The Road Not Taken

by Mai_Blade

Summary

For every choice you make, a different universe takes the path you didn't.

[AUs and What Ifs of The Greatest Healer in the World]
In one life, the year you were twelve, you called out to Izuku Midoriya.

In this life, you let him pass without a word.

You killed the dog, but you couldn’t stop it from biting you.

Oh god, it hurts.

It hurts, it hurts, it hurts!

Tears trickle fast down your face as you sit on the street near the dead dog, tightly gripping the leg it had bitten and teared at, trying to yank you off your feet so it could go for your neck. Red, hot, slick blood dribbles much too freely down your leg, sticky between your fingers as you sob helplessly in the late evening.

‘Mom! Dad! Someone, help me!’

It figures that there are no heroes around.

They’re never around when you need them!

“A-ah?!”

Flinching, you turn and see… that kid from your apartment building, that quirkless boy whose name you can’t recall. He’s frozen for a long moment, eyes locked on your mangled and bleeding limb, but another sob from you startles him back into motion, and almost before either you realize it, he’s closed the distance to reach out his hand.

“A-are you okay?!”

You are most emphatically not okay, but you’re better off now than you were before he showed up because now you’re not alone.

He runs to fetch your parents and you are taken to the hospital.

When you get home a day later, your parents invite him and his mother over.

He smiles and you wonder how you ever thought he wasn’t worth knowing.

(He ends up as your hero anyway.)

Some things are destined to be -- it just takes us a couple of tries to get there.

~J.R. Ward, Lover Mine
These aren't linear. I'm just gonna explore whatever catches my fancy. Feel free to submit points you'd like me to look at and I just might.

These aren't canon to the main story. *Raising the Greatest* is, but not this.
Chapter Notes

Soulmate AU where the world is black and white until you meet your soulmate, but the colors come in gradually after each meeting so people don’t glance at a person in the crowd and then lose them and/or suffer uncertainty.

Also, posted before I proofread it. :P

EDIT: Someone finally pointed out that I typed 'twenty-two' instead of 'twenty-four'. I've known about it for ages but left it because I'm lazy. Someone finally said 'hey', so I fixed it. It only took, what, a few weeks? xD

We are what ballads are written of, what bards sing of. We are epic, you and I.

-Samantha Garman, Dandelion Dreams

When soulmates meet, color begins seeping into their monochrome world. Sometimes it only takes seconds after a person first meets their soulmate, but for most, it takes minutes or even hours. It starts with a random primary color. Things that were once black and white suddenly become colored in red, blue or yellow. With more meetings, the other primary colors come into view, and then the other colors of the spectrum.

In this wide world of billions, less than ten percent of people actually find their soulmates.

Which is why, at the age of twelve, you were amazed to suddenly find that the formerly black and white school uniform hanging on the back of your bedroom door had a colored scarf.

With a shaking hand, you reached out and touched the scarf that used to be nearly pitch black. Tears brimmed in your eyes as you let out a wobbly laugh.

You met your soulmate today.

Eagerly, you pulled the scarf free and went to your computer to check out the Soulmate Color Check website. In this world where so few met their soulmates, a way was needed for the lucky few to identify color and the SCC website was the easiest and quickest way to do so (longer ways included mailing a colored object to your local SCC office and waiting for the result to come in the mail). When the correct page loaded, you held up the scarf against the only primary color on the screen you could see.

Red.

This scarf was red!

Laughing brightly, you spun around in your chair, feeling giddy.

Red was your first color, and if you continued meeting your soulmate then more colors would change your black, white and grey world.
A thought crossed your mind, sobering you slightly.

Of all the people you met today, which one was your soulmate?

Izuku ran up to his mom, holding out one of his All Might action figures for her to see.

“Mommy, mommy! This isn’t all black and white!”

Inko lit up. “Oooh?! Izuku!”

Inko had never met her soulmate, and despite the job that sent him to distant places, Hisashi hadn’t met his either. Still, they met and fell in love anyway. Giving up on the dream of ever meeting her soulmate was hard, so she was ecstatic that Izuku, who was quirkless, wouldn’t also be denied the joy of a soulmate.

Her son hopped in place. “What color is it, Mommy?”

Her face faltered before she managed a smile. “Let’s check the Soulmate Color Check website, okay? That’s the fastest way.”

Izuku cheered and raced for the computer, calling for her to hurry. Laughing, she followed after him.

His first color was yellow.

You kept a lid on the fact that you had met your soulmate. You didn’t want to be hassled by the curious, the envious or the jealous. There was no denying that you had an extra spring in your step and there was no hiding your good mood as it kept escaping as a smile.

“What is it?” Kyoko grinned as she leaned her elbows on your desk during break. “You’ve had a goofy look on your face all day.” Her smile widened. “Ooh! Did you meet a boy?”

You shook your head. “It’s nothing. I’m just in a good mood.”

“Clearly,” Shizu said, eying your happy face. She shrugged. “Well, if you don’t want to share, that’s fine.” She gave a slight glare at Kyoko. “Drop it before you ruin her mood.”

Kyoko pouted but dropped the subject. Mostly. She ‘cleverly’ directed the conversation towards cute guys before Shizu rolled her eyes and changed the subject to English class.

For the rest of the day, you stared avidly at all the red things you could suddenly perceive.

Ooh, what color would be next?

Izuku excitedly told everyone at his school that he could see the color yellow and was bombarded by classmates asking him to point out yellow things. He was happy to have done something as rare as meeting his soulmate. Even though he didn’t have a quirk, he had a soulmate, someone who would love him for the rest of his life.

Of course, not everyone was happy for him. In fact, after getting over the novelty of having someone who met their soulmate in class, most of his classmates and even some of the teachers were jealous.
Kacchan yelled at him too, though that wasn’t new. What was new, though, were the new ways he could hurt Izuku.

“You only met your soulmate once so far, right, Deku? Well, wait until they learn exactly what you are. No one, not even your soulmate, will ever want a weak, quirkless loser like you!”

He cried to his mother after school, unable to keep finding joy in all the yellow things (*sunlight is yellow*).

“Is it true, mom? Will my soulmate not want me when they find out I’m quirkless?”

Inko kissed his forehead and gently rocked him. “Of course not, Izuku. Your soulmate is the one person who will always accept you just the way you are. Being quirkless doesn’t mean they won’t love or want you.” *She desperately hoped.* “In fact, I’m betting they’re looking for you right now, eagerly awaiting that meeting that will lead to more colors coming into their life.”

He sniffled and wiped at his face. “I hope you’re right. I hope they like me.”

“Izuku,” she crooned softly. She smiled.

“They’re going to love you.”

The next time you crossed paths with your young neighbor Izuku Midoriya, you called out to him because there was a red smear along his forearm.

“Your shoes and blood are red,” you mused, healing his arm.

Izuku’s eyes snapped to your face. “You can see color?”

You grinned cheerfully. “Yep! My first color is red.”

He smiled widely. “I can see color too! I see yellow!”

You froze.

(After the first time you met him, red seeped into your world.)

Izuku hopped in place. “Color is really pretty, isn’t it? I never knew how much stuff was yellow! All Might’s hair is yellow, you know.”

“Part of his costume is red,” you replied mechanically, letting go of his healed arm.

Izuku—this *six year old kid*—beamed. “I can’t wait to see more colors. Hey, does that mean you know who your soulmate is?”

You stiffly shook your head. “N-no. Not yet.”

He nodded sagely. “I don’t know who it is either. I hope I find them soon!”

You blinked, noticing the smile slipping from his face. “What is it?”

He shuffled awkwardly. “It… it’s just… I hope my soulmate doesn’t hate me.”

You frowned slightly. “Why would your soulmate hate you?
He wrung his small hands together and mumbled almost incoherently. “I’m quirkless…”

It might be just a coincidence. Maybe you both just met your soulmates around the same time and weren’t actually each other’s soulmates.

But if he was your soulmate?

“Midoriya,” you said firmly, gently lifting his chin so he could look at you. “I’m sure your soulmate won’t hate you for being quirkless. Soulmates are special. They accept everything about each other because there’s no one else in the whole world who is more perfect for them. Your soulmate is going to be so happy to know you.”

He gave you a wobbly smile. “That’s what my mom says too.” He glanced away. “I hope you’re both right.”

The next color you saw was blue.

Merchandise with the three primary colors wasn’t uncommon, but your parents hadn’t bought you any specifically designed for the purpose of alerting people to when they had met their soulmate because they didn’t want you to stare at it endlessly, dreaming a futile hope that one day you might see one of the three colored areas. After you started seeing color, though, your parents gifted you with a primary colored Triforce-like object to hang on your wall. One triangle was red was the two others were black and grey.

The same day after speaking with Midoriya, the black triangle changed to blue.

You went crying to your mother.

“My soulmate is six years old!”

(She was sensible and told you that someday he would be eighteen.)

Izuku excitedly ran up to his mom, once again waving around his favorite All Might action figure. “Mommy, mommy! There’s another color! The computer, hurry!”

His next color was red.

He lit up. “That’s the color (Name) sees too!”

His mother looked down at him from where she stood near his chair. “(Name)? You don’t mean the (Last Name)’s daughter?”

He laughed and kicked his legs. “Yeah, that’s her! She must have met her soulmate too, right?”

She gave him a slight smile. “O-of course…”

(She tried to be sensible and told herself that (Name) would only be twenty-four by the time Izuku was eighteen.)

You felt like your life was careening out of control.
Your soulmate was six years old.

And also apparently oblivious to the fact that you were his soulmate, as he kept wondering aloud who his soulmate might be. Apparently the chance that his soulmate might not be the same age as him had completely gone over his head. In his eyes it just wasn’t a possibility.

Well, you weren’t going to enlighten him.

Not at this age.

Izuku felt dumb and mumbled so into his pillow.

He was ten years old before it finally clicked in his head that ‘hey, maybe my soulmate is older than me’.

His world was no longer merely black and white. Color existed everywhere in so many hues he wondered how they could all exist at the same time in the same places.

(It made him grieve that his mother’s world was forever black, white and grey.)

Why, why did he never clue in to the fact that (Name) was his soulmate? They started seeing color around the same time and the more they met the more beautiful the world became. They talked of colors and bonded over colors, talking brightly to each other wherever they went.

So why did it take overhearing gossiping ladies to realize that she was his soulmate?

Why didn’t she just tell him that he was hers?

But mostly, why didn’t he realize it for himself?

Apparently it took a brick wall falling on him for him to see what was staring him in the face.

Blushing brightly, he turned onto his back and hid his face behind his arms.

How was he supposed to go back to the way things were now that he knew?

Izuku was a blushing, stuttering mess the next time you saw him.

You huffed, smirking slightly. “Did someone finally hit you with a bus?”

He yelped and raised his arms to hide behind them.

You laughed.

“Don’t worry, Izuku. I definitely like you.”

This did not help him stop blushing or stuttering.

(′She likes me. My soulmate likes me!’)

“Hand me the blue pen,” you mumbled thoughtlessly, pointing to the blue pen just out of your reach.
on the table and near Kyoko.

Silence fell at the table.

“You sneaky bitch.”

Not offended but perking up at the inflection in her voice, you looked up from the homework you were working on to find Shizu and Kyoko staring at you. “What?”

Kyoko screeched, “Blue?”

You blinked, registered her words, and your eyes widened at your slip. “Shit.”

Kyoko scooted around the table to get close, leaning in and staring at you with wide eyes. “You met your soulmate? When?”

You leaned back, uncomfortable that you had outed yourself. “Uh… four years ago?”

She screeched again and bombarded you with a bunch of questions. Shizu, seeing the study group as a lost cause, set aside her work and listened as you tried to answer Kyoko’s questions.

It was exhausting as she never seemed to run out of them.

Sometimes Izuku felt like the luckiest person in the world.

Not only did he actually find his soulmate among the billions of people in this world, but she was also someone who didn’t reject him as he once (and sometimes still) feared. Plus, she had the most amazing quirk and she was using it to help him become a hero!

He was fourteen now, and U.A. wasn’t just a dream anymore.

The Kami no Kage was your gang. Daiki and Shizu managed it, but it was yours because ‘it’s your quirk that made it possible’. It was fraught with dangers, but it made you rich so you didn’t bail. It was also where you developed and honed your skills, cashing in on the potential of your quirk.

You truly hoped that Izuku never found out his soulmate was a criminal underworld boss.

His schoolmates called him smug because he could see all the colors they couldn’t. They tried to crush him by bullying him with words and actions, but no matter what they did Izuku endured it all.

He endured the worst people could throw at him because he had his soulmate.

And he was her hero.

It might have been a terrible thing, but you felt so glad that that pterodactyl villain grabbed the person next to you and not you yourself.

“Close call,” Kyoko giggled nervously.
“Yeah,” you breathed shakily. “Let’s get back before anything else happens, yeah?”

Izuku heard about Kanmon Bridge, so when (Name) and her parents returned alive after their vacation, the second she opened the door to their apartment, he shamelessly threw his arms around her and held on tight.

He may or may not have been shaking as she tried to reassure him she was okay.

You did not throw a snit and run away from the gang for a night. Instead, you waited until the end of the meeting to tell your friends that you were dissatisfied with the current status quo.

Kyoko immediately declared that all staff meetings excluding emergency meetings were now to close with karaoke sessions.

It helped, as did the hot springs vacation Shizu made you all go on.

It was there in the hot water under the stars that Kyoko finally managed to pry the name of your soulmate out of you. She and Shizu revealed they had made bets on it, prompting you to yell and splash at them.

Kyoko then yelled over the dividing wall at the guys. “HER SOULMATE IS IZUKU!”

Sora’s “I fucking knew it!” did not help matters, nor did Daiki’s “Are you fucking kidding me!”

The final nail in the coffin was Katsu’s barely heard comment of, “Looks like Daiki and I owe Shizu money.”

You bellowed, blushing.

“YOU GUYS SUCK!”

(You weren’t actually mad at them as you were glad to finally share Izuku’s name.)

He crossed paths with All Might and asked him an important question.

In another life, the hero’s answer would have crushed him.

In this life, Izuku raised his head.

“We’ll prove you wrong.”

(He saved Kacchan and got ‘One for All’.)

It was rare nowadays for Izuku to come to you with an actual injury, so it was an unpleasant surprise to get a call asking you to come out to a certain beach where you found him with shattered limbs.

“IZUKU!”

You healed him, glaring murder at the skinny man there, and then he told you about All Might’s
He gave you puppy eyes and you found yourself agreeing to heal the wounded Symbol of Peace. By late that night, All Might had his lung and stomach back.

Both Shizu and Kyoko went to laughing, panicked hysterics when they found out.

Izuku went to U.A. and got first place in the quirk assessment test on the first day.

He paired with Asui in the Heroes versus Villains exercise and together they defeated the team of Kacchan and Kaminari.

At UJS, All Might easily fought off the League of Villains with Eraserhead as backup while Thirteen led the students to safety. He was cuddled by his soulmate in her bed (and it was a special torture of enjoyment and embarrassment).

He dominated at the Sports Festival, knowing that both All Might and his soulmate (his damsel, his love, his hope) were watching. He reached out and helped Todoroki accept his fire side in the final match. He took second place overall.

The League of Villains came knocking and nearly stole you away.

Only the fact that you took a risk, hastily making and releasing a quirk negation smoke in your bedroom, saved you. The double-bladed sword of your desperate attempt backfired on you, negating your quirk as well was the portal villain’s. Denied his quirk, he was forced to subdue you by hand and tried to carry you out of the gang’s headquarters.

Experiment 13 was waiting outside the door, somehow managing to stick to the ceiling before dropping on the unsuspecting villain from above as he exited your room. He knocked the villain out and told you to hide in your closet until someone came for you.

It was Daiki that eventually came and you cried into his arms.

Shizu and Daiki pre-empted your leadership and had unanimously decided to kill everyone from the League of Villains. Experiment 13 started screaming half-way into the job, telling everyone to run or it would be too late.

“Get your families and run! Get your families and run!”

You had never heard Experiment 13 scream before and it scared you.

Everyone except Daiki left you to do as Experiment 13 said. Shizu called back as you burst out of the club, yelling the code name for the hideout in Kyoto.

Daiki went for your parents as you stumbled the rest of the way to the Midoriya’s apartment.

Izuku was frightened when (Name) showed up at their door after midnight, out of breath, sweating and terrified.

“We have to leave!”
She was so panicked he could barely get a word in. She kept insisting that they had to leave, he and his mother both. They didn’t have time to pack anything, they just had to go, now.

“(Name), tell me what’s going on!”

She finally paused, still breathing hard. She locked eyes with him.

“Do you trust me?”

He didn’t even think before he nodded. “Yes.”

She grasped his hand and kept her eyes on his. “Then we have to leave.”

He turned to his mother and told them they were leaving right now.

You were frustrated when Izuku balked at leaving U.A. He and his mother didn’t want to just run away and start a new life without any context. After much arguing, you finally compromised: they wouldn’t go home but instead would go to All Might. The Number One Hero faithfully met them at the location he sent, but that was where you parted ways.

You left Izuku calling after you in pain and confusion.

(Name) called him later that day.

His stomach fell out and his heart twisted in his chest as she told him, over the phone, that she was villain. She told him of her gang’s clash with the League of Villains and how one of their members who with a future-sight quirk told them all to get their families and run.

She said that that gang member said to tell All Might, ‘It’s him.’

He didn’t understand but she hung up before he could ask her more questions.

All Might told him and his mother about All for One.

He took in the news of All for One rather better than his mom did, but most of his energy and thoughts had gone towards (Name) and her revelation.

His soulmate… was a villain?

You watched the news with frightened eyes as All Might fought the villain that Experiment 13 told you all to run from. A vast amount of Akakawa was in ruins, and even parts of Musutafu had been wrecked (your apartment building, Katsu, Shizu and Kyoko’s neighborhoods). You shook with fear in-between a steady Daiki and a trembling Shizu.

After what seemed like forever, All Might finally won.

You cried into your knees.

(and in the end, no one, not even you, would capitulate to the heroes and give yourselves in, though many family members left)
Izuku had bags under his eyes as he went through the motions of living.  
His soulmate was a villain.  
*His soulmate was a villain.*

When All Might and the heroes somehow found the core of the gang less than two months later it was at an inopportune time when Experiment 13 was out of commission and Digital Jack and Digital Jane were away.

It came down to a game of chicken: were the heroes willing to bet the world on bringing in the *Kami no Kage*?  

After a tense standoff, the heroes decided…

Yes.

Izuku tried to see her in prison but he was denied visitation rights by not only the police but also by (Name) herself. His own soulmate didn’t want to see him.

*(rejection rejection rejection rejection)*

He cried when he got back to his room at the U.A. dorm where not only he and his mother but also the rest of his classmates were staying.

His mother came and tried to comfort him.

*Stone, Giant and Clown* were all released into the world by the time the graphic *Bloat* was unleashed. You were all three months into imprisonment when the first case of *Bloat* made international news.

You managed a shaky grin in the face of All Might’s rage.

His mother accidentally let it slip that he had a soulmate and was separated from her.

*(Ochako’s heart was crushed—Deku colored her world but someone else had already returned the mutual favor for him. Why? Why was she so unlucky to be one of those few whose soulmate wasn’t hers?)*

From there, Kacchan somehow pieced together what his soulmate was, though exactly how was a mystery. With all the subtly the explosive blond was capable of, he shouted in the middle of a group of them watching the news about the police force releasing ‘civilians wrongly convicted of villainy’.

“YOUR SOULMATE IS A FUCKING VILLAIN?!”
Six years of painful encounters followed where he tried to understand why and you ran away from him. The world changed as your quirk spread its influence in both the medical world and in the lives of the wealthy.

You watched from afar as Deku and his graduating class stepped into the world of heroes.

(All Might told him it was up to him to manage you, to keep you from destroying the world. He didn’t seem to notice how his words weighed on Izuku’s heart.)

You wondered how many of them would take being told to never harm or bring in a Kami no Kage, even if they caught one of their gang members in the middle of a crime. You didn’t envy them their disillusionment.

Six years had passed since the relevant that turned his world upside down and sent her out of his reach. Six, long, lonely years—because for all the friends who surrounded him, his soul called out for hers.

Enough… was enough.

Shizu and Kyoko were dead to you.

How could they lure you to this place where he was? They knew well enough that you weren’t strong enough to face him!

Trying to blink away the tears without crying them, you stood stiffly on the rooftop across from Deku. A few stubborn stars twinkled overhead (the stars you had all been reaching for, two years into the dream and still reaching).

You didn’t say anything.

He didn’t say anything.

She was as close to tears as he was.

Was she afraid as much as he was?

He was a hero.

She was a villain (well-known face or not).

She spent the last six years running away from him and he spent that same time chasing after her. He knows that she has done terrible, unspeakable things.

(eight-hundred million dead world-wide because she couldn’t stand to be caged)

But he also knew she had done great, miraculous things.

(cures for numerous diseases, miracle-crops, revival of extinct species)

He knew she was going to do wondrous things.
He can’t remember when he started, but he knows he’s never stopped loving her.

There’s no such thing as an easy fix.

You know that you won’t give up what you’re doing, not if it means submitting to the restricting law and forcing your lifelong friends under the chains you’ve helped keep off them since the year you were twelve. Even if you are wrong, you won’t admit it.

But you’re so tired of running away from him when all you want to do is run towards him.

Don’t speak.

If either of you starts talking, you’ll only run away again, even if you have to break down the door behind you.

He can’t say anything. He doesn’t want to say anything, not when the sound of his voice has been all it took to send her away all the times previous.

So he let his tears fall as he held out his arms in silent hope.

She’s so warm.

You can’t stop your tears when his arms close around you.

(Six years and forever.)

He’s so warm.

my eyes never left you

~pooja bagul
Same Power, Different Life AU (Part 1?)

Chapter Notes

Is this even an AU? Well, it's Reader with the same power, but different age and different life, so close enough.

AND I SWEAR MIDORIYA WHY WON'T YOU JUST JUMP INTO HER ARMS???

Warnings: Implied/Referenced Suicide, Suicidal Thoughts (not Reader's), a curse word (and it's not even Bakugo's), author was lazy and didn't want to start a new Work because trying to think of all the applicable Tags sucks, the author doesn't like Bakugo and it probably shows, discrimination, slight gore?, etc.

If you find something else that needs a warning let me know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.

~George Bernard Shaw

You were born to a pair of quirkless people who felt guilty for risking a quirkless child but had wanted a child regardless. When the majority of your fourth year passed without signs of a quirk, they worried that their fear had come to pass. The neighbors and even your pre-school teachers whispered about their irresponsibility and ‘sheer gall’ to risk a quirkless child. You were missing the extra toe joint, but so did your father and he was confirmed quirkless.

When you turned six and no quirk had yet manifested, your mother took her own life and left a note that apologized over and over to you.

Your father fell into depression and began drinking.

But he tried, in his own way. You had a roof over your head and usually had food to eat. When you were forced to move out of your family apartment and into a smaller one, you got the single bedroom in it to yourself. He taught you how to wash clothes and hang them on the balcony to dry, and he made sure you knew how to get to your new elementary school and back home. He gave you a key to the apartment so you wouldn’t get locked out. He drank and worked odd jobs and hours, perhaps even ran errands for less savory people. He was hardly ever home and when he was he stank of alcohol and often cried in the messy living room you had yet to learn to keep tidy.

But he tried and he stayed and he lived, miserable as he was.

(you loved him because he was your daddy, but the gratitude you should have felt for his efforts was years in coming)

One night, while you were sleeping in your small bedroom, he came home and crashed to the floor noisily, startling you awake. Afraid, because you lived in a bad neighborhood, you waited and when you heard a pained groan, you froze in fear. After what seemed like ages, you finally mustered up
the courage to go look. Eventually, through the dark, you identified the man on the floor amid the garbage to be your dad.

He looked awful. There was blood on his face and some dribbled from his mouth. Suddenly terrified he was going to die too, you reached out and cradled his head, crying and begging him to be okay and to stay.

“Daddy!”

Suddenly your heart skipped a beat as information poured into your head, things you didn’t understand but somehow knew. Carefully, with trembling hands pressed against his bloodied face, you stared down at him as you felt what was wrong.

There was a cut in his hair where something had struck him. It was bleeding. You didn’t want it to bleed, so the skin mended itself. You felt him missing teeth and having loose teeth and a cut cheek inside. That probably hurt your poor daddy, so you focused on that area until he was all better. There were sore spots all over his body—someone really hit him! Soothing those areas and fixing the bone parts that worried you (surely the cracks on his ribs hurt!), soon there was nothing left that hurt on your daddy.

He slept through it all and you were sleepy now, so you put a blanket over him before returning to your bedroom to sleep.

(when he pieced together what happened, coupled with your childish explanation, he laughed and cried, going from standing to fetal position on the floor, nearly mad with relief, guilt and sorrow because why didn’t they find out before his wife killed herself)

Strangely, daddy was home even less after that.

You soon blamed your quirk and yourself and resolved not to use it.

One day on your way to school, a pre-schooler with an older child tripped and badly scraped her knees and palm. The older child fretted over her and soon spotted you, begging for help. Wary, you went over to them and quickly found yourself using your quirk to make her stop wailing. Her wounds healed up as though they were never there and you were suddenly the coolest person ever.

After that, you avoided them and started taking a different route to school.

(his daughter was eight before he remembered that maybe he should update her quirk registration as it currently stated she was quirkless, so he took her and they went and he registered it as ‘Flesh Manipulation’ and not healing or regeneration or anything big or special that would paint a target on her back because she was still his daughter)

Dad told you to keep your quirk as much a secret as you could. He told you that healing quirks were rare and rare things were stolen or eliminated and he begged you to be careful.

You promised.

You would have promised anything if it would make him stop crying.
For all the villain fights you saw from a distance and were shooed away from by well-meaning heroes and people, you didn’t see one up close until you were ten. At that particular fight there were civilian injuries. You only caught a momentary glimpse before yet another ‘kind’ stranger ushered you away.

You thought about those injured people and the man you saw who tried to staunch the bleeding of someone else’s wound. He had had a Red Cross badge on his chest and you vaguely knew what the Red Cross meant but decided to look it up for a better understanding.

Eventually you learned that he was a first aider.

You were eleven when you finally saved up enough money and plucked up enough courage to sign up for the first of five first aid courses offered by the Japanese Red Cross. In the middle of these lessons, your father asked you what you were doing to be out so often. When you told him, he seemed to dismiss it. He was gone the next day and you knew you couldn’t predict when and if he’d be back again.

A few days later, before the end of the first course, you found a pamphlet in front of your bedroom door from the centre where you were taking the lessons. On top of it was enough money for the second and third courses.

He tried.

If you weren’t at school or the first aid lessons, then you were often at the library reading biology or medical textbooks or on the computer reading about peoples stories of ‘medical miracles’.

(dad was all you had left, you had to know what to do because you don’t want him to die in front of you)

Your classmates called you weird and a bookworm, but you had your few friends. They weren’t deep, true friends you’d have for the rest of your life, but for now they were enough.

You didn’t mind being ‘strange’.

The more you knew, the better you felt.

You were almost twelve-and-a-half when you finally finished all five courses and in that time, you hadn’t come across a situation where you needed to intervene. It wasn’t strange as you had rarely come close to villain fights before anyway, and so far in your life you hadn’t experienced or been caught up in a disaster.

Father left you a first aid bag the day you passed the final course. It was green instead of red, and weighed a little over a pound with all the stuff inside.

You cried and hugged it.

(you took it with you everywhere and got permission to bring it to school as long as you left it with
You were at the mall hoping to find something new to wear with the money you had saved up when an explosion rocked the place. People started screaming and running away. Trembling, you reached into your pocket and pulled out the badge you had worked so hard to earn. You pinned it to your shirt, tightly gripped the strap of the first aid bag you carried everywhere and took several deep breaths before stepping forward, going towards the danger instead of away.

There were out-of-costume heroes on the scene, fighting against a costumed villain who was cackling and bragging about more bombs placed in the area. The heroes and villains were mostly focused on each other, so your arrival was barely noted and the one hero who did notice you was immediately distracted by the ongoing fight.

There was smoke and rubble and you coughed but carefully eyed the situation. There were many downed civilians (oh god, some of them aren’t moving), some wandering, some sitting, some groaning. There was blood, and cries and pleas for help. Your legs shook, but you forced yourself to do a quick, mental triage. First, those closest to the blast, second, those with missing limbs, third, those with bleeding head wounds, fourth, those with bleeding body wounds, and then the rest. You were only one person, after all and this was definitely too much for one person.

Guilty rushing past a dazed woman, you went up to the area closest to the blast. There were still living people here among the dead (why did you think this was this a good idea? This wasn’t a good idea!). Crouching down near a badly burnt person—and nearly tipping right over onto them—you reached over and pretended to feel for a pulse. Finding none (HOLY SHIT), you frantically activated your quirk, forcing the heart to start pumping again and the lungs to expand to inhale oxygen. With that small jump, you brought someone back from death (but it didn’t hit you like it should have, because you had been trained to try to do exactly that). Numbing their pain receptors and keeping them asleep, you left them in the recovery position and went to the next.

You brought seven people, including the first, back to life before you couldn’t (seven minutes had quickly passed). Frustrated, you abandoned the dead and went on to those with missing limbs. You cheated again, using your quirk to stop the blood flow despite your flimsy attempts to bandage them. Shocked people were still roaming around, occasionally tripping and falling. One hurt his head in his fall and you healed his injury before leaving him in the recovery position.

Other heroes had arrived, and soon there were paramedics, but you kept working. It was an open mall and news helicopters had been flying around, giving live coverage of the devastation and of the fight between the heroes and the villain.

Of the lone girl among the injured, clearly trying to help them. (he’s drunk in the middle of the afternoon when he sees his daughter on the television screen and he starts drinking like a fish because that’s his daughter in a dangerous situation and why did he give her that damned bag at her side)

With the arrival of the paramedics you let them take the more urgent cases you hadn’t had time to get to (there were so many people packed together when the explosion happened). While you were attending to a shocked woman, the unconscious kid next to her stopped breathing and died. With witnesses nearby, you pulled out the CPR mask from your first aid bag and put it over his face while your pinky touched his skin. With more calm than you actually felt, you coaxed his small body back
to life and healed the internal bleeding that had killed him.

You are just removing the mask from his face when a hero squats down next to you, making you twitch in surprise but not gasp like a jump scare usually would have made you do.

“Hey.” His voice is low, like he’s trying to be gentle. You stare at him. You don’t know this hero. He continues, “It’s okay now. The paramedics have the situation in hand. You can stop.”

Slowly, his words register, and you stand.

He catches you when you stumble, and helps you over to the medical tent that seemingly sprang up from nowhere. He makes you sit at the bench near the open side of the medical tent and sets your bedraggled, blood-stained first aid bag next to you.

(‘shock’, a paramedic murmurs when the hero brings the girl to his attention, and neither are surprised considering she’s a young girl to see such a bloody scene

they get her home address and after checking to make sure she’s not wounded, the paramedic releases her to the hero to escort to a police officer who in turn takes her home

said police officer is displeased to see where she lives and walks her right up to the door and tuts at the state of the apartment inside, but there’s nothing he can do about a neglectful parent or her poor status

he does make sure to get her name and make note of her address, though)

You have nightmares for weeks, of explosions and blood and dead people.

Your schoolmates treat you like a minor celebrity and those who don’t call you an idiot and your teachers are divided between praising you and calling you reckless.

The event marks father’s longest absence, and even though the food doesn’t run out and you occasionally find fresh things in the fridge, he doesn’t come home.

You are almost fourteen when father moves the both of you to a different apartment building far away in Musutafu. He doesn’t tell you why. You are unhappy because now you’re at a new school where you don’t know anybody.

(he searched ‘first aid girl mall’ in the deep web and found their apartment building listed and he could hardly move her out of there fast enough)

It takes all of half a day before you know about ‘Deku’ Midoriya. He’s from the next class over and he’s quirkless. You sit and listen as your new classmates deride a boy for being born quirkless.

You remember your father and your mother (dead because she couldn’t bear the guilt of passing the ‘curse’ on to you when in reality she needn’t have had to die).

You stand with force, startling them into momentary silence. Grabbing your wrapped bento, you
stalk out of the classroom and over to the next, a woman on a mission.

“Excuse me,” you ask the boys standing in the doorway. “Is Midoriya here?”

The boys are surprised, but one rallies enough wits to turn and yell, “Hey, Midoriya! There’s a girl here for you!”

Silence immediately falls in the classroom before a sudden clamour erupts.

“A girl is here to see Midoriya?”

“Who is it?!?”

“Hey, Midoriya, come here!”

A yelp is heard, followed by laughter, and soon a boy is shoved through the crowd and towards the door. He’s scrawny, with thick, messy green hair. When he looks up, you see green eyes and freckles.

And timidity, hesitation, and worry and slight fear.

The class catcalls, making him cringe and curl into himself. He appears to be trying to say something, but you can’t hear him over the leers of his classmates.

Nearly bursting with something, you lift your bento box and ask. “Will you eat lunch with me?”

The class explodes in noise with laughter and disbelief. Midoriya looks like he wants to refuse but his own bento box makes an appearance, is shoved into his hands, and then he himself is shoved out the door into you. Catching him, you glare at his classmates before grudgingly taking a leaf from their book and bodily dragging him off. Poor Midoriya is a stuttering mess the whole way outside to the first place you deem acceptable. Then, as though nothing’s wrong, you open your lunch and start eating.

Maybe a little more savagely than socially acceptable.

Midoriya sits next to you in a nervous wreck. “H-h-how do you kn-know my name? I don’t think I’ve ever m-m-met you before…?”

“I just transferred here,” you explained between bites. You introduced yourself.

He inexplicably lit up. “First Aid!”

(in his excitement, he forgot to be miserable and afraid, and found the voice to actually speak to a girl)

What?

He stammered in the face of your deadpan expression. “I-I mean, th-that’s what people c-c-call you on the internet! W-well, s-s-some people, anyway. The Gyōten Mall Explosion was a b-big thing, not only because of the sh-sher devastation wrecked by Bomber Reject, but b-b-because of the heroics of the g-girl to offer first aid before the arrival of the p-paramedics!”

You were not going to be an asshole who made fun of him for stuttering or otherwise commenting on it. You reached out to him for a reason and mocking him in any shape or form this early into your acquaintanceship was right out.
Grimacing, you looked down at your food. “I sort of hoped no one would remember that.”

