravity all by herself, without even getting a chance to work on it in training with Katsuki first. And yes, she does recognise the whole ‘that’s what I wanted to do’ bit that Katsuki likes to hold over her.

“As in the tournament?” Ochako suggests, not that she’s all that worried about it.

“Yeah, what’s on your frigging schedule?” Katsuki accuses with an amused snort.

“You know, just because something's obvious doesn't mean it's not worth saying,” Ochako throws out without realising right away – not until she hears it out loud – just how true it rings. There’s quite a few things that seem pretty obvious but Katsuki has never got around to saying. He hasn’t even told Ochako he likes her, not directly.

Katsuki looks like he’s about to respond when a server arrives with their food. The teen girl’s gaze lingers on Katsuki as she walks away, the moment jolted from its natural resting place to somewhere on the floor. Ochako picks it up later, once they’ve eaten – after making very determined eye contact with the server as Katsuki pays for both their lunches – and they're walking back to to the trampoline park.

It's deceptively easy, in the end, to just say exactly what she means.

“Hey, is this a date?”

Katsuki’s pace doesn't falter, but he's quiet for long enough to hint at his consideration of her question. It's not a stupid one, especially not if he doesn't have an immediate yes or no answer. “Do you want it to be?” He's Katsuki, he's got to be more complicated than that.

“I… ’d like to go on one. Lots, actually. Of dates, I mean,” Ochako answers with the grace of a roller-skating horse.

“Alright, princess,” Katsuki settles like she's getting ahead of herself. “One at a time, eh?”

“I know, it's just I… we never talked about any of this.”
Katsuki gives a rich laugh. “We talk non-fucking-stop about this.”

“We do not!” Ochako shoots. “I’m just asking, it's not like you've ever made it seem like you wanted to date before.”

“Anyone else,” is the only way Katsuki chooses to amend this query, adding the alkaline to Ochako's stomach acid mid-churn. “This is supposed to be training.”

“But it's fun.”

“You saying the rest of it ain't fun?!” Katsuki barks defensively, which is reassuring somehow.

“Alright! It can be fun… at least, when I'm not throwing up on you.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki settles with a raspy chuckle, sounding more like amused reminiscence than bitter. “You'd know if we were on a date.” There’s a promise to his tone that warms Ochako’s cheeks, and she can feel the sticky-hot clasp of his hand in hers too.

“Would I, though?” Ochako didn't even realise when Katsuki thought they were properly together. She's not trusting her instincts if she can help it.

“Tch, probably not,” Katsuki replies with an amused click of his tongue, and then a moment later gives a cryptic, “After the prelims.”

“What?”

“We'll go on a date!” Katsuki snaps, because yelling is always the way to go when Ochako doesn't immediately know what he's talking about. It often comes to that over this kind of thing. At least where Katsuki’s involved.

“Does that mean you're asking me out?” Ochako asks like she might inquire after the weather forecast. First the breakup, and now this weirdly scheduled time for when they decide to make things official. But they’ve only just got back to being kind of normal again, and now it's all about to go changing. They literally got A Talk from their teachers about what a big deal it is. Not that it feels like anything except the most logical decision in Ochako's head and heart, so to her it doesn't seem like a hard decision at all.

Katsuki doesn't respond right away, furrowing his brow at Ochako like he's waiting for a catch that isn't there. Like it couldn't be that easy. If Katsuki asks her out, Ochako would say yes in a heartbeat; she's sure they're going to tell everyone the truth soon, so what do a few days matter when what she wants most is to just be with Katsuki?

Except by the rule of fools, whatever lunatic god is planning Ochako’s fate like an outlandish soap opera, that means Katsuki’s eyes narrow. The edge of his gaze becomes that little bit sharper, as he cuts around Ochako’s form like he's marking out a pattern to fit her in.

“Let's see how the first match goes,” Katsuki announces nonchalantly, his stride never faltering as they return to the trampoline park.

“How the match goes?” Ochako echoes in mocking disbelief. “Are you saying you'll only ask me out if we win?”

“Babe,” Katsuki scoffs it so much Ochako’s more insulted than probably makes sense for her to be – at least compared to the other things he's called her in genuine affection. “If we lose the first match, then there's no way I'm dating you.”
Oh yes, Ochako forgot: he's still *Bakugo*.

Ochako searches Katsuki’s expression for some gem of insight and comes up with nothing but gravel. “I can't tell if you're being serious or not.”

“I'm *always* serious when it comes to winning, dummy.” He donks her head lightly with his free hand, and somehow, well, not somehow – because he's him – Katsuki makes this term of address sound fonder than his last ‘babe’. Ochako's just going to have to roll with it.

“Guess we gotta win then.” Ochako’s playing it so cool you could shave her attitude like a block of ice and put syrup on it, but on the inside she's a gloopy mess.

Katsuki squeezes her hand in affirmation. “That's better.”

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If the morning was so much fun Ochako wondered if it were a date, the afternoon is even more misleading. Either way, Ochako spends most of it ambitiously stomping her mental barriers about throwing herself through the air in as many ways as possible for the sheer hell of it. Soon enough she moves through the air like she *owns* it.

Ochako can tell she’s doing well, because Katsuki focuses less on pushing her than getting everything on camera. Himself as well as her.

There’s a purpose to this, of course, which is that Katsuki can’t watch himself the way he can watch Ochako, so she gets roped into filming Katsuki to enable him to most effectively be his own worst critic – except for Coach Nikiforov, perhaps.

Eventually Ochako gets so bored of playing camerawoman she activates her quirk on Katsuki’s phone. She starts a recording, then stills the phone to keep it in place – or turning only at the rate of a slow panning shot. The camera keeps rolling, capturing up close the moment Ochako throws herself off the ledge a moment later. She joins Katsuki in turning twists and flips with the occasional changing-place between them if their jumps align enough to sneak it in there, while distant yelling of the attendants breaks out in the background as they freak out over the pair’s liberal and repeated rule violations.

Katsuki watches everything right away in a fancy slow motion setting Ochako didn't even knew phones could *do*. Assessing, perfecting, tightening up his turns and movement with a focus on technique that Coach Nikiforov would surely – okay *maybe* – be proud of. But it's all still fun, and Ochako has the thought more than once of how peculiar it is that Katsuki would so easily give their day of training to this instead of rigorous combat or Zero-G practice.

Maybe he does feel ready too, or ready enough to be bothering to perfect his quads by mucking about on trampolines instead of doing endless drills. He doesn't even seem anxious anymore. Whether it's because he's realised they're just *ready*, and that's why they're having fun, or if being relaxed enough to have fun is the sign they're ready; Ochako has no idea, but she’s not complaining either way.

On one of Ochako’s turns she finally pulls off the most recent move Katsuki’s been egging her to do. She’s so thrilled to have nailed it when that when she bounces and next comes flying back up, she doesn’t have another move ready to go.

Katsuki’s still there, phone in his hand and a particularly dumb-cute grin on his face, so Ochako gets silly and just makes a heart with her fingers. She beams at Katsuki for the moment she's still enough
to look clearly at him, before dropping down to the trampoline and turning her next ascent into one of the reverse-slinky moves to land back on the ledge.

Katsuki drops down to sit behind Ochako, an arm slipping around her waist as his body shadows hers like a slightly bigger piece that she just fits inside. As if someone literally made them to lock together like that, so his head snugs perfectly over her shoulder as he plays the footage back. First, the move itself, a nicely tucked flip that involves turning in several directions, and not even Katsuki finds anything to click his tongue at.

At least, not until Ochako comes back up in the next bounce. Katsuki’s finger taps against the screen, pausing the video at the moment Ochako becomes stationary, making a surprisingly well-formed heart with her hands and grinning like a crescent moon.

“Cute.” It’s not quite a click, but Katsuki mouths the word in such a way that it sounds almost similar. His breath plays across her skin a moment before his lips brush it, well-positioned as Ochako’s neck is to receive such attention from Katsuki’s wandering mouth. She squirms, and that only makes him hold her tighter against him. A shrill whistle – the attendants have a whistle now – starts blowing, and Ochako’s senses stop flying around in the ether and return to her for a moment.

Katsuki’s sitting right behind Ochako on the ledge of the platform, so there isn’t exactly any space for her to get up that doesn’t involve climbing over him. Which she’d do, she just doesn’t want to invoke the wrath of the attendants – again.

“Let me up.” Ochako’s trying to signal her intention more than actually making a move for it. She’s quite happy here, truth be told, but she can’t very well perch on a ledge cuddling with Katsuki for the rest of the afternoon. If only.

“Go over me,” he returns, and without a second more notice scoops her by the hips and drops her off the edge of the platform. Ochako shrieks on the way down – that poor attendant blowing the whistle is really losing it now – but bounces with good form, twisting her hips to rotate herself a turn-and-a-half as she curves her body and lets her toes whizz past Katsuki’s shoulders to overshoot him. He doesn’t move an inch, making eye contact when her face passes over him like a sped-up cycle of the sun.

Ochako lands behind Katsuki and props her hands on his shoulders as if she were standing like that the whole time.

“Please you two! This is your last warning or we’ll have to call the manager!” a frantic voice from the ground calls up.

Ochako hears Katsuki scoff. “Calm down! We’re goddam heroes!” he yells down at the momentarily stunned member of staff, like they’re not super sure why Katsuki thinks this information is relevant just now.

“Wh… really?” The full effects of Katsuki’s tone of absolutes finally kick in, changing the youth’s expression from disapproving to suspicious.

“Yeah! So we won’t let anything bad happen, okay?!” Ochako pitches into the plea for leniency, giving the boy a winning smile that smooths over Katsukis’ harsher edges. “You can count on us!”

“Uh… okay…” the attendant relents uncertainly, perhaps understanding that rules designed for user-safety might not have to be impressed so harshly on bona-fide heroes who clearly know what they’re doing. “Th… thank you for protecting us?”
They’re still students, of course, but Ochako considers the truth of what Katsuki’s said. In his own mind it’s the actions that make the status, not the technicalities. And seeing as they fought a for-real villain to protect the symbol of peace literally three days ago, it’s kind of true.

They’re heroes. Partners. This is going to be their job one day.

“You’re welcome,” Katsuki replies grumpily, while Ochako is reeling from the notion of this being their profession, but that really sends her into a tailspin. Katsuki using his manners? “Now buzz off.” Ah, that’s more like it. The attendant does shuffle off again, disappearing back into the rest of the park like an ant crawling back to the mound.

Ochako turns her focus onto watching Katsuki, who is glaring the person into the distance, but soon notices he’s being watched.

“What?” Katsuki bites defensively.

“It’s just weird when you’re nice to people,” Ochako lets slip out, and he doesn’t like that at all, taking a foreboding, say-that-again step toward Ochako. “Other than me, I mean.”

Katsuki takes one more step closer to Ochako, then slings his arm around her waist, slotting his front to her side with a familiar ease. A soft squeeze that’s like the sun on leaves. “Too fucking right, princess.”