“Are you kidding?” Izuku was beaming at you. “Why would everyone forget? You saved people that day. You… you’re a hero.”

It was discomfiting to be the target of such, what is that, admiration? Whatever that look on his face was, it made you uncomfortable, but you reminded yourself that he was quirkless and thus you shouldn’t be rude to him.

“Thanks,” you mumbled, going back to your food.

He started eating his lunch too, and started asking you a bunch of questions about Gyōten Mall. You answered them as best you could without getting snippy, and so it went until people started going back inside for afternoon classes.

(by the end of the day you were a ‘quirkless lover’, as though it were some kind of slur)

The next day at lunch—you were suddenly ostracized for your association with Midoriya—you asked him if his name really was ‘Deku’. He blushed and flustered, explaining that was what his childhood friend called him as it was another way his name could be read.

Said friend loudly introduced himself partway through lunch, come to taunt Midoriya and his new ‘girlfriend’. Midoriya turned red from embarrassment and stuttered under intimidation, but you grew up in a bad neighborhood and faced a slew of the dead and dying, and you weren’t going to let somebody bully you, not when your parents grew up with it and your mother succumbed to it.

Reaching out, you pulled Izuku next to you (making him turn a solid red and stop talking out of sheer shock) and lifted your chin in defiance. “I don’t know about ‘girlfriend’, but I’m definitely a girl and his friend.”

The blond brat in front of you sneered while his lackeys snickered in the background. “You’re that new transfer student, aren’t you? Maybe you didn’t know, but Deku is quirkless.”

You huffed. “The way you bray it around school, I wouldn’t be surprised if everyone and their grandmother knew.”

His eye twitched. “I do not bray.”

You sneered right back. “Sure you don’t.”

He stomped right into your personal space and glared less than a foot from your face. “I don’t.”

Midoriya suddenly wedged between you two and tried placating the bully. One of his lackeys called him ‘Bakugo’ and after shoving Midoriya at you, he left, taking the other two with him.

“You shouldn’t provoke him,” Midoriya stammered, trembling slightly beneath your hands. Suddenly noticing your hands on him, he yelped and jerked away, eyes wildly staring off to the side. “W-well! We should finish lunch before classes start up again.”

(you decided that you firmly did not like Bakugo and if he wasn’t careful you would outright hate him)
Apparently, when it came to socialization in the school, it was ‘all or nothing’.

‘All’ being everyone, and ‘nothing’ being Midoriya. Despite the ‘generous’ second chance offered to you by some of the girls in your class, you chose Midoriya.

*Quirkless* didn’t mean *worthless*.

Sure he was a stammering, blushing mess, but he was leagues better than anyone who would condemn a quirkless person (*like him, like dad, like mom*). He was kind and was an endless well of heroic facts and observations.

In his notebook, he even had a page dedicated to you.

After find it, you had leered at him over the top of his notebook, confusing him until he realized what you must be looking at.

“I-I’m sorry! I d-do an entry for just about a-anyone interesting, e-e-especially potential h-heroes!”

You stopped leering to lower the notebook. “You really think I could be a hero?”

He stopped moving and met your eyes with a firm gaze.

“I do.”

You smiled at him before deliberately ruining the moment.

“That’s what couples say at the altar.”

You laughed when he started flailing again.

For Christmas Day, you invited him to spend the afternoon with you.

He seemed almost to keel over from the blood rushing to his face. He eventually stammered out a ‘yes’.

You grinned. “Then it’s a date!”

(*he told his mom he was going to hang out with a friend and she was so happy for him but he couldn’t bring himself to tell her it was girl*)

You went to karaoke to sing, a café for hot chocolate, and to a holiday-themed hero movie. It was dark out when you left the theater, so you both went to a park to see the lights strewn through the trees and the light exhibits set up along the path. He invited you home to meet his mother and warm up before heading home, and you bought a Christmas cake, even if it was a leftover from the rush.

His mom was really nice.

(*she reminded you of yours, kind and maybe a little weepy, and you shared cake with her*)

She insisted you both hang out in Izuku’s room, making him turn red with mortification. When he opened the door you realized it wasn’t because his room was a stereotypical mess. No, he turned red because his room was *plastered* with All Might merchandise.
“This is… nice,” you managed to choke out, sitting at his desk while he sat on his bed.

He was doing that thing again, where his arms were lifted up to hide his blushing face. “Th-thanks…”

Dumbly, for New Year’s Eve, you both stayed up and sent each other text messages throughout the night as you waited for sunrise. You couldn’t see the sunrise from your apartment, but he could.

[Izuku: the sun is rising on another new year!

Izuku: hopefully it’s a good one]

Looking out the window, you could see the sliver of visible sky above beginning to light up with colored streaks.

You sent him good wishes and went to bed, unknowing of the slight panic you sent him into with your innocent message. You only meant that you hoped you didn’t suddenly move again, but Midoriya…

([First Aid: happy new year Izuku

First Aid: I hope we will be together again this year]

“Wh-what does she mean ‘be together again’?!”)

These idiots had no idea what they were missing out on by being shitty people to Midoriya. He was the probably literally the best person you had ever met. He was willing to help you out with homework and studying, a well of information on heroes, and you never saw him raise his voice at anyone, not even that jerk Bakugo who clearly needed his ego punctured. What really sold you on him, though, was the day he came to drop off the work you missed because you were sick (you’ve never been sick since before you were four, but cramps totally counted because your insides were giving mild birth to the inside lining of one of your organs).

He arrived at your apartment, found out you’d been alone for the whole thing, and politely but firmly invited himself in to cook for you.

You had gone to the door with a blanket on your shoulders for show, but now you used it to hide your blushing face as you internally freaked out (finally falling, and falling hard and fast to make up for lost time).

For Valentine’s Day, you labored over an elaborate box of chocolates. You made the best ones you possibly could and then put them into a box you had spent ages looking for, something fancy but not too girly, medium but not cumbersome. You had been saving for days and just managed to pull it off, box, ingredients and all.

These weren’t giri choco.

These… were honmei choco.

You went to school early that day, waited around a less-traveled corner outside, and when you
spotted Midoriya, you quickly walked up to him, shoved them out to him, and nearly yelled.

“I like you, Midoriya. Will you be my boyfriend?”

There was some mean-spirited catcalling from some of the other students still walking by, but nothing from Midoriya. When you lifted your head to look, you found him frozen on the spot with the brightest red face you had seen so far.

Concerned, you straightened up and asked, “Midoriya?”

A great whoosh of breath left him and his hands snapped out to grasp the box of chocolates that you had slightly lowered. He was still blushing, though not as brightly as before as he answered.

“I—I’ll give you a d-d-definite answer on W-White Day.”

(Kacchan took them and he tried to stand up for them but they were ruined anyway and she was mad later but not at him and said she would wait until White Day to hear his answer)

In the time leading up to White Day, the kids at school knew about their exchange and taunted each of them. He was used to it, but he felt terrible that First Aid had to suffer such bullying just because she associated with him. He was confused and asked his mother, “Mom, if you liked someone, would it be better to stay with them, even though they would be ridiculed for it, or better to let them go to spare them from that?”

She smiled at him knowingly. “Is it about that nice girl you brought home at Christmas?”

He stuttered and felt his face heat up as he stared at his food. “M-Maybe…”

She was quiet for a moment as she thought about his question. She asked instead, “Growing up sometimes means risking your heart. If you’re going to hurt either way, wouldn’t you rather try to keep someone who makes you happy by your side?”

(he didn’t have anyone before she barged into his life but he’s selfless enough to let her go, to spare her the endless teasing and attempts at bullying

regardless of how much it will hurt him to reject her)

Kacchan openly sneers at him on White Day after he’s shaken him down in search of any gift he might be trying to give to her and finds nothing. He laughs loudly as he stalks off and something unpleasant churns in his stomach.

Before school even starts, the rumor that quirkless Deku has rejected the transfer student is already running around, growing heads and becoming more than what it was supposed to be. He didn’t want this kind of attention for her. He’d been trying to spare her this exact thing!

Cringing, he hides his head in his arms and wishes the world would go away.

You were not going to be an asshole and physically demand an answer for him.

You were not going to cry because you weren’t going to give them the satisfaction.
You went home, changed out of your uniform and went looking for trouble.

(you didn’t find it)

Midoriya timidly tried to talk to you again. He was… persistent.

(it hurt)

Finally, one afternoon in the empty hallway, you stopped after he called your name. You didn’t face him as he asked if things could just go back to the way they were.

(before you tried to give him your heart)

“Things can’t,” you said to the floor. Your hands gripped the straps of your backpack. “It would be too much and not enough, you know?”

(he did know and he’s selfish for asking and he’s stupid for not trying

but just when he resolves to try properly, to ask her to be his girlfriend so that they’ll stop hurting like this—

she doesn’t come back to school and he learns from his teacher that she transferred out and when he goes to her apartment a neighbor tells him the family that lived there moved out without a word

and it’s then that he realizes with dread that he let something important go without fighting for it and it’s too late now but he swears he won’t make that mistake again if he’s ever lucky a second time to have someone want him)

Impressively, your father doesn’t bat an eye when you request a move and a new school. He doesn’t complain about how expensive it might be, just ups and looks into it and before anyone at school grows any wiser, you’re gone like the wind.

The new apartment is another small place and the lone bedroom is yours. You attend school and eventually all that’s left of your first crush is faint twinge of hurt (but you don’t poke at it or wonder ‘what if’ because that only makes it hurt worse).

Before graduation, you only use your badge two more times and neither incident is anywhere near the nightmare of Gyōten Mall.

You decided to try for several high schools and you apply for the General Education Department at U.A. too because if you got in and graduated then maybe it would be easier to get into the university of your choice. The other three schools you apply to are public schools that aren’t outrageously far from your current apartment. With careful planning, you make it to all entrance exams including U.A.’s.

One question on the General Education Department entrance exam is an essay question. ‘What are your goals for the future?’
That’s easy.

You’ve known what you’ve wanted to be since you found that picture of mother in her uniform.

*his daughter wants to be a nurse

her mother was a nurse, at least before some prejudiced bastards chased her out of the medical world shortly after he met her

she has a quirk, she’ll be fine

he just has to help get her there and then he can give up, when she’s out of school and into a career and can support herself

he can give up and go look for his wife then, but not before

not before

A month later, the results come in from all the schools. You failed one exam but had a choice to pick from three different options.

You pick U.A.

On the first day, you arrive an hour early, wearing your new uniform with your backpack on and your restocked first aid bag at your side. You visit the front desk and ask about your first aid bag and you’re sent to the principal’s office to ask about it. Principal Nezu talks for a rather long time while examining its contents before finally giving you permission to carry it around with you on school property because of your badge.

“After all, you never know when you’ll need a bandage, especially in a heroics institution!”

You’re nearly late to homeroom because the principal kept you so long and you also got lost trying to find your classroom until Midnight cheerfully pointed you in the right direction. When you speed walk into the classroom just before the teacher shuts the door, you get a lot of stares. The only desk left open is the second-last desk in the middle-left row, so you quickly sit down.

When your homeroom teacher takes your class to the opening ceremonies, Class 1-A is missing and you wonder why.

The General Education Department of U.A. focuses on a normal high school education with the bare emphasis on heroics and even that is limited to laws regarding heroism, villainy and vigilantism. You don’t mind, but a fair few of your classmates have heroic aspirations and dream of advancing to the Heroes Department.

You make friends with a few of your fellow classmates in 1-C. Outside of materials for class, you study human biology and the way the body works. If you’re going to be a nurse then you need to be
able to explain things to your patients, especially if you’re going to modify or otherwise touch their insides. As a result, you often bring a medical textbook with you that you’ve borrowed from a public library and read it whenever you get the chance.

Your new friends, curious, ask you why you’re reading such a boring textbook when it wasn’t required reading. This led to the revelation that your goal was to become a nurse. Your friends politely lauded your goal and you accepted their words with a grin.

During the lunchroom scare when the alarms went off, you were caught up in the rush and ended up pressed between your classmates, including the purple-haired boy you hadn’t talked to before.

“This isn’t the time to panic,” he muttered, barely audible amid the yelling and shouting. He was behind you and crushed against the right side of your back. He caught your eye when you turned to look at him and glanced away, grumbling, “Sorry. It’s not my preference to be pressed in like this.”

“Nor mine,” you replied. The crowded shoved forward, pushing the two of you along. “You’d think that at least those in the Heroes Department would be a little more calm.”

He huffed slightly, sounding both amused and annoyed. “Yeah, good point.”

Finally, though, the crowd calmed when some weird guy crashed into the wall over the exit and yelled for everyone to calm down as it was just the press. Thankfully, you managed to escape the press of bodies and when you exited into the hall among the others, you sidled up to your nameless classmate and introduced yourself.

He spared you a bored glance. “Hitoshi Shinso.”

While heading out after school one day, one of your classmates, Rei Anezaki, tripped and fell down the stairs with a startled gasp, landing hard on the landing below.

*thudcrack*

You winced at the sound of her body and head hitting the landing. She had been in some distance in front of you and one of your friends, Chisa Yamamoto, so you didn’t actually see Rei land. Concerned, you both rushed forward and saw Rei below, sprawled out and silent as a puddle of blood slowly grew around her head.

Someone rushed up from behind and for a moment, you hoped it was a teacher, but it was only Shinso. He stared down grimly and ordered, “Go get Recovery Girl!”

Chisa ran off and Hitoshi looked over at you. “I hope that bag isn’t just for show.”

Snapping out of your shock, you frowned and descended the stairs, careful to hold onto the railing. Hitoshi followed you down and you both crouched down near Rei. Reaching out, you felt for her pulse.

Hitoshi spoke before you could do anything. He was pale as he realized, “She’s not breathing.”

You hesitated only for a moment before deciding to use your quirk anyway because you were not losing a classmate like this. Activating your quirk, you forced Rei’s body to function again, to inhale oxygen and for her heart to pump and blood to flow. Shinso startled next to you but didn’t say
anything. He just watched as you healed up Rei, fixing the blow to her head that killed her.

Long before Recovery Girl even arrived with help, Rei’s eyes fluttered open and the first thing she saw was you.

“Nurse?”

(he knew their classmate was dead before nurse-girl got to her, so nurse-girl must have used her quirk, but what kind of quirk did she have to bring someone back from the dead?

he brushed her off too easily, he can admit that much

seeing what she did, he could see the value in knowing her, or at least in tolerating her long enough to get some answers

so he didn’t say anything about Anezaki being dead and then brought back to life)

You left Rei in Recovery Girl’s capable hands and left the building.

Problem was followed you.

“Hey.”

You looked back at him. “What?”

He stared at you for a long, uncomfortable moment before asking, “What’s your quirk?”

“Flesh Manipulation”, you replied. Since fair was fair, you asked, “Yours?”

He hesitated. “…’Brainwash’.”

You both stared at each other. “…Okay? Was that all?”

Frowning slightly, he dug his hands into his pockets. “Your quirk is more than you’ve said it is. I doubt ‘Flesh Manipulation’ could have saved Anezaki’s life like you did.”

Decidedly uncomfortable, you glanced around the mostly empty sidewalk. “Can we not do this here?”

“Then when?”

You flexed your fingers around the first aid strap you were anxiously clutching. “I can answer some questions tomorrow during lunch if we bring bento and find a secluded place.”

“Fine,” Shinso said, walking forward. As he passed you, he reaffirmed, “Tomorrow at lunch.”

You waited until he was out of sight before you continued on your way home.

The next day at lunch, you let Shinso lead you out of the classroom and to a place he finally deemed acceptable. Sitting down on the low wall near him, you both opened your lunches and began eating. After a few minutes, he prompted, “So?”
You sighed softly and muttered, “I was registered quirkless at first because I didn’t show signs of having a quirk despite not having an extra toe joint. Eventually I learned that my quirk was healing. I don’t really come across the injured that often, but when I do I cheat and use my quirk to help out.” You shrugged. “That’s basically it.”

He frowned, but then again, he hadn’t shown himself to ever be a happy camper. “That’s not really what I wanted to know. Tell me more about your quirk itself.”

You obliged after another mouthful of food. “My quirk is healing, though dad registered it as ‘Flesh Manipulation’. He told me to keep it a secret because healing quirks are rare and that rare things are stolen or eliminated.” You met his eyes and held them. “So don’t tell anyone, okay?”

“I won’t,” he promised grudgingly. “Tell me what you did to Anezaki.”

You huffed. “Nosy, aren’t you? If you’re going to ask me a bunch of questions then I get to do the same. It’s only fair;” you said in reply to his glare. You hummed. “Oh, I know. What’s your favorite animal?”

He stared at you as though asking you what was wrong with you. After a long moment of silence, he sighed and reluctantly answered, “Cats. Now, tell me what you did.”

And so it went.

With Shinso pestering you on a daily basis with endless questions of what you could do, you both slowly learned that you could do a lot. However, you were restricted by your own limited imagination, so Shinso served to push you past your boundaries. With him you learned that you weren’t limited to just the human body. You could affect plants and animals.

When you both learned of the animal thing, he dragged you to a cat café and ordered you to make sure all the cats were healthy. When this was done, he dragged you to two more, plus an alleyway where stray cats hung out. Besides getting to be openly amused at the usually stoic boy fussing over a bunch of cats, you also made him treat you to ramen.

“You’re not so bad, Shinso,” you told him over a steaming bowl.

“Thanks,” he said dryly, hiding his face and regretting his loss of composure.

You giggled. “I won’t tell a soul. I promise.”

Shinso and you were hanging out at a park to test more of your quirk’s abilities. You touched a sapling tree and turned it into a sphere of mush that you picked up.

Eying it, Shinso asked from the tree he was leaning against, “What can you do with it?”

Staring down at it, you hummed. “Well, I could turn it back into a tree. This stuff is useable, so I might be able to use it like a paste?”

He blinked slowly. “What kind of paste?”

You shrugged. “This is all new to me, but the feeling I get… I think I could use this to help heal someone or an animal.”
He pushed off from the tree. “Like the skinny cats you didn’t want to heal too much?”

You turned your head towards him. “I think so?”

With no bag to carry it in, you slid the biological mass under your shirt and let it spread out against your skin. When it was done, you did a turn for Shinso. “Does it show?”

He shook his head. “If I didn’t already know it was there, I wouldn’t be able to tell.”

Arriving at the cat alleyway with food to make it easier for cats to come to you two, you reached out to a skinny cat and used your quirk. When you used your quirk on the cat, some of the biological material seemed to disappear into you and then exit through the hand touching the cat. Said cat paused and wriggled as its muscles grew and fat formed, plumping it out from a painfully skinny thing to a lithe beauty as you also fixed its ratty fur and slightly milky eyes.

Then it went back to eating.

You and Shinso stared at it and then at each other. You were both speechless.

Shinso finally pulled himself together and grinned.

“Think you could do that to me?”

(The said no and cited laws and parental approval, so he researched and found facts to stamp out her complaints and he dragged her home to meet his parents and get their permission and they gave it after he showed them what she could do to a cat

they also wrangled health tune ups from her, but whatever, she didn’t really object

and she was excited later when she had her hands on him and he guided her through the improvements he wanted, though she had to stop fairly quickly because ‘he didn’t have enough material’ so they went to the park to use helpless tree saplings

and maybe they should have realized that people would notice an overnight change in his physique)

The class noticed the sudden change in Shinso’s physique, but when he rebuffed them, only your friends came up to you to ask what was up because of course they had also noticed the interactions between you two. After some prodding, you gave in and told them what happened. Shinso found himself beleaguered for the same information and legal forms he used and then you were dragged home to meet the parents of your friends, most of whom also gave their permission, though only after much begging from their child.

Out of your five friends (excluding Shinso), you were given permission to modify four. The fifth’s parents finally gave their permission when the others went to their home and showed them it was perfectly safe. Shinso was miffed, but ultimately dragged into the group, though he asserted himself as the leader with you second-in-command.

Weakly, you asked, “What is happening here?”

Chisa grinned and pumped her fist. “This is the advancement group. We’re going to push forward until we’re in the Heroes Department!”
Shinso nodded in agreement.

Deadpan, you said, “Good luck with that.”

Chisa grinned and patted your shoulder. “Don’t worry. You don’t have to switch departments with us. We just don’t want to exclude you after what you’ve done for us.”

“Actually,” Shinso started, only to stop when Chisa sent him a cold smile and said, “We wouldn’t dream of forcing you out of the department you’re happy in, no matter how much we wish you’d come with us. Right?”

He grumbled and glanced away. “Fine.”

“So, for the upcoming Sports Festival,” Chisa said to the group. “First off, we need to get used to the new limits of our modified selves.”

You listened to them plotting with only partial attention as you opened the medical textbook you brought and read up on the muscle structures of the base human and wondered how a mutant would differ.

Class 1-A suffered a villain attack at the USJ.

Shinso sat at his desk, listening to his gossiping classmates, of which you were one. When class was letting out for the day, he left. Later, he told you and the group that he gave class 1-A a declaration of war.

You gave him a deadpan stare.

Chisa and Juri complained he should have taken the group with him while Kaze and Mizumachi nodded in agreement. Shinso was entirely unrepentant.


(he had her make some new modifications to him, but she went and gave the same ones to the others and while the irked he didn’t make a big scene about it because he knew that if pushed she would choose them over him

no one ever picked him over someone else, so he had to tread carefully

still, he was annoyed with all the ‘team meetings’ leading up to the Sports Festival, though he would eventually be grateful for both them and her insistence on giving the same modifications to the others)


The Sports Festival arrived and the Heroes Department got the more detailed and energetic introduction.

“We’re just here to make the others look good,” someone complained.

“Hard to be motivated with such a lackluster introduction,” Chisa agreed.

She wasn’t alone, though you were too busy trying not to shake to really listen to them. Even if the attention wasn’t on your class, it was scary to be out here participating in the famous U.A. Sports
Festival. Shinso, noticing you shaking next to him, grasped your wrist.

“You’ll be fine,” he said before letting go.

“Thanks—“

(a group of seven kids from the General Education Department became the black horse in the obstacle course as they teemed up for the race, though one of them seemed to be dead weight they were willing to literally carry with them to victory

as the crowd watched, the group dubbed the ‘Seven GEDs’ by Present Mic forced the crowd to acknowledge them through speed and stamina alone

they didn’t finish in the top ten, but for a group outside the Heroes Department, they did well and finished in the top thirty)

When you finally snapped out of the fog you were in, it was to find that the first hurdle of the Sports Festival was already over. Chisa filled you in on what happened and you were simultaneously relieved and annoyed.

You smacked Shinso on the shoulder. “Just ask me next time, Shinso! Geez!”

(that was it? no hate, no sudden betrayal, just a slight reprimand and a slap on the wrist?
nurse-girl was as strange as ever
…it’s not… dislikable…)

Midoriya finished first and was worth ten million points. The ten million points wasn’t the most shocking thing though. No, it was this:

What was quirkless Midoriya doing here?

Angry at the sudden flaring of the feelings you thought you had already put behind you, you stuck close to your group as they quickly decided how to split up. Shinso called dibs on you, Chisa and Shin Kaze. The left the remaining three members of your group to find someone else to be part of their team and, ultimately, part of the horse as Yosuke Mizumachi appointed himself leader and rider.

“You’re going to be the rider,” Shinso informed you. He met your gaze with a side-glance. “Don’t be afraid to knock people out as they go past. Most of us have our forearms exposed. You’ll have plenty of skin contact to work with. The main thing is not to fall. Just be ready to grab headbands when I use my quirk near the end.”

Grimly, you nodded as you removed your shoes and socks. You tied the headband on and let Shinso help you up as the rider for your group.

“Let’s do this,” he murmured from below.
You nodded, stomach roiling with nerves.

“We got this,” Chisa cheered.

Kaze grinned. “Those kids from the Heroes Department won’t know what hit them.”

(the Seven GEDs had split into two groups, and of the two, the group with the rider who had been dead weight during the obstacle course was doing something to the other Calvary participants whenever they passed, but only Present Mic’s loud observation put anyone wise to that fact what was happening was that anyone the rider touched would soon pass out, either nearly or completely falling from their horse or having the horse break apart again by Present Mic’s loud announcing, the Seven GEDs seemed to have a silent agreement and so far avoided trying to take points from each other and indeed they were sticking relatively close and working together the rider was announced as (Name) (Last Name) and dubbed Seventh GED and her fellow Seven GEDs members, Hitoshi Shinso, Chisa Yamamoto and Shin Kaze were dubbed First, Second and Third GEDs as he had seemed to be in charge during the obstacle course followed by the other two the Seventh took down Hagakure and took her points in passing, and destabilized Teams Kendo and Tetsutestu while outright taking out Team Mineta by making the lone horse pass out while the other General Studies team took the points from Teams Mineta and Kendo when Team Monoma neared in both curiosity and with intention of taking Team (Last Name)’s points, the point of his horse, including himself, froze and let Seventh GED take their points before both fell to the ground, their horse broken and their rider sleeping)

“It’s the last stretch,” Shinso muttered warily.

The other Seven GEDs team, Team Mizumachi, came closer. Mizumachi’s horse consisted of Juri Ikari at the front, Mimi Koizumi on his right, and some Heroes Department boy on his left. You stood far enough apart not to be able to grab for each other’s headbands and stared at the battling Teams of Midoriya, Bakugo and Todoroki.

“We’re not all getting in to the next round,” Chisa said grimly. “As long as no one takes their points, Team Mizumachi will advance, but…”

“I’d like to get back at that electric boy for shocking us,” Mimi said.

Shinso frowned and you grimaced at the reminder. That… hadn’t been fun.

“Personally I’d like to take down explosion boy a notch,” Kaze said, making you cringe for another reason.

“We have to take a risk,” Shinso said. “Otherwise we won’t have enough points to advance. We’re going!”

You yelped as your horse burst forwards towards the chaos of the Heroes Department teams duking it out.
“We have forty seconds! It’s do or die time!”

Chisa laughed. “Think fast!”

(the crowd watched as the Seven GEDs plus one ran forward into the fray and Present Mic gleefully announced their arrival, momentarily distracting the other three teams as they glanced over at the Seven GEDs teams)

in that moment of distraction, Iida burst forward with barely a warning, dragging his team and speeding past Team Midoriya while stealing their points before coming face to face with Team (Last Name)

the Seventh missed the headband in Todoroki’s hand and her horse kept going, but for some reason Midoriya seemed to freeze at the sight of her and let her team pass to face Team Bakugo)

“Quirkless lover reject!”

You flinched at his words, angry and hurt, and in that moment of weakness, Bakugo’s horse raced past as he himself grabbed at the headbands around your neck, stealing two.

“NO!” Shinso turned the horse around and charged after them. “(Last Name)! Pull yourself together!”

Team Mizumachi had lost a headband to Team Todoroki and had raced past Team Midoriya to face Team Bakugo while Team Midoriya launched themselves at Team Todoroki.

“Jump forward on three,” Shinso commanded, referring to the three horse’s members’ legs.

Chisa yelled, “You’re crazy! We haven’t practiced that!”

“THREE!”

You screamed, yanking two headbands off Team Bakugo as they were focused on Team Mizumachi and not the team that had been coming up behind them.

“THREE!”

You shrieked again as your horse leapt forward a second time, coming up behind Team Midoriya who was now in close range of Team Todoroki. The riders were reaching out to each other for combat.

“THREE!”

Your heart leapt into your throat as your horse covered the last distance just as Team Midoriya was rushing past Team Todoroki with a headband in hand. Todoroki was suffering a shock of some kind and was frozen in place and his eyes widened as he saw your team leaping at him.

The jump took you right past him as your arm reached out and yanked a headband from his head.

[“Another upset from the General Studies students! Fourteen seconds remain!”]

“THREE!”
Your team took a sharp turn and leapt out of reach of both Teams Todoroki and Team Midoriya before coming to a stop to warily eye them.

“Come to your senses, Todoroki! That GED team just stole the ten million points!”

What?

You flinched as both Teams turned their collective eyes on you. From off to the side you heard Bakugo screaming profanities at Team Mizumachi.

[“Time’s almost up! Let’s count down. Hey, everybody say… 10!”]


[”TIME’S UP!!”]

Team Todoroki stuttered to a halt, your arms up in defense as Todoroki’s reached out towards you. Team Midoriya also stopped moving. A thud over to the side revealed Bakugo on the ground halfway towards Team Mizumachi.

Your team felt your legs shaking.

[“Let’s see who the top four teams are right now! In first place, an upset unlike any other, Team (Last Name)! In second, Team Todoroki! In third, Team Bakugo! And in fourth, Team Mizumachi! It’s the Hero Course versus the General Studies! These four teams will proceed to the final event!”]

You were still shaking as your horse helped you down to the ground and Chisa had to help you keep on your feet. You swore, “Never again.”

Chisa laughed as Present Mic announced a one-hour lunch break. “Yeah, I guess a nurse doesn’t really need to do all this dangerous confrontation stuff, huh?”

Shinso rubbed the back of his neck. “We did well. Good on the two of you for not falling out of formation.”

Kaze grumbled as you all headed off for lunch. “I for one can’t believe your mad scheme worked.”

“(Last Name)! Wait!”

You all turned to see a teary-eyed Midoriya run up. He paused and tried to blink back his tears. “I-I didn’t know you came to U.A. too. Um… great job back there. You really… you really showed me, huh?”

You stared at his brave but sorrowful face and sighed, glancing away. “I didn’t do this to get back at you or anything, Midoriya. My team just had better luck than yours.”

“Luck nothing,” Chisa cut in. “We were good! And whatever’s coming up next, we’re gonna do just as good there! Right?!?”

“Sure, sure,” Kaze soothed, patting her back. “Come on, let’s go get lunch.”

Shinso didn’t say anything but didn’t move until you did. You called back at Midoriya, “Goodbye.”
(his classmate asked who that General Education Department girl was and he said he knew her from middle school, at least for the short while she was there

he didn’t mention that he might have chased her away by rejecting her feelings)

“Fucking blond bomb really got the side of my face,” Mizumachi complained, catching you before you could enter the lunchroom. He pointed and pouted, “Do you mind?”

Reaching out you touched the bottom of his chin and soon his burns were healed. He grinned.
“Thanks, (Last Name).”

You all went inside and sat together to eat lunch.

Of course, Chisa would pick the absolute worst time to ask what happened back there with Bakugo.

“What did explosion boy mean by ‘quirkless lover reject’? Jerk made it sound like some kind of slur.”

Your mood plummeted and you growled wordlessly at your tray. The group kept eating as they waited for your answer.

“I went to middle school with him and Midoriya for a short while,” you started. After a long moment, you decided to leave out the fact that Midoriya was quirkless then. “I… I confessed my feelings to an unpopular, quirkless boy that Bakugo knew. I…” You kept your eyes glued to the table. “I got rejected. A short while after that I transferred to a different school.”

“Sucks to be that idiot,” Chisa declared. “He has no idea what he let slip through his fingers.”

You thought of Midoriya’s face just a short while ago. You murmured, “I think he has a clue now.”

(the Seven GEDs did not exhibit the physical abilities they did today back in the entrance exam so how could they have possibly improved so much in such a short amount of time? the principal speculated over lunch with a couple of the teachers and Recovery Girl but they did not have an answer

for sure, though, Present Mic was right—these kids were unexpected dark horses)

The final event was revealed to be a tournament styled series of one-on-one matches. Before the drawing could begin for the spots, you raised your hand and withdrew.

“(Last Name),” Mimi pleaded. “This is your chance for pros to notice you!”

“This is the General Department’s chance to show the Heroes Department what they’ve overlooked,” Kaze pointed out.

“You should at least try,” Chisa suggested.

“I’m going to be a nurse, not a hero,” you explained, trying not to visibly wobble with all the attention on you. “I don’t want to fight.”
"What a strange turn of events," Present Mic commented.

The mild voice of Aizawa asked, "What will the coordinator, Midnight, decide?"

Midnight smiled down at you from her perch. "Some people would argue that nurses are heroes too, but if this is your final decision..." She cracked her whip when you nodded. "I’ll allow it! (Last Name) has officially withdrawn!"

(he cried tears of joy when his teammates allowed him to take the open spot left by (Last Name)’s withdrawal, though he had to promise to someday advertise Mei’s inventions before the Support girl would back down)

a part of him wondered if this was (Last Name)’s affections again, if she had planned this

he doubted it, but a part of him still wondered)

The line-up was shown on a massive screen.

Sero versus Ikari
Bakugo versus Shinso
Midoriya versus Koizumi
Ashido versus Kaminari
Kirishima versus Mizumachi
Yaoyorozu versus Kaze
Aoyama versus Yamamoto
Iida versus Todoroki

You reached out and clasped your hands around Shinso’s wrist. “Don’t do it now.”

He huffed. “Wasn’t going to.”

(he watched as his almost-girlfriend ran around with a few other General Studies students playing games before the start of the final event)

he bit his lip and wondered how different things would be if he had just said yes like he’d wanted to instead of saying no like he thought would be best for her

even if they were in different departments they were still in the same school, so maybe in the next three years he could fix things so they could be friends again

…maybe he would even gather up his courage and tell her ‘I was wrong, please give me another chance’

Sero from the Heroes Department defeated Juri by trapped her with tape and throwing her out of the ring. She was annoyed but not hurt as she stopped by Recovery Girl before coming over.

Shinso won, to your great delight, by making Bakugo walk out of the ring without a fight. The cheers from the General Education Department where you were sitting were loud. You grinned widely at him when he joined the group as he endured the encouragement of the rest of the department.

Midoriya defeated Mimi by pushing her out of the ring. She sulked after joining the group.

Ashido won despite Kaminari’s electrical attacks as he shorted himself out trying to keep her away.

Kirishima defeated Mizumachi despite your friend’s best attempts to beat the other’s defense. He saw Recovery Girl and surreptitiously asked you to heal what she left, which were pulped but bandaged fists. Shinso, who was sitting next to you, was annoyed you two held hands over his lap but didn’t say anything as it didn’t take long.

Yaoyorozu lost to Kaze as he didn’t give her time to use her ‘Creation’ quirk before he leapt over to knock her out. Again the cheers from your section were loud.

Aoyama, the blond boy from Mizumachi’s Calvary team, was defeated by the nimble and fast Chisa. More cheers were given and Present Mic loudly wondered if the General Education Department would make an upset at this year’s Sports Festival.

Iida lost to Todoroki who froze him in a giant iceberg and wow, you were so glad you didn’t risk racing him. Shinso had already gone down during the match to be ready to face Sero.