The character of Katsuki’s grin changes, a flash of teeth hinting treachery before the affectionate arm around her waist becomes a rude shove off the edge of the wall.

“Katsukiiiii-!” Ochako squeals in equal parts delight and indignation on the way down.

Chapter End Notes

I have already been spoiled beyond believe by people drawing fanart for the events of this fic, I'm literally beyond belief at the amazing work people have produced just by being inspired by lil' ol' me and this fic.

So without making it a request so much as a 'people often ask me about scenes I'd love to see drawn in this fic' and a good answer is: any that are about actual pictures that exist in the story. The photobooth is one, but now we have some fresh new ones that I would literally combust if I ever saw made into a thing I can look at with my real eyes and not my imagination ones. Thanks as always y'all! It's fun being at the front of a ship that's built up so much momentum!

Also to speak a little more to the discord, just in case people are curious but unsure what to expect - it's basically just a big warm saucepan of boiling water that people just chill in to talk about DADT in the first instance, but fandom and anything else that people want to talk to each other about. It's more of a chatroom than a forum, but certainly after a chapter has been posted I will be hanging out in the #spoilers tag eager to hear people's reactions to the story. Everything else is just pure chillin'
Feeling Ready

Chapter Summary

Finally things begin to settle. Right before they blow up again.

Chapter Notes

F-f-f-f-four chapters to go! As in, this one, two more, and the epilogue. We're so close!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

By the time they finish at the trampoline park, Ochako’s returned to the notion of this being a training session. Dates probably aren’t meant to leave you so physically exhausted it’s a fight not to fall asleep on your partner’s shoulder on the train. Or maybe dates with Katsuki are.

“This was a lot of fun,” Ochako mumbles to Katsuki’s shoulder as she dips in and out of Doze Town. Her hand seeks his out to lock their fingers together. “Even if it’s not a date.”

“Any time, angel,” he murmurs back soft – super soft, like he’s got to hush his sweet nothings to the point of being sure Ochako’s the only girl in the world who ever hears him say something so tooth-rottingly cute. As if no one else can possibly be allowed to know this is what he can be like, or his reputation would be left in tatters.

In a spectacular failing of her observational skills, Ochako only notices they’re not going back to school when Katsuki shakes her hand and announces, “This is our stop.” It’s not the one she was expecting.

“It is?” That Ochako gets up and follows Katsuki regardless is a testament to her unquestioned faith in him. Perhaps a little too much, it could be said as she stumbles after him like a baby duck.

“What’re you surprised about?” Katsuki yaps like one of those little dogs that doesn’t really come across intimidating no matter how much it barks. “You’ve been here before.”

“Oh.” Once they’re out of the station, Ochako starts to recognise the surrounds. It’s Katsuki and Deku’s neighbourhood. “I didn’t realise we were going to your house.”

“Problem?” Katsuki parcels up like a suspiciously ticking box.

“Of course not, I… actually wanted to go,” Ochako lets slip with a fiddly tap of her fingers together. “I just hadn’t figured out a way to ask.”

Katsuki laughs and throws an arm around Ochako’s shoulders. “Smart one, ain’t’cha?”

“You didn’t say anything.” Ochako knows it’s a weak point to refer to, but she’s a bit busy being distracted by the weight of Katsuki’s arm around her, like maybe her shoulders were a shelf put up specifically for him to rest on.
“You didn’t ask,” Katsuki points out, like Ochako hasn’t just admitted it already. “It ain’t like you not to tell me exactly what you want, princess.”

“Well, it’s not like this is a date or anything,” Ochako replies a touch aversively, spotting someone on the other side of the street watching the two of them walking past in this overly intimate arrangement.

“Yeah, fair enough.” Katsuki’s arm swings down suddenly. “Go back to school, then.” He stops walking, and Ochako takes several steps of bluffing before finally grinding to a halt and turning around to face him.

“Alright, you made your point,” Ochako says stiffly, taking a few steps back and reaching for Katsuki’s hand to tug on it gently.

“I’m serious.” Katsuki isn’t, but he wants her to think he is, shaking himself out of her grip. “Piss off.”

“Katsuki-”

“Don’t Katsu-ku me,” he interjects, and if they can’t have real arguments, this must be the next closest thing. “If you wanted to then you should’ve asked, bubs. Now I’ve changed my mind.”

Ochako can bluff with the best of them, and thinks that Katsuki is just seeing how far her temper will stretch, the same way he stretches a muscle that little bit longer than Ochako would do for herself without him there. But Ochako can bend for days.

“Alrighty, have it your way,” Ochako stops trying to cajole Katsuki and pops her hands on her hips. “See ya tomorrow.” She twiddles her fingers in a wave, turns around on her heels and gets about three steps away when she hears Katsuki move. Ochako takes another – slightly faster – two steps before Katsuki’s completely behind her, an arm fastening around her waist like a seatbelt.

Ochako doesn’t fight him, lets her body meld with Katsuki’s like they’re held together by magnets. His hand presses into the ticklish part of her side, lips brushing the outside of her ear through her hair as he asks, “Wanna come back to my place?”

Ochako turns so her cheek instead of her ear presses to Katsuki’s mouth, and he obliges with a kiss to the squishiest part of her already pretty-squishy face. “Yes please.”

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Turns out, Katsuki’s parents aren’t in. Which is a bit of a win.

That’s how Ochako and Katsuki get to have the full-on, drifting in-and-out-of-dozing, tv-in-the-background cuddle-nap she’s been dreaming of for weeks. They make out, obviously, but it’s less of an attraction than when they were last here. A week ago, if it can be believed that all this has happened in just a week. Ochako feels like it’s been months, but perhaps just because it’s been months’ worth of change crammed into a week.

Ochako still likes making out with Katsuki, of course, but when it’s something she can do whenever she wants, it’s just as nice to get good and comfortable before drifting off to the nonsensical tv-chatter of Katsuki’s frustrated channel-surfing. It feels so normal too. Enough to override that the fact that they’re not training literally the day before the preliminaries. Less than 24hrs to go and they’re just… cuddle-snoozing on the couch. After a day of ‘training’ sure, but even that wasn’t the normal kind of Katsuki-guided torpedo bootcamp he’s been putting her through hitherto.
Ochako dares to think Katsuki finally feels they’re ready too. Or maybe he just knows there’s nothing more they can do that’ll make a difference before tomorrow. Besides, he doesn’t get a free house all the time. Somewhere they get to be alone and enjoy each other, without fear of what anyone else makes of it.

Katsuki doesn’t relax very often either, so in some ways this is training, Ochako considers as she watches him gazing with eyes at half-mast at the tv. In some ways, this is the best preparation they could possibly have for what’s coming next. To be at peace, for a moment.

“What?” Katsuki’s groggy stare finds Ochako’s, quickly sensing when he’s under observation. Ochako’s got her face sort of buried in Katsuki’s armpit, or at least half-buried against his chest as she slots around his side in the crevice between his arm and body.

“Nothing,” she says, before the crease in his brows prompts her to explain a little further. “I like when you’re chill.”

“I’m always fuckin’ chill,” Katsuki drones with his eyes shuttered so low it’s like he could be closed for business. “Especially with you.”

“Sound fake, but okay,” Ochako zings back, and Katsuki’s chest shakes silently under her like a little earthquake. Then his hand tightens around her back and then he lets out a deep breath.

“We’re gonna crush them tomorrow,” Katsuki says in a low, purring tone of voice that Ochako feels the vibrations of through her chest pressed to his. “Right?”

“Who?” she replies innocently.

“Everyone,” Katsuki hisses, a frown twisting his features like his whole face can be tightened and loosened with a specially crafted key.

Even after the original curiosity of her training with Katsuki in the first place, Ochako would have never expected to find him seeking reassurance from her; not like this, with such direct words.

“Of course,” she answers softly, splaying her fingers across his chest, feeling for his heartbeat to match the rhythm in her ear.

“Even Deku.”

Ochako’s eyes open a little wider, considering the true nature of what Katsuki wants when he asks a question like that. Why he needs to feel safe even from Deku. Especially from Deku.

Pushing out of her slot next to Katsuki’s side, Ochako raises herself up over Katsuki and looks carefully into his face. She waits for the concerned tightening of his expression, pre-empting the ‘what?’ that would have arrived moments later. “Yeah, baby. Even Deku.”

The key twists back the other way, and Katsuki’s face relaxes again. “Good.”

When Katsuki exhales, his sinking chest brings Ochako closer to him, such that it’s almost as if the act of breathing is what draws them into a kiss.

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The morning is… surreal.

Ochako and Katsuki’s early morning training runs like usual, but aside from a quick good morning
peck there's little affection to spare. Ochako lets Katsuki set the tone of their practice, which is of calm, controlled focus. It's serious to everyone, but Katsuki sets the curve for taking things extra-seriously.

The practice runs like a well-oiled machine, and they even arrive to the classroom a little early. Continuing the trend of being a completely ordinary day, the usual person can be found in-situ who-knows-how-far in advance of homeroom beginning.

“Good morning, Uraraka,” Iida offers quite normally as Ochako and Katsuki walk in, but then a little more remarkably adds, “... and Bakugo.”

Katsuki grunts, a final squeeze on Ochako’s hand before he leaves her side to go to his desk, and she to hers.

“Mornin’,” Ochako says cheerily, patting Iida on the head as she passes him and smiling at his alarmed little flush. “Feeling ready for the prelims?”

“I certainly hope so,” Iida replies with utterly sincere consideration, and Katsuki scoffs all the way on the other side of the room. Iida looks over at the sound too, but Katsuki’s gaze is on Ochako, who just sticks her tongue out at him. Katsuki gives a much fonder scoff of tolerance, then turns back to his notes.

“Knowing you and Yaomomo, I’ll bet you’ve put together some amazing tactics,” Ochako muses as she rests her face in her hands. “Speaking of which, where is she?”

Iida suddenly jams, like someone’s tie has been snagged and pulled into his gears. “Yaomom- oh, uh… she needed to change her…” Iida starts a gesture that he then immediately stops, putting his hands down hurriedly on the desk like they’re under arrest. “There was an incident with her field uniform in practice and uh…” Iida’s light flush has become a full gibbering blush, and Ochako can’t help a grin wiring its way onto her face. She even catches a crimson flash of a gaze from Katsuki across the room that says with an unequivocal smirk ‘I know what that look means.’

Maybe it took them a while – longer than it should take anyone – to figure their own feelings out, but Ochako finally feels confident recognising them in others now. It makes sense that Katsuki would too.

“Well, I can’t wait to see what you two can do together!” Ochako enthuses cheerfully, trying to spare Iida needing a fainting couch to recover from his fluster. Though it doesn’t seem to help, and if anything Iida’s condition worsens.

“Likewise.” Iida twiddles his thumbs, trying not to glance at Katsuki like he’ll be turned to stone if their gazes ever meet; that a deflection off Ochako is the safest way to engage. “I also wish you and Bakugo,” there’s a small pause, but only a small one, “all the luck in the world.”