(tape-boy almost got him but with his new strength he was able to yank him off his feet, surprising him into yelling just after he shouted at him and then he was snared and it was all over

he won and maybe he basked in the cheers from his department

just a little)

Midoriya defeated Ashido.

Kirishima defeated Kaze and he too returned to you with damaged fists.

Todoroki defeated Yamamoto, though thankfully not with a giant iceberg.

Then came Shinso versus Midoriya.

(he wanted to make All Might proud but he lost

he managed to break free the first time and he really tried not to speak again but—

“did you know she was a quirkless lover reject? is that why she ran away from your school, because you wouldn’t stand by her?!”

he couldn’t not say anything, but it cost him the match because he couldn’t break free again
You had mixed feelings about Shinso winning. On one hand, Shinso was your (sort of) friend and classmate and you were glad for him to keep advancing. On the other hand, Midoriya was once your friend too, and him breaking your heart shouldn’t mean that you have to hold on to those negative feelings forever. Was it petty to be glad he lost? Maybe, but whatever.

You weren’t going to think too deeply about it and make it all complicated. Shinso didn’t break your heart so yeah, you were going to be glad for him.

After their fight, it was two members of Class 1-A fighting each other. Todoroki dominated the round and moved on to the final battle.

Suddenly nervous, you refrained from biting your nails by clasping your hands on your lap.

How could Shinso win against someone like that?

["At last, we’ve arrived!! The best of the best among U.A.’s first-years will be decided! It’s the final match… General Studies Shinso versus Hero Course Todoroki!!"]

Nearly the entirety of the General Education Department section bellowed.

"GO, SHINSO!!"

["START!!"]

(he’s ashamed of how easy it was for that General Studies student to rile him up

a couple mentions of his father—those damned comparisons—and then he was caught

and then he was out of bounds)

["And the winner of the final round is Hitoshi Shinso! Amazing! For the first time in over a decade, a General Education Department student has swept the final tournament! Listen to those elated cheers!”]

You yelled right along with everyone else.

["And that concludes our contest! The first-year winner of U.A.’s Sports Festival is… Hitoshi Shinso of Class C!!"]

(he fought Kirishima for third place and they put on a good show

he knows he should be glad that he at least earned a spot on the podium, but something felt wrong

like he’d missed a lot of important things)
You watched with something like pride as All Might put a gold medal around Shinso’s neck.

Your classmate won first place, that jerk Bakugo had his declaration to take first place thrown in his face, and there was a victorious mood among your other classmates.

Maybe you were doing something right after all.

Life is to be enjoyed, not endured

~Gordon B. Hinckley

Chapter End Notes

I need a break from The Greatest Healer so I wrote this. I couldn't make myself stop and break it up into different drabbles so I'm posting it here.

I JUST WANTED MIDORIYA/READER BUT NOOO. Now we have this and it looks like it might be Reader/Hitoshi if I write a second part. Or maybe Reader will get together with Midoriya.

Aahahah, this Reader and quirk have taken over my life. Send help.
Welp, here's to another story that has kidnapped me and won't let. [raises glass]

Also, Reader exists, so things aren't going according to canon.

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived; that is to have succeeded.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

After the Sports Festival there were two days off. Rumor had it that during that time, scouting reports for the Hero Course students would be waiting for them when they came back. There was a general sense of smugness and victory among the General Studies students and many who had never spoken to Shinso before went out of their way to congratulate him.

You giggled at his annoyed expression when he finally managed to escape yet another group of well-wishers. When he neared he seemed intent on giving you the bare interaction before heading home so you took the initiative.

“Congratulations, Shinso,” you grinned. “How about I pay your entry fee to Neko Neko House tomorrow?”

He came to a stop near you and didn’t say anything for a moment. Then he glanced over his shoulder. “Fine. Tomorrow at two.”

You waved goodbye and both went your separate ways.

(he felt slightly guilty about being short with nurse-girl earlier because she didn’t deserve that sort of attitude from anyone she modified, including him—especially him since he’s the one who put her up to it)

okay, tomorrow she gets to pay his entry fee, but then he’s going to buy her cake or ramen or whatever else she felt like eating and she’s not getting out of it either)

You were slightly surprised when, after leaving Neko Neko House, Shinso offered to buy you something to eat. Cocking your head to the side, you asked, “Really? You don’t need to.”

His hands were in his pockets as he stared blandly at you. “I want to.”

Grinning bemusedly, you accepted his offer. “All right, then…”

(at the afternoon staff meeting, they agree to move Shinso to the Hero Course and Aizawa got the
trade in return for a mildly troublesome student named Mineta

they then discussed the Seven GEDs and the sudden improvement of six of them and their willingness to include the seventh—their homeroom teacher, Cementoss, revealed that they became close only a short while before the Sports Festival and seemed to gravitate around Shinso and (Last Name) as the leaders and/or central figures

clicks of the Sports Festival were reviewed and pictures of before and after shots of the students were scrutinized until they came to the tentative conclusion that (Last Name), as the only one to retain her original physique and still be included in the group, might know more

she would be called in for a meeting with Nezu tomorrow while he had some last minute research done and hopefully she would be able to clear up a few things

A letter was waiting for you when you finally went home after spending the day out with Shinso (you could almost swear it was a date but he didn’t say it was and you weren’t going to assume again). Swallowing nervously, you read it three times to make sure you read it correctly.

You had a meeting scheduled with Principal Nezu tomorrow afternoon.

The rest of the day was an anxious hell as you imagined several different scenarios, some of which included expulsion or, worse, somehow getting your friends in trouble for the modifications you did to them. Needless to say, you weren’t looking forward to tomorrow.

(a letter from U.A. was waiting for him that evening when he got home and he felt a smile cross his face as he read it over three times to make sure he wasn’t seeing things

he was being transferred to Class 1-A in the Hero Course

he had to be honest, he thought it would take longer than this and the fact that it didn’t was most likely because of nurse-girl’s modifications

still—the Hero Course!)

Shaking in your shoes, you arrived fifteen minutes early for your meeting with Principal Nezu, your trusty first aid bag at your side as usual. As was your habit when nervous or scared, you gripped the sturdy strap repeatedly, waiting for the fateful moment to arrive.

The fact that you were meeting Principal Nezu at a boardroom instead of his office only heightened your apprehension. You had no idea what this was about and you were afraid you weren’t going to like it.

The door to the boardroom opened at the appointed hour and a scruffy man peered out, the ever-unapproachable-looking Aizawa of Class 1-A. His gaze rested on your for a moment before he spoke.

“Come in and take a seat.”

Swallowing nervously, you stood and stepped forward.
And tripped over your own feet.

*(she bolted up from the floor, wincing as she strode past him, and when Nezu asked if she was okay she said she was despite the obvious fact she was trying not to cry from the sudden fall and subsequent embarrassment that teenagers tended to blow out of proportion)*

*repressing a sigh, he closed the door behind her and took a seat, deceptively calm but always ready to leap into action and use his quirk if need be*

*the principal began with a series of observations and he doubted he was the only one to notice her increasing unease and guilt, though Nezu kept assuring her that she was not in trouble*

*she was an agreeable girl, giving answers despite some long pauses preceding them but as she went on, he wanted to sigh*

*this was looking troublesome)

You sweated under the eyes of Principal Nezu, Aizawa, Recovery Girl and your homeroom teacher, Cementoss. They appeared to have drawn some conclusions of their own from observations about your friends and they seemed to be leading up to something. You sat there like a condemned person on the executioner’s block waiting for the ax to fall.

“So, Miss [Last Name],” Nezu went on, “You may be interested to know that when we contacted them, the parents of Yamamoto, Kaze, Mizumachi, Shinso, Ikari, and Koizumi all said that you used your quirk on their children. They stated they had the Quirk Usage Permission forms as issued by the Japanese Hero Association. As you may know, these forms, once signed and submitted to the Quirk Usage offices, prevent legal action from being taken against the quirk user. Why would the parents of your classmates feel the need to do this?”

“I-It was at my request,” you stammered, hands clutching your knees behind the desk in front of you. “My friends, the ones you just listed, they wanted me to use my quirk on them. I refused the first one who asked because I heard something about medical professionals having to get similar forms before using their quirks on their patients in most cases, so… yes, I didn’t want to have legal action taken against me if… if something went wrong, I guess.”

“That is irregular for students in high school,” he observed. “But tell us, what is it you were going to do that you needed legal protection? Perhaps something to do with the improved physical abilities of the aforementioned students?”

You tried not to have a panic attack in front of your principal and the teachers. “W-well, it started with Shinso. Y-you see, he became interested after Rei fell down the stairs. Chisa and I were behind Rei and she fell. Shinso was behind us and we all went to check on Rei. Shinso sent Chisa for Recovery Girl and we went down to help Rei. Sh-she hurt her head and she was bleeding. It… it was bad.”

Nezu asked gently, “How bad?”

You stared down at the desk, clutching your knees painfully. Maybe you should have come clean the day Anezaki got hurt, but you hadn’t, so now you were stuck in this situation. You couldn’t lie to the principal and teachers (*you just knew they would see right through your lies because in your mind they were nearly omniscient, and while this way of thinking would change in time, it was not on this*)
day). You whispered.

“She was dead.”

You heard them startle and you didn’t have to look up at them to know they were paying closer attention.

“Please explain,” Nezu requested calmly, though his tone said you were going to have to answer that question whether you wanted to or not.

“She fell,” you explained. “When Shinso and I got down to her, she was bleeding from a head wound and she wasn’t breathing. I…” You lifted your head, tears in your eyes. “I didn’t want to lose one of my classmates like that so I used my quirk! I’m not sorry!”

“Your actions are understandable,” Recovery Girl soothed. “No one will punish you for saving the life of your classmate. Mind, I do wish you had informed me of the true severity of the situation when I arrived.”

“Ah, okay…”

They waited as you pulled yourself together. Cementoss passed you a box of tissues and patted you on the shoulder. After he shuffled back to his seat and you took a moment to wipe your eyes, you went on.

“I used my quirk on Rei. I… I basically forced her body to continue functioning. Her head wound killed her, so I fixed most of that. I knew that Recovery Girl was coming, so I…” You hung your head in shame. “So I didn’t completely heal the wound on her head. I left some superficial damage for Recovery Girl to find. Shinso witnessed the whole thing and became interested in my quirk.”

Taking another moment to collect your thoughts, you continued on, “I explained it to him as I knew it. I asked for his secrecy. He helped me push the boundaries of my quirk and we eventually learned that I could take living matter from something else and then… repurpose it on another living thing, to… make changes. We tried it out on a cat. I used a tree sapling to add body mass to a stringy cat. I made it healthy. Shinso requested a similar thing done to him, but I refused. That’s where the forms came in.”

(she went on to explain that the rest of her friends caught on and jumped on the bandwagon

he knew he wasn’t the only one to see in to the bigger picture, Nezu was too clever to miss it, and Cementoss was no slouch either

this girl… was a literal force multiplier

weak villain? a little added padding from her and suddenly it’s a strong villain

and to think that a bunch of first years capitalized on their new discovery, so caught up in their own cleverness that they didn’t think to inform any teacher from U.A. of the goldmine sitting in the General Education Department

well, at least this explained how a bunch of General Studies kids had the edge in this year’s Sports Festival

of course, from here on out, they were going to have to take her safety very seriously—the absolute
It seemed like years before they finally let you go when in reality it only lasted for almost an hour-and-a-half. You weren’t in trouble, though, so yay?

They called Vlad back because they had to rearrange the classes to accommodate (Last Name) in 1-A and when he demanded to know why they told him she needed to be kept from the hands of villains and to develop contacts with heroes, not to mention that while the others in the class would continue hero simulations, during those times, she would be assigned to Recovery Girl to learn the ins and outs of being a specialized nurse.

They had finally found a potential replacement for Recovery Girl and needed to encourage and guide her growth.

Not even Vlad could argue against that.

In the end, Koji Koda from 1-A was bumped over to 1-B and Kosei Tsuburaba, formerly of 1-B, was transferred over to the General Education Department.

Thus did two General Studies students ascend to the Hero Course.

It was raining on the day you finally returned to school. People on your train commute recognized you and greeted you. Startled by the sudden interest, you did your best to remain polite despite your discomfort. Growing up in a bad neighborhood made you wary of being noticeable, so you hoped the attention would die down soon.

Arriving at school, you were confused when Cementoss informed you of the unexpected change in your placement.

You blurted, “But I don’t want to be the Hero Course!”

“I tried to tell them that,” he said apologetically, “But they were rather insistent. It’s not a terrible thing, (Last Name). You’ll still be learning the same things as the General Education Department, but instead of participating in the hero exercises, you’ll be working with Recovery Girl.”

You tried to protest but he nudged you off back down the hall.

“I don’t even know where 1-A is!”

He was surprised to see nurse-girl arrive, though he shouldn’t have been since his new homeroom teacher just told the class about the change in the student list and had even said her name.

She looked upset and he felt annoyed despite reminding himself that she didn’t want to be a hero like he did.

Still, at least it wasn’t just him who had to deal with being a new face.
“Sorry I’m late,” you apologized to Aizawa. “I got lost.”

Glancing at your fellow students, you suppressed a grimace at the sight of Bakugo and Midoriya, and also hid a look of surprise when you saw Shinso sitting behind Midoriya. Looks like you weren’t the only one who got transferred, though at least Shinso was probably happy about it.

“Don’t make a habit of it,” Aizawa replied. “Take the free seat. Settle down,” he added to the rest of the class.

You took the open seat behind a boy with spiky red hair.

“A summary for our latecomer: today for Hero Informatics class you will be coming up with your hero alias. Behind me are the pro draft picks that came in following the Sports Festival.”

You saw that Todoroki got the most picks at over four-thousand. Bakugo got the next most picks at over fifteen-hundred, followed by picks for Iida, Kaminari, Yaoyorozu, Kirishima, Sero, Shinso and even one for you. Surprisingly, neither Aoyama or Midoriya got any picks.

The class must have already commented on it because Aizawa moved on, explaining that everyone would have a chance to work alongside pros. Midnight then burst into the room and took over, apparently in charge of helping the students pick a name. Aizawa warned the class to be careful in choosing their hero name.

“This is too sudden,” you mumbled, head in your hands.

“Here,” the boy in front of you said.

Peering through your fingers, you saw him holding the writing cards over his shoulder with a friendly grin. Taking them, you muttered, “Thanks.”

You passed the last card back to the student behind you and wondered what your life was.

(it was a little unexpected to suddenly have to choose a hero name, but he used his fifteen minutes to think of something, which was probably more than what nurse-girl did as she seemed to spend most of the allotted time to mutter darkly under her breath

his new classmates went up one at a time sharing their hero names and when it was his turn his showed them his card)

“Resolute Hero: Hitoshi.”

Midnight asked, “Your name? Are you sure?”

Shinso nodded. “Yeah. I want everyone who thought I couldn’t be a hero to know that I didn’t fall into the mold they tried to fit me in to. I’m not a villain and never will be.”

You were impressed, but that feeling quickly fled when Midnight called you up. You panicked,
“Sorry, I haven’t got anything.”

Shinso, headed back to his seat, mildly called over to you. “What about the First Aid Heroine: Nurse-Girl?”

Midnight beamed. “Like the Youthful Heroine: Recovery Girl? As I mentioned earlier with Kirishima, bearing the name of your personal hero comes with a lot of pressure.”

“Not to disparage her, but she’s not my personal hero,” you corrected. And it was true. You wanted to be a nurse because of your mother, not because of Recovery Girl. You scribbled on the card as you headed up to the front and then held it up for the class to see. “But I’ve got nothing else, so I’m going to go with Shinso’s suggestion.”

“It’s a fine name,” Midnight said, and with that you fled back to your seat.

Class continued and Midoriya surprised you when he went with ‘Deku’ as his hero name. Just remembering that awful middle school made your stomach boil with negative feelings, but he was clearly doing much better in U.A. and if he wanted to give a positive spin on a mocking name then good for him. It was nice to see him moving on.

Though that did remind you that he was a mystery because you knew he was quirkless just last year!

(after the class finished picking hero names—explosion boy still hadn’t decided on an acceptable one—they were given lists to choose an agency from and those who got picks were given personalized lists while the rest got a list of forty agencies to choose from, a choice they had to make by the weekend

she came over with her paper and instantly showed it to him, revealing Recovery Girl’s name

in return he showed her his list of fifteen agencies, though he didn’t know which one he was going to choose first

the stammering boy in front of him spoke to her and she was polite but he looked as though she wounded him, making him wonder how deep Midoriya’s guilt ran regarding their short time together in the same middle school

a few of the other students came over and introduced themselves and he decided that Ashido and Kaminari were too loud, though nurse-girl seemed amenable to making friends

he should be glad about that trait of hers, otherwise he might still be in General Studies

he’s not happy about sharing though, not so soon and not with these students)

At lunch that day, Chisa abducted both you and Shinso to sit at your usual table where she demanded details. Shinso said the bare minimum while you honestly told them you had no clue how you ended up in the Hero Course. Your friends were miffed at being left behind but resolved to keep striving for advancement.

After school, you finally mustered up the courage to ask Shinso something important.

“Can I have your phone number?”
He stared at you as though you had unexpectedly grown an extra head, and his continued staring made your face grow increasingly warm. After an age, he answered, “Sure.”

And that was how you got the first boy’s number you had ever had in your life.

(he tried to talk to her and while she was polite there was a definite distance she was keeping, and he could hardly blame her, of course, as he too would be awkward if someone rejected his confessed feelings)

his classmates had mixed feelings about her as well, though for a different reason as while they could understand someone replacing Mineta, they were having a harder time understanding why she would take Koda’s place, a thing he questioned as well because she made it clear she wasn’t happy with her transfer

when he, Uraraka and Iida asked about it, Aizawa told them that it was not anything Koda did, but rather an executive decision from higher up to cultivate someone who had the potential to be a hero-grade nurse

he remembered her actions as he brief stint as ‘First Aid’ and accepted his teacher’s words as did Iida though Uraraka was still skeptical)

You didn’t really have any ideas for a hero costume so you left it up to the appropriate department to design a costume for you, though you did request that they leave your hands uncovered as you needed skin contact to use your quirk. What you got was a nurse-themed costume that was predominately white and red, though non-stainable. There was a cap with a red cross on it, though a weird veil was attached to it too. It was, thankfully, not sexy, and you were glad because you did not need people cat-calling ‘hello nurse’ or something equally dumb. They still might, but at least this costume wouldn’t actively encourage it.

It was this costume you put on not long after the rest of the class left the school to head for their internship locations. Staring at yourself in the mirror, you had to admit that your costume made you look approachable. Suddenly happy to be wearing any kind of nurse’s uniform, you did a twirl in front of the mirror before heading down the hall to meet the hero you would be working under.

As Recovery Girl was usually stationed at U.A., that’s where you would be for most of the internship. She introduced herself Chiyo Shuzenji but told you to call her Recovery Girl. She showed you how the nurse’s office was set up and gave you an overview of her duties as the school nurse. Listening avidly, you decided that maybe this wouldn’t be so bad after all.

Of course, you had no plans to work at U.A. in the future.

(delstive lacking the motivation to become a hero, the girl was eager to learn about what it took to be a nurse, even a school nurse like she was)

after two days of covering the basics and learning more about her quirk, she decided to take her intern on a fieldwork trip to a local hospital where both she and a doctor would supervise the consented work of her quirk on a few patients

two patients into the internship and she began wondering if perhaps they had severely
The doctor that Recovery Girl was working with today took her aside to whisper about something. You sat on a chair down the hall out of earshot and wondered if you had done something wrong. So far they had asked you to look at a patient with a broken leg and patient with a hand-sized third-degree burn. After going through the legal explanations with each one (done mostly by Recovery Girl and the doctor), you had gotten the crucial skin contact and healed the specified wounds.

Maybe you went too far with each one by offering to eliminate the growing leukemia in the first one and offering to balance the cholesterol levels in the burn patient? Both patients accepted and overrode the doctor and Recovery Girl’s protests and were now being checked over by more of the medical staff. The patients had been happy when you declared them healed and nodded when you informed them that they might be unusually hungry later. Perhaps you did something wrong.

“Nurse-Girl?”

Startled from your thoughts, you looked up at the doctor. He smiled.

“Would you consider looking at another burn patient? This one is an adult and has extensive burns on their body. Of course, if you don’t feel up to it today, I will understand.”

You rubbed a finger under your bottom lip. “Well, it’s not like I haven’t seen one before. It’s fine. I will see them if you want me to.”

“Excellent,” he said. “This way, please.”

You followed along with Recovery Girl.

(it was one thing to suspect that she had modified her classmates but it was another thing entirely to witness her completely heal a badly burned woman, regardless of the fact that she had to use expired blood pacts the hospital was going to recycle, though that too was an impressive feat in itself after taking a look at the patient and explaining that the woman didn’t have enough spare biological material to heal her and after hearing the parameters of what was useable, the doctor offered the expired blood packs and Nurse-Girl opened them, getting skin contact with the expired blood and separated it into two globs, one useable and the other biological waste

in this manner, she healed the burned woman, and she when the bandages were undone, she was not the only one to stare in wonder at the completely regenerated skin

the woman was ecstatic for a moment before remembering something vitally important and she startled Nurse-Girl by grabbing her shoulders and tearfully begging for her to heal her baby

the doctor and she separated the patient from the student and said they would look into it

the girl informed the now worried mother and concerned doctor that the woman would likely experience hunger as a side effect of her quirk

hunger as a side effect for such a marvelous quirk was a miracle

although she quickly learned that that was only the side effect for the affected, not the user herself)
After healing the woman’s baby—she had to sign forms giving you permission to do so—and then seeing a bunch of other parents to see their babies, you had seen a total of three adult patients and eight babies and their parents. After healing the eighth, a little pre-mature thing with a weak heart, you stumbled after taking only a few steps away.

Recovery Girl was instantly at your side, staring up at you in concern. “Are you okay, dear?”

You tried to stifle a yawn to no avail. “I get sl-sl-sleepy…” You yawned widely behind your hand. “…Sorry. I get extremely sleepy if I use my quirk for too long.”

She asked, “You should have told me sooner. I would have put a cap on how many patients you saw.”

You hummed softly. “I don’t really know my limits yet. I’ll try to do better to keep you informed.”

“That would be best,” she said. She turned to the doctor who came over. “We’re done for the day, Doctor. I’m afraid my intern may have pushed herself a little too far today.”

After some goodbyes and imploring for you to return soon, you and Recovery Girl left the hospital. Before going home, you had to return to the school to change out of your costume, which you did. Then, concerned about your well-being, Recovery Girl got you a ride home and escorted you. Being so tired and struggling just to stay awake, you missed the pursed lips on her face as the car pulled up to your shabby apartment building.

You thanked her and tried to leave but she insisted on walking you all the way up to your apartment so that she didn’t have to worry about you being passed out in the stairwell. She got a look into the apartment, but it was dark, though at least neat, as you had finally learned how to keep house in your father’s absence.

She told you to eat something and left soon after, but as soon as she was gone you went to your room, flopped down on your bed and were out like a light until your alarm clock went off the next morning. Thankfully all that sleep did its job and you were ready for another day.

(as the class president and vice-president had insisted on it, he and nurse-girl had shared their phone numbers with the rest of the class though he had so far ignored all messages until they were legitimately school-related

so he had ignored the random location text from Midoriya and only later learned about their encounter with Hero-Killer Stain in Hosu

a hero, Native, was dead, while Iida was paralyzed and Midoriya was wounded

he questioned why he felt a quick flash of jealousy when he wondered if nurse-girl would worry about Midoriya and perhaps become closer to him because of it as the Florence Nightingale effect was a real thing, though he pushed that ridiculous thought aside)

Recovery Girl was grim when you arrived at her office after changing into your costume and Principal Nezu was present. She asked you to sit and you did, worried about the tense atmosphere. Your stomach fell as Nezu told you about an encounter two students had yesterday with Hero-Killer
Stain. Iida’s brother had been attacked by Stain and gone off to confront him, using the internship as an excuse to get to Hosu. Yesterday, a bunch of Nomu attacked the city and here you were told that Nomu were biologically engineered beings made to handle more than one quirk. They were defeated, but in the commotion, Iida slipped off and Midoriya, his train being stalled in the city, had gone in search of him. Midoriya found Iida in an alleyway with the hero Native and he tried to fight Stain. He sent his location out but no one responded until it was too late.

Outmatched by the villain, Midoriya had to watch Stain kill Native, though when he begged the villain to kill him instead of Iida, the villain ‘compromised’ by paralyzing Iida. Stain then monologue-d long enough for Gran Torino to come looking for his intern and managed to force the villain out into the street where a passing Endeavour joined the fight, though this allowed a flying Nomu to get away. Stain was eventually subdued and captured and was currently at a villain hospital before being imprisoned.

The main thing at the moment was Iida. The boy was currently paralyzed from the waist down and suffering nerve damage in his left arm. They wanted to know if that was something you could fix.

“Maybe,” you hedged. “Iida’s body is still alive so it theoretically should be within my reach.”

“Your quirk is improperly named,” Nezu mused thoughtfully. “Perhaps you should consider updating it.”

You grimaced. “Please don’t. Imagine if a villain found out it was more than actual flesh manipulation. I don’t want to get kidnapped.”

“Point taken,” Nezu replied. He clapped his paws together. “Well, I am going to get in contact with Iida’s family and ask if they are willing to have you use your quirk on their son. Of course, young Iida’s opinion will be taken into account, though the final decision will lie with his mother.”

“We’ll wait here until we hear back from Iida’s mother,” Recovery Girl said. “In the meantime, let’s go over the laws regarding quirk use for medical purposes.”

Less than two hours later, you, Recovery Girl and Nezu were headed to Hosu General Hospital to see Iida and his mother who was already there.

(shame, guilt and regret were things he was becoming intimately familiar with
he had sullied his brother’s name and forced Midoriya to watch a murder and beg for Iida’s life, all because of his own selfish rage and need for vengeance
he almost got his friend killed and nearly died himself
he couldn’t imagine how the news must have affected his brother and his mother was speaking about it
strangely, though, she told him that it might be possible to save his legs, to save his mobility, as Principal Nezu and Recovery Girl were on their way with someone who had an amazing healing quirk
for the first time, his heart lightened, but not because he might be healed, but because if it worked then that meant his brother could be healed as well and then it wouldn’t be the end of his brother’s hero career anymore)
when they arrived, however, he was surprised to see the female transfer student in a nurse-themed costume—what was she doing there?)

You waited off to the side as Nezu and Recovery explained things to Iida and his mother. You idly waved at a perplexed Midoriya who was sharing a room with Iida and had been given permission to hear whatever was said as his friend didn’t have the heart to exclude him ‘after all he had put Midoriya through’. Iida’s mother made the final decision and gave you permission to touch and heal her youngest son. Placing your hand on Iida’s, you focused on the information that you instantly knew. You explained to the room at large what Iida’s damage was and a moment later you declared, “Done.”

Iida startled, his legs jerking. His mother burst into tears as he moved his legs and sat up with wide eyes. You blinked as he suddenly turned to you with an intense gaze.

“Can you heal my brother too?”

You shrugged. “It depends on what Recovery Girl wants me to do for my internship.”

“I think we can work in a visit to your brother,” the hero commented. “In the meantime, how do you feel, Iida?”

The class president hung his head in shame. “I am… fine.” His head snapped up. “Please! Can you heal Midoriya too?”

“Well, we didn’t come all this way for nothing,” Recovery Girl said good-naturedly. “Let me take a look at him. His mother isn’t here to give Nurse-Girl permission to use her quirk.”

You watched as Recovery Kiss gently berated Midoriya before giving him a healing kiss. Midoriya met your gaze with watery eyes.

“Thank you for helping Iida,” he quavered. “… couldn’t do anything for him… so thank you.”


His eyes watered again with emotion. He nodded slowly, still doubting himself, just… maybe not as much as before.

(she thought both her sons would be paralyzed for life, their brilliant careers permanently cut short, but then like a miracle Nurse-Girl appeared and made them well

she cried as she embraced her sons who were also overcome with emotion and crying in Tensei’s hospital room

her sons were on their feet again and they all knew they would never be able to repay this debt, but still, they would try)

The rest of your internship was packed with visits to hospitals and most of the patients you saw were
children whose parents were eagerly grasping onto the sudden hope that was… well, you. It was almost scary, really, how desperate some parents could be, and it was definitely uncomfortable to bear the gratitude of the parents once your healing sessions were over.

You just wanted to be a nurse, but it seemed as though life had a different idea on what your future should be. On one hand, you were glad to learn about the legal ways to use your quirk, but on the other hand, you didn’t care for or like the attention you were getting. Maybe you could request a kind of mask that hid your face?

It was a relief to get back to regular classes, though the doctors at the three hospitals you had visited were insistent that you come again. Recovery Girl said she could work out a schedule for you if you wanted, but right now you just wanted to decompress so you put that off for now.

Walking into the classroom, you saw Shinso at his desk with his head in his arms. As Midoriya was off at Iida’s desk, you went over and stole his seat, resting your chin on your arms as you stared at Shinso’s head. After a long moment, he shifted to look at you.

“Hey,” you murmured. You were terrified of messing with someone’s brain so you had steadfastly refused to do anything about his insomnia as well as refusing to handle brains during your internship. You grinned slightly. “Good to see you.”

He mumbled slightly in acknowledgement before closing his eyes again and attempting to sleep. Having greeted him, you carefully stood up and went to your desk, leaving him to catch up on what sleep he could. You had to fend off Iida and then a bunch of questions from your classmates, so you were thankful was Aizawa arrived and everyone sat down.

The girls felt the need to compliment your costume afterwards.

“You look really cute,” Ashido said cheerily, changing out of her hero costume. “I like the veil. It adds an air of mystery to you!”

Yaoyorozu asked, “Did you design it yourself?”

You shook your head, also changing to your school uniform. “No. The only suggestion I had was ‘nurse-theme’ and this is what they gave me.”

“I like it,” Uraraka said. “You look like a nice nurse I wouldn’t mind approaching.”

“Thanks,” you said, buttoning your blouse. “I like your girls’ costumes too. They really suit you.”

You got a chorus of thanks. Glancing up, a black spot caught your eye as you pulled up your skirt. Quickly pulling it up the rest of the way, you pointed and asked, “Is that a hole?”
There was a brief moment of panic before the earphone jack-eared girl investigated it. “It’s dark, so it’s hard to tell. We should still cover it up, just in case. Momo?”

Yaoyorozu provided some material to plug up the hole and that was that.

(her former young intern didn’t know if she could replace missing organs, so she hadn’t brought it up yet with that reckless Toshinori as she didn’t want to give him false hope

still, it was something she would focus on for the next while whenever she got time with the young girl

if she could learn to grow organs like she did to repurpose old blood to make new skin then Recovery Girl would bet that Nurse-Girl would be one of—if not the—greatest healers in the world)

You just wanted to be a nurse and live a simple life.

So why did it feel like the weight of the world was slowly but surely settling on your shoulders?

**The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.**

~Mahatma Ghandi

Chapter End Notes

Ahahaha.

Yeah, more parts incoming. Eventually.

I’ll probably get back to The Greatest Healer next week but on a slower update schedule so that I don’t feel the need to run away from it again.
You were not looking forward to the final exam or the summer training camp to follow nor the summer school hell promised to those who failed the final exam. However, almost immediately, Aizawa announced the only exception would be you, as your summer training camp would be with Recovery Girl.

You tried not to light up. “So that means I don’t have to go out into the woods?”

“Youngster,” you said chirped happily, happier to not be sent away from civilization than you were disappointed to not be included with the rest of the class.

As one on the path to becoming a nurse, you were no stranger to studying, but the fact that the exam would include a practical was freaking you out. For goodness sake, you not only finished dead last, but you also got lost during the search and rescue race! The practical was going to be the hardest part about the final exam, you knew it.

“I’m going to fail,” you predicted darkly at lunch one day as you and Shinso ate lunch with your former classmates from 1-C.

Shinso then drily delivered the story of your search and rescue race despite your yelped order to stop. Your friends laughed at the mental image of you getting lost and then needing rescue yourself.

“You guys suck,” you grumbled as they laughed at your expense. You blinked as Juri and Mizumachi stood up and left. “Did I say something?”

Shinso’s eyes had narrowed slightly at the pair’s sudden departure. “Don’t dwell on it. It’s not your fault.”

Glancing around the table, no one disputed him so you shrugged your shoulders and pretended their departure didn’t hurt.
he tried to cheer her up with words but he wasn’t very good at such things so he doubted it worked.

why was it that the person who helped him rise to the Hero Course could make him feel so helpless?)

In between Shinso’s torturous exercise regimes, the two of you banded together to study like mad. According to the most recent class ranking, you were ranked sixth in academics while Shinso was ranked twelfth. The week before the exam, the rest of the class banded in other groups and while you were both invited, you and Shinso turned down Yaoyorozu’s offer to join her tutor group.

You weren’t sure about Shinso, but it wasn’t as though you deliberately weren’t trying to be part of the class, it was just… awkward for you. Transferring in middle school never seemed like a big deal to you, but here at U.A. you literally replaced someone and you couldn’t get over it enough to comfortably settle in with the rest of 1-A. Shinso was from General Studies like you, so you tended to stick with him the most. He wasn’t verbally adverse to it so things went on that way.

The written exam was tough, but you did fairly well as you gave it your all. The practical exam, however, was another story. Instead of fighting against robots, as was rumored, the principal and teachers decided to focus on battles against flesh-and-blood opponents. Students would be paired up to fight a pro-grade teacher. You did not envy Midoriya and Bakugo who had to face All Might.

Shinso was paired with Jiro and they were facing Present Mic. You were paired with Sero and you were facing Midnight. As this was a practical exam, you were permitted to use your quirk. On the way to your assigned field, you sat with Sero as far away from Midnight as you could get and plotted with him, though you did feel a little guilty at her pout. She did say that you shouldn’t use your quirk until you got to the assigned field though, so you had to wait before you could start on the modifications to Sero that he granted you permission to make ‘as long as it helps us pass’.

Arriving at the designated spot, Midnight told you both to face her as though she were an actual villain. She also said that running was an option, so the exam was testing your decision-making skills. She then sent you both off to the center of the area to wait for the starting signal. When it came, Midnight popped into sight way too close and your hand snapped to Sero’s wrist, sealing his nostrils closed with membranes while also forcing an adrenaline rush in his body. "WHOA!!"