Ochako’s heart gives an almost painful kick, and she reaches over her desk to give one of his shoulders an affirming squeeze. “Thanks, Iida,” Ochako says warmly, meaning it more than words can say. “You too.”

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The rest of the day’s classes are slow agony; every tick of the itching second hand of time another pin in Ochako’s skin. Until finally, the moment arrives.

“I suppose you’re all wondering who your opponents are going to be for the first round of preliminaries,” Aizawa announces with a slightly-less-tired-than-usual dreariness to his voice. Like he got almost enough sleep for once. His hand floats lazily above a button that’s presumably wired to
the big screen.

“YES!” the entire class just about screams in unison, and with a badly concealed smirk Aizawa presses the button and lets havoc break loose a moment later.

Ochako's standing next to Katsuki, and a tsunami of relief sweeps her away when she sees Deku and Todoroki are all the way on the opposite side of the tournament bracket. She wants to beat them as much – almost as much – as Katsuki does, but would certainly prefer it to happen later rather than sooner.

“The first match will be Ashido and Jirou versus Iida and Yaoyorozu,” Aizawa announces crisply, but it's lacking a little…

The intercom of the training arena crackles into life. “Alright alright alright, listeners! Here's the moment you've been waiting for! The Spirit of Unity inter-school all-star no-foam couples tournament! First up! Team Iida-Yaoyorozu, this high-rolling president-vice-president combo will have you wondering what they're feeding kids these days! These two definitely drank all their milk!”

Ochako glances at Katsuki, who's wearing a default scowl but looks kind of amused on the underlayer. Aizawa’s eye definitely looks to be twitching, but he's still on the arena floor while Mic runs the booth. Perhaps not for long.

Yaomomo and Iida are so red-faced they could pass for a tomato patch between them, walking like a couple of robots up to the concrete stage. Echoing the incident Iida spoke of earlier, Yaomomo isn’t wearing her full uniform so much as a field-uniform-inspired crop top and shorts. Ochako doesn’t know if she envies or covets how… all-woman Yaomomo’s figure is. Both, probably.

Watching them pass by on their way to the stage, Ochako catches Katsuki’s eyes on Yaomomo like honey on bees. “Hey.” She elbows him sharply in the side and Katsuki basically growls.

“You’re looking too,” he grumbles quietly, hands stuffed in his pockets. He's got her there.

“Aaaand facing down team Presidential Candidates are a couple of chicks so hip old age pensioners could use them as walking aids! That's right! Class 2A’s very own Ashido Mina and Jirou Kyouka! They’re totally too cool for school! That said they are, uh, in school so without further ado let's get this match started! Your moderator as usual will be the rockin’ teacher of life and modern lit, Cementoss!”

From elsewhere in the cluster of the remaining class, Ochako's sure she hears Todoroki asking, “Doesn't Mic have classes to teach?”

Suddenly the wall of their classmates shuffle apart enough to reveal Kirishima pulling Kaminari along by his sports festival jacket towards Ochako and Katsuki. “Like that'd stop him,” Kaminari remarks as he and Kirishima park themselves opposite her and Katsuki.

That's right, Ochako thinks as she sees the fight in Kirishima's sharky grin: they’re up next.

“So, this is how it's gonna be, huh?” Kirishima poses directly to Katsuki, a five-tier-layer-cake of suggestion in his tone.

“Did you turn into such a blockhead you actually forgot how to read?” Katsuki returns coarsely.

But then, like he's competing with the friendly way Kirishima hangs onto Kaminari, Katsuki slings an arm around Ochako's neck. “We're gonna destroy you.” This gesture from Katsuki almost draws more attention than the imminent beginning match, at least among their classmates – the other
spectators – other years and classes filling the bleachers hopefully aren't. Katsuki doesn't help lower this profile anymore by turning to Ochako to rasp, “Ain't that right?” in such a way that only she, Kirishima and maybe Kaminari hear the cheeky “babe” he sneaks in at the end of it.

“Ooooooh,” Kaminari’s girlish squeal continues until Kirishima digs a hardened elbow into his side and turns it into an, “Ow!”

Ochako takes a second to adjust to her new reality of shit-talking classmates as part of a Bakugo-Uraraka double act, and then fully embraces her fate. “You heard him,” she adds boldly. “We're coming for you two!”

Without another moment more for chit-chat, the first match begins.

Chapter End Notes

Finally we head out of candyland this chapter and onto the ending proper. This one goes to to everyone who commented about how they were waiting to see what would happen in the couples tournament. I GOT THERE IN THE END. At least... next chapter. I'm about to travel for work again, so as always, next update (two more to go + epilogue!) will be whenever it's ready.

But also *whispering* Iida/Momo is the hidden breakout background ship of this fic. I'm die for it.
And the crowd goes wild

Chapter Summary

Ochako can see the finish line, but this is far from the home stretch.

Chapter Notes

Now let me tell you I've been putting off doing this for a while but we've literally only got one more chapter after this (then the epilogue) so in a way I'm doing y'all a favour by dragging the end out a day or two more. So you're welcome for that, and also for this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Truth be told, Ochako hadn't expected Katsuki's last-minute prep to involve so much heavy petting. She would've happily stayed to watch the full Iida-Yaomomo and Mina-Jirou match, but Katsuki drags Ochako off to a waiting room after the first few exchanges. Maybe he decided he'd seen enough and already knew the result.

Mina and Jirou were able to keep up with Iida's speed using their new combo-move; where Jirou's sonic shin-blasts propel herself and Mina back-to-back across an acid-trail around the arena. However, the the cable Iida dragged – created by Yaomomo just as fast as he could pull it out of her like unwinding a spool – proved to be more of a problem. Jirou and Mina tripped after Iida whipped the cable under their legs, the pair of them tumbling into an awkward heap that they'd barely begun extracting themselves from before Ochako was hurried out of the stadium.

Back to the situation (literally) at hand, maybe this all makes perfect sense to Katsuki, with his famed ability to have more than one concurrent train of thought. Either way, he seems pretty comfortable with his fingers threaded through Ochako's hair, the other hand gripping her butt to brace her against him on the table she's sat on; Katsuki's mouth runs some last-minute checks of her neck while they go over tactics. Ochako wonders if it relaxes him, or maybe even does the opposite – revs Katsuki up, getting them pumped to crush their opponents.

"I'll take care of Kirishima, you do Kaminari," he says hoarsely right before his mouth reforms a seal over Ochako's skin.

When Katsuki sucks, gently at first, Ochako's answering, "Oka aaay, " gets drawn out like taffy, her hands in a tight grip of his vest-top.

"Sparky needs you to be grounded to get shocked, so if you never come down he's useless," he slips to her next. Ochako just gives him a needy 'mhmm' this time, breaking into an 'ahh' when he digs his teeth into one of the sweet spots she's – for better or worse – pointed out to Katsuki. Ochako makes a disappointed noise when his mouth suddenly lifts. "You listening to me, bubs?"

"Uh, yeah," Ochako replies guiltily, blinking a few times like it'll banish the floating petals accompanying such a shoujo-like scene.
“Then what did I just say?” Katsuki tests, and Ochako wrinkles her nose in amusement.

“Stay off the ground and I won’t be shocked.” Katsuki tweaks Ochako’s nose, which might be a positive affirmation in his mind. “What about Zero-G?”

“What about it?”

“How much are we going to use?”

“As much as we need,” Katsuki replies ambiguously. “We’ll have to watch it with the out-of-bounds rules.”

“I know that,” Ochako replies, and Katsuki tweaks her nose again, even though Ochako tries to weave away from him and fails abysmally.

“Don’t ask, then.” He’s smiling, which Ochako considers a tremendous victory before they’ve even stepped into the ring. To be this calm before a match: it’s an incredible transformation. No more being locked up on the podium, or so Ochako hopes. “I’ll start out with Zero-G, but not for long. I want to get behind that asshole, but I need to be grounded to really give it to him.”

“Okay, baby.” Ochako’s reply betrays her amusement over Katsuki’s choice of words, and he lifts an eyebrow. Or maybe it’s just her term of address. He’s let her call him baby before, though Katsuki’s mood will change like the winds given half a chance. Either way, they’re leaning back into another kiss when there’s a knock at the door.

Ochako and Katsuki push back from each other: a force of habit that seems hard to kick. Ochako wonders if they’ll ever get to a stage where the instinct isn’t to leap apart like they’re keeping a secret. Perhaps after this match.

“Uraraka…and Bakugo.” Iida still has difficulty not making the and Bakugo component sound forced, like he’s trying to memorise a formula he’s having trouble with. That the door barely opens suggests he’s being somewhat careful about how fast he barges in anywhere. Smart guy.

“Come on in,” Ochako signals clearly enough that the door opens the rest of the way. “How’d it go?”

“Oh… we won,” Iida replies with a prim embarrassment, maybe because Katsuki is still standing between Ochako's legs at the table he perched her on. “Cementoss is doing some minor repairs on the arena, they’ll be ready for you soon and asked me to let you-”

“Congrats! That’s great!” Ochako cheers over Iida's explanation, hopping off the table after Katsuki finally steps away from between her legs. If Iida’s conscious of that fact, he’s very good at concealing it, and even accepts the excited hug Ochako launches on him. Just for a moment, before she pulls back and then shakes Iida like she’s trying to affectionately knock some coconuts out of a tree. “I'm so happy for you, I wish I'd been there to see it!”

“How about you save the celebrating until we win?” Katsuki suggests as he paces up next to Ochako. He’s a little feral, but that Katsuki’s not outright barking at Iida is actually kind of a testament to their ability to co-exist as people who both have an important connection to Ochako. Katsuki has a habit of getting Ochako into these piggy-in-the-middle situations, often literally.

“Well I… wish you both luck,” Iida tells them… again. But it’s still nice to hear a second time.

“Thanks.” Ochako pats his arm, and notices Katsuki watching. The intensity of his glare is only the equivalent of a small heat lamp – compared to, say, the face of the sun. So that’s progress.
“Let’s go, Ochako,” Katsuki says simply, but if anything that makes the impact greater. It’s been awhile since he actually just called Ochako by her name, and it still turns her stomach into a stage where a cast of butterflies are putting on some kind of ballet. Iida won’t have missed it either, but that’s why Katsuki did it, Ochako assumes. Katsuki basically only calls her Ochako in front of boys he’s trying to score a point on.

Their eyes meet – Iida and Katsuki – on the way out and snag like a hairbrush on a tangle. But all it takes is a gentle tug from Ochako to pull things smoothly along. They have a match to win.

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“Allllllright alright alright, listeners! Hold onto your hats, hop into those bunkers and throw on a pair of shades, because our next team-up is gonna blow you away. Literally! Bakugo Katsuki and Uraraka Ochako have been tearing up school gossip rags for the past month, and boy do the fireworks fly between these two! Are they? Aren’t they? Where are those binoculars... there we go... yeah! And- hey, is that a hickey?” Find out all this and more after these ad-

There’s a chaotic sound of movement over the announcement system, and then like someone has pulled the mic much closer to his mouth than it needs to be, Aizawa’s monotone echoes across the almost-empty arena. “Let’s stick to the relevant facts here. This team has plenty of firepower, but lacks restraint.”

“You can say that again!” Mic cheers, and from the sounds that follow Ochako's certain they're both crowded around the same mic, pulling it back and forth. It's been said before but can most certainly be repeated: her teachers are weird. “Facing down this terrible two are the electrifying Kaminari Denki and the rock-solid Kirishima Eijiro- hey, ow! Why’re you-” Further sounds of scuffling, followed by Aizawa reclaiming the mic. Kirishima and Kaminari stand at the other side of the stage, looking similarly puzzled by the apparent chaos in the commentator booth.

“Less talk, more action. This match begins in three, two, one-” A siren wails, and that's it. They're off.

Nothing happens at first, and Ochako would almost believe Katsuki didn’t hear the bell. Except he’d never do that, so the quiet murmur of, “Wait for it,” from Katsuki only affirms Ochako’s faith in him.

There’s an eerie silence, the phantom chirp of a cricket in the air. Kirishima and Kaminari don’t seem to know what to make of it either. Katsuki’s magnetic confidence keeps Ochako in place – like when they fought in the first sports festival; he doesn’t need to go to them. Let them come to him, or them, it ought to be.

“Well it looks like... nothing. Sorry folks, guess these kids aren’t much in the mood for fighting today. Perhaps loving’s more their deal—hey!” A scrabbling sound cuts Mic out, and then Aizawa takes over.

“Both teams are waiting to see who will make the first move. They know every action could determine the outcome of the whole match, so to rush in is to risk losing.”

Almost like Aizawa’s narration moves him, Katsuki’s spurred into action. A small one. But the arena stands so still that even a slight adjustment seems huge. So when Katsuki raises his hand to Ochako, it seems like a monumental gesture. One that might well determine the whole match; he’s inviting Ochako to put her own hand palm-to-palm with his.

Ochako answers the call, setting her hand in Katsuki’s.
The crowd is… confused.

“Uraraka and Bakugo are… holding hands? What kind of a contest do they think this is?!”

Taking the bait after a couple more moments of deliberation, Kirishima and Kaminari shrug in tandem and break into a run at Ochako and Katsuki. Without moving from their pose, Ochako activates her quirk on herself and waits, knowing what will happen before she needs to act again.

When Kirishima and Kaminari are almost equidistant across the stage, spread out a few metres from each other like they’re charging Ochako and Katsuki one-on-one – perhaps even the way Katsuki divided the match-up himself while they were in the waiting room – when the spark of action catches fire.

Katsuki whips Ochako all the way around him and releases her shooting high up over Kaminari’s head; she activates her quirk on him in the last second before their hands part.

Ochako waits barely a second for Katsuki’s first blast to take him across almost the whole stage in the blink of an eye, whizzing up and past Kirishima before anyone can even turn their head fast enough to keep up with him.

Just before Katsuki hits the outer limit of the arena, he uses another blast to change direction, now coming just as fast toward Kirishima’s back, like a rocket-powered wrecking ball. That’s Ochako’s cue to yell like a siren, “Release!” She starts her own descent over Kaminari, who’s squaring up under Ochako like he’s more tempted to catch her than fight her. His mistake.

Kirishima might have his back to Katsuki, but he still hardens into a pillar so solid that when Katsuki slams into him, the stage floor shatters. It gouges a trench as Katsuki drives Kirishima through the solid concrete like it’s meringue.

Still airborne after Katsuki threw her up over the arena to arrange a sky-high nose-dive on Kaminari, Ochako’s pelted with a few harmless chunks of debris, like running through a handful of gravel. She tucks and turns until she’s freefalling headfirst onto Kaminari, who raises an arm with a single finger pointing up at Ochako and a grimace on his face.

“Sorry about this, Uraraka.” She’s close enough to hear Kaminari say it as electricity starts jumping off him.

“No,” Ochako returns as she reaches out and grabs Kaminari’s outstretched finger. Her own fingers wrap neatly around his to press against him and activate her quirk. “Sorry about this.”

Ochako reads the moment of ‘I hadn’t thought of that’ shock when contact with Kaminari doesn’t lead to a shock – she’s not on the ground, there’s no reason for his electricity to want to go through her – and he realises he’s just been had. He doesn’t have too long to muse on it before Ochako’s carrying on a somersault that swings Kaminari around like he’s a blade on an electric fan.

Ochako flicks Kaminari into the air just before she finishes the somersault, lest she zap herself just when she’s almost pulled off the stunt. When Kaminari’s well and truly gone, Ochako unfurls so fast her feet slam to the ground in a deep stabilising squat – something she’d never have learned how to pull off without the rigorous training Katsuki’s been putting her through. Popping back up, Ochako glances to the sky for a moment to check exactly where she sent Kaminari soaring off to, and at what approximate speed. He’s gone almost straight up because Ochako went straight down, and he’s staring down at her from somewhere around the top level of seats in the stadium.

“INCREDIBLE, LISTENERS!” Mic screams over the announcement system. “While the crowd
watches Bakugo and Kirishima duke it out, Uraraka avoids a shocking encounter and throws Kaminari like a yo-yo with a cut string! He’s still in-bounds, maybe... depending on where he lands! Don’t let this chick fool you! She means business!!"

Ochako still means business as it happens, stationary on the ground for just a moment before she bursts into a sprint and launches herself with her quirk active on herself. She’s got a partner to support.

Whether Katsuki needs the help isn’t clear when Ochako jumps. What can be said, is that in the time it’s taken Ochako to send Kaminari heading for the clouds, Kirishima hasn’t given an inch to Katsuki. In fact, he’s cheering, “Yeah! Let me have it, Bakugo!” between blows as Ochako shoots in silently from behind.

The boys have fallen into their usual pattern of deadlocked all-out brawling – Ochako really has to sit in and watch them really duke it out sometime. Now more than ever, it’s clear how far Kirishima’s come since his first matchup with Katsuki in the sports festival.

When Ochako’s almost reached them, Kirishima throws a punch that Katsuki ducks, but he doesn’t pop back up. Katsuki drops instead – kicks his feet out and literally falls onto his back. The crowd, including the rest of their classmates at the front of the stands, goes nuts.

“Whoa whoa whoa! Bakugo Katsuki goes down?! Unbelievable!”

Aizawa takes over the mic and says with sharp purpose, “Unbelievable is right.”

That only confirms Ochako’s hunch, and her heart surges with determination not to let him down. Especially not when Katsuki’s using a dive to throw his – their – opponent off guard. The one thing he holds so dear that he never would have thought of sacrificing it in front of his peers, not even to win: his pride.

Ochako flies onto Kirishima’s back like a magnetic koala returning to its mother. Both hands press flat to Kirishima’s broad, rocky shoulders, and her view of Katsuki’s best good girl grin of satisfaction is incredible.

The moment Kirishima feels Ochako stick to him out of nowhere he shakes her off, but it’s already too late to spare his gravity. Ochako is still weightless too, and tumbles awkwardly through the air, feeling extremely sick and possibly at risk of going out-of-bounds if Katsuki doesn’t—

Right on time, Katsuki finishes the sequence. Being under Kirishima means that when Katsuki blasts from both his palms, the weightless Kirishima-on-top launches helplessly into the air, regardless of how he’s hardened his quirk.

“Who-hoa-hoaaaa! A devastating combo-move from Bakugo and Uraraka! The chemistry between these two is off the charts!”

“Release!” Ochako finally gets the chance to deactivate her quirk before she lets Kaminari or Kirishima drift into orbit – also meaning she starts to drop out of her screwball tumble that’s making the acid at the back of her throat take on an expressly pre-barf taste.

Ochako tries to control her landing, in the sense of making sure it’s not on top of her soft-skulled head or easily-breakable limbs, but she never needed to in the first place. Katsuki’s up on his feet and full-on sprints across the arena to catch her. The second his arms wrap around Ochako bridal-style, a rush of reassurance forces back the biting nausea of her quirk. Katsuki staggers a little as Ochako’s weight hits him, but they’re solid.
As up and down become the right way around again, Ochako hooks an arm around Katsuki’s neck to anchor herself, then she turns to join him in watching Kirishima and Kaminari fall.

Because they were both sent up rather than across, Kirishima and Kaminari are both still in-bounds as they descend, flailing in the air like a couple of flightless insects towards the half of the arena they started out in.

Kirishima is moving faster – a Zero-G blast will do that to anyone – but had less time before being released, while Kaminari’s been gaining height at a slower rate for a while. It’s like one of those experiments when a coin and a feather are dropped in a vacuum, just played out on an arena stage with Ochako’s teenage-boy classmates. Kirishima lands first, and hardened to the point that the concrete flooring cracks when he hits it, like someone dropping a bowling ball on glass.

“OUCH! Don’t try that one at home, kids!”

Kirishima isn’t down yet, though: the impact of the floor against him hits no harder than any other blow he toughs out. But Ochako thought of that too.

“One more to finish them, babe,” Katsuki says quietly in Ochako’s ear, still gathered surely in his arms, and she nods. It’s a testament to how well this has gone – is going, technically – that they have time to chit-chat at all, but Ochako’s feeling pretty confident right about now. It doesn’t seem weird for Katsuki to call her babe at a time like this either; one thing has become the affirmation of the other. Being in love has become a reinforcement of their capability in battle. As if they can’t lose, as long as they have each other.

Katsuki drops Ochako, but takes hold of her hands with a clear signal from the loop of their arms. Ochako hops up, tucking herself up into a ball that Katsuki swings between his legs and then he just hurls her up and away. Ochako gets her alignment spot-on, finishing turning before she uncurls and reaches out so she’s shooting straight. Only then does she activate her quirk on herself. Katsuki’s judged the angles right, so that Ochako’s flying straight for Kaminari as he falls in an increasing state of panic – they’re in this to win, but letting their classmate fall that far without a defence like Kirishima’s would be taking it too far – they’re in it to win, not hurt anyone.

Ochako intercepts Kaminari, and she grabs one of his hands in hers. Her hair stands on end, a buzz of connection that electrifies her but still has no place to go – yet. They’re both midair, so Kaminari’s descent under the force of gravity brakes Ochako a little. Not for long. She re-activates her quirk and tosses him down the rest of the way – a safer distance, with less force on impact.

At least, until Kaminari hits Kirishima.

Kirishima’s just made it back onto his feet when Kaminari sails into him like a broken power line spitting sparks in a storm, and the air crackles as the charge meant for Ochako finally finds an escape route. Being hard’s not really a defense against electric shock, and Kirishima’s surprise seems to factor into it too; he’d been focusing on Katsuki again, rather than thinking about where his own partner was.