He faltered while enacting his part of the plan, which was to slap tape over your mouth and nose so it ended up crooked. Still, crooked or not, you were effectively denied air. You flailed from both panic and surprise as Sero threw you over his shoulder and ran away from Midnight. "Ahahahaha! This is weird!"

After losing sight of Midnight and running a good distance, he set you down and breathed hard, still grinning widely as he clutched his heart. After ripping off the tape (ouch), you reached out and touched Sero’s skin, dissipating the adrenaline and returning his heartbeat to normal. "Wow,” he breathed. “What a rush.” He wriggled his nose. “This feels weird, too.”

You shrugged. “Her quirk works on scent, right? Maybe this way you won’t fall asleep.” “Might work,” he mused. He gave you a thumbs-up. “Our plan seems to be working so far.” He paused, seeming to notice something. “Hey, how come you don’t give yourself these membranes too?”
“Oh, my quirk doesn’t work on myself,” you explained, staring off on watch for Midnight. “I learned that ages ago.”

“You’re dressed like a nurse and you can heal people or modify them, but not yourself?” He grimaced. “That must suck.”

“Sometimes,” you said honestly. “When I get hurt, I have to heal slowly like most people. It’s frustrating when I know my quirk would literally make it better in seconds if it would just work on me.” You shook your head. “Anyway, yeah, that’s why I asked you to cover my nose and mouth with your tape. When it comes to avoiding breathing in things, I have to do something like that.”

“Let me get you a new strip of tape,” he offered, pulling off just that.

You both paused as Recovery Girl announced the first passing team of Todoroki and Yaoyorozu.

“That was quick,” Sero commented.

You groaned. “Aw man, they’re announcing these?”

(she wanted to split up and try for the exit, but he didn’t want to split up because she was nearly civilian-level weak and he would never abandon a teammate like that

he doubted Midnight would hurt her, but ditching her might hurt her more than she would let on and he just couldn’t bring himself to do that—sure, she seemingly unfairly replaced Koda, but he didn’t resent her for something she couldn’t control

they were a team and there was no ‘I’ in team

they were going to finish this together or not at all)

For the rest of the exam you were wracked with nerves, certain that Midnight was going to suddenly appear, knock you out and make you fail. Sero wouldn’t split up, and you were half-annoyed to have your plan discarded and half-glad he wasn’t letting you do the same dumb thing you shouted at characters in horror movies. Several more teams passed had before you both came across Midnight again, waiting near the exit. She asked what took you both so long but neither of you rose to her taunts. Instead, you firmly pressed tape against your nose and mouth and that was Sero’s cue to rush at Midnight. Her eyes widened as he neared and she realized he wasn’t going to succumb to her quirk. She may have paled slightly when she noticed the unnatural appearance of his mouth where you had modified him there as well. While she was dealing with your teammate, you ran around them and made for the exit.

Your heart was racing in your chest from both adrenaline and a lack of air. Any second now you were sure that Midnight was going to pounce on you and that would be the end of it. But no. Racing past the gate, you pulled off the tape and looked back, breathing hard. Sero was smiling after you while Midnight was smiling ruefully. You lifted your head as Recovery Girl announced that your team passed the exam. Sero released Midnight and jogged over to take your hand. You had sealed his nostrils and mouth shut, while also having made his blood more efficient so he wouldn’t starve of oxygen. You undid these modifications and when his mouth was back to normal he congratulated you and you returned the sentiment while smiling, glad that it had somehow managed to work out.

Still, you worried because you hadn’t heard Shinso pass yet and time was almost up.
(he never regretted getting the enhanced hearing as much as he did right now because what was he thinking getting enhanced hearing? he was paying for it now, that was for sure

his partner for the exam said time was almost up, so he forced himself to his feet and told her his last-ditch plan and while she didn’t like it, she didn’t have a better idea

so together they forced themselves close enough to Present Mic so that his voice could be heard and he bellowed out a catchphrase from one of Present Mic’s radio shows and the hero automatically replied, falling under his thrall

his partner, wincing because her eardrums were just as busted as his were, used her earlobes to snap the cuffs around Present Mic’s wrists as they closed the distance on staggering, unsteady feet, literally just managing to finish capturing him a second before the buzzer went off

their results were announced as just under the wire and he breathed hard, winced due to the pain in his ears, and hoped nurse-girl was nearby and in a willing mood)

Your classmates Kirishima, Sato, Kaminari and Ashido failed the final exam. Poor Shinso and Jiro’s eardrums had been destroyed in their bid to pass. Recovery Girl was upset about that, but they ended up okay in the end.

The day after the exam the four who failed who clearly feeling down so Midoriya and Sero tried to cheer them up, to no avail. Aizawa arrived and told them that everyone, excluding you, was going to the summer training camp. He explained the reasoning behind the exam and then concluded it was a rational deception, making many of the students yell. Iida mentioned something about being lied to twice and you decided you didn’t like ‘rational deceptions’. The cheering failures then had a wet blanket thrown over them in the form of special supplemental lessons being announced.

After class, some of the students started talking about needed supplies and decided to go shopping together. A lot of them were excited about the idea and agreed, though Shinso declined Kirishima’s invitation and you declined Kaminari’s invitation, citing that you weren’t going anyway so you didn’t need anything.

Midoriya timidly sidled over. “A-are you sure? You don’t have to b-buy anything for the trip, I understand, but maybe you need to buy something for h-home? You can still come sh-shopping with us…” He took a deep breath and met your eyes. “I’d like to… to spend time with you.”

Kaminari’s eyes widened. “Dude! Did you just confess to her?”

Midoriya immediately spluttered and started waving his hands in denial. Annoyed and somewhat hurt, you huffed and stood up from your seat. “I have to go now.”

Kaminari called an apology after you as you left. Striding down the hall, you wondered when you became the sort of person who ran away from her problems. Ever since you were a kid, you’ve had to take care of yourself. When something scared you, then you had to face it or the terror would consume you. The first aid badge in your pocket was something you aimed for because you wanted a purpose, something to fill your days. When you were bullied, you had to stand up for yourself. The first time you ran away from something without facing whatever it was… well, that was Midoriya’s rejection. You couldn’t take being in the same school with someone who broke you heart. The bullying you got from that was also an incentive, as you couldn’t just fight the whole school.
You didn’t know what to think. He had the right to reject you if he didn’t share your feelings but a
dark part of you was angry. You were ashamed of that anger and afraid that people would find out
about it and call you a hypocrite. And didn’t those ugly thoughts make you one? You didn’t want to
be a jerk, or petty or possessive. You didn’t want to be the very sort of person you despised.

Just because you were nice to a quirkless person didn’t mean they were obligated to be nice to you.

Just because you had feelings for a quirkless person didn’t mean they should jump for joy and
immediately agree to be yours.

People weren’t possessions.

Quirkless people weren’t obligated to bend to the will of those who threw them scraps of attention or
associated with them out of pity.

You began your association with him out of a combination of anger and pity. Your continued
association was an act of defiance in the faces of those would treat a quirkless person like less than
trash. Regardless of the fact that you soon saw more to him than just his surface and saw someone
worth having special feelings for, if he said no then that was his right and you shouldn’t hold it
against him.

So why were you barely giving him the time of day?

“I’m muddled up,” you muttered at your feet, gripping the straps of your backpack.

Okay. If you didn’t want to feel this way anymore then wasn’t your path clear?

You had to stop running away from Midoriya and face him, talk to him. Maybe then you could settle
your feelings and really move forward again without something holding you back.

Yeah.

You could do this.

(he was talking to Iida and Uraraka and still feeling awkward about (Last Name)’s sudden
departure so he almost didn’t check his phone when it buzzed but he did and he was glad because it
was a message from her, an unexpected invitation to finally talk so of course he was going to grab it
hastily bidding his friends goodbye, he hurried off to meet her, hoping that this was his chance to
clear things up with her, to apologize for his actions and try to explain his reasoning for the choice
he made

he didn’t notice Shinso’s eyes follow him out the door)

Midoriya arrived at the designated café and looked around for you. He found you at a seat with two
glassed of juice and came over, nervously sliding into the seat across from you.

“Midoriya,” you greeted neutrally.

He shifted awkwardly.

You picked up a glass of juice and sipped from it. Setting it down, you stared at it. “I think I’ve
treated you somewhat poorly since becoming classmates, and for that, I apologize.”

He was silent for a moment before speaking. “I think I can understand why you tried to keep your distance. I don’t blame you.” He reached out and idly turned the glass of juice you had ordered for him. “I… back then, in middle school… why did you confess for your feelings to me on Valentine’s Day?”

“It’s a holiday for romantic feelings,” you said, deliberately misunderstanding his question, but only for a moment. “But the real reason?” You paused before asking slowly. “Do you remember that time you came to my apartment?”

He nodded. “Yes…”

Staring at the glass of juice instead of his face, you spoke. “My dad is rarely home, so when something happens I usually have to deal with it myself.” You never get ill, but you weren’t going to tell him that as you didn’t want to tell him the real reason why you missed school. “The same thing applies when I get sick. I have to deal with it alone. So… well, before you came over, I already knew that you were a good person beyond your nervousness and timidity, and I was glad to know you. It wasn’t… romantic… until you came over and decided that you just had to stay and help me.”

You grinned slightly at the table, remembering the way he gently but firmly invited himself inside your lonely apartment and devoted his time and attention to cook food for you. “No one’s ever tried to take of me like that since before my mom died. You were so kind, Midoriya. I don’t think you meant to steal my heart back then, but you did. That’s why I confessed my feelings on Valentine’s Day. I just wanted you to know that you special to me.”

You lifted your head to give him a brave but wavering smile.

“You were my first love.”

(\textit{his heart was racing in his chest, the sincerity and simple honesty of her confession making him remember that long ago day when she held out a box of chocolates and her feelings to him}

\textit{he was nothing back then but there had still been something about him that made her love him? he had been enough as he was, quirkless, weak and all?}

\textit{his emotions welled up in his eyes as they so often did and he told her why he rejected her back then, but looking at it now he wondered how he could ever have thought that letting her go was a good thing}

\textit{he trailed off before asking another question he had always wanted an answer to but never had the courage to ask before:}

\textit{why him, the first day?})

You clasped your hands around the half-empty glass of juice. “My parents are quirkless. They have dealt with discrimination all their lives. My mom… my mom thought I was quirkless too and… she couldn’t… handle it, I guess.” Your grip tightened. “She took her own life but she needn’t have because it turned out I had a quirk, just not one I knew how to use until later, long after it was too late. My dad… hasn’t taken it well, even after all this time. I was barely at our middle school for half a day before I heard all about you. I couldn’t stand it, so I went looking for you right away.”
You looked up with a pinched face. “It was anger and pity that motivated me in the beginning, but please believe me when I say you soon gave me other, better reasons.” He was staring at the table. You added, hoping he would hear the truthfulness in your voice, “The more time I spent with you the more I thought that people were missing out by terrible to you. There was so much more to you than just being quirkless. Your friends at U.A. can see that, and I’m glad… and a little jealous… that I’m not the only one who can see it anymore.”

(he thought it might have been something like that because who ever reached a hand towards a quirkless person for purely altruistic reasons? and still, she saw more to him quickly, didn’t she?

it didn’t… it didn’t detract from her confession, not much anyway

she still fell in love with his quirkless self

and how did he really feel about her? did he truly have feelings for her, or was it just a remnant of his time as a quirkless person, as someone who would grab on to the first scrap of affection thrown their way, desperate for companionship and to not be left to live a life alone?

back then he rejected her in an attempt to protect her, but if he hadn’t been quirkless, would they have interacted at all? would either of them given each other a second look? probably not

did he truly like her or were his feelings just borne of desperation?)

“I don’t know what to think,” he finally murmured aloud, still staring at the table and probably unaware he had just spent the past few moments muttering loud enough for you to hear.

It stung to hear his inner monologue, to hear him questions if his feelings were just the aftereffects of his forced isolation.

“It’s a lot to process,” you agreed. You inhaled and slowly breathed out before giving him a soft smile. “How about we start over?”

He paused, gazing at you for a moment. After a while, he smiled slightly and nodded. “I’d like that.”

“Great,” you said. You greeted him, introduced yourself and followed up with your likes. “I dislike villains, thugs and people who bully quirkless people. My hobbies are keeping my first aid skills up to date and studying medicine. My dream for the future is to become a nurse, get married and have a family.”

He blushed. “My name is Izuku Midoriya. I like heroes and All Might most of all. I dislike bullies and villains. My hobbies are hero-watching and studying quirks.” His eyes lit up with a warm fire. “My dream for the future is to become a great hero.”

Your smile brightened. “It’s nice to meet you, Midoriya.”

He beamed back. “Likewise, (Last Name).”

You stared at each other for a moment before laughing.

This… wasn’t the worst outcome.

Yes.
This was enough, for now.

It's amazing how a little tomorrow can make up for a whole lot of yesterday.

~John Guare, Landscape of the Body

Chapter End Notes

Heh. These things are getting shorter...

My birthday is on the tenth. I hope I get that mattress I wanted. :D

I wouldn't mind stickers, either, but I forgot to mention that on my wish list to mom. Ah well.
"You were the one who taught me," he said. "I never looked at you without seeing the sweetness of the way the world goes together, or without sorrow for its spoiling. I became a hero to serve you, and all that is like you."

~Peter S. Beagle, The Last Unicorn

You still didn’t go shopping with the group and later, when you found out that Midoriya ran into a villain, you were glad you didn’t get caught up in that situation. In light of what happened, Aizawa announced that they were changing the location for the summer training camp. Of course, since you would be at U.A. with Recovery Girl, nothing changed for you.

Having cleared the air with Midoriya meant that you were no longer awkwardly finding excuses to run off or not to engage in conversation. Lowering your guard around him made it easier for you to talk to class president Iida and their friend Uraraka, though you weren’t particularly close to either of them. When Midoriya invited you to eat with them at lunch, you accepted, deciding to split your time between him and your other friends, completely oblivious to the resentment this would create in your friends from the General Education Department.

Shinso seemed a little distant, but you brushed it off because he still spoke to you. You went together to a park to discuss further modifications. No one had actually told you to stop modifying your fellow students, so Shinso planned to capitalize on that before someone shut you down and you weren’t adverse to it as he was still playing the role of expanding your imagination. Before he left for the summer training camp, you made his legs stronger and more capable of jumping longer and higher. At his insistence, you also made his skin more resilient against piercing and, hypothetically, burning. Rather than making him bulky, you both worked out a way to make his current muscles—also a modification—stronger. All of this was explained to his parents beforehand and done with their permission and the correct legal forms.

The first day of your personal summer training camp was spent at a hospital where Recovery Girl and the doctor oversaw the treatment of several patients with various disfiguring scars. You used the biological material provided by the hospital—tree saplings—to smooth out the patients’ skin. Over the course of the day you became more proficient in doing so and ended the day feeling accomplished. You were, of course, out like a light the minute you got home and thus slept through one of your father’s rare visits home.

The next day Recovery Girl and a different doctor oversaw you carefully treating several babies who suffered from premature birth complications and/or allergies to milk. While there were a few other things you had to treat in the premature babies, one thing common between all of them was a need to increase their weight. More tree saplings were sacrificed for the health of these babies and after every treatment, another doctor and nurse would swoop in to begin checking over the infant you just finished treating. So far, the babies were in perfect health and no drawbacks besides a temporary increase in hunger in your patients had been observed so far. After that, you slept through the entire night like a rock.

Thankfully the next day was a less stressful day where you treated adults with serious illnesses rather than tiny, helpless babies whose very lives were literally in your hands. Converting sicknesses into healthy components of a patient’s body was much less stress-inducing, thank you very much.
On the fourth day, however, Recovery Girl spent a morning with you discussing organs, and if you felt up to experimenting in whether or not you could create them out of biological material. You could see the value in such a skill, as sometimes there just weren’t enough organs to go around, and besides which someday you might be in a disaster area where someone would need a vital organ replaced. You agreed to try and she started you on researching lungs and stomachs, claiming they would be easiest to start with.

Later that afternoon, she took you to a faraway hospital to see a specific patient. Walking into the private room, the first thing you noticed were the tree saplings. Okay, this patient would need some biological material applied to them. So where—

Your thoughts derailed and crashed into a fiery blaze as you rudely stared at the lone patient in the room for all of three seconds before mentally slapping yourself back to your senses.

The blond man was introduced to you as Toshinori Yagi. You were given a summary of his injuries and current state of health, to which you nodded as you processed the information. Yes, all that would explain the need for all these tree saplings. The start of your summer training experience was apparently practice leading up to this, for which you were glad. You were also glad for the practice you got when modifying your friends, a processes that took days as you had only done one a day and even then not all at once.

You wanted to be a nurse to help take care of patients like this man, but perhaps if you focused on honing your skills and becoming a hero-grade nurse then maybe you could help your future patients even more.

Nodding when your hero name was said, the thin man smiled (don’t cringe) at you and said he was in your care. The forms were signed after the usual explanations and the doctor, one of Yagi’s personal doctors, apparently, brought over a cart with the first tree sapling on it. Yagi and the doctor watched in fascination as you touched it and slowly transformed it into a shapeless glob.

“May I have your hand, Yagi?” you asked, completely oblivious to the fact that it almost sounded like a marriage proposal.

Stifling a cough, the patient reached out and placed his hand on yours.

You ‘looked’ and nearly cried.

It was one thing to be told he was missing his stomach and a lung, to be told that he was skinny because of this, to be told that his left side gave him constant pain, and another thing entirely to see it. A lonely lung struggled to provide the body with oxygen, the intestines labored to extract nutrients from what little food the body could eat, and nerve endings all along his left side were on fire with pain. You can’t describe it, nor could you actually feel it, but this man’s burden and struggles were heartbreaking.

(after seeing mom in her nurses’ uniform, you started seeing the sick and the frail and the struggling when before your eyes had merely slid over them, and you wondered if they had been to see a nurse or doctor and if those medical professionals had been of help

you wanted to help but you were just a kid and helping people was years away and you didn’t like yourself yet besides, so when you saw a man with a badge helping people you found the starting point to where you wanted to go and knowing you could be useful helped eased the pain you hid away deep inside)

You were not making less of the people from Gyōten Mall, those poor victims with burns, cuts and
missing limbs, those poor people you couldn’t save, nor were you making less of those who battled against their own bodies and sometimes lost. It was just… in Gyōten Mall you were too disconnected to feel deeply for the people scattered around you, too focused on trying to save as many as you could. Back then you didn’t have time to connect or empathize with the people you were helping. Even your patients under Recovery Girl’s guidance hadn’t been so bad individually, their damage recent or not so far gone as this man’s. It was just that you couldn’t imagining living as he did for a week, much less almost six years.

You really did try not to cry as you began restoring his body mass. You even did a reasonable job of holding back your tears, but there was no hiding it, especially from the man right in front of you.

His blue eyes blazed from the shadows of his face, radiating concern. “Are you okay? I-if this is painful for you in any way—“

“Painful?” You let out a watery, breathy chuckle. “I know nothing of pain.”

And you didn’t, not really. Your pain was fleeting and rare. You never got sick and it was uncommon for you to get large injuries. You’ve never even broken a bone before. Cramps were monthly, but they passed. This man’s struggles were ongoing, constant over the course of a day. ‘Looking’ at his digestive system, you knew that even eating was a chore, something to be carefully monitored so it didn’t cause a severe backlash. You were young and healthy—this man’s very existence was a never-ending cycle of suffering.

They tried to get you to stop, but you shook your head and said you needed to finish this. You weren’t full out crying yet anyway (you could do that later). For this patient, a measure of relief was near and you would not force him to live without it a single second longer than absolutely necessary. So you blinked the tears from your eyes and smiled at him, reassuring him and the other two in the room that you could do this.

And you did. Slowly, carefully, over the course of an hour, you filled out Toshinori Yagi’s body with muscles, fat and flesh. He was not bulky, but rather a healthy weight. He was still skinny, still lanky, but he was stronger and now his body had more reserves to eat before he fell back down to a skeletal state. You had also soothed the pain in his left side, easing it away to nothing.

When you were done, Yagi smiled at you, his face no longer angular and frightening. “Thank you, Nurse-Girl. This… is amazing.”

(later, when you were gone, he would look at his face in the mirror and marvel, becoming suddenly acutely aware that he hadn’t said enough)

You smiled back and said it was no problem. Recovery Girl sent you out into the hall while she and the doctor looked over Yagi and you left to sit out in the hall some distance away.

You stared down at your hands, at the instruments you had taken for granted all your life, and knew that today was the last day you did so. In his room, Yagi was still missing his organs, but no longer in pain. These hands did that. In several different hospitals, or even out in the country right now, there were people and babies living because of you.

Could you create functional organs?

Could you do even more to end the suffering of others?

So lost in your thoughts, it took Recovery Girl calling your name a few times before you realized she was there in front of you. Lifting your gaze from your hands but still holding them up, you uttered
what would become your *truth*, yet also a statement that would make you an Atlas holding up your sky.

“I… want to heal people.”

*(she had seen her student’s reaction to Toshinori’s state and it seemed as though the girl had something on her mind, so Recovery Girl let her go home early with the promise to continue studying at home)

She was pleased, though, because Nurse-Girl had firmly asked her to begin her on organs so that she could help Yagi and others like him, so she made calls that afternoon and set things up at a hospital for the next day)

[Someday soon she would look back and wonder if perhaps that if she had gone about things a different way if she could have spared that girl all the pain and suffering she would have to endure]

Within two days of complete dedication, you learned how to create the left lung and a working stomach. You accomplished this by studying the lungs and stomachs of numerous male patients for one day wherein you scrutinized the form and function of each organ in every patient, and then healed their ailments. The sheer number of male patients you ‘saw’ and healed took a toll on you because your quirk was active for a greater part of the day, and to your sheepish embarrassment, you slept through your alarms and were late the next day *(missing the warning sign the dead sleep represented, but forgiven by Recovery Girl who also missed the warning sign it was, the both of you focused on the goal in front of you)*.

The second day was spent with that doctor in the faraway hospital who dissected the organs you created based on yesterday’s observations. He discarded the first few, giving you pointers after each one on how to improve on them and told you to create them based on Yagi’s blood type. Finally, by late afternoon, the doctor declared your efforts satisfactory regarding both the lung and the stomach.

Returning to Yagi’s room, there were more saplings present for the procedure ahead. Yagi, looking healthy and happy, smiled at you again.

“I am in your care.”

*(the tree saplings morphed under her hand and she placed a glob on his exposed chest as he lay on his hospital bed)

She was concentrating on the procedure, she missed the way he kept glancing at Recovery Girl and his doctor and the way they gave him reassuring looks or nods, and he gasped quietly and twitched as a strange fullness appeared in his torso

He coughed as something connected in his chest, though his cough was cut off right away, leaving him with a strange sensation of wanting to cough but not needing to

The strange sensations eased but didn’t go away, and he wondered that if after six years without
them, was the return of his lung and stomach so noticeable

she lifted her hands and declared it was done so yes, his returned organs would take getting used to

but still!

this girl... she was going to be amazing, a new kind of hope he swore to protect not only in thanks, but also for all the people she would save)

[he had sincerely meant it, so when the day came that he failed, it hurt all the worse]

He thanked you profusely before the doctor and Recovery Girl sent you out again so they could examine him. You smiled and wished him well before leaving. Out in the hall, you found that sitting down made you unusually sleepy, so you paced around, unwilling to risk burdening Recovery Girl with your sleeping self.

Your limbs felt heavy and you were exhausted, so it was a mercy wen Recovery Girl finally exited Yagi’s room. She took one look at you, berated you for pushing yourself too far and not telling her that you needed a break, even a nightlong one before tackling Yagi’s condition, and took you back to the school to change out of your costume. Doing so was difficult as you kept almost nodding off even while changing, so you were exceedingly glad to arrive back at your apartment building after getting dropped off again.

You slept through the night, the next day and all the phone calls coming through your phone. You slumbered through the knocking at your door that came insistently several times throughout the day. You snoozed right through certain heroes breaking into your apartment and finding you still in your school uniform in your bed. You remained unconscious despite Recovery Girl’s attempts to wake you and even through Edgeshot picking you up and carrying you out of your apartment.

You slept right though the ride to the hospital, the medical examination and the process of making you a patient. You had no inkling of the people who came to see you, those being Recovery Girl, one of the doctors you and she worked with, and Toshinori Yagi, now at full health and suddenly exceedingly worried that he was the cause of your comatose state. The arguing between he and Recovery Girl went unheard as you slept without dreaming, unaware that so much time had already passed.

You woke up the next morning shortly after five in the morning, disoriented and confused as to why you weren’t at home. After a moment you wondered why you didn’t need the washroom and it was then that you noticed that between your legs there were tubes where there shouldn’t be. Mortified, you sulked and tried to piece together how you ended up in a hospital but couldn’t remember anything past getting home and going to bed. Did something happen? Perplexed, you decided to leave it until there was daylight outside and went back to sleep as it felt too early to be awake.

The next time you opened your eyes there was definitely daylight, so you pushed the call button to summon a nurse and hopefully get some answers.

(she learned that exhaustion was a drawback the girl suffered for long and complex uses of her quirk and of course she scolded the girl but the girl maintained she hadn’t known so she let it go after
getting her to promise to be more careful and speak up when things were too much

she did derive amusement from the girl’s befuddled when Toshinori visited with flowers and profuse apologies, but her heart was also warmed by the girl’s sincere smile upon hearing that he was truly well and feeling good

as long as she didn’t push herself too far, this girl was going to do great things

Not even three days later, terrible news came in regarding the others’ summer training camp: they’d been attacked by villains, putting several into critical condition due to inhaled gas, others suffered various injuries, Midoriya had nearly broken himself to pieces, and, perhaps worst of all…

The villains had come for Shinso.

You had managed to hold yourself together fairly well throughout Recovery Girl’s grim update, shuddering when she mentioned Midoriya’s injuries, but you could not stop yourself from shedding tears when she revealed Shinso’s fate. Shinso, the boy with a fondness for cats, someone who helped you push past your self-imposed boundaries to explore your quirk… your friend, in hands of villains.

“Ah, sorry, sorry,” Recovery Girl said suddenly, noticing your tears. She smiled gently and amended, “The villains came for Shinso, but they didn’t get him.” Her eyes stared at you shrewdly. “Apparently he was too fast to catch.”

“His legs,” you blurted, wiping away your tears. “He wanted to be faster and to jump higher, so I modified his legs.” You gave a watery laugh. “I almost refused to do it…” You hid your face behind your hands. “Oh my god, I almost didn’t do it…!”

Recovery Girl sighed and walked over to pat your bowed head. “Well, you did, and it saved him. The villains left without taking anyone.”

“But they still hurt some of the students,” you said grimly, sniffling and wiping your face again. “Can I help them? Please?”

She sighed. “Well, the hospital is taking care of those who suffered from inhaling that poison gas one of the villains spread across that area, but it seems as though Midoriya is in need of a more thorough sort of healing. I’ll check in with his mother before I make you any sort of promise.”

“Thank you,” you murmured, staring down at your knees.

She then expressed concern about your living arrangements but you assured her it was fine. If villains wanted to attack students in their homes then they probably would have already done so by now. So, fending her off, you left and went home to wait for the next day when, hopefully, you would be allowed to go see and help Midoriya.

(there were only nineteen students but no expulsions, so it was easy to find the one who had strayed from the flock, the one who was vulnerable and conveniently seemed to live alone

she was so surprised to see them waiting for her in her bedroom

perhaps this was fortuitous, as his party had long been missing a healer, even a limited one like her)
You were scared—

(no amount of words could possibly convey his rage when the news was hijacked by the League of Villains to show off their terrified hostage, a wide-eyed and terrified female student, that girl he swore to protect and watch grow from afar)

there was tape over her mouth and her hands were tied behind her back as Dabi held her by the arm while Shigaraki crowed and dared All Might to save her

he was there within minutes but they had already gone, taken her with them

the only time he had ever hated someone so much was when All for One killed Nana

young Yaoyorozu had already given them a priceless lead, so now it was a race against the clock to storm their hideout before they did something irreversible to her

please, please, whatever power was out there, don’t let him have to bury another wonderful woman so young, don’t let him have to bury one of his students, this girl who had barely begun to shine)

Once the initial terror had slightly subsided, you found yourself able to observe Shigaraki and his cohorts in glances. You had no idea how much time had passed, but you had already passed out once, though for how long you weren’t sure. They had just brought you to a bar of some sort and were now standing around listening to Shigaraki. He promised he wouldn’t hurt you if you just joined his side. They were missing a healer and you could prove yourself valuable to them.

Oh, please, please, please, let him have no idea.

After his speech, the one called Twice was ordered to remove the tape from your mouth. He carefully peeled it away and stood back while you shook on the stool you had been forced to sit on. They stared at you and Shigaraki prompted, “So?”

“N-No,” you stammered, lifting your chin. “I refuse.”

Shigaraki sighed. “You don’t actually have a choice, girly. It would be easier for you to just say yes. After all, you’re not going anywhere.”

He went on another tangent about needing a healer for his party and now that he had one he just had to train your rebelliousness out of you as you were an important pawn, though for different reasons than he needed Shinso for. Purple-scar guy commented that it probably wouldn’t take long or much, given how you were shaking in your seat. There was laughing.

And then a knock at the door.

“Kamino Pizza delivery.”

(she cried his name the moment she saw him, and he saw the hope in her eyes
for a few moments it seemed as though she was saved and he had his hand on her shoulder to reassure her

but then, the black liquid stole her and the villains away and didn’t take him with them

within moments he threw off the attacking Nomu and handed the operation off to Endeavour before leaping off into the sky towards the second area, praying it wouldn’t be too late)

You arrived in a new place, somewhere damaged with heroes strewn on the ground some distance away. You immediately recognized Best Jeanist and saw that he was wounded. Suddenly more concerned for him than afraid of your situation, you took a step towards him.

“Greetings, (Last Name).”

Startled, you nearly fell backwards as you spun and noticed that you weren’t alone. A tall man was there, wearing a metal mask and dressed in a suit. He loomed over you and you instinctively knew that this man was death and evil.

(she was right there on the other side of this broken wall, but he couldn’t even move

he owed her, he owed her a debt he could never repay so even though he knew this was a terrible idea he had hatched this plan and asked Midoriya and Shinso if they wanted to come and try and rescue her, and Yaoyorozu had come along and here they were and they couldn’t do anything

the mastermind was too strong and the villains had also arrived and they were outnumbered but they couldn’t just abandon her)

You watched as the looming man told Shigaraki that it was all for him and then All Might was there again, shooting down from the sky to strike the main villain.

He called the villain All for One.

[the name of the villain who would cut your life short in less than twenty minutes]

One day can change your life. One day can ruin your life. All life is is three or four big days that change everything.

~Beverly Donofrio

Chapter End Notes

So. Apparently I'm incapable of just giving you a happy life. 8]
I swear though, I was part way into writing a Midoriya POV where you visit him in the hospital and things were going fine and then I thought, 'this is boring... I know! I'll ruin her life! :D' And that's pretty much how this happened...

And no, those aren't romantic feelings All Might/Yagi is feeling.

Shit, I forgot to put in a Shinso POV. Ah well.
The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.

~G.K. Chesterton

“Twenty seconds,” All for One said, having caught All Might’s fists in his hands. “Not your best, but not terrible either.”

The aftershock of their attack was large, sending everyone else sprawling including you. All for One and All Might appeared to be familiar with each other and, from your position on the ground, you stared at them in horrified fascination as they also appeared to be approximately of equal strength. All Might spoke of five years ago and charged at the villain, saying he would be taking you back and putting an end to All for One and the League of Villains. Your eyes widened as All for One sent All Might flying away, crashing through numerous buildings and causing devastation (the villains took your first aid bag away). You cried out All Might’s name as another smoke-filled blast of air blew over everyone.

“Don’t fret,” the villain reassured you, making you flinch. He said it wouldn’t be enough to kill the hero. He then turned to Shigaraki, called him Tomura, and told him to flee and to take you with him.

You watched in dread as All for One forced the mist man’s quirk to activate (’Kurogiri’, your brain filed away). Another villain complained on his behalf and All for One said his warp ability was insufficient. A warp portal opened and All Might slammed back onto the battlefield. All for One told Shigaraki to always think ahead and said he had much room to grow. The two titans met in battle again.

The villain with the top hat, Mr. Compress, used his quirk on the unconsciousness purple-scar guy and told Shigaraki they should leave while All Might was preoccupied. He then added, while looking back at you, “And take your pawn.”

You reeled back from the stares of Twice, Mr. Compress and the lizard man. “Wait…!”

You heard nothing else as Mr. Compress closed the distance and suddenly you were inside a spherical prison. Shaking, you pounding on the curved walls in vain.

“Let me out!”

(there was no plan when the three of them launched over the wall, jolted into action by the cut off sound of her voice so soon after overhearing that the villains would be leaving, unable to stand back and let her disappear without a fight

they fought these villains before, so their target was Mr. Compress, and using their legs, he and the other two closed the distance, though Iida launched into the fray first with his Recipro Burst, sending the magician villain sprawling with a fist to the face, a marble bouncing from his hands

the element of surprise was on their side and with attention on Iida and the loose marble, he and Midoriya were able to strike from behind, knocking out Toga and stunning Twice, but then the villains knew they were there and it became a free-for-all
they weren’t trying to win, getting that marble and getting out of there quickly was the most important thing

even while striking Twice, his eyes had tracked the wayward marble through the dust and rubble but he hadn’t been the only one and he used his legs—the legs she gave him—to leap forward, shoving the lizard villain out of the way and grabbed the marble up with a handful of dirt

he screamed at the other two it was time to go, but the villains had rallied themselves

so he started yelling insults)

It was taking everything he had to keep All for One from attacking the kids and what were they doing here?

(he knew, young Midoriya spoke of her and the way they met before, young Iida and his brother could only walk because of her, young Shinso and she had worked together to explore her quirk and rose from General Studies together, she was important to them one or another so he knew, but that didn’t mean he wanted them here in the midst of this danger)

He heard Shigaraki scream at his minions not to respond to Shinso but Twice and Magne had already stilled, and Midoriya and Iida were fending off Spinner and Mr. Compress. Both he and All for One wanted to interfere, but they kept each other busy to prevent just that.

He could only hope the boys wouldn’t come to grave harm.

(he launched into the kids’ battle without hesitation, ruthlessly knocking out Spinner, Mr. Compress and the frozen Twice and Magne, and when the kid saw who he was he shouted his name even as Toshinori told him he was late

he yelled at Midoriya and his friends to get out there even as the purple-haired kid foolishly took the time to stare hard at something in his hand before he inexplicably yelled ‘it’s her’ and then the three kids were sprinting away from Shigaraki and the battle, leaving the hand villain to scream in frustration

he launched himself at Shigaraki to put him down as well and was looking away from All for One)

All Might dodged an attacked that flew past him and realized belatedly that All for One was pulling another one of his tricks. Turning his head, he saw the long ‘fingernails’ stab into Magne, forcing quirk activation. He charged Shigaraki as South and pulled him towards the unconscious Toga who served as a charged North. The other male villains were pulled towards her unconscious body and they piled up in one place.

Fearing he was helping them escape, All Might attacked All for One again. The villain irritatively evaded his punches as he forced quirk activation in Mr. Compress.

(he stumbled as his hand burst open and his shock was doubled when he saw the released nurse-girl, but all three of them yelled her name in relief as she blinked in surprise
before anything else could be said, Midoriya had grabbed her hand and began pulling her along, saying they would explain later and they all ran with her at Midoriya’s side and Iida on her other other

he silently seethed as he took up position on Iida’s other side)

You gripped Midoriya’s hand, trembling with relief but also with fear, as you wouldn’t believe you were safe until you were far, far away and maybe not even then. There were sirens in the distance and helicopters overhead and screams were in the air. The first aider in you wanted to head to the nearest person to help but as someone who was just kidnapped by villains and then almost kidnapped again, you understood that getting yourself to safety was the more important thing.

You stumbled and Iida grabbed your other hand, keeping you from falling. It was awkward to run like this, but you suddenly felt safe. Tears welled up in your eyes as you realized, clutching their warm hands…

These boys had come to rescue you.

(he used his stolen quirks to trick All Might into attacking Shimura’s friend and while he took a couple moments to check over the old man, he instantly closed the distance to Shigaraki’s side and asked him a vital question

was the girl more important as a pawn or as a tool to hurt All Might?

his ward didn’t disappoint and he smiled beneath his mask even as he bid his heir goodbye, throwing his minions into the portal and using the forced quirk activation in Magne to drag Shigaraki along with them

as the portal closed and they were gone, he declared it was up to Shigaraki to continue this war

staring at All Might approach, he smiled again behind his mask

a terrible smile that did not bode well for the hero)

As they fought, All for One declared that he detested All Might for what he did in the past, for being lauded as the Symbol of Peace and standing atop their sacrifices. All for One taunted him, saying there was so much worth protecting. He couldn’t stand it anymore, so he yelled in anger, growing stronger with every word.

“Shut up! That’s what you do. You toy with people’s very lives! You break them! You steal from them! You take advantage and manipulate them! You sneer at them when they’re just trying to live their everyday lives! And for that…” He released all he had in a single punch, bellowing, “I can’t forgive you!!”

The iron mask shattered and he breathed heavily. If it weren’t for Nurse-Girl then he would be on the verge of reverting to his true form from sheer strain, but her quirk had healed him to point where he could maintain his hero form completely with ease until the very last second. He thought it was over.

And then All for One spoke, saying he heard the same line from the previous holder of One for All,
Nana Shimura.

He didn’t want this monster speaking her name.

[if his rage had not gotten the better of him, would she have been safe from harm?]

(he had heard of the girl from General Studies, unremarkable but advanced to the Hero Course following the Sports Festival, a budding healer under Recovery Girl’s tutelage and aside from Tomura’s slight interest in a healer, he had thought little of her

but then he saw All Might at work, less than what he had been in his prime but more than he should currently be if his wounds were still afflicting him and suddenly the girl was more interesting than he originally thought

perhaps it was a waste, but if she would not be Tomura’s then the heroes shouldn’t have her either

and yet, if she had done for All Might what he suspected, then for the hero to fail her would perhaps be a wound comparable to the death of Nana Shimura

with the stolen quirk ‘Search’, it was all too easy to locate the girl and easier still to get a rise out of the hero, enough to goad him into attacking and he took to opportunity to launch the hero off him and disappear from All Might’s sight)

They were amidst a crowd of people and they thought they were far enough to be safe, that the rescue had been successful.

Iida was on the phone confirming that Yaoyorozu had gotten out safely and was profusely apologizing to her for their sudden departure from her side. Shinso was staring off into the crowd and she was right there next to him, holding her free hand against her chest as he was still holding her other one. He said her name and she glanced over at him and smiled, opening her mouth to say something.

And then he was there.

“Pardon, young lady.”

“Wha—“

He screamed her name as her hand was wrenched from his with ease, gone in less than a blink of an eye.

(sometimes words aren’t needed and this was one of those times

oh, the look on All Might’s face as he reappeared with her in his grasp, his right hand around her neck and holding her fast while his left hand traveled down and pierced

the impotent rage in All Might’s voice, mixing with the pained screams of the girl was music to his
ears

but he could not dwell

in the second All Might faltered at the sight and sound of his failure, he cruelly dug deep into her flesh and crushed her left lung)

[it was too fast and hurt far too much for you even to think about using your quirk while his hand was digging around inside your body]

You were choking on your own blood, shaking in pain and only peripherally aware of being caught before hitting the ground. Almost everything had faded away before the blaring agony that was your torso. The worst of it was on the left side, but the pain flared and pulse d out to envelope the rest of your body and it

(h) e was not the only one shouting as they helplessly watched as the girl they just rescued was eviscerated on live television, blood spurting from her body when it shouldn’t be

how could this happen

she was right there
He could not describe the roar that burst from Toshinori’s chest as he threw himself at the villain again just as the girl was dropped. The two titans were off again in an instant and by some luck he caught the girl before she hit the ground.

She was still alive but any fool with eyes could see that she was dying.

In the short time before the assault on the villain’s hideout, he had cornered Toshinori and demanded to know why he wasn’t coughing up blood anymore and he’d been told of what this girl did, of what this girl could be. Trust All for One to clue in to that with only the barest of clues. Trust that villain to wound Toshinori in the worst way by hurting someone else.

He glanced down at the crying girl (they found Nana with tear tracks on her face) and gruffly spoke, “Don’t you die now. He’d never forgive himself.”

Gran Torino knows he’s not the best to offer comfort and he’s not one to coddle.

He kind of wishes he was able to, at least in this situation.

(’was there ever a time when you couldn’t save someone?’

his question has come back to haunt him in the worst way

the Number One Hero continued fighting the villain, but all of Japan has just seen him fail to save someone

and that someone is his friend

how could he ever call himself a hero when he couldn’t even save the person who’s hand he had just been holding?)

[she burst into his life at lunch one day and then she was a shining star in his lonely darkness and he foolishly let her go without a fight, he failed the first test, barely passed the second by reconciling and now he had failed the greatest test

he couldn’t keep her safe]

He saw his daughter dying on live television, carried from the battlefield in the arms of a small hero in white and yellow and for a moment he froze, glass raised to his lips. The newswoman commented on the wounded high school student, one still wearing the U.A. uniform, and said that she hoped the girl would be okay once handed off to the nearest paramedics.

He remembered the scant few times he saw his daughter since the death of his wife and then the image of her bleeding body burned into his eyes.
Setting down his glass without drinking the contents, he stood up without a word and calmly left.

(he told All Might that he hated him, and that though he killed the hero’s master, All Might had crushed everything All for One had built, so that was why he wanted the hero to suffer, to die an ugly, brutal death

much like the girl who was no doubt slipping away even now

the hero was enraged, but All for One remembered the last time such a look passed over the hero’s face and was wary, deciding to bide his time until the perfect moment to further rip All Might apart from the inside)

The look on Nurse-Girl’s face wouldn’t fade from his mind, nor would her scream stop echoing. The stench of her blood still clung to his senses and every peripheral glimpse of that puddle was nearly fatally distracting. He could only hope against hope that Gran Torino would somehow manage to get her to paramedics who could save her. An apology looped in his head under the blazing rage of his hate as he fought his nemesis, this monster that killed his master and had probably killed that brilliant girl.

The revelation that Tomura Shigaraki was Nana’s grandson hit him as hard as Nurse-Girl’s scream did. All for One had pointed out that his smile had faded—how could he keep smiling when that girl was dying, dragged into a fight that wasn’t hers and paying the price for his negligence—and he had brushed it off only for the villain to follow up with the thing about Shigaraki.

*His master’s own family.*

Despair breached his rage and he faltered.

All for One nearly laughed, saying that *that* was the expression he had longed to see.

*(the hero who had dropped the girl off was long gone but he and his partner barely registered that fact as they labored to save the girl he’d brought, her left side torn open and insides shredded

she was ghastly pale beneath the stains of blood and near death, but she still breathed and they labored to save her as other paramedics did the same for others all around them

an ambulance came and they handed her off before turning their attention to the others who still needed their help

she lived to reach the hospital)*

He was a coward, one not strong enough to go and face his child in her pain, nor brave enough to keep living if she died, so he would go on ahead and wait for her arrival.

Surely she wouldn’t be too long in joining him and her mother beyond this painful life.
He was shocked out of his grief for (Last Name) by the sight of All Might on the giant screen. He…
that was definitely All Might but not the one he remembered. The one on the screen was healthy-
looking, handsome, even, while the one he remembered was a skeleton man with a generally off-
putting appearance. What… what happened to All Might? He sniffled, glancing around the crowd as
they also murmured about the hero’s change in appearance. His eyes slid over Iida and Shinso who
had also been jolted back into the present by this revelation, though they weren’t aware of his
previous appearance.

Soon, though, the crowd decided that they didn’t care about his form because he was still All Might.
Their voices rose, urging him on. He joined them, shouting for the Number One Hero to win.

As they watched, more heroes showed up on screen to help him out. Two heroes got the injured out
of the way while Endeavour and Edgeshot tried to help fight the main villain. The voices of
everyone present shouted for the heroes’ victory.

*Please, put an end to this.*

*wounded heroes are the scariest
he gathered everything for the final moments of their battle, disdaining his opponents’ sentimentality,
their words of hope and dreams
the bane of his existence gathered the last dregs of his strength, his arm bulging, the only part he
could enhance in his current state
this… was the end!!*)

He remembered why he wielded his power. He remembered his dream, his life-long goal. The words
of his master echoed in his head and gave him strength. Gathering the entirety of the last ember of
One for All, he threw his entire being in to putting down All for One.

The first punch was a fake out and the villain called him out on it.

But that was because it wasn’t his final attack.

Again he remembered his master’s words, the history of One for All.

'*Do your best, Toshinori.*’

He screamed as his fist flew towards the villain.
“States of United… SMASH!!!”

(The country watched in terrified awe for a long moment before All Might stood straight, raising a bloodied fist into the air

and then the cheering started)

He cried when All Might pointed at the camera and declared that it was ‘your turn’. He understood, better than anyone else what the hero really meant by that.

Then Shinso muttered her name and he remembered that this nightmare wasn’t over yet. The fight was won, but what was her ultimate fate? Was she even still alive?

That terrible wound, the sheer amount of blood that had flowed from her…

He bowed his head and wept.

Sometimes the prize is not worth the costs. The means by which we achieve victory are as important as the victory itself.

~Brandon Sanderson, The Way of Kings
Chapter Notes

This was getting too long for my tastes so I cut it into two parts, so that means one more part for this AU and we can move on.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There is a saying in Tibetan, 'Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength.'

No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster.

~ Dalai Lama XIV

He was exhausted, both mentally and physically, but he couldn’t rest just yet. The first thing he did after leaving the scene was go in search of Nurse-Girl, to find out what happened to her. He was a hero, a teacher and her patient, and yet he hadn’t managed to do a single for her. All his presence had done was brought her suffering.

(her left side, her goddamn left side, he saw what All for One did and didn’t like it in the least)

He found the hospital she was at and was permitted to enter the observation room while the surgeons and their team worked to save her life. Staring down at her small form on the operating table, he clenched his hands hard enough to draw blood.

He had once truly possessed the physique his hero form had, and even then, it had been a close thing to save his life. In five years, he had slowly wasted away, shrinking down to the skeletal form she had so easily healed. Even if she lived through the operation and survived, she wouldn’t live long. Her small form only had so much body weight to go through before she too became skeletal.

All for One hadn’t instantly killed her on the spot, but he had ended her life all the same.

Toshinori was already grieving.

(he and the rest had to go home without answers, the bitter taste of defeat in their mouths and the heavy weight of guilt on their backs

they had come to rescue her and failed completely

in another life he would have lied to his mother about where he’d been, but he couldn’t do it now, not with his guilt suddenly exploding in a burst of tears and he admitted everything, including the fact that he had so terribly failed

he had been holding her hand

he cried and wailed and his mother bore it all, a pillar of strength he needed right now
he still didn’t know and that terrified him the most)

Recovery Girl joined him in the observation room, grim and silent.

Nurse-Girl had already died twice during the operation, only to be resuscitated as the medical team kept desperately trying. Toshinori had lost track of time, though his fists had at least loosened.

They both blamed themselves for Nurse-Girl’s current condition. If she hadn’t sent her home alone then maybe she would still be safe. If he had been faster, then maybe she wouldn’t have gotten hurt at all. They blamed themselves for failing her, keenly aware of what her future would be even if she lived.

They watched in silence as the medical team labored to do what the girl they were working on could have done in minutes, if only it wasn’t on herself.

She flat-lined again and his fists clenched.

(pain
hurts
HURTS
don’t wake up
the pain will get you
go back to the darkness where the pain can’t reach
can hear mom and dad in the
d
i
s
t
a
n
c
e
calling
want to go
want to go
but

closer

more voices are calling
pleading

‘stay’

It takes nearly two weeks before Nurse-Girl is conscious again and when she is, from personal experience of having his left side torn out, he knows she would rather not be. He’s been healed, but he remembers the agony of his left side, the daily pain and struggles. She’s just a child, she shouldn’t have to experience that agony. She’s already in pain, face grimacing, and when she finally glances at her surroundings, her eyes pass over him, searching for someone.

Toshinori gritted his teeth in silence.

They found her father in their apartment, dead from a slit forearm in a puddle of partially dried blood. There was no note, no explanation as to why he had done it. Toshinori could guess though—what father would expect his child to survive being apparently eviscerated? Rather than wait, her father jumped the gun and now she was an orphan, both parents dead by their own hands.

“My… fath—?”

Her eyes suddenly scrunched shut in pain and he hovered his hands, not daring to touch her but wanting to offer some sort of comfort anyway. “Um, uh…”

She hissed a pained breath and creaked open her eyes to stare at him. She must have seen something in his face because tears started dripping down the sides of her own.

Then again, maybe the pain really was just that bad, even with the drugs. (He knew it was.)

She didn’t speak again and eventually drifted off into sleep, the only sanctuary she had at the moment. Though, again from experience, he knew she wouldn’t always be able to stay asleep. In fact, oftentimes sleep would lead to unintentionally causing pain to one’s self…

“I’m sorry,” he said yet again, hunched over in his chair. “I’m just so… sorry…”

(as their teacher, Aizawa informed the class that (Last Name) had survived her surgeries and woke up, though, due to the severity of her injuries and her own wishes, visitors were not permitted, and of course there were raised voices with anything from relief to anger, and a few of his students demanded to know when they could go visit her because she was their classmate
tiredly (angry at the villains, unfairly disappointed with her and annoyed with himself for feeling like that for even a moment), Aizawa dropped another bombshell on them: she wasn’t their classmate anymore, as in light of her injuries and current family situation, (Last Name) had elected to drop out
when that was announced, Cementoss had taken that news like someone punched him in the gut.

he was her homeroom teacher in the General Education Department, had voiced the opinion that she should stay in General Studies because she had expressed that desire more than once to her classmates, but in the end, he didn’t fight hard enough for her to stay put and had even nudged her along when she clearly hadn’t wanted to go.

the cement hero was taking it hard and as another of her teachers, Aizawa could understand.

she had been their responsibility and now…

The classroom filled with more shouting, but the two students he eyed the most were the silent Shinso and quiet Midoriya, two of three who had gone to rescue her, and while Iida too was not taking her choice well, he was being vocal while the former two were internalizing their reactions.

calling for quiet, Aizawa, perhaps vainly, hoped his students wouldn’t do something foolish.

You refused all visitors and the only ones who got through that particular wish to the nurses and doctors were Yagi (for some unexplained but apparently sufficient reason), your former teacher Aizawa, Nezu, the police and that detective whose name you forgot. Too many people, really. They didn’t all come at once, but sometimes you had more than one of them present at the same time. After Recovery Girl admitted that she didn’t want to risk her healing kiss on you in your current state, you asked her to not come back.

You dropped out of U.A. as soon as you could sign the forms and you ignored Principal Nezu’s words when he had come. You could barely even look at Aizawa when he was here, ignoring his attempts—to goading—to get you to pay attention to him. You turned a deaf ear on how your classmates were probably worried about you, and then on a later visit, you also turned a deaf ear on the confirmation that they were worried about you.

You resented them, those adults who were supposed to watch over you.

You hated them!

You hated U.A.!

Hate, hate, hate, hate, hate hate hate hate hate hate hate hate hate—

You left side gave a terrible spasm and you choked on a sob.

It’s Cementoss’ fault for not letting you stay in General Studies! It’s Aizawa’s fault because you were in his class! It’s Recovery Girl’s fault because you were separated from the rest of your class, easy pickings that the villains took advantage of! It was the police’s fault because they didn’t protect you or rescue you! It’s that detective’s fault because he’s part of the police force! It’s Yagi’s fault because… because… just because!

Tears slipped down the sides of your face, cold, wet, and unpleasant. Your left side seared with heat and pain, throbbing in agony that made you wish they had just left you to die.

“Kill me! Please, someone, just kill me…”

The hospital staff was familiar that particular refrain, but that didn’t make it any easier to hear.
(he isn’t sure how, but somehow the news got hold of the fact that her father had taken his own life, leaving her as an orphan and a dropout, a victim failed by heroes and especially by those who had gone to rescue her

his mother finds him crying in his room and again she patiently listened to him through his tears

he couldn’t call himself a hero)

Yagi hates himself. He hates himself now more than he has in quite a while. With young Midoriya to watch over, he thought he had been getting better in that aspect, but with the colossal failure with young (Last Name)…

Naomasa tried to help, telling him he had done all that he could. Maybe he had, but it hadn’t been enough. It hadn’t been enough and now a brilliant light was fading fast with tears and anger and pain, all of it, in his eyes, completely justified.

He was in such a stupor of self-loathing that it took the literal presence of child services before he grimly remembered that (Last Name) was an orphan and therefore a ward of the state. As such, her treatment and care would be limited, even with the settlement from UA. Granted, she hadn’t sued the school, but Nezu had offered to cover her medical expenses and more, and while (Last Name) had accepted that, it hadn’t stopped the sharks from circling around, hadn’t brought her father back from the dead. She was an orphan, a teenage girl, a high-school drop out and an invalid all in one. Virtually no family would take her, even with her amazing Quirk.

Thus, child services had come to claim the latest face on the news, a tragic victim of villains. What would happen to her? Would they take care of her? Would they leave her in some godforsaken room on her own whenever she curled up or screamed in pain? She was a child! A child bearing a terrible wound he knew all too well. He had managed on his own through sheer will (okay, mostly on his own), but then he knew just who he was and what he meant to people, so of course he got back up and forced himself forward, forced himself through those terrible days when the thought of death was a sweet siren’s call.

But (Last Name) was a child.

She was young and didn’t have the iron will he had, the iron will he forged over years. She was… just so… young. She’s not even twenty. He knows that wound, knows the pain and suffering that accompanies it, so he knows.

There was every chance she was never going to be twenty.

(he’d like to say he’s surprised that Toshinori wants to adopt (Last Name), but the truth is, Naomasa mostly isn’t, if only because he knows his friend so well

a child injured with the same wound he suffered, the same child who healed that wound and was now an orphan in danger of getting lost in the system?

of course Yagi was going to try and take responsibility for her, but in his rush to try to make things better for her, he’s only going to make it worse if someone doesn’t slow him down and make him look, so Naomasa spoke up
before Yagi brought up adoption with her, did the girl even know that Toshinori Yagi and All Might were the same person? secluded away in a hospital room without news and in too much pain to care, did she even know what the rest of the world found out during his fight with All for One? did she know that she was responsible for All Might’s health?

his friend froze, no doubt realizing that no, the girl didn’t know, didn’t realize who was in her hospital room so often, only that she sometimes gave him quizzical looks as though he were a puzzle she couldn’t figure out

now, Naomasa had only meant that she should be informed of who her potential future guardian might be

he hadn’t meant to send his friend into a spiral of guilt)

Yagi sat in a chair, elbows on his knees as he stared unseeingly at the floor. He wanted to adopt young (Last Name) because there was no one else who knew what she was going through like he did. He had experience dealing with that pain, experience of suffering alone, and he wanted to be near, to help her through all that until the inevitable end if he had to. But… Naomasa had a point.

She didn’t know he was the hero who failed her.

She wasn’t aware yet that All Might was Toshinori Yagi, that her former patient was in fact the former Number One Hero. He had retired soon after the Nightmare of Kamino Ward, but she had been unconscious for all that time and cut off from the news in her room, stuck in a haze of pain.

Would she hate him?

He wanted to help her. He wanted to protect her from an indifferent system that would probably send her to her end faster than a home with someone who honestly cared about her well-being. He wanted to do something to make up for his horrendous failure.

He wanted to return her kindness, the care she had given him.

He couldn’t heal her as she had healed him. He couldn’t take away her pain or even lessen it. All he could do was taken her in and help her through the pain she was in, the pain that would come, the pain that would never stop.

But he couldn’t do anything if she went in blind, and in fact he’d probably just make it worse if he didn’t tell her. She would find out anyway, once she was out of that place.

(if she got out)

So he put off his plans, at least for a while.

(it hurts, it hurts

mom, mom, mommy

once I said I knew nothing of pain

i know now

i know now)

‘A while’ turned out to be four days. He was back at her side as he often was when he could find the time.

Nighteye came to see him.

His former sidekick was doing well and had a hero agency of his own. Yagi hadn’t spoken to him since he called that last time to tell him that he had found his successor in a certain quirkless middle school boy. The other man looked as stern as ever, and Yagi felt awkward to suddenly be face to face with him after all these years.

“The future changed.”

Blinking, Yagi wasn’t sure what to make of that. Even if it hadn’t changed from what Nighteye had seen years ago, Yagi would have kept going, even if he met that foreseen ‘unspeakable end’.

“That girl changed it, didn’t she?”

Yagi grimaced slightly, knowing which girl Nighteye was referring to. He glanced away, remembering Nurse-Girl’s hospital visits. “She healed me.”

“And he found out somehow,” Nighteye guessed.

Yagi glared at the memory. “He did. I don’t know how, but he did.” He clenched his fists. “And now she’s paying the price.”

Nighteye pushed up his glasses, his expression inscrutable. “How is she?”

“Alive, and that’s probably the best she’ll ever be.” Yagi’s fingernails were starting to dig into his palms. “The doctors tell me the best estimate they can give her is a year, maybe less. It would take… a miracle… for her to even see seventeen.”

They stood there in grim silence. All Might had had a large body and it had taken a long while for it to cannibalize itself as he wasted away from his injuries. That girl was so much smaller, so much frailer—she would waste away faster, and that’s only if she dragged herself through the days until her end.

(the nurses told him she cries for mercy, for someone to make it end)

“I’ve heard the news and did some investigation. She truly is an orphan without family, isn’t she?”

Yagi rubbed the back of his neck. Naomasa had looked into that as well and confirmed it. (Last Name) had no living family at all.

“I know you,” Nighteye said, adjusting his glasses again. This time Yagi saw his eyes and the steely glint there. “You want to adopt her, don’t you?”

Yagi wondered if he really was just that transparent or if his friends and former sidekick just really knew him that well. Still, if Nighteye already suspected it… “I do.”
“You shouldn’t.”

Angered, Yagi turned his gaze back on the other man. Nighteye held up his hand to forestall whatever Yagi was about to say.

“Hear me out. You’re the former Number One Hero. You adopting that girl won’t remain a secret for long. You can’t protect her in your state.”

Yagi grimaced at the reminder. The last embers of One for All had gone out in his battle against All for One. Young Midoriya was now the only wielder of that Quirk.

“If you adopt her, she will be targeted.”

Again, Yagi couldn’t refute that. But damn it, he couldn’t just leave her to the system!

“So let me do it.”

His eyes widened. What?

Nighteye went on. “Let me adopt her. I’ll take care of her.” He glanced off to the side. “It’s the least I can do.”

Yagi couldn’t help himself and blurted, “For what? The least you can do for what? I’m pretty sure she’s never even met you.”

Nighteye looked back at him. “She changed the future. She healed you.” His mouth twitched slightly. “Quite frankly, I’m surprised you even stood still long enough for her to work.”

Yagi coughed and averted his eyes. Despite how she had worded it, Recovery Girl hadn’t really given him a choice…

“I suspect that you’re worried about what will happen to her if she leaves in care of child services. That’s probably why you want to adopt her, which, I notice, you haven’t refuted.” Nighteye paused as though to let him, but he didn’t. “You’re worried about her. Understandable, given the situation and the nature of her… wounds. All Might adopting her would cause a media storm.”

He frowned, knowing his former sidekick was right.

“If I do it in my civilian name, there’s less chance of that causing a media explosion. Granted, it will probably come out eventually that All Might’s former sidekick adopted her, but I have the means to protect her. I promise you, I will take care of her.”

Yagi was silent. He still felt some trepidation when it came to Nighteye, but he couldn’t deny that when the man said something like that then he would keep his word. Nighteye would no doubt see to it that young (Last Name) was provided for, but Nighteye was still connected to All Might, and…

“She doesn’t know who I was.”

(he went with All Might to the hospital that day he finally made the decision to inform her of his dual identities and also of the fact that there was someone who wanted to adopt her

she didn’t take it well and there was guttural screaming and sobbing and All Might was chased out by the nurses
Yagi was All Might?

All Might had been that skinny, skeletal man?

It’s been days since he told you and he hasn’t come back. Well, he might have, but you told the nurses that you didn’t want to see him again. They seemed to listen to you this time as he hasn’t shown up in your room since then.

The door opened but it wasn’t a nurse or a doctor. Maybe the director of the hospital, or someone else from child services? A tall, skinny man with green hair and a yellow streak, glasses and a business suit. Not someone you’re familiar with or have seen before. What is he doing here?

“I am Nighteye. I would like to discuss adopting you.”

Oh. Right.

Still an orphan.

(the girl is surprisingly willing to hear him out, perhaps because she has not met him before and doesn’t hold her current situation against him, though she still scowls at the revelation of whose sidekick he used to be

the scowl melts away before he can say anything and she surprises him by requesting if he could ask Yagi to come back to see her again because she wants to apologize

his opinion of her goes up

and she accepts his offer to adopt her, under the condition she gets to keep her names

he agrees, and as soon as he leaves the hospital he gives All Might a call)

It takes Yagi less than a day to come back to your hospital room, all nerves and hesitation. That’s fair. You did try screaming unfair and probably painful things at him.

You’ve felt awful about it because it wasn’t like he was the one who personally shredded your insides. The guilt on top of the pain was too much so you wanted to apologize. You hadn’t been fair to him. You told him all that and he accepted your apology with ease, saying you didn’t need to do so.

He asked about Nighteye and you told him that you accepted his offer of adoption.

Yagi looks so relieved that you have to wonder why, though you don’t ask.

The nurse comes then, saying visiting hours are over and that it’s time to change your bandages. Tears fill your eyes at the mere thought, and you miss the look of pity in Yagi’s eyes.
(the adoption process goes through, but only after a few difficulties and attempted roadblocks
she is now in the hospital as his own adopted daughter
although the fact that that’s what she was after the adoption only hits him right then—he has a daughter!
he had done it in gratitude for what she had done and also to help ease All Might’s burdens, but it suddenly sinks in that he, legally, has a child
a daughter in the hospital
and a boy training to be a hero who was growing to be like a son
for all his Quirk let him foresee things, him being a father hadn’t been thought of at all)

It hits you, suddenly, that you’re still going to die.
The doctors and surgeons and nurses are fighting the inevitable, have struggled to keep you alive, but none of them can do what you can. None of them can heal the damage done to your body. You remember Yagi when you first met him. That was going to be you someday. Your body was going to eat itself but eventually—soon—there wouldn’t be enough left to sustain itself.

Your hospital room is private and you are attached to more than one machine. They beep quietly, but sometimes they shriek, summoning hospital personnel. These things are helping keep you alive. The IV drips are supplying you with drugs and nutrition but you won’t always be on them. Sir Nighteye—adoptive father—hopes that you can eventually leave this room.

Thinking about it, you can see it in your visitors’ eyes. They know you’re going to die, it’s just a question of when.

Mom and dad are already dead. When you die, will there be anything left of them? Will anyone remember the (Last Names)? People might remember you for what happened to you during that nightmare in Kamino Ward, but would anyone really care about your memory, or the memories of your parents?

You doubt it.
The thought of death is a relief because that means no more pain, but the thought of being forgotten is terrifying.

And yet, there’s nothing you can do. There’s nothing you can leave behind to prove that you lived, to prove that your parents lived.

You’re too weak, too young to leave behind a kid.

You’ve done nothing monumental that will leave your name in history books.

That night is spent in despair, accompanied, as always, by the constant pain in your left side.

But, in the hour before dawn, you decide on a compromise. You’re going to die, probably someday much too soon, but before then you’re going to get out of this bed and you’re going to use your last days to do what you would have done if not for that fateful day:
You are going to heal people.

(you are going to save people and they are going to see all the days that you aren’t going to have)

The choices we make about the lives we live determine the kinds of legacies we leave.

~Tavis Smiley, The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates

Chapter End Notes

Reader is going to die next chapter. :D
If you are going through hell, keep going.

~Winston S. Churchill

It is a trial to Nighteye to suddenly have a daughter who is insisting on pushing herself into an early grave. He went to see her—having scheduled a visit every day he can manage—and he found her having gone from simmering in bitter resentment to wanting to get up and help people. Her desire to help is commendable, but Nighteye also can’t help having flashbacks to All Might in a hospital gown, barely able to stand and unable to smile, equally stubborn to push himself when he should be resting.

“No.”

The refusal to her request is instant and automatic, and the stubborn defiance in her eyes is recognizable as the look he saw in All Might’s eyes all those years ago.

(please stop, he wants to plead)

please have some consideration for me too, the me that will have to watch you push yourself too far, the me that can only watch when the pain hits you too hard for you to even stand straight)

He lets out a small sigh, pushing up his glasses as he tries to reason with her. “You are still recovering from a grave wound. You need to rest, not push yourself beyond your limits.”

She won’t let go of the idea. “What if I go around in a wheelchair? I’m not trying to hurt myself. I just want to help people.”

‘Of course you do. All Might only wanted the same thing, too. Why are you so similar when you’re practically the furthest thing from each other? Fighter and healer, hero and nurse... What is it about other people that makes you want to completely disregard yourselves?’

He looks out the window. She’s going to die. He knows that deep down like he knows the sun will rise. She’s too frail, too small to hang on for years as All Might did. She’s going to waste away in front of his eyes. She helped All Might when no one else could. His idol no longer bends double in pain or coughs up blood. He eats and drinks without fear or double-checking if there’s anything in it that will make him sick. So of course Nighteye wants her to be happy before the end, but this...

She can’t legally do it without his permission and a whole lot of other paperwork, and he worries she might actually be stubborn enough to drag herself out into the halls and go into rooms and offer illegal healing. Many would jump on it and there will be those who will try to hurt her back in unkind payment, in ugly greed. Stress would be terrible for her in her current state, so he should help her avoid that, but again, why does she have to try pushing herself too far?

“I’m dying.”

He doesn’t flinch, but it’s a near thing. Turning his gaze back on her, he finds her staring at the ceiling. He glances at the machines around her bed, those mechanical guardians and assistants which
do not care and will never care. He doesn’t say anything because he doesn’t believe in sugar-coating the truth, but neither can he address her as bluntly as he usually does with others.

“Not even Recovery Girl can help me, and my Quirk doesn’t work… on me…” Her voices trailed off for a moment, small and threatening tears. She sniffs quietly before continuing, “No one can do what I can. I’m going to die.”

Her head shifts and her eyes meet his. There’s something there he can’t identify.

“Let me help people while I’m still alive. Maybe I’ll get lucky. Maybe at least one of them will remember me.”

She doesn’t need to count on strangers to remember her.

_He’s_ going to remember her, for everything she did for All Might.

All Might, Toshinori, is going to remember her for the rest of his life, perhaps mostly in regret but he will remember her.

Even if her friends forget her as they grow up and move on, he and All Might never will. She will always be there in their memories, this girl who performed a miracle and changed the future they thought inevitable. For everything she did and for her suffering, she will never fade away from them.

_(but neither of them will tell her and it’s doubtful anyone would come out and say so)_

This may be her only wish, yet Nighteye can’t bring himself to let her hurt herself.

“No,” he repeats, looking away. “I won’t have you hurting yourself.”

He almost adds ‘for no reason’, but that would probably only make her angry. After all, the self-sacrificing barely need a reason and will offer any justification, no matter how flimsy.

She sulks and refuses to speak to him for the rest of his visit.

He is annoyed and outnumbered when her doctors and a couple nurses call him for a meeting later that week to discuss the same subject.

(you don’t understand why your adopted father so steadfastly refuses to consider letting you use your Quirk because, after all, it’s not like you would even leave the hospital)

you ignore the voice in your head that says if your roles were reversed that you would probably do the same thing because what guardian or parent wants to see their ward or child hurt themselves?

instead you go behind his back and talk about your idea to your nurses and the doctor that oversees your treatment and the doctor gets the data from the hospitals you worked at while serving as Recovery Girl’s intern, and suddenly they think it might not be so bad if you moved around the hospital or even saw patients who could come to you, though of course all that depends on what your legal guardian’s opinion is

your adopted father is stubborn and continues to refuse, but as he does so, your health takes a turn for the worse and during one of his visits he stares at you long past the point of ‘comfortable’ and finally says that starting when your doctor deems you well enough you can start healing people

it’s not a miraculous cure, you still feel awful and you don’t really have the energy to go far from
your room so your first few patients are those who can come to you

the doctor and nurses watch you like a hawk, wary of your exhaustion, and though they cap the number of patients you see and the treatments you give, you’re weak enough that using your Quirk usually means you sleep like the dead

once, in the middle of the afternoon and right through a visit from your adoptive father)

Izuku hasn’t seen her since that long ago evening, nor has he heard of her since the last time All Might mentioned her, and she weighs on his mind almost constantly. Even when he manages to push the thought of her to the back of his head, she soon reappears at the forefront. He’s sloppy during some of his class hero exercises, but he’s not the only one, and they even have the same reason, regardless of how Shinso tries to deny it.