Katsuki’s standing with his hands in his pockets, in fact, watching as Kaminari zaps himself and Kirishima senseless. They fall to the arena floor in a twitchy pile.

Ochako’s still in the air, and has a moment of thinking how useful it would be to have her own explosion-powered jets to get herself back to Katsuki quickly.

Before that thought can be fully completed, Katsuki has broken into a run and blasts himself at Ochako with no Zero-G, old school Bakugo style. It still works just fine, as Katsuki catches her long
before she sends herself out of bounds with the final move. They would have still won as long as Katsuki’s in the arena when the other two go down, but that’s not good enough: any situation a partner puts you into is something your partner should get you out of, as their teacher so notably put it.

Katsuki grabs Ochako and swings her easily into one of their flying-trapeze turns, her weightlessness overruled by Katsuki’s weight. They set the momentum and then she activates her quirk on him too.

When Ochako comes out of the move, she’s heading straight for the ground – centre stage, as it happens – but she doesn’t reach it alone. With a controlled blast to turn himself around, Katsuki catches up with Ochako and scoops her up before landing. They have enough forward momentum when Katsuki’s heavy-landing gets him grounded, and Ochako’s so mobile in his arms that when he starts to spin her around him, Ochako never questions it and just goes. They’re usually moving with so much energy in so many directions that anything spinny from gymnastics tends to come out as a default way of getting their gyroscopic momentum under control.

To that end, there’s a legitimate purpose for why Katsuki rolls Ochako around his body with such practiced ease that she’s already sat on his shoulder before she realises it’s what they’re doing.

The fact that it looks like an incredibly audacious way to finish their uncontested win in the first preliminary, a bona-fide victory pose, is just a happy accident.

Because the crowd goes wild.

Chapter End Notes

So! I've had a few requests about this so to quickly go on the record.

I'm not really cool as a creator with people wanting to write their own stories 'of' this fic. Because it's fanfic, we all share a canon, so I'd just really be a lot happier if people took ideas or inspiration they get from this story and then use it to make their own freestanding (presumably Kacchako) content. This goes double-especially for smutty/sexual stuff, which I can confirm I WILL post a smutfic set in the future of this story. It'll be the final fic in this series. So I can't (and won't) tell anyone NOT to write it, just that I'll be super uncomfortable and stuff.

I do have a tumblr with more information about my writing, I'll also go on record saying that I don't do requests/suggestions or commissions. Writing is a very personal creative hobby, so I have a lot of my own ideas I want to give time before making stuff that other people would like to see 'written by me'. I get why wanting that would seem appealing to anyone who doesn't write, but I can assure you from experience that the only person who knows best how to write exactly what you want is you! You can do it! Go write your own stories! That's how I got started.

Oh and also next chapter is the last one (plus the epilogue). BUT IT'S A GREAT ONE (it'd have to be). So there's that.
Katsuki doesn’t remember to put Ochako down right away. Meanwhile, half their class have already vaulted out of the stands and rush up to the edge of the stage, sounding like a gang-fight broken out between geese and dogs. As the rabble get a little closer, individual threads can be divined.

“What the everloving hell was that?!”

“You two were so cool!”

“AHHHHHHHHH!”

And then from within the accolades, a voice of reality cuts through. “There's no way you two learned how to do that in a few days,” Jirou announces. She's recovered from her bout against Iida and Yaomomo, but is perhaps still a little dented in the pride area. Or maybe she’s just been waiting to ask this question for a while. “How long has this been going on?”

This is it, Ochako realises all of a sudden. The big moment. And she’s still sitting on Katsuki’s shoulder.

“Uh… eep!” Before Ochako can answer Katsuki swings her down. She moves instinctively, but by the time Katsuki sets her back on solid ground, Ochako’s much pinker in the face than she imagined being at this critical moment.

“Since the first time you dummies assumed we were dating,” Katsuki answers confidently. Again, Ochako realises it’s happening. Finally.

“Uh, assumed you were dating?” Sero queries.

“But that sounds like you’re not dating!” Hagakure asserts.

“Right,” Katsuki replies firmly.
“So you’re not going out?” Jirou phrases like she doesn’t believe it for a second.

“Did you get beat so hard you can’t understand basic sentences?” Katsuki growls. “We’re. Not. Dating.” Not everyone is shocked by this news, but the ones who are make up for the others tenfold.

“Anymore, you mean,” Mina tries to reason.

“Ever,” Katsuki snaps tersely, and Ochako's kind of… proud of him. He's really taken this on board, not just understood but actively defending the fact that they weren’t properly dating. Which means he understands what doing it for real should entail.

“Then how come Uraraka broke up with you last week?” Sero points out quite rightly.

“Oh, that was so you'd think we weren't going out,” Ochako explains. Or tries to.

“What?” Jirou uses her sharpest scalpel of a tone.

“Okay, wait, it definitely made sense at the time…” Ochako starts trying to rationalise before realising that it makes no frigging sense.

“We were training, but you idiots just thought we were going out,” Katsuki jumps back in to chop everything up into its simplest parts.

“Because you said you were!” Hagakure accuses rightly.

“Well… not right at the beginning,” Ochako replies awkwardly. “We just…”

The intercom crackles. “Fascinating as Uraraka and Bakugo's relationship is, all students not competing in the next match need to vacate the arena so we can resume doing something that has an actual purpose.”

The announcement ends and Ochako takes that as her cue to get the hell out of there – but not without Katsuki. Ochako initially reaches for his hand but second-guesses it, then decides that’s nonsense and grabs it anyway.

She’s only gone about a step when a voice from behind declares, “Non! One moment, if you will!” Aoyama bolts an arm in the air, and Ochako freezes. “Hagakure, it is time to present our findings!”

“Findings?” Ochako gulps.

“It is a collaboration the two of us have been developing in secret, alongside our combat teamup,” Aoyama elaborates. “We call it: the case for why Bakugo and Uraraka are dating! Over to you, Hagakure!”

“Thank you, Aoyama!” Hagakure launches into the spiel as enthusiastically as if she’s giving a special news report. “Exhibit A! They have been spotted hugging, kissing and holding hands all over campus!”

“For example, they’re doing the latter right now,” Aoyama observes wryly behind his hand to Mina, and Ochako whips her loose-fingered grip off Katsuki’s hand and back to her side. “That brings me onto raison deels: Uraraka’s hickey!” Ochako does the worst thing she could, and darts the same hand she snuck away from Katsuki right up to her neck, the spot she’s sure would be the one to leave a mark. “A coincidence possibly? But she didn’t have it before the match… so I can only conclude: it’s a good luck charm!!” Aoyama accuses like he’s transformed into the Poriot of 1A. Ochako hadn’t thought about it like that until now, but when she does … she wouldn’t put it past
“And that brings us onto Exhibit C!” Hagakure takes over with three gloved fingers suspended midair, before she swings her hand out for a kitbag that Jirou hands to her. It takes Ochako a minute to realise she recognises it, by which point Aoyama’s hand dives into one of the zipped compartments and withdraws Katsuki’s phone. Hagakure is just a pair of gloves and boots at this point, so her showman-like gestures at the phone as Aoyama presents it make the moment look bizarrely like an infomercial. “Uraraka is Bakugo’s literal lockscreen.”

“You goddamn-” Katsuki starts to roar as Aoyama presses the home button and the lockscreen illuminates on his phone.

Ochako sees everyone’s reaction before she actually sees the picture herself; when Aoyama notices her straining, he turns it around so Ochako can get the proof too.

It must be a screenshot from one of the videos Katsuki took yesterday, at the trampoline park when Ochako was just messing around, making a heart with her hands at him because she didn’t think fast enough to do a proper move. But it’d look like a perfectly composed shot if you didn’t know any better. And that’s what Katsuki chose for…

Ochako feels like her heart bulges several sizes larger inside her chest, a pressure in there that she can’t keep holding in. This not being there yet, fully with Katsuki the way it feels so normal to be in every way but name.

“Aoyama. Hagakure. You have five seconds to step into the arena or you will forfeit the match.”

“Eeek!” Hagakure snatches Katsuki’s phone from Aoyama and shoves it in his bag, swinging that at Katsuki so fast it basically hits him in the chest and completing a perfect spin that leaves her sprinting to the stage after Aoyama.

Ochako takes that as her cue to reconnect her hand to Katsuki’s and pull him after her, scurrying away from the cluster of their remaining classmates as fast as she can. But not fast enough.

“Wait up! We’re not finished yet!” Mina grabs Jirou by the hand and skids after Ochako and Katsuki. “You can’t just leave us hanging after that!”

Katsuki overtakes Ochako with a couple of long paces and then becomes the one pulling Ochako by the hand now, leading them off-stage and into one of the corridors that lace the stadium like blood vessels.

“You lot can go hang for all I care,” Katsuki replies gruffly, and Ochako tugs on his arm like a bellrope to call down the more palatable version of himself. He gives an exasperated sigh, and then stops motoring away quite as hard. Jirou and Mina, a few more stragglers behind them, are allowed to catch up enough to permit some form of conversation.

“Just admit you’re going out already and we’ll let it go,” Jirou says as she gets a step in front of Ochako: better placed to shoot Katsuki accusing looks.

“We’re really not,” Katsuki replies with his eyes fixed dead ahead.

“But Aoyama and Hagakure gave a presentation!” Mina declares like anyone needs a reminder of that little ordeal.

“There’s a simple reason me and Ochako aren’t going out,” Katsuki announces surely as they pace down the hallway as a three-girl-and-one-boy-across wall. It’s obviously when he’s denying they’re
dating that Katsuki calls Ochako so surely by her given name: she can't blame her classmates for being confused.

“Well? Spill it!” Mina demands, elbowing Katsuki so hard he barges into Ochako. That he doesn’t bite her head off is uncanny, so Ochako is poised to find out what he thinks is so important that not even overzealous elbowing can shake his focus.

Katsuki turns to look at Ochako and says, “I haven’t asked her yet.”

“That’s it?” Jirou accuses.

“You can’t be serious!” Mina tag-teams.

“Believe it,” Katsuki mutters.

“So if you two weren’t dating, why did you say you were?” Sero manages to jostle close enough to the front to pose this question with a hint of exasperation.

Ochako gets ready to wrestle another nonsense-logic alligator. “Well it—”

“I wanted her to,” Katsuki interjects like he means no further questions.

“You wanted Uraraka to be your fake girlfriend?” Jirou deduces.

“That seems kinda desperate.” The face of pity Sero makes brings out a furious red in Katsuki’s neck almost instantaneously.

“So you’d keep your noses out of our fucking business!” Katsuki yells. “Not so you’d think—”

Katsuki swipes for Sero in frustration. “Stupid idiot. You were all so busy pestering us about dating you didn’t notice we were training.”

“I noticed, ribbet.” It’s not super clear to Ochako when Tsu arrived, but it seems like she must have been lagging behind the other more enthusiastic members of the brigade. “You just didn’t want to talk about it.”