Koda is back in Class 1-A and it feels strange. It felt strange when (Last Name) took his place and it’s strange now that he’s taken the place she left vacant. His presence means she’s definitely not coming back to U.A. and Izuku can tell it feels just as weird for him as it does for some of them. Some, like Kacchan, couldn’t care less that she’s not coming back, but others like himself, Shinso and Iida are having a tough time coming to grips with it.

She’s not coming back.

He knows this but it’s still difficult to accept.

(there was no sound during the live coverage but his mind provides the scream she no doubt made when that hand was digging around inside her torso)

He worries about what will happen to her so much that All Might finally divulges that she’s been adopted and that he himself trusts the person who did so. His mentor won’t reveal more than that, citing privacy for both the person who adopted her and for the girl herself. Izuku reluctantly drops that line of thought and asks if he ever sees her. All Might says he does and when Izuku asks, he slowly agrees to asking her if she would accept visits at least from himself and Shinso and maybe Iida.

In the aftermath of Kamino Ward, U.A. became a boarding school—to protect the students from getting hurt like she was—and the next semester had already started before he asked All Might to carry his request to her for her consideration. While waiting for All Might to bring back a reply, the Hero License exam loomed over them.

(being a parent is stressful, he realizes

his adopted daughter has wowed and amazed the hospital staff and he has to step in to firmly remind them that her health comes first, regardless of what miracles she can perform, and if he finds them pushing her too hard then he was going to not only sue them for it, he would move her out of the hospital so fast their heads would spin

her room fills with flowers and balloons and teddy bears and gifts, and though he moves a lot of it to her empty and waiting room at their new house, still more comes as she continues healing patients

he takes a day off from work and leaves the office in his employee’s capable hands to spend that time watching her work and what he sees amazes even him—and he thinks he understands why she wants
to use her quirk until she can’t
she still can’t leave her bed so the doctors and nurses bring the patients to her, whether it’s on their
own feet or in a wheelchair or on a bed, there’s no one they bring to her that she can’t heal
if it’s not herself then there was nothing she could not do to the human body, no ailment out of her
reach—he sees her cure three cancer patients, wake up one from a coma and witnesses her
effortlessly reconstruct a child’s disfigured face
her patients or their families often shed tears of joy and most of them shower her with thanks and
gratitude before they’re escorted back out of her room and he realizes that it’s because of what she’s
doing that her room keeps filling with gifts
after her last patient for the day, she lies in her bed, mentally and physically exhausted and he chides
her for pushing herself too far, but she just smiles, satisfied, and he can’t begrudge her that because
she usually sleeps well after these sessions
he bids her goodbye and it’s as he’s leaving that he barely catches something she whispers, probably something she meant only for herself
‘—all the days I won’t have…’
he leaves quietly rather than try and falsely insist that she’ll have her own days to see, but he can’t
because there was every chance he might make himself a liar and besides, he doesn’t believe in
giving false hope
he has more of her gifts in a bag, taking them home with him so that her hospital room doesn’t get
overcrowded, and a part of him wishes that he could tell the gift-givers that their trinkets were not
what she wanted, that she wanted them to remember her, not give her something and then forget her,
forget the reason why they could leave the hospital when she was still stuck in there
but he can’t
neither he nor she can force them to remember her

The others from General Studies keep asking about her but Hitoshi doesn’t have much or anything
new to share. All he knows is that she survived, dropped out of U.A., and that wherever she is, she
doesn’t want visitors. Juri and Mizumachi stew in guilt and he’s unremorseful about shoving it in
their faces because he’s angry with them, angry that they hurt her feelings and turned their backs on
her just because she advanced to the Hero Course before they did. He resents them because they
didn’t make up with her before Kamino Ward and that she has to live with the fact that they used her
and turned on her, even if it was only passive-aggressively. They argue and fight one day and after
that he doesn’t sit with them anymore.
Instead, Hitoshi finds himself rebuffing Midoriya’s attempts at friendship. He isn’t interested but he
can’t get that fact through the other boy’s head. Snubbing him only works for a short while and even
when it’s not Midoriya, Hitoshi has to fend off some of the others with limited success. Ashido is
bound and determined to have him join them as a ‘friend’ but Hitoshi doesn’t want them as friends.

(he felt like he had one in her and he let her down and she no doubt hates him and he can’t face that
again)

He’s ready to bite Midoriya’s head off the next time the green-haired boy speaks to him but finds
himself swallowing his harsh words when Midoriya blurts out that he asked someone to ask (Last Name) if they could go see her. Midoriya then asked for his phone number so that he could let him know the answer when it came and that’s how Hitoshi gave his phone number away to someone that wasn’t her.

(he didn’t expect All for One to be remorseful, but it still angered All Might to have to listen to the villain’s gloating about Nurse-Girl, to know that the villain was reveling in his drawn-out plan for her demise

that All for One could also correctly guess what was happening outside despite being locked away was also disconcerting because the villain was currently locked away without outside news, so that things seemed to be going as he planned…

he left frustrated and could only vent to Naomasa

he received an image and text from young Midoriya, confirming that his successor had gotten his hero licence and All Might felt guilty for being happy)

Yagi came to see you one day and asked if you would consider seeing your former classmates Midoriya, Shinso and Iida. You glance off to some partially deflated balloons, apparently gifts from Iida’s mother. Honestly speaking, you don’t want to see them. You don’t want to have them see you like this, pale and already shrunken… but you’ve had enough of running away from your problems. Growing up, you had to face your problems, and it had worked well for you. Besides, it was better to see them now than to not and later wish you had. Better it was now, before you were skin and bones (if you made it that far).

You agree to see them if they come.

Yagi smiles and says he’s glad to hear that. Apparently Midoriya had been driving himself nearly spare in his worry about you.

(“I like you, Midoriya. Will you be my boyfriend?”

“I’ll give you a d-d-definite answer on W-White Day.”)

You wince at the memory of your rejection, but thankfully he doesn’t ask about it. It’s convenient, sometimes, that people automatically assume you wince or cringe because of pain.

(he gets text messages from Midoriya, saying she was willing to see them and the hospital name and address included, and he asks if Hitoshi would like to go with him, but he declines, sending a refusal by text because he’d prefer to see her on his own

he goes the first day he can, getting approval to leave campus, and he’s annoyed to find out that he’s expected to go with Midoriya and Iida and a chaperone, the former Number One Hero

he had planned to buy her flowers or something on his way there but would prefer to throw himself out of the moving vehicle before suggesting so in front of Midoriya and Iida

he is not relieved when Midoriya makes the suggestion himself with the loud agreement of their class
You’re just finishing up with a patient when the nurse watching the door outside says you have visitors if you want to see them. Expecting your classmates, you agree and the doctor and other nurse take away the healed patient who throws back another call of thanks to you. The next people to come through the door are pretty much who you expected. Midoriya enters first, followed by Iida, Shinso and Yagi.

“Hello,” you reply awkwardly to Midoriya and Iida’s greetings. You can tell they seem uncomfortable seeing you attached to machines, but they do their best to not make it seem obvious. You get flowers from both Midoriya and Iida, though Shinso brought you a stuffed bear. You have gotten many of those, but this one is instantly special because you actually know Shinso, or at least you two were almost friends.

(it was like dating, like being a normal school girl)

Yagi only stays briefly before leaving you kids alone with the warning to call a nurse if your health takes a sudden turn for the worse. After he leaves, Iida fills you in on everything the class has been doing and Midoriya hands you a get-well card signed by most of Class 1-A. Shinso doesn’t say much, preferring to stand off to one side and stare out the window.

Eventually, Iida’s and Midoriya’s words trail off. Iida then startles everyone by suddenly bowing and loudly exclaiming his apologies for his failure to save you. This sets off Midoriya who is soon crying and apologizing for the same thing. You cast wild eyes at Shinso only to find him grimacing, and even he grits out an apology. You inhale too quickly to try to reassure them and end up coughing hard enough to spit blood. The machines shriek and a nurse suddenly bursts into the room and practically shoves everyone out before she comes to help you through another one of your episodes.

The nurse won’t let the boys in again, but she does let Yagi come see you since ‘he knows better than to excite you’. Yagi apologizes for the boys but you wave him off, saying it wasn’t their fault. However, you do ask him to try to convince them that what happened to you wasn’t their fault. They did their best and you don’t fault them for it.

(not anymore)

He says he will try, but it would probably be better to hear it from you. He asks if he can bring them again and you agree. Before he can leave, though, you ask him to hand you a certain teddy bear. If he recognizes it as the one Shinso just brought for you he doesn’t mention it.

(he disapproves of the boys when he hears that they startled his adopted daughter into a coughing fit, but he later doesn’t have any ground to stand on after he introduces her to Togata and the cheerful boy makes her laugh herself into another coughing fit)

The boys come to visit you again and they tell you that they’re taking internships now that they’ve got their provisional hero licenses. You smile and congratulate them and hide the bitter resentment against the fact that time and the world are moving on and you feel stuck in one place. When they mention where they’ll bet taking their internships, you are surprised by Midoriya’s but don’t tell him why.
You just hope Nighteye isn’t too hard on him. The man is your adopted father but you don’t know him very well, just that he’s very stern and that you’ve only seen Togata make him laugh.

They’re going to be busy so they apologize in advance that they won’t be able to come see you until the internships are over. You say it’s fine and you wish them luck.

They leave and you tell yourself not to cry.

You are, after all, already making the best of your situation.

(the raid against the Shie Hassaikai was eventful, though it was a punch in the gut to learn that Lemillion’s Quirk had been erased)

when the time came for him to act, he spared a though for his adopted daughter but threw himself towards a deadly path anyway, all for the hope of victory and changing the future once more

the spike in his gut would kill him, he knew that, but at that moment all he cared about was Togata and (Last Name), those two children under his wings

the doctors labored to save him but all they could do was delay the inevitable

was this how his lonely daughter felt all the time?)

Yagi burst into your room and asked you point blank if you wanted to go save Nighteye.

The speed with which you sat up sent the machines shrieking and made your left side twist in protest, but you pushed past the pain and grimaced, grabbing him by his white shirt collar to pull him in close.

“Try and stop me.”

You refuse to lose another one.

(the nurses and doctors were protesting, trying to stop him from taking her, but he told them her adopted father was dying in another hospital so finally one doctor with some sense said she could go, but only in an ambulance)

and that’s how they ended up racing through the city, her strapped to a gurney and both of them in the back of an ambulance, and he told her about the raid that happened earlier, the call he got from Bubblegirl to go and see Nighteye one last time

she trembled and gripped his hand, saying she just got him, that he wasn’t allowed to leave her like her parents already had, that that was just too cruel, and he silently agreed)

Nighteye was lucid when you were wheeled into his ICU room with a mask over your face. You could sterilize your own skin, but you couldn’t do anything with or to your own blood so you always had something over your mouth when you saw patients. He was surprised to see you there and had the utter nerve to disapprove of your outing and expressed anger at Yagi for dragging you out of
“Quiet,” you scolded right back, taking his hand as a nurse offered you an unidentifiable glob of something. It was biological material from one of the tree near the hospital, something you insisted on grabbing before going inside. You blinked back tears as you touched the round glob and you began the process of healing your adoptive father’s devastating wounds.

(organ shredded, needs new ones, severed nerves and blood vessels, damaged spine, paralyzed from the waist down, heart failing, internal hemorrhaging—)

A surgeon carefully removed the many tubes protruding from Nighteye’s stomach whenever you instructed him to do so. You weren’t aware of how many people were in the room and in fact barely registered Togata’s loud arrival. You had already healed people that day so you were exhausted and sluggish in your treatment. Regardless, you made no mistake in restructuring his insides, growing him new multiple new organs even as the glob from the tree disappeared and was replaced by other biological material provided by the hospital.

Recovery Girl was present and trying to get you to stop, but you were concentrating too hard on your task to register anything beyond Nighteye. Instead of the usual few minutes, it took you nearly an hour to finish, to be secure in the knowledge that your adopted father had been completely healed and out of death’s reach.

He was going to be okay. He was going to live.

(not like mom, not like dad)

Barely able to keep your eyes open, you met his gaze and tried to smile. “Make me worry, why don’t you…”

You broke skin contact—

(the room burst into action as blood spurted from her mouth, almost completely staining the mask over her face which was quickly pulled away, her body slumping in her wheelchair and quickly supported by the nurse)

non-medical personnel were pushed aside and she was raced out of the room

guilt immediately washed over him like a cold bucket of water because he was the one who brought her here, and when Nighteye sat up the adoptive father glared at him, and even though he didn’t say anything, Toshinori could almost hear his reprimand and blame

perhaps Toshinori was utterly wrong

perhaps she would not have cared too much if Nighteye died

perhaps he read too much in the fact that her biological parents had already gone…)

Even though Nighteye had been saved, the tension from the room didn’t disperse. No, the tension had merely transferred from worrying about him to worry about (Last Name).

Izuku sat near All Might as they waited in Nighteye’s hospital room. The hero had been moved out
of the ICU shortly after (Last Name) had been taken away, so now they were all waiting in his room. Nighteye was on the hospital bed because the staff wouldn’t let him check out. Togata was sitting in a chair because he refused to go back to his own room, and Izuku and All Might were there because they didn’t want to wait out in the hallway and Nighteye didn’t kick them out.

The time passed with agonizing slowness and still there was no news. Izuku lowered his face onto his hands and held that position.

If he had been in her shoes, he probably would have done the same thing, regardless of what it cost him.

(The doctor delivers the news and he’s immensely relieved to know that she had been stabilized, but it’s then that Nighteye starts digging into him, angry that he dragged his adopted daughter out from her hospital room and made her overextend herself, and they argue, getting loud enough that a nurse has to come running to tell them to stop

he has to leave, both by request from the nurse and Nighteye’s own dismissal, so he takes young Midoriya with him and hands him over to Aizawa before reluctantly leaving the hospital

he feels worse the next day when he learns that Nurse-Girl has fallen into a coma and he blames himself because he was the one who went to get her)

Hitoshi finally got permission to leave the campus on his own but his visit to her hospital only revealed that she had left a few days prior and no, they did not know when she would return. They did at least inform him where she went, so he boarded a train and headed over there.

Her so-called adopted father was there, tall, stern and imposing, just leaving her hospital room as Hitoshi walked up to it. Hitoshi introduced himself as her former classmate from U.A. only to get a long, cold and drawn out silence. Finally, the looming man acknowledged that she had mentioned him a few times, so he could see her, but only for a while. As Hitoshi entered the room, her adopted father said that talking to her might prove beneficial.

Closing the door behind him, he walked into the private hospital room to find her hooked up to what seemed like even more machines than before. Clenching his hands, Hitoshi remembered the information he managed to pry out of Midoriya, how she overextended herself and landed herself in a coma. Taking a seat next to her bed, Hitoshi realized he didn’t know what to say.

To be honest, he wasn’t even sure why he had come here.

(he used his Quirk on her and she didn’t drop him like a hot coal)

The room would be silent if not for the beeps of the machines attached to her. She was still and only her torso moved as she breathed.

Was she beyond the reach of pain like this? Would she prefer to remain this way?

“When we should go see the cats again sometime.”

He covers his mouth because his voice seems too loud and besides which, where did that thought even come from? She didn’t seem too attached to the cats when he took her to see and treat them.
“I like riding bikes. You probably can’t with the way you are now, but I’ve seen people giving rides. When you’re better, consider taking a ride with me along the river. You… won’t have to do anything. Just sit and watch the world go by…”

Hitoshi trailed off and rubbed his face. What was he spouting?

He glanced over at the door and didn’t see it opening so he decided to just let the words keep going. If he said them then maybe they would stop running circles in his head. He looked back at her.

(he doesn’t hear the door open)

“You don’t dodge things for very long or play games. You’re very straightforward. You don’t hesitate or try to find ways around talking to me. Even during the Sports Festival, after I used my Quirk on you, you didn’t turn your back on me like others would have.

“You treat me like a person.”

Not like a villain or a delinquent or a bully. She saw him as ‘Shinso’ first, not ‘the boy with the Brainwash Quirk and budding villain’. She didn’t think twice about being alone with him like the girls from Middle School and his neighborhood did.

“I like you, (Last Name).”

The words left his mouth in a bare whisper as he stared at the floor.

(no one ever chooses him so he doesn’t expect different here, saw that she still seemed to prefer Midoriya, but he can’t help the way he feels)

He stifled a sound and rubbed his face.

Why doesn’t anything good ever stay in his life?

Why couldn’t he protect her back then?

(the door he just barely opened quietly slides shut as he releases it, leaving the young man alone for a few moments more to pull himself together)

even as an adoptive father, Nighteye doesn’t like the idea of a boy coming in and swooping his daughter off her feet, especially with the injuries she has, but he’s not going to be utterly insensitive to someone who was losing a friend—and maybe more than that, even if it was only one-sided on his part, though on that point Nighteye doesn’t know where his daughter stands

he waits three minutes before entering the room again and the boy doesn’t stay for much longer)

You wake up to a white ceiling, but not the one you’re familiar with, and it takes a few moments for your vision to clear. It takes several moments to scan the room before you realize that you’re alone. The realization hurts and you cry quietly.

A kind nurse checks in on your later and gently sponges away the tear-tracks on the sides of your face while telling you that she’s going to inform your ‘devoted father’ right away. Apparently he comes every day, just not around this time of the morning. You ask how long you’ve been there and she carefully tells you that it’s been over a month.
You cough in surprise and that sets off a short but hard coughing session which the nurse calmly walks you through. She gets you water and you drink it gratefully. Water doesn’t hurt as long as it’s not too hot or too cold.

The doctor comes and you go through a medical examination and answer a series of questions. It’s only then that you remember Nighteye’s wounds and jolt upright, startling the nurse and doctor and hurting yourself in the process. They answer your questions and plead with you to calm yourself which you reluctantly do. After all, if Nighteye came to see you every day then of course he was okay.

You sighed in relief because he hadn’t died, you had helped save him.

(all the days you weren’t going to have)

When he arrives an hour or so later, you smile at him.

Your smile, however, turns into a pout as he starts reprimanding you for risking your own health. The anger you expect to feel from what you feel is an unfair scolding doesn’t arise like you thought it would. Instead your pout transforms into a smile as Nighteye continues citing the reasons why you were irresponsible to do what you did. He finally asks why you’re smiling when he’s trying to scold you.

“I’m happy you’re okay.”

He’s standing on his own two feet and there wasn’t any medical apparatus attached to him that you could see. The nurse said he comes to see you every day so that means that every day he’s outside somewhere, not stuck in this hospital or cold and dead.

You don’t even notice the tears sliding down your face until Nighteye is there wiping at them with a handkerchief. You sob and cradle his face in your closest hand.

“I’m so glad you’re okay…!”

(why? she doesn’t know him very well and he only adopted her because of what she did for All Might
why was his health important enough to jeopardize her own and then to later be so relieved that she can’t help crying?
he doesn’t understand
he wonders if she does)

Later, after you’ve pulled yourself together and he’s scolded you a little more, you learn that he’s still angry at Yagi. Here, you finally feel the anger you expected.

“Don’t be mad at him. He did the right thing.”

Nighteye is stern. “The right thing? He put your health at risk! (Last Name), you were in a coma.”

You retort, “And you were dying!”
He freezes. Sighing, you clasp your hands on your lap. “My parents are dead and you took me in. Sure, it was because of what I did for All Might, even if I didn’t know who he was at the time, but you still did it.”

Tears trembled on your eyelashes as you tried to explain what that meant to you.

“I was scared.”

(dad was gone, just like mom and there was no one else)

“My dad wasn’t the best, but he made sure I had food, a roof over my head and an education. I was left alone a lot, but I had the comfort of knowing he was still alive.” You lowered your head. “And then, after waking up after Kamino, I found out he was… gone.

“I had no one left.”

You sniffed and wiped your face. “It was scary. I was hurt and in the hospital. I worried about the bills for my stay, and about what I would do after I was discharged. Without dad I didn’t have a way of paying for food or rent. As far as I knew, I was homeless.”

You lifted your gaze to meet his and you were trying to smile again.

“And then you came. You adopted me and told me I wouldn’t have to worry about anything except getting better.”

You closed your eyes and tears dripped down your face as you bowed your head to him.

“Thank you.”

(he isn’t one for physical contact, but in her case he makes the exception, letting her cry on his shoulder until her tears subside

so All Might did the right thing after all, even if it was an emotion-fueled decision to save him

his adoptive daughter needs stability and he provided it after her previous foundation fell away, so now he understands things a little more, has more perspective

he’s extremely reluctant to let her go back to healing people, though, but this is still something she won’t budge on, and the only saving grace is that she agrees to wait two-weeks before starting again

he’ll have her moved back to her previous hospital though, as that one is closer to both his hero agency and their new house, which she still hasn’t gotten to see, so he makes a mental note to take her to see it sometime soon)

Toshinori is a little tense and more than a little apprehensive when he picks up a call from Nighteye, but his former sidekick doesn’t open up with lambasting him and in fact doesn’t scold him much at all. He’s glad to learn that Nurse-Girl is awake again and requests permission to let young Midoriya know. Nighteye gives him permission and adds that he’ll be moving her back to her previous hospital soon, so if the boys were planning to visit they should wait at least until then.

Young Midoriya lights up when told and says he’s going to let Iida and Shinso know right away. Toshinori smiles as the green-haired boy runs off to do just that. Alone again, he stares up at the sky.
It’s a beautiful day.

/she cries again when she sees the room prepared for her in the house he bought just because he adopted her/her things from her previous apartment are there, along with other things he purchased for her convenience and comfort/there’s a housekeeper who comes and keeps the place clean, someone he’ll keep even after his daughter comes home, though probably as a full-time employee, and he has plans for a live-in nurse as well, things he tells her as they slowly tour the rest of the place/they never get the chance to live together/

You decline attending the cultural festival because you want to avoid too much excitement and crowded places. Midoriya is disappointed that even the trump card of having Hitoshi being one of the dancers didn’t succeed in pulling you in, but brightens when you grin and ask for plenty of pictures. Shinso, sitting in the corner, scowls but makes no comment about dropping out.

They leave, but Shinso surprises you by coming back alone. You both stare at each other in silence as he stands near your bed. You honestly don’t know what’s going through his head but you wonder if he wants some kind of modification. You’re going to have to decline his request if that was the case, so you hoped that wasn’t it.

“I’m sorry.”

You blink because of all things, that wasn’t something you were expecting. He went on.

“Back when I asked you about your Quirk, you didn’t try playing some game of cat and mouse. You answered my questions instead of dodging them.” He grimaced and looked away. “I was nosy and pushy, and my actions brought you under the teachers’ attention. It’s… it’s my fault this happened to you.”

He bowed at the waist.

“(Last Name), I’m so sorry!”

You thought about it. “…Well, I suppose that’s one way of looking at things…” You shook your head. “Stop bowing, Shinso. It’s… I don’t hate you or anything. Plus, it’s not like you deliberately orchestrated things to end up this way. When I got kidnapped, you came to rescue me. You put yourself in danger for my sake.”

You laughed a little. “I think that’s the first time anyone my age did that for me. You and Midoriya and Iida.” A smile bloomed on your face. “My heroes.”

/he winced, knowing that none of them felt like one, especially in regards to her, but there was no sarcasm or derision in her voice so she must really think that/she kept that smile on her face and it didn’t look fake/
she told him that she didn’t blame them or him, and that he shouldn’t think himself solely responsible for her condition, but even if she said that…

he left after saying goodbye again

and he honestly expected to see her again)

Nighteye got a call in the middle of the night, the night after the cultural festival at U.A., and it was the hospital. His daughter was suffering complications and the surgeons were working on her, but he had better come just in case.

He probably broke more than one law that night, but no police intercepted him and even if they had he wouldn’t have stopped until he got to the hospital. He knew there was nothing he could do, but that didn’t stop him from wanting to get there as fast as he could.

Upon his arrival he was directed to a hallway where he could wait until the operation was over. He sat there, alone with his thoughts in the silence. Anxiety gnawed at his insides and he wondered if he should call someone.

(he was alive because she existed)

It was shortly after four in the morning when the light over the operation room turned off and the doors opened. He stood up and stared at the surgeon in the front.

One look—pity—was all he needed to confirm the worst.

(it doesn’t hurt anymore)

Nighteye didn’t fall to pieces or even cry, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t tearing up inside.

She was a good girl. A good nurse. A good hero.

A taxing child, but a good one too.

She hadn’t been his daughter for even half a year and he felt like a father for even less of that time, but she had left her mark on him. He had memories of her, more than what he originally expected when he first made his proposal to All Might to be the one to take her in, to adopt her. That stubborn girl who could let go of her pride and resentment but not her drive to help people, even when she had her bad days.

It was a shame that the house waiting for her—for them—would have to remain empty.

Strange how that was the thought that finally made the tears come.

Mostly it is loss which teaches us about the worth of things.

~Arthur Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena
And that's that.

Now excuse me while I go make an AU of this AU. T_T
Your stomach roiled and churned as your hands clenched tight on the straps of your backpack as you strode straight home from school. Today was another day of Hayashi, Tanaka and Akiyama stubbornly hanging around you and again all your protests and orders for them to leave you alone had been ignored. This had been going on for little more than a week and you were just beginning to resign yourself to their stubborn presence, but just a while ago, near the gates of the school, another boy from your school accidentally bumped into you and the three of them had dragged him off. You had had enough of Hayashi and his buddies. You couldn’t take this anymore!

“(Name)!”

Startled out of your thoughts, you jerked your head in the direction of Izuku’s voice. Your little hero was running up to you, his small backpack bouncing slightly on his back as he smiled and closed the distance between you two. Not wanting to let him see you upset, you forced yourself to relax your death-grip on your backpack straps and loosened your tight expression. Forcing a smile, you nodded at him as he caught up to you at the corner of the block.

“Hello, Izuku. No injuries today?”

He shook his head. “Nope!”

“That’s good.”

“Ah! The light changed! Let’s go!”

You let Izuku take your hand and escort you across the street. He tried to walk only on the white lines and you followed his lead. After safely crossing that last major stoplight on the way home, Izuku filled you in on his day, cheerfully chattering about his hard work in class. Then, as you neared the apartment complex, he swung your arm, looked up at you, and asked you how your day was.

“Boring,” you complained, lying to his face. You mock tapped your face. “So boring in fact, that I think I’m going to change schools.”

He gasped. “Oh no! What if you have to go in a different direction?” He gazed up at you with a pleading expression. “Don’t go too far away! Please?”

Heart melting, you hummed. “I’ll try not to.”

Poor Izuku, he seemed so crestfallen at the thought of not being able to escort you partway to and from school. It was basically his only ‘hero’ work at the moment.

“Things will work out,” you reassured him as you parted ways on your floor.

“I hope so,” he mumbled, staring at the stairwell floor for a moment. He lifted his head and smiled
squeezed. “Um, goodnight!”

You waved. “Goodnight, Izuku.”

He scampered off up the stairs and you walked the last distance home. Entering the apartment, you called out greetings and immediately heard back from your mother. Slippers donned, you stood in the hallway and stared at the floor.

You didn’t want to see Hayashi, Tanaka and Akiyama anymore.

Walking into the kitchen, you stared at your mother’s back as she prepared tea. The day’s events replayed in your mind and you felt your throat tighten as your vision blurred.

Your mother, focused on her task, absentmindedly registered your presence and asked, “Do you want sugar cookies or chocolate chip coo—“

“Mom?”

She immediately turned her head at the sound of your small voice. Her expression instantly turned to one of concern when she saw you trying to hold back tears. Turning away from the tea, she crossed the kitchen, reaching out to you. “Is something wr—“

You threw yourself into her arms and wailed. “I don’t want to back to school!”

(Izuku slowly trudged up the stairs. (Name) hadn’t gone to school since last week so he hadn’t been able to escort her safely like a good hero. Instead, he went to school alone and came home alone and… it was just really lonely. He didn’t have anyone to talk to anymore and now when Kacchan or the others were mean to him at school, he didn’t have anything to look forward to later. It was just him again. Did… did (Name) not want him to be her hero anymore?

“Good afternoon, Izuku.”

Head snapping up at that familiar voice, Izuku lit up when he saw (Name) waiting for him on her floor. He called her name and ran up the last few stairs. “Your uniform!”

Her old school uniform had been mostly blue with a red scarf. The one she was wearing now had a white shirt, red sailor collar, black skirt and black scarf. She grinned at him and twirled around once. “Guess what!”

He pointed at her clothes. “You changed schools!”

Her grin widened. “Yep! Plus, it’s more on the way towards your school, so we can walk together for longer.” She faltered. “I-if you want to, I mean.”

He beamed. “I do!” He hopped in place. “I want to protect you longer!”

She laughed, her face slightly pink. “Oh, you.” A worried look came over her face. “But, it’s farther away, and I have to catch a train to get there, so I have to leave earlier in the mornings. I don’t—“

“It’ll be okay!” Izuku smiled up at her. “I’ll just tell mom I need to leave earlier too. What time?”

She told him she would have to leave a half hour earlier each morning, and he nodded. He would convince his mom for sure! Tomorrow morning, they were going to walk together again!)
Transferring schools was a hassle and losing Kyoko and Shizu sucked majorly, but losing Hayashi, Tanaka and Akiyama was so worth it. Making new friends wasn’t too hard either, as there were a couple of friendly girls who befriended you by the end of the week. Nami Yamato and Ami Sakuraba were nice and fun to hang out with.

Izuku’s mom was justifiably worried about Izuku leaving home a half hour earlier each morning, but he won the argument, probably by suckering her with his big puppy-dog eyes and you wouldn’t blame her if that was the case. Those eyes could destroy even your strongest defenses… Er, anyway, the way to and from your new school went right by Izuku’s, so you walked with him the whole way to his school each day and he waited for you so you could walk home together.

Unfortunately, this increased your chances of running into ‘Kacchan’, and sure enough…

“HEY!”

Some little punk just shoved Izuku down!

Running over to them, the blond and the other two seemed startled at a bigger kid running up to them and they backed away. Glaring at the assaulter for a moment, your expression softened as you knelt down next to your little hero. “Izuku, are you okay?”

The green-haired boy grinned slightly. “I-I’m okay, (Name).”

“(Name)?” The blond kid repeated your name with a sneer. “This is the person who let you be their so-called ‘hero’?”

Damn, if that sarcasm was any sharper it could draw blood. As it was, it made Izuku flinch beneath your hands. He frowned. “Kacchan, you shouldn’t call her by her name. You should call her (Last Name).”

Ignoring your small friend, the blond kid crossed his arms in an arrogant manner. “Deku is a Quirkless loser, you know. There’s no way he can ever be a hero!”

You really didn’t like this damn brat. Glaring at him, you resisted the urge to pull Izuku close in an attempt to shield him. “His name is Izuku, and at least he isn’t a bully.”

The kid snarled. “Who cares what you think! Deku is a loser and always will be! Playing hero is just pathetic, just like him!”

You will not hit a kid, you will not hit a kid, you will not hit a kid—

Exhaling forcefully, you stood up and helped Izuku to his feet. Glaring down at the blond kid again, you gritted out. “If you do this again, I will find your parents and I will tell them what you’ve been doing. ‘And if they don’t do anything, I will.’”

The blond kid’s glare intensified while Izuku spluttered at your side. Ignoring them both, you grabbed Izuku’s hand and started walking home, ignoring the blond kid’s angry taunts and (hopefully) empty threats. Izuku struggled for a moment before meekly following you. Once you neared the apartment complex, he finally spoke.

“Kacchan isn’t bad.”

You felt your heart crack.
Slowing to a stop, you stared at the street for a moment before turning your head to look at him. “If you saw someone push me down, what would you think of that person?”

He fidgeted, seeming to realize where you were going. “Um… well, if they pushed you down…” He whispered. “I would think they were mean. And I… I would run to protect you.”

You chuckled slightly. “Even if they were bigger than you?”

He nodded resolutely. “Even if they were bigger than me!”

You didn’t say anything for a moment. “And then, if I told you they weren’t a bad person, what would you think?”

He stared at the ground. “I… I might believe you…”

“So if you saw someone hurt me, and I told you they weren’t bad, you would believe that?”

He sulked. “Not really…”

You tugged slightly at his hand, silently asking him to look up at you. After a long moment, he did. Softly, dreading the answer, you asked, “Is he the one who gives you all those burns and scrapes?”

Tears filled his eyes. He shook his head. “Kacchan isn’t… Kacchan isn’t bad! He’s just… he isn’t bad, (Name)!” He stared up at you with wide, watery eyes. “Kacchan always wins! He’s going to be a hero! And I am too!”

You sighed in defeat. Izuku was really stuck on the idea that his bully wasn’t a bad person. And hey, maybe the brat was only like that to Izuku, maybe he was a good person to everyone else.

But you didn’t care about everyone else. You cared about Izuku.

(Inko didn’t know what to expect from young (Last Name)’s unexpected visit. She told her that Izuku was out playing in the nearby park and was surprised when the girl said she was there to speak to her. It was strange and a little unexpected, but not unwelcome. She invited the girl in and made some tea and now she was just waiting for the girl to speak.

She didn’t expect to find out exactly who it was that had been hurting Izuku for so long. It hurt worse because little Katsuki was Mitsuko’s baby and Mitsuko was her friend. Inko knew things had been different since the news of Izuku’s Quirklessness broke out, but she didn’t think…

The girl left and Inko was left alone with her thoughts. She could see now why Izuku wouldn’t tell her who was responsible for all his previous injuries. Young (Last Name) used her Quirk to heal Izuku and she was beyond grateful for that, and now the girl had done something that was difficult for her. Izuku had asked her to keep quiet about who was bullying him, but she had still some to her, to Inko, and now the ball was in her court.