“Oh, is that what you didn’t want to talk about?” Mina gasps as she fills in the gaps. “Why didn’t you just say, silly?”

“Yeah, why did it matter if we knew you were training or not?” Jirou points out.

“Because Bakugo’s a basket-case like that.” Kirishima’s voice rings true throughout the hall, and a moment later he pops out from around a corridor, like he’s deliberately cut them off to join this inquisition. “Ain’t that right, Uraraka?”

“Uhhh… not exactly,” Ochako replies, but her uncertain denial seems more culpable than if she’d just agreed.

“Didn’t we hit you hard enough?” Katsuki growls at Kirishima with the most genuine thread of discomfort he’s had so far; everyone else is one thing, but Ochako’s pretty sure by this point that Katsuki hasn’t directly lied to Kirishima, about anything. Being caught up with now they’re telling full truths might be a bit of a fix for Katsuki, because Kirishima’s got an insatiable hunger for the low-down on them.

“Not even close,” Kirishima guffaws, putting himself directly in Katsuki’s path and sticking out one of his hands to shake. “Good match, by the way.” His gaze swings across to Ochako, who reaches
for Kirishima's hand after Katsuki just stares at it like he doesn't know what it's for.

No sooner has Ochako's palm touched Kirishima's than he zips it away, disappearing back down the hallway as a groggy, “Huhdooy,” sound echoes from around the bend.

“There he is! C’mon, dopey,” Kirishima coaxes, coming back into view with a shorted-out Kaminari, who gives them all a disorientated thumbs ups. “What can I say? You two beat us fair and square! How long have you been squirrelling all that away?”

“Since the beginning, apparently,” Jirou answers for them.

“Yeah! Bakugo says they were never really dating at all!” Mina adds. “It was a coverup for this crazy team-up they’ve been working on.”

“Ohh, so that's how it is?” Kirishima says with a mischievous grin. “I had a feeling.”

“Keep ‘em to yourself,” Katsuki grunts.

“There's one thing I can't figure out,” Mina reasons. “If the only reason you're not going out is that Bakugo hasn't asked, why don't you just ask?” she puts the question indiscriminately to Ochako and Katsuki, and it's such a good one that everyone else falls into deathly silence.

“Hurr,” Kaminari breaks it, and Katsuki looks like he wants to break him again.

“I would…” Katsuki says with a tone like wire garotte. “If you assholes left us alone for five goddamn minutes.”

“Really?!” Mina squeals in excitement.

Ochako spontaneously decides she's had enough. “Just GO already!” she belts, releasing a shockwave of ‘oh shit, Uraraka’s pissed’ across the gaggle of friends. “You're missing the next match, aren't you?!”

She’s right, their dazed expressions say. Also: Katsuki mad is one thing, but so help anyone who makes Ochako pissed enough to yell.

Like the settling of a decision by coinflip, the gang that’ve been pursuing Ochako and Katsuki turn tail and dash out of there. Mina even grabs Kaminari by the hand and leads him off too – steering clear of Jirou, who would no doubt wreak havoc with him in his poor dundering state of affairs.

So everyone's gone… except for Kirishima, of course.

“Didn’t you hear her?” Katsuki growls at the red-quiffed wall that remains in front of him. “Piss off, hair-for-brains.”

“Yeah, yeah, I'm going,” Kirishima soothes, waving a lax arm like he didn't just get the snot beaten out of him minutes ago. A quick smooch from Recovery Girl and it's like he’s never been scratched: truly indestructible, or as close as makes no difference. But before he goes anywhere, Kirishima fixes Ochako with a tell-all look. “So do I get my training buddy back now?”

“Dumbass,” Katsuki rasps, but Ochako shoves him with her elbow: it's entirely like Katsuki to be oblivious of these things, and the least she can do is be considerate of his friends in lieu.

“Of course, but… couldn't we just train together sometimes?” Ochako suggests tentatively, not wanting to infringe on their boy-time but also totally wanting get in on that.
“A three-way, hm?” Kirishima says playfully, and Ochako hadn’t meant it like that before but now she can't stop thinking about it. Especially when Kirishima steps up to Katsuki and throws an arm around his neck with all that reach Ochako lacks. “Whaddya say, Bakugo? Think you can play nice an’ share?”

Katsuki puts his palm square over Kirishima’s face and shoves him back; but Ochako would swear there's a rudimentary flush – not in his face, but his neck where Katsuki-blushes originate. “You're such an idiot.”

“Aww, you're only sayin’ that,” Kirishima chuckles disarmingly. “I bet you tell everyone they’re stupid and dumb all the time.”

Ochako laughs, and Kirishima flashes her one more of those light-up-the-city grins across Katsuki. “So I guess you two’re all legit now?”

“Not if you won’t fuck off so we can talk,” Katsuki replies grouchily, and the city in Ochako's chest – Kirishima's smile powered the lights for a week – starts a fireworks festival the likes of which has never been seen.

“Alright, alright, I'm going.” Kirishima slaps Katsuki’s shoulder with boyish charm. “You kids have fun now.” He sets off the way everyone else went, and Ochako and Katsuki are alone. Momentarily.

With the strength of a train desperate to leave the station, Katsuki grabs Ochako’s hand and pulls as if he's discovered a newfound desire to become a steam engine, chugging along with her in tow.

“Where we goin’?” Ochako asks simply.

“Somewhere quiet,” Katsuki grumbles. “It's too fucking busy around here-” this line coincides with Katsuki rounding a corner so aggressively he barrels into… Deku coming around the other way.

“Wh-oooh, Kacchan! Didn't see you there, I was just-”

“For fuck’s sake!” Katsuki snaps. “What is it, Deku?!”

“I just wanted to say well done!” Deku squeals like car tyres, and Ochako feels extra-guilty, but also desperate to just be left the hell alone with Katsuki. “You two were amazing back there! I’m so happy you’re… you two…” Deku trails off for lack of words to safely describe Ochako and Katsuki’s relationship, which if anyone would give them a minute to sort out would be a damn sight easier.

“Thanks, Deku, we’re just…” Ochako starts tentatively, thinking of excuses and managing expectations – Deku’s featherlight gauge for being on the sidelines of Ochako and Katsuki’s relationship, yearning for details while being afraid to get too close.

So instead, Ochako decides to cut the fluff, once and for all. Being honest with everyone also includes Ochako being clear with Deku.

Abandoning her first line of explanation, Ochako becomes a woman of action and sets her hand high up on Katsuki’s shoulder, gripping him by the thick muscle of his neck to bend him down to her like a trained sapling. To both boys’ surprise, she kisses Katsuki square on the mouth, literally inches away from Deku.

It’s not a long or overly engaged kiss, more of an Ochako hit-and-run, but it confirms in action what Ochako’s about to say in words. “I like Katsuki,” Ochako puts as simply as it should ever need to be. But just in case. “Like, a lot.”
Katsuki’s grinning as if Ochako’s the pot of gold he found at the end of a rainbow. So much so that he’s happy to quietly return, “I like you too, bubs.”

Finally tearing her gaze away from Katsuki to Deku, Ochako sees that his face is radiating so bright he might go down with heatstroke from the force of his own blush. “So we’d actually like to be alone, if you don’t mind,” Ochako sets out with clear, boundary-laying control like she’s marking an outline in chalk around herself and Katsuki. So Deku can actually understand where he fits; in the slightly larger circle that encircles all three of them. “We can all talk… later.”

When she and Katsuki are officially going out, Ochako means.

“O-okay, yeah.” Deku is super interested in the ceiling right now, which is weird when he was looking while Ochako and Katsuki actually kissed. Not for the first time, Ochako reflects on how she can't figure Deku out. But for the first time this thought is accompanied by the notion that maybe Deku can't either. “I'm just so… happy for you both.”

“I know, Deku,” Ochako replies softly, and it's kind of a miracle Katsuki is just standing there letting Ochako navigate these white waters. So she pushes just a little bit further, and darts forward to give Deku the hug she’s been meaning to give him for what feels like years.

Deku always hugs super-tight, and it’s not clear if the strength in his body is due to his quirk or his raw physical power. Ochako’s missed them. “Thanks,” she says just over Deku’s shoulder, which comes down close enough for her to actually reach – unlike Katsuki’s. “Really.”

Katsuki, amazingly, is silent and still behind Ochako. He’s not going nuts, not that he should be, and it’s all actually okay. This thing’s gonna work out alright, and the two most important boys in her life aren’t going to kill each other.

With respect to Katsuki’s admirable show of patience, when really he must want exactly what Ochako does, she backs out of the hug and offers a kindly worded, “But would you please fuck off for a bit?”

This comment succeeds at its secret aim: to make Katsuki laugh. Deku doesn't totally know what to make of it, but that's okay because it's not for him.

“You heard the lady,” Katsuki announces with raspy satisfaction, giving Ochako a look that needs no explanation. “Scoot, Nerd.”

This isn’t even hostile, so Deku wouldn't be wrong to think he's in a world of opposites right now: where Ochako cusses him out and Katsuki softens the blow.

Deku opens his mouth like he's about to say something, but meeting Ochako and Katsuki’s gazes makes him think the better of it. He shuts it again, then disappears off the way he came with a little wave, leaving Ochako and Katsuki alone. Finally.

“C’mere, you.” Katsuki grabs Ochako's hand without hesitation and resumes tug-boating her through the hallway, only stopping when he’s sure they're not going to be found again. Namely, inside the first empty waiting room.

“So…” Ochako starts uncertainly, only to be answered with a full-on kiss that makes her toes curl. A kiss that falls like fresh, warm rains: refreshing and recharging, confirming something immutable between them.

“So,” Katsuki echoes when they finally part again, having changed from standing across from each other to wrapped up like vines around a trellis. “Will you please go out with me?”
“You said please,” Ochako remarks in utter shock before reacting to the rest, and sees the disapproving scowl dash across Katsuki’s face. “I mean- Yes!” she slips in urgently, and kisses him again to pacify. “Of course I will.”

“Good,” Katsuki turns out like more of an animal noise than a word. Then, like he's got to try it out right away: “You're my girlfriend.”

“Mhm,” Ochako affirms, linking her hands behind Katsuki’s neck while his arms tighten softly around her lower back. “How’s it feel?”

Katsuki’s face has reached the alcove of her neck, so when he grins it’s something she feels in warm lips and tickly breath, more than she actually sees on his unbearably smug face. “Fucking great.”

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Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaand that's the way the news goes! See, he got there in the end.

The Aoyama & Hagakure bit was a late add-in, the Deku hug I literally thought of while chatting on discord and was like 'fuck gotta put that in' and the Aizawa garbage has been there from the frigging START because I was always on board that particular fucktrain to shit-town.

I also always had this moment in mind as the end of the story, though we have an epilogue of course still to come up.

I'll mention again in a more structured way so it's clear - there is going to be a final fic in this series, which will be a down-the-line future/aged-up smutfic that features our darling romantic leads and a mystery third party! Who's... not really a mystery if you think about it, though I'll admit there's kind of two camps at this point that are equally valid. I've also told people in Discord before so if you're lucky you might find out who the third leg of my smutty tripod is.