Sighing, Inko brushed her hair away from her face. She… even if (Last Name) could heal her baby, she didn’t want him to keep getting hurt. Maybe if she talked to Mitsuko then the other woman could do something about it? Katsuki wasn’t a bad boy, just… too energetic, she supposed.

…Izuku would probably be angry with them for interfering.

No wonder (Last Name) had looked so torn throughout her whole explanation. Inko wasn’t looking
forward to Izuku’s reaction either.)

The first inkling you got that Izuku might be upset with you was his absence the first day of school after the weekend you told Inko about ‘Kacchan’. After the faceoff in front of the school, not two days later you had had to heal several burns on your young neighbor and you just couldn’t let that go. You had to do something, despite Izuku’s begging you for silence.

‘Kacchan’, or rather, Katsuki Bakugo couldn’t be permitted to get away with his treatment of Izuku any longer. Thus, you tattled to Inko in hopes of getting something done.

Perhaps something had been done, and perhaps that was the reason you were walking to school alone after waiting ten minutes for Izuku to show up.

You weren’t crying!

Something just got in your eyes and your Quirk doesn’t work on yourself, that’s all.

That’s all.

(For the past couple of days Izuku had been upset with (Name), but he didn’t mean to make her cry!

Okay, so it wasn’t nice of him to not walk her to school and to not walk home with her too, but he really, really didn’t mean to make her so sad. He didn’t meet her in the mornings and yesterday he ran home instead of waiting for her, and today he turned his back on her after seeing her outside on the way home, but…

He had looked back and seen her wiping her face and with a jolt he realized her made her cry.

A couple of students from his school laughed at her as they passed her, and Izuku felt his lips tremble as guilt flooded his stomach. What… what kind of hero makes a citizen cry on purpose? How could he be so mean? Like his mom said, maybe she was only trying to help him by telling on Kacchan. She was only trying to help and he made her cry!

Taking a step back towards her, he tried to say her name, but she ran across the street without looking both ways and that was dangerous! Startled, he called her name for real and frantically looked both ways before jaywalking across the street in pursuit.

It didn’t do him any good and soon he lost sight of her. Panting, he swiveled his head around, trying to find her, but she had disappeared. Tears fell down his face and he yelled out, “I’m sorry! (Name), I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to make you cry!”

A few people glanced at him but no one helped him out. (Name) was gone and it was his fault. He made her cry and run away and he was no hero.)

You went home a different way and got here much later than usual. You tried to tell your mom to leave you alone and to refuse any visitors, but she sat in your room and patted your hair until the whole story stumbled out. You felt so stupid for crying because a little kid hurt your feelings, but your mom didn’t make you feel stupid. She told you that things would work out and you just groaned at the cliché response.
She did jolt you out of your despair, though, by teasingly saying she was going to tell your dad that a boy made you cry.

You yelled, blushing, “Mom!” As she laughed, you stopped and thought about it before groaning and flopping your head back down into your pillow. Muffled, you conceded, “Oh my god, a boy did make me cry…”

Your mom laughed again. “I rather hoped it would be at least a couple years yet before that happened.”

Pulling a different pillow over your head, you grumbled. “(Name) isn’t here. (Name) has gone to Shame Town, where she is Mayor. She will not be back.”

Your mom giggled, patted your shoulder and said she would make (Name)’s favorite dinner.

“(Name) will come back for dinner, then.”

“(Name) should take a bath, too,” your mom suggested.

“I will pass along the message,” you said.

The pillow lifted from your head and you stared up at your mom as she smiled down at you. “Things will work out, sweetie.”

You smiled slightly after a moment. “Okay, mom.”

(Izuku cried to his mom that he made (Name) cry and he wanted to apologize to her but her mom said that she didn’t want any visitors.

Izuku cried into his mom’s lap. “She must hate me!”

His mom patted his hair soothingly. “I’m sure she doesn’t hate you at all. Maybe you hurt her feelings, but you know better now, don’t you?”

He nodded vigorously. His mom talked to Kacchan’s parents and then Kacchan had been forced to apologize to him and things were weird between them, but Kacchan was doing his best not to use his Quirk on him anymore, and (Name) had only been trying to help, right? He shouldn’t have gotten mad at her like that when she was only trying to help him.

“I wanted to do a dogeza but she won’t even see me…” He sniffed and shifted his gaze into determination. “So I’ll just wait outside tomorrow and do it then!”

Inko giggled. “I don’t think you’ll need to go that far, but you should apologize for your behavior. She was just trying to help you, you know.” She lifted his chin so he was looking up at her. “And you know what?” She smiled. “That’s what good friends do sometimes. They get help even when you don’t think you need it or even want it. That’s how you know they really care about you.”

He sniffled. “Even if you get mad at them or they know you’ll get mad at them?”

She nodded. “Even if it’s hard, even if you made them promise not to do anything, because that’s how much you mean to them.”

Izuku laid his head back on her lap. After more than two years of being bullied and isolated… He sighed in wonder. “I’m that important to someone?”
He didn’t know why his mother suddenly picked him up and hugged him, but he returned her hug anyway.

You headed out the next morning and found Izuku waiting at the staircase. Truthfully, you were still a little miffed at him, and it must have shown on your face because he immediately got down on his hands and knees and you startled because—

“(Name), I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean to make you cry! I’m sorry!”

Flustered, you closed the distance and knelt down, waving your hands. “I-It’s okay! Please get up!”

He looked up with watery eyes. “(Name), I’m sorry I made you cry. I know you were only trying to help.”

You waved your hands again. “It’s fine, just please get up.”

He pushed himself up so that he was on his knees too. He stared at you earnestly. “(Name), I’m sorry I made you cry.”

“I accept your apology,” you replied, still a little flustered.

You both knelt there in awkward silence.

“Um… C-can I walk you to school again, then?” Izuku fidgeted, staring down at his lap. “I-I know I messed up as your hero. A hero doesn’t make people cry…” He lifted his gaze suddenly. “Please give me another chance!”

You stared at him in surprise before giggling. “Yes, Izuku. I’d be glad to walk to school with you.”

He brightened and jumped up while you rose more sedately. The two of you walked to school and after school he was waiting for you when you made your way home.

All was right in your world again.

Initiative is doing the right thing without being told.

~Victor Hugo

Chapter End Notes

If Reader escapes Daiki then there is no gang. Things get are mundane and average and Reader’s greatest confrontation is against a little kid.

Not sure if I'm going to make a second part of this particular AU, but if I did, she'd be on the hero path.
He lived in your apartment building, that green-haired boy who seemed to get hurt a lot. You didn’t know his name, but you did know that he had scrapes or burns a lot of times. He didn’t seem to have any friends. When you asked your mom if she knew him, she paused before saying that must be Izuku Midoriya, the Quirkless boy from upstairs. She told you not to say so to his face though, because she raised you to be a good girl who respects people, right? Well, there wasn’t much you could do except agree with her, and besides, you didn’t want to hurt the boy’s feelings.

It made you sad though, to see him walking with his head bowed. It hurt your chest too, the few times you noticed that he was crying. It felt bad to see him all alone and hurt, but mom and dad said you shouldn’t show your Quirk to anyone, so you definitely shouldn’t do anything, right?

Well, it was right, at least until the summer day you saw him hobbling up the stairs. Mom said it wasn’t too hot outside, so she let you take your plastic sand toys to go to the park to play in the sandpit and you had your plastic bucket in your hands when you arrived at the stairs to see him there. He was staring at the stairs, holding the banister and limping up the stairs with a lot of breaks. Looking at his legs, you saw that he was dirty, had scrapes, and his ankle was too big.

“Are you hurt?”

Wait, that was a silly question. Oh, now he’s looking at you.

(Izuku Midoriya snapped his head up in surprise. Oh… yeah, someone was definitely talking to him and that someone was a little girl. She looked familiar and she was here, so she was probably one of the kids who lived here too.

He stammered, “I-I’m fine.” He tried to smile, to not scare her. “It only looks bad. It doesn’t hurt too much.”

He could almost feel sweat roll down his face as the little girl stared at him skeptically. Great, he can’t even lie convincingly to a kid. He really hoped Kacchan wouldn’t get wind of that, otherwise it would just be something else his childhood friend would throw at him.

The little girl set down her green plastic bucket near the wall and carefully descended the stairs only to stop, sit on her haunches, and stare at his legs. He blushed slightly at the intensity of her scrutiny and protested. “H-hey, come on, st-stop that…”
The little girl ignored him and suddenly pressed her hand against his leg. Flinching, Izuku backed up against the rail but the girl kept her grasp on him. “Um, w-what are you—?!”

Izuku’s mouth dropped open as he realized he couldn’t feel the pain anymore. As he stared, the scrapes and cuts from his fall in the ravine seemed to melt away before his very eyes. Even his swollen ankle, the injury that had made a usually short journey home extra-long shrank until it was back to normal. Once everything was gone, the little girl pulled her hand away and looked up at him.

“Clumsy.”

He shrank back. He wasn’t clumsy! Well, not more than most people. It was just that today while out at the park, he came across Kacchan and the others, but when he tried to join them Kacchan had pushed him. He had fallen down a small ravine and they only laughed before just leaving him there. Granted, Kacchan glared down at him long enough to make sure he hadn’t hit his head and was lying face down in the shallow water or anything, but still. That was… rather mean. Izuku had had to struggle out of there with a twisted ankle and the hobble home had taken so long that he was completely dry now.

“S-sorry,” he apologized reflexively. A thought hit him and his nervousness vanished. “Wait, no! Little girl, you’re not supposed to use your Quirk in public!”

She cocked her head. “…But it’s just us?”

Izuku paused. Well, sure, but still! He shook his head. “Even when it’s just you and someone else, it’s still against the law!” Tears filled her eyes and he wildly backpedaled. “N-not that I’m going to tell anyone! In fact, I want to thank you!” He held back a sigh of relief as she looked more curious than close to crying. He smiled and shifted his stance, showing her that he could stand up on his own now. “Thanks to you, my legs don’t hurt anymore.”

He paused before bending down to make it easier to look her in the eyes. “What’s your Quirk?”

The green-haired boy seemed much better, but you were still worried he’d tell the police to come arrest you. So, you said, “If I tell you, do you promise not to tell the police men?”

He stared at you for a long moment before nodding. “I promise.”

Smiling, you clapped your hands together. “My Quirk is healing!”

His eyes lit up and you giggled in pleasure, proud of yourself and your awesome Quirk.

“That’s so cool! So, you know how to heal people?”

You held your hands behind your back. “Kind of? Mommy gets cuts sometimes and two times daddy hurt his foot. I use my Quirk on them and they let me. Sometimes they hurt themselves to teach me what to do.”

The boy smiled. “You have really nice parents to help teach you like that.”

You nodded. “Yes. I have the best mommy and daddy ever!”

“I’d challenge that,” he murmured in a low voice, but you didn’t know what he meant.

The boy lifted his head and smiled again. “Right. My name is Izuku Midoriya, age twelve. Thank
you for helping me.”

You smiled back and told him your name. “I’m six! You’re welcome.”

Remembering all the times you had seen him hurt, you patted his shoulder. “Hey.” When he looked at you, you smiled. “When you get hurt, you can ask me for help!”

He stared at you for a moment before laughing. “Okay, (Last Name)-chan. I will!”

(Izuku is slightly ashamed that he actually took little (Last Name) up on her offer because sometimes he got burns from Kacchan in obvious places and he didn’t want his mom to worry. Granted, he probably shouldn’t be putting his health and safety in the hands of a six year-old, but she’s a really smart kid! (Last Name) is actually fairly good at using her Quirk despite her young age. Perhaps her parents really do injure themselves that often, though he hopes it’s not always on purpose.

(Last Name) is a cute little girl with a powerful Quirk. He completely doesn’t hold it against her parents for summoning him to their apartment under false pretenses to give him a ‘talk’. He shared their concerns about (Last Name)’s safety. She showed him what she could do way too easily, so now the three of them are trying to impress on her the seriousness of keeping her Quirk a secret. As much as Izuku would like to see her as a hero someday, she has to keep herself safe first so that no one kidnaps her.

Izuku was now, officially, one of her protectors. After (maybe) convincing her parents of his good intentions, they asked him to look out for her, to help keep her safe. It was the least he could do, so he agreed.

…This somehow translated into becoming her babysitter, but whatever. They had fun playing heroes.)

Izuku was your babysitter and third practice person. The first practice person was mom and the second practice person was dad. Babysitting meant watching you whenever your parents asked, whether it was at home, his home, the park or on walks to the convenience store for snacks. Practice people meant they were people you practiced your Quirk on. Izuku got hurt the most, almost enough for you to wonder if maybe he should be the first practice person, but mommy liked being first practice person so you didn’t talk about it.

After seeing Izuku get hurt so much, you decided to make his skin stronger without becoming hard like a shell. You didn’t want a lobster babysitter! Also, later, when he complained about being weak and slow, you made him a little stronger and faster. But you didn’t tell him! Or anyone.

…You probably shouldn’t have, so you just kept quiet.

(Izuku was thirteen when he realized he was stronger and faster than before. He didn’t know how that happened though, since he hadn’t actually done much exercising or the like. He was getting better in P.E., but that just meant a little more bullying for ‘daring to challenge’ people. It was weird, but not unwelcome. Maybe it would make it easier for him to become a hero!

Speaking of which…

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”
He had moved on to calling her by her given name and she had done the same for him—looked up from the juice she was sipping on. They were at her apartment and her parents had gone out to see a movie, so he was watching her for the evening. They had watched her magical girl hero show for a while and now they were eating a snack, cookies and juice. She blinked and set down her cup.

“I don’t know,” the seven year-old said blithely. “Be like mommy, I guess.”

“A mother and housewife?” He nodded. “That’s a good thing. That’s what my mom is, too.” He grinned. “Do you know who you’re going to marry yet?”

She giggled and shook her head. “What about you?”

He managed to not wince, but only just barely. Who would want a Quirkless husband? He’d read stories online about Quirkless people who despaired their lots in life. He’d been looking for support stories and somehow ended up on that depressing topic and hadn’t been able to tear himself away for quite a while.

He shrugged. “I don’t know yet either.”

After their snack, she settled down to draw and he watched the news, looking out for any hero bulletins.

He tried very hard to concentrate on his dream of being a hero instead of the flip side of that coin.)

Inko was probably the second-best mom in the world. Yours, of course, was first-best. Still, Inko was really nice. Sometimes when you came over and Izuku wasn’t there, she would let you come inside anyway for a snack or to talk or just to sit around until Izuku got back home. She never yelled at you or made you feel like a pest or a brat like some of your other friends’ parents did the few times you went visiting.

She showed you pictures of baby-Izuku once when he wasn’t home, and he came back to find you laughing at naked baby pictures. He turned so red he looked like a tomato! You laughed while he hid away the photo album, but Inko showed it you again on a different visit and even gave you a picture of when Izuku was your age.

Sometimes you wished you were both the same age. Things would probably be much cooler. It wouldn’t feel so weird having him at the park with you. Having a babysitter take you places made you feel like a baby, but you didn’t hate Izuku so it was fine. Besides, he was a lifesaver when it came to stupid homework!

(Izuku wonders if it’s sad that his only non-violent friend is a kid six years younger than him. Well, whether it is or not, he wouldn’t trade her for anything. (Name) is a smart kid, despite her many, many claims otherwise. She knows how to make use of her Quirk and he knows that someday she’s going to be able to amazing things with it. Once, when he had a bad cold that he thinks was edging into fever territory, she took his hand, concentrated for a long moment, and then bam! He was all better, as though he hadn’t been sick in the first place. For an eight year-old to have that kind of power and control was amazing.

His mom noticed a change in his behavior and commented on it, which surprised him as he hadn’t noticed it for himself. He was… happier, lately. He smiled more often and didn’t wake up dreading
the day as often as he used to. Playing with or babysitting her was fun. Even if some of the things he said went over her head, he had some to talk to and laugh with, someone to watch over and share things.

She was his friend, and he wasn’t ashamed to admit that.

You were almost nine when Izuku suddenly didn’t have time to babysit you. He just said something had happened and that he needed to prepare for U.A.’s entrance exam next year, and would you cheer him on?

You had nodded and smiled. “Of course!”

It wasn’t that you didn’t have other friends, it was just that you missed Izuku a lot. He seemed so tired whenever you saw him, but he kept refusing your Quirk, saying he had to do things on his own until at least after the exam. It wasn’t fair, and it made you mad so you ignored him, but you don’t think he noticed. He just kept smiling tiredly at you when he saw you and didn’t seem to notice when you snubbed him. He didn’t even come to your birthday party! It was annoying and made you mad!

To distract you, mom and dad started having you learn how to change parts of them. When the plants in the small pots got sick and wilted, making mom worry they would die, you had reached out and fixed them. Dad brought home other plants and you changed those too. Mom really liked the blue roses. Anyway, you could change plants too, not just people.

Dad brought home a cat with only three legs and he also brought home really nice flowers. He asked you to regrow the cat’s leg with the flowers and it took a long time, but you did it. Now the cat, Bauble, was a member of the family. The other cats that dad brought home for you to practice on didn’t stay.

That same time when Izuku was still too busy to babysit or play or hang out with you, mom made you change her body. You made her skin smoother and her chest a little bigger. She was really soft and warm and you liked hugging her. Dad liked the changes too, but he didn’t get any because he ‘didn’t want to make people suspicious’.

Mom started yoga classes and took you with her. You learned to get really bendy. It was kind of fun.

…You may have played a mean prank on Izuku by waiting in a crumpled heap at the bottom of the stairs and he may have gotten a little angry at you for scaring him, so you won’t be doing that again.

Dad finally got you a big girl’s phone and you talked to Izuku that way. You stopped getting so mad at him now that he could send you messages almost every day.

Then, one day, in March, Izuku showed up at your apartment to visit.

(His neighbors were happy for him and little (Name) was excited for him, but that’s probably more because he was so hyped up about it rather than any interest in U.A. She knows what it is (he mentioned it a lot) but she showed little interest in heroics. The lack of hero worship in her is the most puzzling thing about her, but if he becomes a hero then maybe she’ll learn to trust them?

‘Heroes didn’t help me and mommy when we needed it.’ He’ll never forget that flat statement she made the one time he asked if she liked heroes. That had been the most resounding ‘no’ without the
actual word being said that he had ever heard.

He… he didn’t want her to go through life thinking heroes couldn’t be counted on. He wanted to show her that there were heroes who would be there for her. And now, with One for All, Izuku swore to become a hero that she could look up to!

And besides, he had to be strong enough to protect her if she ever decided to become a hero herself with her absolutely amazing Quirk.)

You were nine when Izuku started going to U.A.

He talked excitedly about his classmates and teachers and the things he was learning. Sometimes, when he came over to help you with your homework, he would show you his and your eyes would swirl at how hard his homework was. U.A. was way too hard to even think about going to! You were lucky that all mom and dad wanted from you was for you to be happy and safe. You didn’t want to end up like Fukui whose parents only wanted him to get perfect scores all the time.

Strangely, even after he got into U.A., you didn’t see him as often as you used to. When you complained to mom, she said it was because he was growing up. Someday you would grow up too, but Izuku would always be older. You would never catch up to him, not ever.

If you cried about it, well, he didn’t need to know.

I may not always be with you
But when we're far apart
Remember you will be with me
Right inside my heart

~Marc Wambolt (Poems from the Heart)

Chapter End Notes

Yes, there will be another part.
Izuku had been avoiding asking (Name) to use her Quirk on him for quite a while now.

While he was training under All Might to prepare to receive One for All, he had avoided using her Quirk to speed the process as that was something he wanted to accomplish on his own. He finished cleaning the beach less than a month before the entrance exam, so he hadn’t had much time to practice actually using his new Quirk. All Might managed to keep him from breaking his bones prior to the exam but when the day finally came, he ended up breaking three of his limbs anyway. Thankfully, Recovery Girl’s Quirk meant that he could successfully hide his injuries from his helpful little neighbor.

Since then, he’s broken a finger during Aizawa’s Quirk assessment test and injured his arm again in his first Hero Basic Training when facing off against Kacchan during the class exercise, but again he managed to hide his injury from (Name). His sling came off and he stopped actively avoiding her, but he did stop to wonder why he was doing that in the first place. Perhaps it was guilt over having a child use her Quirk on him?

Thanks to the cooperation of both his mom and her parents, he even managed to keep the truth of the attack on his class from her. They all wanted to avoid scaring her, so they had planned to misdirect her if she asked about it, but in the end, after she heard about it on the news, the next time she saw him, she only stared for a moment before asking if he was okay. He said he was—Recovery Girl had healed his legs—and she just nodded before apparently brushing the incident from her mind.

His injuries from the Sport Festival, on the other hand…

(You cried into a sofa pillow as Izuku was carried out of the arena on a stretcher on the screen. When your mom put her hand on your shoulder, you tossed aside the pillow to cling to her waist and look up at her. You bawled, “Why? Why did he get hurt so much? Is it because of his new Quirk?”

She frowned, troubled. Gently patting your hair, she mused, “I suppose that must be it. Since he’s such a late bloomer, it makes sense that he can’t control it properly, right?” She smiled slightly and wiped your tears. “Don’t cry, sweetie. He’ll get the hang of it. You won’t have to worry about him like this all the time.”

You sniffled and buried your face against her thigh from your position on the floor. Tears trickled down your face as images of the injured Izuku replayed in your mind. His arms and leg looked really broken. Was he going to be okay until you could see him? Would you be able to fix him?

Your voice was muffled against your mom’s leg as you asked, “What if I can’t fix him? What if I mess it up?”

Her hand ran through your hair. “Honey, you already have an impressive grasp of your Quirk. You’ve regrown legs on cats, fixed blind eyes on animals, and you’ve been healing your dad and me since you were four. As long as you keep learning and pay attention to things, I don’t think there’s
anything you won’t be able to fix.” She turned your head and brushed your hair away from your eyes, making you look up at her. She was smiling again.

“I know what you’re worried about, sweetie, and let me tell you this, as someone who has watched you grow up and knows just how stubborn you can be: you can protect the people important to you. It’s just a matter of learning and patience.”

You closed your eyes and nuzzled against her. Yes. You wanted to protect them: mom, dad, Izuku, and Inko. If you would just keep learning about your Quirk and how to use it… yes, with your Quirk, you would protect them all.)

Izuku went home only to have both his mom and (Name) burst into tears when he walked, well, hobbled, into the kitchen. His mom sat him down so (Name) could get at him. Of course, they both waited for him to actually accept her healing because consent was a thing her parents had drilled into her after his first meeting with her back when she was only six. His mom had been let in on the what (Name)’s Quirk was by her parents as they didn’t want to go behind her back and they also apologized to them both for their daughter’s reckless use on her Quirk on him in the first place. Thus, his mom had been part of the ‘(Name) Protection Squad’ since not long after his first meeting with her.

Anyway, back to the present, and he told her that Recovery Girl said she was refusing to heal such injuries anymore. (Name) scoffed and said she would take care of him, which, predictably, made his mom tear up, and, embarrassingly enough, also made him tear up as well. (Name) had done a lot for him already, and his mom was so grateful that she was willing to look out for him as he forayed into the hero profession. Izuku himself was both touched and concerned to the point of worry, but he set that aside to pay attention to what she was doing now.

“Um, can you leave the scars?”

He had given her permission to heal him and she was reaching out to touch his face, which was the easiest bit of exposed skin he had. She paused and blinked at him, frowning. “Why?”

He felt his face warm slightly. “Uh, I…” He mumbled, “…want to keep them.”

“Izuku,” his mom reproached softly, sounding concerned.

He made to wave his arms but winced as pain ran along his more injured right arm. He hissed slightly in pain before slumping slightly in his seat. He met (Name)’s eyes. “Please… can you leave the scars?”

She frowned but nodded. “I’ll try.”

That was fair. He supposed she had never purposefully left behind scars before because most people probably didn’t want them.

The kitchen was silent as (Name), touching his face, closed her eyes and concentrated. Izuku could almost swear he was feeling his bones rearranging themselves, but that was impossible. He never felt anything except a cessation of pain when she used her Quirk on him and right now was no exception. The pain in his injured limbs was blessedly fading away.

After several long minutes, (Name) let out a breath and leaned back in her chair, breaking skin contact with him. Sweat was beaded on her forehead and she was slightly out of breath, something he had never seen before. Then again, she did just fix three of his busted limbs and she was young
besides. She glanced at him worriedly. “D-do you feel better?”

Izuku flexed his hands in the confines of his wrappings and was delighted to realize that he felt no pain at all. “E-everything seems fine. Mom, can you help me get these off?”

His mom immediately rushed to his side and helped him unbandage his arms. Izuku beamed as he saw that while his fingers were no longer crooked, he still had scars. The shiny skin stretched and he felt them pull slightly but it was more than manageable. He turned his smile on his young friend.

“Thank you, (Name).”

She giggled. “You’re welcome, Izuku!”

(Young Midoriya was obviously nervous as he showed up at her office for his appointment with her. At a glance, Recovery Girl could guess why immediately and pounced on the most glaringly obvious piece of evidence.

“How are your bandages, Midoriya?”

The reckless boy flinched and glanced wildly off to the side as he tried stuttering some excuse as to why he was miraculously healed, but she saw through him instantly. She knew his Quirk didn’t grant regenerative abilities or quick healing. No, this was something else entirely.

She tapped her cane hard against the ground, making him flinch. “Come now, boy. I’m old, not senile. Tell the truth now.”

Midoriya stood silent before resolve suddenly seeped into his meek frame. He met her gaze. “It’s not my place to tell. According to the law, I’m not required to tell you. A-and! I promised I wouldn’t rat her out. I promised, Recovery Girl.”

She tried to talk some sense into him and even said his attendance at U.A. might be in jeopardy if he wouldn’t tell, which, harsh as it may seem, was true as she, his teacher and the principal couldn’t just let some mysterious healer use their perhaps unlicensed Quirk on one of their students. Young Midoriya flinched again, his face twisting in pain. In the silence of the nurse’s office, only the sound of the clock could be heard for the longest time.

Midoriya lifted his head, the beginning of tears in his eyes. “It doesn’t have to be U.A.”

Recovery Girl didn’t show her surprise, but internally she wondered who was the person that Midoriya felt they were worth risking expulsion for?)

Her parents had painted a grim picture for him back when he first met them, of (Name) being in danger if her Quirk became known. They were afraid, terrified, that if villains didn’t abduct her then the government would take her into ‘protective custody’. He remembers his words dying at the looks on their faces, unable to say ‘that couldn’t happen’ because those were two people who clearly believed otherwise. He remembers thinking of (Name), of how small she was, of how powerful her Quirk already seemed to be… and suddenly he himself could imagine her being taken away, of that whole small family either being separated or just disappearing from that place without a trace.

Healing Quirks were rare, and Quirks like hers were rarer still. She didn’t know any better. If Izuku had had ill intentions, after discovering her Quirk, he could have sold her out or plotted to steal her
away. He imagined her being in a cage or a room she could not leave. He imagined her crying and lonely and only used for her Quirk.

They planted the same fear in him and for all he believed in heroes and the good of the law, it wasn’t his choice to make to let her be known, even to Recovery Girl whom he could probably trust. He hadn’t even mentioned her to All Might, and the temptation there had been great. He had asked her parents about it but they said she couldn’t heal organs (‘yet’) and they told him not to reveal her, and he promised. He promised them to keep her a secret and he couldn’t bring himself to betray that trust.

*(she was so small)*

She hadn’t done anything wrong. According to the law, as long as her Quirk wasn’t used in public then technically she could get away with it. As long as she and her parents didn’t take monetary repayment, again, they technically hadn’t done anything wrong. She healed him because they knew each other, because they were friends. She trusted him.

He wasn’t going to betray her trust, even if it meant risking his dream to attend U.A.

*(she reached out to him first, before All Might, before anyone who wasn’t his mother)*

Izuku, who studied that sort of thing in anticipation of situations like this, recited several facts from laws that made his “mysterious healer’s” actions permissible. Recovery Girl told him that the law was not meant to be used to let potential criminal negligence go without scrutiny. He took exception to that because (Name), for all her youth, was not a kid who took health or healing lightly. He has seen her studying diagrams of the human body, and despite scratching her head in frustration, she never gave up on learning about the human body. He defended her.

Recovery Girl finally told him she was going to exam him. He sat meekly through it all and blushed in second-hand pride as the nurse commented on the state of his hands. The blush faded when she asked if the unknown healer couldn’t fix scars.

“Ah, I don’t know, exactly. I-I asked that the scars be left. I wanted to keep them as a reminder.”

She scolded him before sighing and declaring his examination over. Solemnly, she told him that regardless of his promise, she was going to have to tell the principal about his mysterious healer and it would be up to both Nezu and Aizawa to decide whether his refusal to reveal that person was worth suspension or expulsion.

Steeling himself, Izuku nodded, said he understood, and left on shaky legs.

But on this issue, he would not budge because he *knew* her. He knew she wasn’t dangerous or malicious or holding her Quirk above his head. She was just a kid, one he promised to protect and he intended to keep that promise.

*(for her, the only person in the world who never, not once, ever mentioned his previous Quirkless status or used it as an excuse as to why he couldn’t achieve his dream, the only person in the whole world who, when he told her his dream, smiled without hesitation and, this person who didn’t even like heroes, exclaimed with happy enthusiasm)*

‘you’re going to be a great hero!’

His little friend never trampled on his dream. For that alone he could accept expulsion.

After all, some things were more important than what high school he attended.
A promise made is a debt unpaid.

~Robert Service
Without Izuku AU (Part 1)

Chapter Notes

Sorry, not the next part for the Age Swap AU. Still... still working on that one.

This AU deals with what would have happened if Reader didn't meet and bond with Izuku as she did at the beginning of The Greatest Healer in the World. Things end up a little (lot?) different.

Warning: child kidnapping happens (but child is mostly safe)

Strangers

You decide to skip the soda you had been considering stopping for on the way home. Going on your way, you never realize that moment was the crossroads you would wonder about later in life.

Izuku goes home with skinned knees and tries to stifle more tears when his mother bandages him up. He never misses what he never knew he could have had.

Dog

Your mother doesn’t send you out for last minute ingredients and instead changes what she cooks for dinner. You don’t cross paths with a rabid dog, but later you hear about from your mom, though you don’t really care.

Izuku doesn’t rescue anyone from a rabid dog, being safe at home. His mother hears about the dog and frets, walking him to and from places for the next week.

Strength

Middle school is normal until partway into second year when Daiki Hayashi bumps into Shizu hard enough to send her sprawling. Kyoko yells at him and Daiki yells back with Sora Tanaka and Katsu Akiyama just behind him. Daiki reaches out to shove Kyoko, but your hand snaps out and grabs his.

Hayashi falls and you do the same to Tanaka, running away with your friends as Akiyama is left with his two unconscious friends.

Feud

Hayashi and his friends begin targeting you and the teachers are next to useless. Shizu and Kyoko stick with you despite their fear.
It’s only after Hayashi actually knocks you to the ground with a slap and steps on your chest that you take off the kid gloves and set his nerves on fire by shoving your hand under his trouser to grab at his calf.

You do the same to Tanaka and Akiyama when they put their hands on you.

**Alpha**

You fake sick for two days before reluctantly going back to school. You expect your battle against your bullies to continue. Instead, you get the shock of a lifetime: Hayashi wants you to be his boss, and the other two bend to his whim, wishing for the same.

You have no idea what to do, so you try to ignore them.

**Delinquent**

Hayashi insists you call him Daiki. Like a stubborn stain, he doesn’t go away. Soon you have the three of them making scenes everyday by walking in front of you to clear the way.

Your reputation suffers a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn and suddenly you’re a known delinquent despite the fact that the worst you’ve ever done was fake sick to get out of going to school.

**Loyal**

Shizu and Kyoko also suffer a blow to their reputations because they don’t ditch you. They stuck with you through Daiki’s bullying which had chased away the other girls, and now they stuck with you through this bewildering change you don’t know how to deal with.

Shizu starts getting along with Daiki out of the blue one day and neither you nor Kyoko know what to make of that. So, you both shrug and bow to what seems like the inevitable and start actually talking to the boys instead of trying to ignore them.

**Protector**

Your tentative friendship with Daiki results in you girls being dragged into their conflicts with other delinquents, including those from other schools. Not long after leaving a karaoke place, your group is beset by older boys from some high school with a grudge against Daiki. The three of you huddle against a wall while the boys duke it out and you scream when one lunges for you, but he never touches you.

Daiki never falls and though he gets hurt, he never lets the older boys lay a hand on you, Shizu or Kyoko.

**Repayment**

You scoff at the bedraggled appearances of the boys, secretly relieved that they’re not hurt too badly. They all have bruises and they’re all bleeding at least at little from various places, so you show them a part of your Quirk you hadn’t revealed to them before. Reaching out to Daiki first, you heal him, and then follow up with Sora and Katsu.

Your friends all stare at you because they didn’t know you could do that.

**Revelation**
You tell them your Quirk does a lot more than what people outside your family suspects.

It’s a risk to tell anyone, but, caught up in your emotions after the unexpected fight, you blurt out a fraction of what your Quirk can actually do. Your friends look at you like they’ve never seen you before and before you can feel uncomfortable for possibly oversharing, Daiki laughs and says he picked a better boss than even he knew.

They chatter excitedly for a moment before you frantically shush them, adding that you don’t want other people to know and they say they can agree with that.

**Bonds**

The rest of middle is spent, admittedly, sinking further into the delinquent image that was forced on you. You hang around with Daiki and the boys outside of school at arcades, outside of convenience stores and in abandoned buildings. Kyoko is usually with the group as well and it’s Shizu who spends the least time with the group outside of school, but that’s only by a small margin and family-related besides.

Izuku spends his childhood alone. He never really notices the big girl from one floor below.

**Power**

By the end of middle school, you’ve used your Quirk to hurt people, mostly other people who pick fights with Daiki. The people you hurt assume your Quirk is nerve-related because that’s the pain you inflict in varying degrees of strength.

Shizu leads you through possible applications of your Quirk’s abilities, and memory-loss is one of the first things she develops with you. This is not the last thing she coaxes you to develop.

**Money**

High school starts off with Daiki and the boys finding the strongest guys and bringing them down low. You and the girls watch, and of course you use your Quirk to help cement the fact that said strongest are no longer the alphas in the school.

Shizu actually robs their wallets when they’re down and out cold, making you and Kyoko laugh. She is unrepentant and says collecting money is going to be a thing, and you worry when Daiki agrees, but those two are the strongest-willed of the bunch so you don’t mind going along with them.