There's been some hope/mention of the very important thing that's still to come in the epilogue, so some of you should be able to guess what it's gonna be! So close, I see you shiver with antici-
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

The thing you've all been waiting to see.

Chapter Notes

So today I got sent a wonderful gift by the talented Murr the Multishipper (discord handle) that named me a 'Kacchako Champion' in cross-stitch with a lovely card for finishing this fic... so I figured I better do that! What better high to go out on?!?!? This one's for you, Murr!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Welcome back, listeners! We’re bringing you live coverage of this: the final preliminary of UA’s Class 2A in the all-star couples Spirit of Unity inter-school tournament! Why are we televising a qualifying match? Because it’s Midoriya Izuku and Todoroki Shoutoooo versus the indomitable Bakugo Katsuki and Uraraka Ochakooooo!!! This is a clash of titans you don’t wanna miss! For the sake of, uh… hell, there was some excuse, but really we just wanted to give you all a show! Both teams have been granted use of their full support gear upgrades! We’re in for a fight of the semester!!!”

There’s a pause filled by a sound that could legitimately be Aizawa scratching his stubble on his own microphone, and then Present Mic resumes his tirade. “That is… if they’d actually take the stage.”

“C’mon, we don’t have all fucking day!” Bakugo Katsuki in four words: not in the mood.

“I’m coming, I’m coming.” Ochako steamrolls through the crowd of people taking their seats to watch… well, her. And her boyfriend: Bakugo Katsuki. Also her partner in this ever-growing spectacle of a tournament. Ochako foolishly thought the matches would all be over in a day, two at most. That was a week ago. “I told you we didn’t have enough time to-”

“I told you!” Katsuki snaps over his shoulder at Ochako like an over-excited dog. “Just get over here.” People are peeling off left and right as Katsuki tears through them like a ship breaking ice, and he reaches across the bubble of empty space while Ochako weaves through the wake he leaves to grab her hand. “It was worth it, anyway.”

Ochako feels herself flushing. Heavy petting in the waiting room has become a bit of a pre-match tradition, she’ll admit. But it’s not supposed to make them actually late for the whole match.

Finally they make it out into the arena, and all at once it hits Ochako just how big this has all gotten. The stadium is full. They’re on television.

“Here they areeeeee! Finally finished… whatever it was they were doing and decided to show up! This couple-team-up has become the talk of the school, town, city district… hell! I swear I heard the
Mayor asking about them the other day! What the… I totally know the Mayor, get off my dic-

“These teams both score highly on teamwork and power, but one has the edge in each.” Aizawa cuts in before Present Mic gets the rest out. “The effectiveness of how well they can balance their teamwork and individual strengths will be a determining factor of the match.”

Katsuki’s hand squeezes Ochako’s, and she tunes back into him like he’s got her trained to a whistle no one else can hear. “You ready, bubs?” He gives her hand another shake, and Ochako nods, but Katsuki’s too sensitive to the vibrations she puts out now. “You know we’ve got this.”

“I know,” Ochako echoes like she’s not totally convinced, reaching the steps of the stage and seeing Deku and Todoroki on the other side; already up there, ready and waiting. She’s been pretty good at Bakugo levels of confidence, but this is, well, Deku and Todoroki.

Katsuki takes the first step up and then waits as Ochako follows carefully – a lot more carefully than she usually walks in her pony-footed boots. With good reason, too. “We’re gonna win this whole thing, remember.”

“Oh, I remember,” Ochako repeats back to him like an enchantment as she scales the first step.

But before they go another step further, Katsuki leans in so his masked face is very close to the rim of Ochako’s helmet, just close enough that he can quietly tell her, “I love you,” as if he’s giving her some last-minute tip for the match. Maybe he is.

Ochako feels herself blushing instantly, even knowing this is not the time. She gets why it would be logical in Katsuki’s mind to tell her this – for the first time, with no lead-in or context – right now, but that doesn’t help her in the heat of the moment.

“M-me too!” Ochako squeaks, and Katsuki looks back at her with mild confusion. Squeezing Katsuki’s fingers between hers – this is so not the time, which must be why it absolutely is the time – she hurries to say, “I lo-”

“Yeah, yeah. Save the mushy shit for after we’ve won,” Katsuki interrupts with a sure grin, tugging Ochako up the final step by the lock of their fingers. They’ve started every match like this so far – not the love confession part, but holding hands. The crowd, and their opponents within it, know what to expect.

“Aren’t they adorable, everyone? This infamous beauty-tamed-the-beast couple have been caught all around school in compromising positions, because they literally can’t keep their hands off each other! And hell, it’s not hard to see wh- Hey! Give that bac-”

The mic is yanked away from Mic, and Ochako’s kind of relieved. The reassuring deadpan of Aizawa’s voice takes back over. “The match begins in 3, 2, 1…”

When the siren rings, an iceberg appears in the blink of an eye, crashing towards Ochako and Katsuki.

But they prepared for this, so Ochako and Katsuki both lunge forward with the same intent, diving low and letting Ochako shoot forward ever so slightly in front. When the first plume of ice touches her hand she activates her quirk just as Katsuki blows the first perfectly-timed explosion into the advancing avalanche.

In a heartbeat, Todoroki’s giant ice wall becomes a giant flying ice wall. Pushed by the blast from Katsuki, weightless from the touch of Ochako’s quirk, the hunk of ice goes spiralling up into the air, through the open roof of the stadium. It’s pushing hard on the upper limits of Ochako’s quirk control,
but she can take it, so she allows the iceberg to gain some height while Katsuki shortens the distance between himself and Deku.

Katsuki always goes for Deku like he’s been waiting his whole life for this fight, and there’s no exception now. This leaves Ochako to torpedo right towards one Todoroki Shouto, whose attempts to bar Ochako’s access to him aren’t so effective when she can use the ice-barriers he pushes out at her as launchpads to gain height and then start a controlled fall over the top of him.

When Todoroki’s left arm lifts, Ochako knows what’s coming, but she’s not diving into this without a few tricks up her sleeves – well, in her boots. Swinging around in the air to line up the soles of her feet over Todoroki’s open left palm, Ochako presses the mechanism Hatsume built for her and meets Todoroki’s fire-blast with a bit of her own bottled Bakugo.

“Whoa whoa whoa! A counter from Uraraka!!! This couple knows that sharing is caring, and what you’re seeing is a,” some papers rustle, “patented Hatsume Mei Tech Cutie Booties… Cutie Booties? Seriously? Okay, whatever! Patented Hatsume support gear that allows Uraraka’s boots to fire explosions powered by Bakugo’s sweat! Hey, how come we never do fun stuff like that?”

The mic is reclaimed from… Mic, and Aizawa interjects, “Uraraka’s enhancements give her greater maneuverability and firepower in the ring, but require regular refuelling with her partner. If their opponents can stop them from reconnecting, she’ll quickly run out of juice.”

Meeting Todoroki blast-for-blast, Ochako’s boots send her soaring back up the way she came, but that’s not such a big problem. The giant iceberg is still suspended above them, and serves as a satellite surface for her to land on. Still just within the limits of her quirk, Ochako pushes back off the polished surface with another blast from her boots. It’s a bit like bouncing off the moon, if the moon were a melty ball of ice floating above the stadium rather than out in space. And it’s a couple of hundred metres up, but still technically in the ring – at least, no announcements have indicated she is out of bounds.

Using such a large mass as a launchpad would practically send the iceberg out into orbit, if it weren’t for the fact that Ochako touches her fingers and calls out, “Release!” just as she rebounds. Ochako becomes a brigadier, leading the charge of a huge partially-melted comet of ice back down to the ground.

With bottled Bakugo in her boots, Ochako moves just as fast without him as she would with him. It’s been a dicey weekend – that’s how long they’ve had, a weekend – learning how to master, or at least have a basic grip, on how these boots work. But with the amount of experience Ochako has shadowing Zero-G blasts with Katsuki, the adjustment wasn’t as brutal as she anticipated. Constant positive reinforcement and strict coaching from Katsuki certainly helped too.

Ochako’s aiming for Todoroki initially, but still has her eye on Katsuki and Deku. Each kick or punch from Deku needs a blast-powered counter from Katsuki, so it’s easy for their brawl to get out of hand – unless Ochako can give them some assistance. She waits until the last possible moment of still seeming like she’s focused on Todoroki, then changes direction with a new blast from her boots – they’re getting a little low on fuel already, but she doesn’t need to go much farther.

“A fakeout!!!” Mic screams. “Uraraka ditches Todoroki to help her man!”

Maybe it’s Mic’s warning, though Ochako wouldn’t believe it, which has Deku so ready for Ochako to fly at him like a blowdart. He swings an arm away from the fight with Katsuki to brush Ochako off course, but it’s controlled. Ochako and Katsuki talked about this before, and had a hunch Deku might resist using his full strength on her, at least at first. If it’s the case, which it might be, then they have to take full advantage.
Ochako latches onto Deku’s arm, moving with, rather than against, his strike and swings around him like a tetherball until she’s clinging to his back. Using her own momentum, and five fingers pressed against his tense bicep, Ochako swings Deku off his feet and says, “Sorry about this, Deku.”

Katsuki’s remark is, “I’m not.” Then he kicks Deku in the stomach, and sends him and Ochako both flying upwards.

The Deku-and-Ochako sandwich doesn’t get far before Todoroki surfs up on the crest of an ice-wave to catch them. But just before that happens Ochako detaches from Deku, using the last of her fuel reserves to blast herself back towards Katsuki.

“A magnificent save from Todoroki! He should play in goal!”

Katsuki catches Ochako dead on, landing foot-to-palm with rigorously drilled precision to connect his bracers to her boots. A click, followed by a high-powered shhhhhht- ing sound confirms refuelling, which only lasts a couple of sections as the highly pressurised bracers pump Ochako full of liquid explosive. Crouching down, Ochako reaches to touch her fingers against Katsuki’s as he cradles her foot, and activates her quirk. Moments later, Katsuki pushes Ochako back the way she came – straight for the ice-wall Todoroki created to catch Deku.

By this point, it’s also become a pressing issue that the melty-iceberg-comet Todoroki made in the first seconds of the match is about to crash into the stage. And due to their elevation, Deku and Todoroki are first up for a squashing.

“It should be noted.” Aizawa’s voice comes in over the intercom with a crackle, “that the extent to which these combatants know each other is a critical factor in this match. Their ability to anticipate one another’s reactions allows them to control the match from both sides.”

A thunderous boom shakes the arena, an explosion like blast-mining as the sizable hunk of ice is shattered into thousands of pieces against the fist of one Midoriya Izuku, standing atop another shimmering wall of ice.

At about the same time as this happens, Ochako flies into the wall that Todoroki built to catch Deku. She rams into it feet first and looses a short Baku-blast, landing with a force that takes out the support and shatters the other pair’s platform underneath them.

Todoroki starts to fall. Deku doesn’t: he’s still weightless. In the time all this has happened – so, like three seconds – Katsuki has shot up with Zero-G speed ready to take out Deku like a bowling ball into pins. Distracted by shattering the incoming iceberg – it will always be Deku who steps up first when there’s danger – and Todoroki peeled away from him by gravity, Deku is left open. Two heavy combat-booted feet slam into Deku’s chest, and his reactions are fast. But Zero-G Katsuki is faster.

Amid the scattering pieces of ice that spectators in the arena are using their quirks to break further and prevent from causing injury to the crowd, Deku gets booted clean out of the arena and lands somewhere in the topmost bleachers.

The crowd goes wild; Present Mic goes wilder.

“What WHAT WHAT? MIDORIYA IS THROWN OUT OF BOUNDS!!! TWO-ON-ONE, LISTENERS. DOES TODOROKI HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO STICK IT OUT ALONE?!”

Like hell, Ochako thinks with victorious spite, wondering if Katsuki’s thinking something much the same. No time for that anyway: they’re not done yet.
Katsuki blasts himself back into the centre of the ring, but Ochako’s ahead of him in her rocket-boosted trajectory straight for Todoroki. He can probably defend against both of them at split-second intervals, but that’s no reason not to try taking him from both directions.

Todoroki uses a hot-and-cold blast to blow Ochako and Katsuki back – her from the front, him from the back. The shockwave hits like thunder, but Ochako and Katsuki are fighting it from the moment the wave hits. They can regain control of themselves in the air by finding each other, which is exactly what they do.

Re-centering and loading Katsuki back up full of Zero-G aggression, Ochako wonders if Todoroki realises what he’s setting himself up for by scattering the whole arena with massive chunks of ice; they’re all surfaces for Ochako to bounce off. And Katsuki is about to turn back into that large, angry, literally exploding fly that just won’t be caught.

“I’ve seen this technique before, listeners, and let me tell you: IT PACKS A PUNCH. Uraraka and Bakugo’s Zero-G style hits like it’s raining grenades! Hey!” The next part comes out in song, until the mic and Mic are parted. “Hallelujah! It’s raining grenades!”

The tennis-ball barrage of Zero-G explosions at Todoroki don’t achieve victory over him, but they do wear out the limits of his quirk good and fast. Without gravity, Katsuki is more fuel-efficient than usual, hitting bigger and harder for less energy – and always with Ochako to catch and then send him back in. They wear the Ice Prince down, until his caps have finally melted.

Finally they get headway on the ever-resistant Todoroki. Ochako’s signal comes from Katsuki on one of their spinning trapeze direction changes. All Katsuki says to introduce the moment is, “This is it.”

Ochako thinks it so she says it, but it’s not really a reassurance. Just the reflection of what she feels as long as she’s with Katsuki. “I’m ready!” She was getting close to barfing anyway. Not that it would’ve stopped Ochako for long.

Katsuki lands right next to Todoroki, and when a wall of ice or fire doesn’t push him back, he throws a good-old-fashioned punch. Ochako lands slightly further away, but breaks into a sprint to get over to the brawling boys pronto.

“A fist-fight has broken out! Even these powerhouses of flame, frost and fury run outta fuel eventually! And it’s about to be two-on-one! Will Todoroki be able to hold out, or is defeat inevitable?”

Aizawa commandeers the microphone just as Ochako breaks through the gap in Todoroki’s guard that Katsuki wrenches open for her, and strikes him with an open – quirk-activating – hand in the side while he’s blocking Katsuki from the front. “Wrong,” Aizawa says as Todoroki’s feet lift off the ground. “This match has already been won.”

It’s not obvious to everyone else, perhaps, but from the moment Todoroki becomes weightless, they’ve got his number. Not even he realises it yet. With his left arm outstretched, a lick of flames surges out and drives Todoroki through the air: not much to fight with, but enough to give him agency in the open space. But just as Katsuki said back when they were preparing: no one is as used to being weightless and airborne as Ochako and Katsuki.

So in fact, it’s really more like playing a table-tennis game with Todoroki – grabbing him as he tries to blast himself back into the arena, passing him back and forth and trying to send him out of the ring again. Waiting to see who will score the winning point with him.
“This is almost cruel! It’s like they’re toying with him.”

Aizawa begs to differ. “Todoroki can also manoeuvre in the air, so Bakugo and Uraraka aren’t taking the chance to let him zone one of them before they can do the same to him. One slip-up could reset the match entirely.”

But that’s not going to happen, the surge in Ochako’s gut tells her. She and Katsuki won’t let anyone split them up.

So it’s remarkably simple, in the end. Just one throw that Todoroki can’t recover from before Katsuki blast-punches him towards the ground past the line of the arena boundaries. Ochako catches Katsuki on the recoil and sends him into the ground before cancelling her quirk one last time. “Release!”

At a pacing of about one every few seconds, Todoroki, Katsuki, and Ochako all fall back down to earth, but two of them are in the ring and one is outside it. Todoroki goes down onto the terrain outside the stadium ring, landing flat on his back with a thud that looks like it knocks the wind out of him. Ochako’s right above Katsuki, so he catches her in his arms as the roar of the crowd surges up around them.

“We have our winners!!!! Bakugo and Uraraka beat Todoroki and Midoriya and qualify for their class to make the inter-school final!!! That’s right, listeners. This is just the preliminaries!!! Let’s cut to Midnight down on the arena floor and see if the victors have anything to say for themselves!”

“Thanks, Mic!” Midnight’s voice pitches up like a cat singing alleyway sonnets, strutting over to Ochako and Katsuki in a way that would make Ochako sweat if she were not already super sweaty already. “Congratulations, lovelies! Any comment on this victory?”

“Yeah.” Katsuki drops Ochako and leans over the mic Midnight brandishes at them. “We’re gonna win this whole fu-”

“UH-PLUS ULTRA!” Ochako screams over Katsuki’s expletive so suddenly Midnight actually twitches. “Go UA! Thanks for watching, everyone!”

“-tournament,” Katsuki finishes with a quick glare.

“Uhhh, okay! Back to you, Mic!” Midnight returns before any more trouble can happen on-air.

Outside the ring, Todoroki has already sat up, looking around with a perplexed what-am-I-doing-here expression even as Recovery Girl and a few supplementary medics bustle around him. Deku has presumably been removed from the bleachers.

Katsuki is ready to move on, never stationary for long – and for once, actually rational in the aftermath of a stadium match. “C’mon, babe. Let’s get outta here.” His hand closes firmly around Ochako’s, tugging her after him like a victory banner as he strides out of the arena and almost takes out a photographer who doesn’t get out of the way quickly enough.

They’re new. The photographers, that is. Ever since the first match, followed quickly by a TV deal to promote the inevitable 2-A qualifying final, Ochako’s been getting (vaguely) used to the idea that the media have a legitimate interest in her and Katsuki. Too much of an interest, it could be said.

That’s why she’s got no objections at all about being dragged through a crowd of bustling press and having the door slammed on the first post-match training room Katsuki can find. His legendary attitude for brushing people off is useful when it comes to dealing with paparazzi.

“So that went well,” Ochako offers with a sigh that’s mostly exhaustion, taking off her helmet and
setting it on a table.

“Mmn.” Katsuki slumps into a chair and immediately tilts back on it, dragging his bracers and gloves off and sweeping noxiously sweaty palms up through his hair. No wonder it’s always on the brink of exploding. “It ain’t over yet.”

“I know.” Ochako comes over and brings Katsuki’s chair back to an even keel, by merit of plonking herself square in his lap. There will be people looking for them already and they’ll get found soon enough, so moments like this are to be enjoyed. She sets an arm around his shoulders, and one of his curls around her waist in return. “So about what you said.”

“We are gonna win this whole fucking thing,” Katsuki reiterates more successfully.

“No, before the match,” Ochako catches. “How you… yunno-”

Katsuki’s eyebrows lift, like he thinks it’s funny she can’t say it without her blood being mostly composed of pure adrenaline. “I was actually gonna wait to tell you after we won.”

*He loves her,* the message replays in Ochako’s mind without needing a repeat in person. *Bakugo Katsuki loves her. Back.*

“So why’d you say it then?” Ochako queries.


“What?!” Ochako bashes a balled fist against Katsuki’s shoulder. His muscles are hot, practically rippling after the exertion of the match. Ochako needs to cool her jets, and not in a rocket-powered boots sense. “You told me you love me as a *distraction*?”

Katsuki’s grin cracks open further. “Worked, didn’t it?”

“Ohhhhh! You’re unbelievable!” Ochako’s one-handed beating turns into two as she swivels in Katsuki’s lap to drum her fists against his chest. He just laughs, taking the battering like a heavy bout of rain.

“You almost said it back, so joke’s on you, bubbles.” A rare full-usage of the nickname that stuck to Ochako like gum on the bottom of her shoe. “Anyway, it’s true.” Ochako stops fighting Katsuki and stills, waiting to see if he’ll follow through. He does, warm gaze fixed to Ochako’s with unwavering certainty, the same surety with which he declares everything he believes in. “I love you.”

Ochako leans in as Katsuki does, meeting in the middle in one of their reflexive, did-it-before-I-thought-about-it kisses that comes and goes as quickly as summer rain, leaving her to reply, “I love you too,” over his smiling mouth. Ochako’s known it for weeks, long before they even started officially dating.

Because it’s taken Ochako and Katsuki a while to get here, but the results are well worth the wait.

Chapter End Notes

Props to everyone who wanted/guessed we would see the all-important Kacchako Vs. Tododeku match. Which is uh, not exactly the final, but it sorta is. Let’s just pretend that
there's no match after that's tougher for them than this one.

Thanks so much for your support y'all, it wouldn't have been the same without you! WE MADE IT AHHH.

... Stay tuned/subscribed for the series-clinching smutfic and *drumroll*..... THE START OF MY NEXT MHA FIC. Yes! For real! AH!!

Just to pre-empt a few likely questions: after writing this much Kacchako I'm all worn out of 1. this ship 2. teenagers and 3. rom-com so my next project is going to go in a COMPLETELY different direction on all those points. I'll start posting chapters sometime after I put up the smutfic and finish this series, but I won't be posting anything else so if you subscribe to me as an author it'll be the next thing to hit your inbox post-smut. I don't want to give too much away (unless you come hang in discord) but suffice to say it's totally different to DADT so if you're not into that it's cool.

... But if you're about twisty Killer Thrillers with Aizawa, his loud long-suffering boyfriend, a policeman who's a kittycat, and a total brat with purple hair, then you might be into some'a what I've got lined up for ya.

End Notes

SO I'M TRYING OUT THIS DISCORD THING?

https://discord (dot) gg/gWJrUBv

As per my instructions, "check out my Tumblr if you want to know more about me and my writing” it's Fear3loathing (tumblr) /fanfiction

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!