**Lackeys**

It takes less than a month for your group to solidify the group’s reputation as both strong and scary, and soon students are either scurrying out of the way or trying to latch onto the group to leech off your friends and you. Daiki accepts some of the boys as extra muscle while Shizu selects a few for… whatever she had planned. No one is welcomed into your inner circle which consists of the you and your five friends from middle school.

Unless someone is exceptionally useful, you are content with the few already close to you.

**Unimportant**

There is a Quirkless person at your high school, a boy in second year. You only know of him because Kyoko is a terrible gossip with little respect for people’s feelings and neither you nor Shizu actually care enough to deter that habit of hers as long as she’s not spreading rumors of the group. She yammers on about how the Quirkless boy from second year doesn’t have any friends and is
basically ignored by pretty much everyone.

It doesn’t bother you until one day Kyoko tells you that the Quirkless boy committed suicide over the weekend.

**Appalling**

Despite the fact that you never met him, the Quirkless boy weighs on your mind. Searching for news on his death, you are appalled by how many hits you get for ‘Quirkless boy suicide high school’. It’s not just boys or teenagers either.

You wonder what is wrong with the world when the suicide rate for Quirkless people is so high, and you wonder if maybe there was something you could have done to keep that boy alive.

**Unfair**

Shizu notices that you’re feeling down and asks if you feel like telling her why. You tell her why and she is silent for a long while before commenting that society places a high value on Quirks, so those without it are unfairly neglected and ostracized. It’s not fair, but then, the world and life is never fair.

“Might makes right.”

**Nothing**

The word ‘might’ brings the Number One hero to mind and you do a search on him and ‘Quirkless’. There is nothing. Either no one ever bothered to ask All Might about Quirkless people or any opinion the hero may have expressed was successfully kept from the masses.

For some reason, it doesn’t sit right with you that the Number One hero has never addressed the subject of Quirkless people, but then again, it wouldn’t be the first time heroes have disappointed you.

**Echo**

Daiki, hearing about your discussion from Shizu, repeats her words and grins. “I like that. ‘Might makes right’.”

His boss had ‘might’, so she made ‘right’.

**Noticed**

You vaguely remember your mom mentioning that a Quirkless boy lived in the same apartment building, so you ask her about it. She is a little surprised you remembered and was showing interest, but she told you about the boy from upstairs anyway, telling you his name and general description, and you kept an eye out until you finally saw him.

Izuku Midoriya was an unassuming boy with green hair and the day you saw him, he was walking with hunched shoulders and a downcast face, but you didn’t say anything to him because you were basically strangers.

You wanted to do something, but you didn’t even introduce yourself because you suddenly found yourself painfully lacking in… pretty much everything.

**Downtrodden**
Izuku was just a kid, maybe ten or eleven, if even that. You noticed him a lot more after that, and while he often started his days with a spring in his step, almost inevitably, you would see him looking dejected later. You also noticed that he would suffer frequent scrapes and what looked like mild burns. The almost systematic breakdown of a mere child made you sick.

**Coward**

You didn’t reach out to him. You were, after all, a teenager and he was just a kid. What could the two of you possibly have in common?

You left him alone and your decision made your insides boil in shame and guilt.

**Anger**

You grew less patient with bullies and delinquents who weren’t yours or Daiki’s. Your simmering rage at the rotting society frequently escaped when you used your Quirk on whichever fools challenged Daiki.

When Daiki proposed becoming a gang, you barely batted an eye.

The *Kami no Kage* was born and you stood at the top as the undisputed boss.

**Hormonal**

Kyoko and Sora suddenly developed a deep interest in sex, though thankfully not with each other. Shizu drily commented that you should develop a means of making sure Kyoko couldn’t get pregnant and that the boys didn’t put other girls in the same state.

You gave the boys a vasectomy that you could reverse anytime they asked while with Kyoko you didn’t want to fiddle around with her reproduction organs, so you just had her see you after each ‘romp’.

Shizu made it into a business and you treated your fellow students via a hole in a bathroom stall, though you had to give the boys painful rashes before they would stop calling it the glory hole.

**Slogan**

Shizu, at Daiki’s insistence, had scrolls made with the phrase ‘Might Makes Right’ and gave on to each of the group. You made a sarcastic comment about it not being suspicious at all and Shizu rolled her eyes, saying she tried to tell Daiki that, but he kept insisting. In the end, the scrolls went home with each of you.

You hung it up in your room and your parents either never noticed or didn’t think it was worth commenting on because it was far from the only thing decorating your bedroom walls.

**Temptation**

The six of you sat in a karaoke room to discuss the future, about whether or not the gang was going to be a lifetime thing or just a high school phase. Daiki and Shizu were all for it being a lifetime thing, Kyoko wanted it to be a phase, while Sora and Katsu were going to go along with whatever Daiki decided. The two who were all for it laid out what the gang could do if you committed to it but you weren’t interested in being anything more than a housewife and mother, at least until the issue of territory came up.

Seeing your eyes light up in interest, Shizu pounced on that moment of weakness and Daiki caught
on as well, both of them reassuring you that if they did things well enough and carefully enough, there was no reason why you wouldn’t be able to have a territory to call your own.

Fact

Kyoko burst out in protest, reminding you all that heroes were a thing, and in the age of All Might very few gangs actually survived for very long. Shizu smirked because she knew just what you were capable of as she was the person who spent the most time with you developing more uses for your Quirk.

“All Might is alive and anything alive is (Name)’s bitch.”

Kyoko gaped at Shizu’s rare use of foul language and her protests fell silent.

Commitment

After a long while, you finally decided to commit your life and Quirk to the gang. You gave Kyoko, the only one who wasn’t excited, an out, saying she could leave right now as long as she never told anyone else, but she surprised you by saying she was staying.

“I’ve been with you idiots—and girls—since middle school, so I’m not ditching you all now.”

Thus marked the beginning of the Kami no Kage’s increasing brutality.

Learning

You got ideas from everyone and Shizu was the one who usually helped you actually achieve the desired results. Experimentation meant live test subjects were needed, and these were provided by Daiki on demand in faraway locations from the high school and your neighborhoods where you lived.

By the end of high school, you could restructure a person, regrow limbs, fix blindness, purge diseases and sickness from the body, as well as so some mild brain modification, though after one particular subject you became reluctant to mess with brains.

The gang was not aggressive at this time and held no official territory outside ‘Daiki’s territory’ which encompassed the school and the street where your favorite karaoke place was, but you were patient.

Graduation

You were all eighteen when you finally graduated from high school, and everyone except Daiki and Sora went on to university. The gang was still low-key and the plan was to keep it that way for a while yet, so the surface of normality was maintained.

Izuku Midoriya was twelve, entering middle school, and you finally knew the identity of his main bully.

Anonymity would no longer protect one Katsuki Bakugo.

Alternative

Your stomach churned at the thought of ruining Katsuki Bakugo in some way, but your conscience held you back because who ever said that you were in any way responsible for Izuku Midoriya? The kid probably didn’t even know who you are!
Shizu asked what was eating at you and you told her. She suggested blackmailing and/or threatening the bully’s parents into correcting their child’s behavior, but then she cut words off as a strange smile spread across her face.

**Ignored**

Daiki had boys as young as middle school students in his pocket, though that far down they were brothers or relatives of his lackeys still in high school, so it was easy to find someone in Midoriya’s middle school to get evidence of the bullying going on against the Quirkless boy.

Shizu hummed as she made burned DVDs to go with the letters she wrote to that middle school, the local police, Katuski himself as well as his parents. She sent them all off and waited for the reactions.

When Izuku Midoriya was basically attacked by Bakugo and no one did anything, she declared that now you could get… **meaner.**

**Temporary**

Methods of making Katsuki Bakugo suffer were discussed at one meeting, and it was Kyoko who suggested trying to block the bully’s Quirk, and you, Shizu and Daiki liked that idea because it could be used on others besides Bakugo. The experiments began with enthusiasm and within three months you developed a process that would allow you to ‘seal away’ someone’s Quirk for up to seventy-two hours.

It wasn’t permanent, so hopefully it could scare Bakugo into backing off Quirkless people.

If he failed to leave Midoriya be, the permanent erasure of his Quirk would be next, and a petty part of you hoped he would go that far.

**Kidnapped**

The flaw and risk in using that technique on Bakugo meant that you had to get skin contact with him. He was watched for weeks before Daiki, Sora and Katsu found an opportunity to grab him using the sedation drug Shizu helped you develop, which was a less harmful version of chloroform.

They brought you an unconscious Bakugo and you sealed away his Quirk while Shizu tucked a typed letter into his school backpack. Then he was returned to a random alleyway and left to fate to protect.

**Criminals**

“…Am I the only one fucking bothered that we just kidnapped a kid and basically temporarily crippled him?”

You told Kyoko that no, she wasn’t, though Shizu didn’t comment, Daiki said no, and Sora and Katsu shrugged. Kyoko groaned and muttered under breath but none of you paid much attention.

You felt… **off** about the whole thing, considering Bakugo’s age, but you brushed it off by justifying it as Bakugo’s karma biting him in the ass, something that seemed was long overdue.

**Rage**

Katsuki Bakugo woke up in a filthy alleyway with only a vague memory of someone suddenly pressing a cloth over his lower face before things went black. He’d tried to fight back, but trying to take in a breath to yell had been a big mistake, one he made a mental note to avoid in the future.
Pissed off, he tried to set off small explosions in his palms… only to find that he couldn’t.

Frightened in a way he hadn’t been since he was very young, he tried in vain to summon his Quirk, only to scream and rage in futile denial.

**Letter**

Her son came home more agitated than usual, but the brat shoved aside her concern and stomped off to his bedroom, slamming his bedroom door shut.

Later, a strangled scream of rage came from his bedroom before his door slammed open and he thundered down the stairs, yelling that he was going to kill ‘that shitty Quirkless bastard’, so she had to put her foot down and physically hold him from running out of the house to make good on his threat. She had no idea what was going on but she was certain that Izuku was innocent of whatever imagined slight her son thought he was guilty of.

Her husband came over to help reign in their son and they finally made sense of his screaming, that the crumpled letter in his hand was the source of his rage, and she was surprised he hadn’t already burnt it up.

**Retribution**

It was then that both she and her husband realized that their volatile son wasn’t using his Quirk. Now deeply worried and concerned, they held their struggling son down and she pried the letter from his hands to read it even as he bellowed at her not to do so.

They ended up calling the police and taking their son to a hospital for examination.

What sort of sick person thought they could administer ‘justice’ like this?

**Innocent**

Katsuki might think that Izuku was actually capable of sinking so low, but Mitsuki knew the Midoriya family and they wouldn’t hurt anyone, much less in revenge. Hell, Mitsuki worried about them because they were basically doormats!

Still, she gave Inko a call from the hospital and asked about it, especially if Izuku had fallen in with the wrong crowd or something. Inko was flustered and stammered that no, she didn’t think so, and Mitsuki believed her because Inko was a terrible liar, especially when surprised or under pressure.

**Warning**

She told Inko the bare bones of the Bakugo’s current situation and advised her to keep a close eye on Izuku, and the timid mother said she would. Hanging up, she sighed and rubbed her shoulder.

That letter… if they hadn’t been so lenient with letting Katsuki’s temper run around unchecked, would this have happened to their son?

She shivered slightly as she remembered the warning in the letter, that this time was a warning, but next time… no, they couldn’t risk that, so as long as Katsuki’s Quirk came back, they were going to make him attend anger management classes.

**Investigation**

The curious case of Katsuki Bakugo and his mysterious assailants was passed up the line to
Detective Naomasa Tsukauchi who came to ask additional questions. Getting information from the kid in question was like pulling teeth and it was likely only the presence of his mother that made the kid talk at all. He grumbled out his answers and blew up near the end of the questioning, yelling at him to ‘go find the fuckers that did this’ to him. The boy’s mother slapped his head again and apologized for her son’s mouth.

That letter from the assailants made a little more sense, but still, the kid’s personality was no reason to do what happened to him, and he vowed to get to the bottom of this.

**Questioning**

Naomasa went to question the Midoriya family while his subordinates were searching for security footage that may have captured Bakugo’s abduction or deposit in the identified alleyway. The matriarch was short and overweight, as well as nervous even as she welcomed him into the apartment, but Naomasa’s Quirk told him she was telling the truth when she said she didn’t know much beyond what Mitsuki Bakugo had already told her.

Interviewing both her and her son, Izuku, revealed that they didn’t have any information to share, despite their earnest wish to do just that. However, they did seem to sink into themselves when he brought up the issue of Izuku’s Quirkless status.

**Worried**

Izuku was honestly worried about Katsuki and the only time he lied was when the detective asked if Katsuki had been bullying him. He told them about his Quirk and the kid was momentarily sidetracked with questions about it before the detective brought things back on topic.

Izuku finally admitted that Katsuki was sometimes rough, but he tried to defend the other boy as well. His mother cried and Naomasa made a note about Izuku possibly suffering the effects of long-term abuse.

**Traced**

His subordinates lucked out and managed to find grainy footage of Katsuki’s abduction. The assailants were masked and driving a van with a cleaning service advertised on the side. A search revealed that the cleaning service in question was an out-of-business establishment and the van was nowhere in sight.

Whoever Katsuki’s kidnappers were, they were slippery criminals.

**Policy**

Kacchan’s Quirk had, thankfully, come back and he was also back in school. Strangely, though, Kacchan seemed to be avoiding him. He would glare as usual, with explosions in his palms, but instead of yelling or threatening him with his Quirk, the other boy just turned away.

There was a special assembly that week, and the principal announced a stricter policy on bullying, and the teachers seemed to be taking it seriously because now Izuku found himself bullied less frequently.

**Threat**

The principal and three teachers had been abducted, tortured and had had their Quirks sealed away for nearly three days. They were threatened into silence otherwise the same fate would befall
children related to them and that was a risk they couldn’t take.

They were abducted separately and not told that some of the colleagues had been given the same treatment, so they all blessed their ‘luck’ that the very thing their abductors wanted fell into their laps.

Who knew villains would take such an extreme exception to bullying?

**Lonely**

Izuku was bullied less frequently and Kacchan practically ignored his very existence, so middle school was a lonely time for him. Thankfully he had his analysis hobby to occupy his time, as well as other things.

You saw him from afar now and again, and you worried now about his isolation.

Were there Quirkless support groups?

**Softy**

After ranting about the lack of support groups for Quirkless people in Musutafu and just in general, Kyoko finally drawled out that she had no idea you had such a soft spot for Quirkless people.

You stared her right in the eye and asked her if she remembered that Quirkless boy from high school.

Kyoko didn’t say anything and you went back to telling Shizu that in her and Daiki’s grand plans she had better add funds for forming a support group for Quirkless people.

It was then that Shizu suggested modifying one such Quirkless person with your Quirk, to see just what you could do to improve a base human body.

**Desperate**

Shizu found one such Quirkless person and the guys picked him up. It was a middle-aged man who told your masked self his tale of woe, of the miseries of his life as a Quirkless person and how he had been considering suicide when ‘Second’ contacted him. He was willing to gamble everything, including his ‘worthless’ life.

He reminded you again of just how this society that worshipped heroes had failed yet another person.

**Promise**

Shizu told you it was an imperfect world and that you would only drive yourself mad trying to fix it. She advised you to focus your attention into what you could do, and you decided to cement your tentative idea of a city where Quirkless people wouldn’t be discriminated for what they couldn’t help.

Daiki burst out laughing and even Shizu seemed amused, but then, with firm conviction beneath their tone, they unintentionally chorused.

“‘We’ll get you your city.’”

“What if I wanted to rule the world?” she asked lightly. “I might desire to sit on a throne of skulls and be the universe’s dark queen.”

“I’d totally help you with that,” Jared told her. “I am so willing to be a minion, you have no idea. I
will throw people into aquariums full of mutant octopi and sharks with lasers on their heads on command.”

~Sarah Rees Brennan, Untold

Chapter End Notes

Honestly speaking, this chapter could have been like, two separate parts, but I just kept going. Ha...
Most of the evil in this world is done by people with good intentions.

~T.S. Eliot

Elimination

The group took a map of Japan and sat around it at yet another karaoke place, this one close to the university you were attending with Shizu and Kyoko. The purpose of the meeting is to select a prefecture with the (admittedly ambitious) eventual goal of ruling it. Kyoko, after spending a minute or two with her face in her hands, takes her marker and immediately scratches out the prefecture where All Might’s office is, as well as the prefecture where you all currently live, and, for some reason, Hokkaido.

No one else immediately rules out any other prefectures, so the discussions begin in earnest, and by the time your rented time in the karaoke room is up, several other prefectures have been crossed out but nothing has been determined yet.

Selected

It takes another week, but the group finally decides on the Tokushima prefecture because it depends on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which are all things you can potentially influence with your Quirk. Tokushima is also on a separate landmass and you suspect that Daiki and Shizu agreed on it because they already had their eyes on the neighboring prefectures of Kagawa, Ehime, and Kochi, though you let your suspicions remain silent.

Daiki would be taking some of his men and moving to the capital city Tokushima and establish a base of operations. At the end of the school year, the lot of you would be moving and transferring to universities there.

Change

Izuku is fourteen when his life changes. He meets his hero and at the end of day, someone finally tells him that he can be a hero. He throws himself into All Might’s training with all the zeal he has.

He barely registers a family from one floor below moving out of the building.

Sneaky

Izuku spends the rest of the year cleaning up the beach and doggedly follows through with the hellish training program given to him by All Might.

In the Tokushima prefecture, in the capital city of Tokushima, a new gang begins emerging, seeping into the city so quietly that by the time their presence is noticed, it’s too late. The gang is elusive, largely unknown, and had somehow managed to get either the loyalty or cooperation of many everyday citizen business owners.

The Kami no Kage have dug their claws into the city, and though the heroes don’t know it yet,
they’re not going anywhere.

**Stalked**

Shizu is unhappy when she realizes that some guy has been appearing in many places where she goes. She tells Daiki about it and soon the stalker is brought before her, beaten but conscious and coherent.

He blandly introduces himself and says he wants to be part of the gang.

Shizu doesn’t want to let him join, but then he tells her what his Quirk is.

**Minion**

Shin Oshiro is permitted to join the gang after extensive tests of his Quirk. He takes the alias ‘Experiment 13’, though he doesn’t explain why.

Shizu puts him with her Research and Development group, people with whom she and (Name) have been working with since shortly after high school graduation.

No one really likes Experiment 13, but he never seems to care and is content to just wait around until his Quirk is needed.

**Secrets**

Shizu’s father pulled the plug on her mother before Shizu could work up both (Name)’s skills and the nerve to ask for help, and she carries her failure and resentment against her father with nary a word to anyone in the gang.

Katsu never tells anyone that he offered to help (Name) run away from the gang if she ever wants to.

None of them ever tell their parents or family members that they’re part of a gang.

You never tell anyone that the weekend before that Quirkless boy committed suicide, you recognized him by his distinctive hair and ignored the fact that he was being cornered and bullied.

**Guilt**

If you had intervened, would that boy still be alive today?

You know that you’re just as guilty as most people when it came to Quirkless people. You may not actively bully or discriminate against them, but you ignore them and you don’t reach out to them.

You may not be able to change the world, but surely you can do *something*.

**Coincidence**

While training his successor, All Might hears from his friend Naomasa about a gang starting to spring up in Tokushima. He can’t run off to the distant prefecture, not while young Midoriya needs him present, and Naomasa reassures him that he wouldn’t be able to do much until they pin down the location of the gang’s headquarters and the core gang members themselves anyway.

Weeks later he gets an update and Naomasa tells him that one particular suspected gang member used to live in Musutafu.

A suspected criminal once lived in the very same apartment building as his successor, and All Might
can’t stop the chill that creeps up his back at how close young Midoriya might have been to danger.

**Healing**

The *Kami no Kage* appear to specialize in healing, but they still indulge in other crimes to fill their pockets. Even the good they do is tainted by the fact that they do it for profit instead of actual good will.

Naomasa isn’t on the taskforce to deal with them and only gets sporadic updates from a friend and colleague who is.

With (Last Name) identified as a potential core gang member, it is surprising how easy they seem to find the other five.

**Children**

All Might hears more from Naomasa when they meet up in early February and he is dismayed to learn that it is possible that the *Kami no Kage* was started by *school children*. Those children have grown up, and they are criminals caught in a slowly restricting web of investigation.

Why would middle school students feel the need to form a gang?

Where did he go wrong that children would knowingly go wrong?

**Successor**

Young Midoriya finishes his task at nearly the last minute, and All Might gives him his Quirk on the day of the exam. There is no time to teach him how to use it, only time enough to give him some words of encouragement.

He watches the boy struggle, and he watches the boy sacrifice himself to protect a girl trapped beneath rubble.

It’s a close call, but All Might doesn’t regret it in the least.

**Waiting**

Izuku is trapped in a fog as he waits for his exam results. When it comes in he cries tears of joy and later smiles at his mother who also bursts into tears.

In another lifetime, he speaks to a gravestone in excitement that turns to sorrow and then to solemn determination.

This is not that lifetime, and he has no love or affection for (Name) (Last Name).

**Found**

Experiment 13 sticks his head into the room without knocking and announces that heroes are on their way to arrest every last one of them. After a pause wherein the information he just delivered slowly sinks into the minds of yourself and the others, he adds that All Might is coming to.

You don’t blame Kyoko for screaming, nor do you resent Shizu for slamming her fist on the table to yell at everyone to calm down.

There are plans for such a situation, but this is the first time any of you will have put them into action.
Masks

Everyone from you down to the lowliest employee in the hideout dons a mask of some sort. You, Shizu and Kyoko are all dressed alike while Daiki, Sora and Katsu also wear similar costumes. Experiment 13 overexerted himself when he first realized the attack was coming and is out cold with only a domino mask over his face.

The six of you wait upstairs for fate to coming crashing through the front doors.

Smoke

Digital Jack and Digital Jane are down below, watching through cameras as police and heroes methodically approach *Wild Party*, the karaoke-slash-nightclub that Daiki owns which stands over the gang’s headquarters below.

In the worst-case scenario, the two Digitals are ready to unleash the smoke that is *Karma*, a custom disease built to inflict intense pain each time an infected person uses their Quirk. It’s not fatal, but when it’s covered in the news, that will be the signal for the outpost in Hokkaido to unleash the deadly disease *Bloat*.

They hope it doesn’t come to that, but with All Might on the scene, it just might be inevitable.

Arms

The boys have their non-dominant arms covered in yellow liquid. That is the dormant form of *Stone*, in case Endeavor decides to get cute and roast them. Once activated by fire, the disease would become both active and airborne.

Katsu didn’t know about the others, but he was keen to not get set on fire.

Laughter

Shizu and Kyoko were infected with a modified version of *Clown*. The effects would start showing up in the next two hours, at minimum, and Kyoko was already starting to stifle giggles before the heroes were even inside the building, though that might have been nerves.

*Clown* was passed through saliva, so they intended to try spitting on heroes and policemen to pass it on. Although if you heard correctly, if Kyoko could get close enough, she intended to kiss people.

Immunity

Your Quirk being what it was made you immune to literally everything. If your Quirk was negated, however, then you would likely fall prey to the monsters you made, although when your Quirk came back it would likely flush out any diseases that had taken root in its absence. Thanks to it, you had never gotten so much as a cold your entire life.

You just hoped that you didn’t contract anything that would affect your brain as your Quirk didn’t let you heal yourself.

Skin

For the purpose of the coming confrontation, the sleeves of the girls’ costumes had been removed. This was to, hopefully, cover the fact that you needed skin contact to use your Quirk. This was a slim hope as if the police had done their research well then they would know that the ‘Doctors’ of the gang needed skin contact.
Still, a slim chance was better than no chance.

**Knock**

Sitting at the back of the entrance room, you watched the street beyond the glass doors and flashing neon lights, but you still missed the moment a hero arrived to literally punch their way into the building. Glass and shattered neon lights scattered across the floor and you wrinkled your nose behind your mask, hoping that your shoes were thick-soled enough to not get pierced if you had to walk across them.

A squeak from your left brought your attention back to the hero in question and you felt your innards shrivel up at the sight of All Might.

It was honestly terrifying to be on the opposite side of *that smile*.

**Introductions**

All Might was soon joined by Edgeshot and Kamui Woods while you knew that Endeavor and a couple other heroes were either in the background or just out of sight.

The Number One hero declared that the gang’s rise was at an end, that the *Kami no Kage* could not be permitted to continue growing.

Shizu clapped sarcastically and welcomed the heroes and then Daiki drily thanked them for knocking in the front doors.

Kyoko giggled and you wondered if that was nerves or Clown kicking in early.

**Captured**

Kamui Woods, a popular hero from Musutafu, shot out his Quirk and captured the six of you in his branches at All Might’s signal. His branches wrapped around your torso, pinning your arms to your sides, and you nearly laughed when your Quirk registered it as *alive*.

The hero suddenly convulsed in place, causing alarm in his companions.

While eyes were on him, you made the branches wither to brittle, dry sticks starting from you to your friends, and when the heroes looked back at the sounds of snapping branches, no one yet realized that you specifically were responsible.

**Mercy**

The withering effect was growing along the stretched main branches, and, seeing the potential danger to Kamui Woods, All Might snapped said branches in hopes of preventing the effect spreading to the hero.

You didn’t like heroes, but you weren’t quite ready to kill them just yet, so while Kamui Woods was in pain, his life wasn’t technically in danger. Still, he was a *fascinating* living thing, and you wished you could have kept him.

Was he a tree living as a human, or a human with a tree-like physiology?

**Mistake**

They brought in Kamui Woods instead of Best Jeanist for capture. That was a mistake. Kamui
Woods’ Quirk was alive, while Best Jeanist used fabric threads for capture.

They should have brought Best Jeanist.

Unconscious

Seeing what was done to Kamui Woods, All Might called for everyone to stay back. Turning his rage on the six villains assembled in the room, he felt a twinge of satisfaction as they all flinched from his gaze.

None of them possessed speed that would allow them to counter him, and soon the six of them were unconscious on the floor.

Cleaning up the rest of the building followed.

Released

Seeing the core six down and out, the two Digitals let their fingers fly across their keyboards. In several places spread across the capital city of Tokushima, red lights turned green and smoke started spewing out of several canisters. This smoke dissipated and vanished from view, but the disease continued through the air, drifting over several busy roads, and pedestrians inhaled pathogens, unaware of the danger as they went about their daily lives.

The police force and heroes gathered outside of Wild Party didn’t notice a thing as they breathed in Karma.

News

The villains and minions were handed over to the local police. All Might went home to Musutafu after making sure Kamui Woods would be okay, while the other heroes left Tokushima shortly after the debriefing as well.

In the news, the successful capture of the Kami no Kage by All Might and the other heroes was covered and spread across Japan overnight.

In Hokkaido, two people decided to keep a close watch on news coming out of Tokushima because while the capture of the gang was unpleasant news, that was not the signal they had been instructed to watch for, merely the predecessor of what was to come.

Reactions

Izuku sent text messages to his mentor, practically gushing about the news he recently read. He had had no idea that All Might was going down to Tokushima at all, much less for a successful mass arrest like that.

Happy in his world, Izuku didn’t realize that one named gang member used to live just downstairs. His mother, on the other hand, read the newspaper and was horrified by the idea that a villain used to live in the same building as her and her precious son.

Unnerving

You woke up to the sound of Shizu and Kyoko laughing.

Sitting up, you found that you had been lying on a hard bench. Your two friends were sitting on the floor, holding their stomachs as they shrieked with mirth.
You saw that you were all wearing Quirk-suppressant bracelets.

Prison

Daiki’s voice came from across the room and you saw that he and the other two were sharing another holding cell. He informed you of what little he knew, only to be interrupted by the guard’s voice coming through a door-less doorway. Although, he might have been yelling at both Daiki and the girls, as he had had to raise his voice over the incessant sound of their laughter.

It slowly sank in that you were all going to go to prison.

Innocent

Forcing down the initial panic, you hoped that the police and heroes would leave your parents alone. You had moved them to Tokushima City, but you never told them anything of your criminal activities. Your parents were innocent, and so was most of everyone else’s family members.

Surely your family wouldn’t be prosecuted, right?

Breathless

You were worried about the girls and you saw that the boys were worried as well. The modified Clown in their bodies wasn’t fatal on its own, but if they kept laughing, wouldn’t they end up dead anyway?

Shizu kept trying to say something, but she always broke off into gales of laughter.

Both she and Kyoko were currently curled on the floor, giggling quietly and facing away from each other.

Fear

With Shizu and Kyoko panting on the floor, Daiki told you that it was unlikely that the six of you would be able to stay together. He told you to be prepared for that.

You curled up on the bench and cried.

On the floor, Shizu and Kyoko started crying between giggles and muffled laughter.

Breakout

A power outage suddenly hit the police station, plunging the entire building into darkness. The emergency lights came on for only a short moment before they too went out. Shouts went out across the building, increasing in sound when the front doors suddenly exploding inwards.

Unbeknownst to the prisoners in the holding cells, canisters were thrown into the building and were also being thrown out into the streets, filling the area with a thick white smoke that knocked out anyone who breathed it in.

Rescue

Daiki’s men numbered many and the police and hero task forces had missed a lot of them. Among them were four who capable of thinking for themselves but also completely loyal to Daiki and the Kami no Kage. Two were entrusted with attacking the building where the gang leaders were being kept while the others raised hell in two different locations nearby that would require police presence.
in addition to heroes.

Haruto Suzuki, keys in hand and gas mask on his face, found the unconscious leaders in two separate holding cells in the same room.

**Success**

By the time heroes with wind or air Quirks arrived to clear the smoke from the scene, every last *Kami no Kage* gang member had been liberated from the precinct. The six core gang members plus nearly a dozen minions from their headquarters were on the loose once more. Toshinori Yagi nearly ripped his newspaper apart after reading the full article.

Eight police officers were dead, thirteen were wounded, not to mention the number of civilians who alternately caught in the crossfire and/or held as hostage at two different locations that same night!

**Caught**

All villains and criminals at the two separate locations were captured with minimal injuries. Despite all those they hurt and killed, they got out of the confrontation relatively unharmed. There was public outcry, of course.

For some reason, each and every one of them looked unbearably *smug*.

**Postpone**

Shizu sent a secret message to the two in Hokkaido, using an innocent phrase to tell them to hold off on unleashing *Bloat* even after *Karma* made itself apparent. *Bloat* was fast, too fast for the gang to use it effectively as a threat. *Karma* was just making itself known, and they planned to use it as it was, technically, non-lethal.

If things went according to plan, then they could get the captured pawns set free, but that would be harder, if not impossible, if *Bloat* suddenly appeared so soon after *Karma*.

**Epidemic**

Hospitals and clinics in Tokushima were receiving a sudden influx of patients who were experiencing pain following the use of their Quirk. At first it was just a trickle of patients, but as the days went on, more and more people were coming to medical experts for help they couldn’t provide.

Epidemic procedures were initiated in Tokushima once it became apparent that, whatever it was, it was contagious. Travel into and out of the city was cut off and panic began creeping to the hearts of its citizens.

**Infected**

All Might, Endeavor, Edgeshot, Kamui Woods, and Gang Orca were all out-of-town heroes who had been on the *Kami no Kage* case. Therefore, when they started experiencing increasingly crippling pain when using their Quirks, they were quick to deduce that whatever it was likely had something to do with the gang that escaped shortly after they were captured.

All Might immediately cut off contact with young Midoriya, but he feared it was too late.

After all, Principal Nezu, Recovery Girl and Naomasa had all reported experiencing pain when using their Quirks.
Isolation

The Todoroki household was covered in a heavy, oppressing atmosphere. Enji no longer went around the house with his beard on fire and occasionally loud crashing noises came from the weight room where he was currently holed up.

The children who hadn’t moved out yet, Shouto and Fuyumi, were hiding in their rooms.

Outside, plastic covered the whole of their massive traditional house, and yellow caution tape was placed at the entryway.

Whoops

“Okay, now I’m too scared to admit we did anything…”

Internally, you echoed Kyoko’s comment as you all continued watching news coverage on attempts to contain the massively contagious disease known as ‘Reaction’. The out-of-town heroes, including All Might, had all willingly allowed themselves to be either herded to medical facilities or, in the case of Endeavor, isolated at home.

Now, people in contamination suits were herding infected heroes and citizens into camps where, hopefully, the disease could be contained.

Suspected

Given the timing of the disease and some of the first hero cases involved, it wasn’t long before newscasters, televisions hosts and random people on the internet were pointing fingers at the Kami no Kage, condemning the gang for biological warfare.

People started protesting outside the prison where the captured gang members were being kept.

Worried for their safety, Daiki nudged Shizu into making a call.

“They stay safe, or you see worse.”

Trade

Finally, Experiment 13 said the best time was the present, so Shizu made an untraceable phone call to the Commissioner General of the National Police Agency. The Kami no Kage wanted the public news coverage and protests to go away, and surely Japan wanted the cure to Karma—the correct name of the disease, thank you very much—right?

She was refused, but said she would call again.

Four days later after the disease was confirmed to have reached both Hokkaido and international shores, the Commissioner General gave in to her demands.

Free

Shizu demanded more because she had to ask a second time, and the Commissioner General seemed to ask through his teeth what she wanted. She wanted the freedom of the gang members captured in their escape in addition to her original demand.

Within twenty-four hours, the gang members were free, and with Experiment 13 on the case, they lost all trackers placed on them.
Every single gang member was free again.

**Delivery**

Because Sora had a shield Quirk, it was left to him to deliver the cure to *Karma*. He completed his job and, once again with Experiment 13’s help, lost everyone and everything that tried to track him. Shizu declared it a shame, but she advised giving up Tokushima as a lost cause.

You agreed, but said you’d be back to for it someday.

**Grudge**

You’ve known Shizu and the rest of your friends since middle school. They’ve been threatened and their civilian lives are a lost cause.

The law has made them suffer, and something burns inside you at the thought of just letting that stand.

What is the true versatility of your Quirk, and how can you turn it against the law holders of Japan?

**Dream**

Experiment 13 sees a future that can be reached by multiple means. However, the flip side of that is that it can be averted by multiple means, and, honestly, in more ways than there are of reaching it.

Still, he wants to see that future in the present moment, that time when heroes and police can only grit their teeth in frustration.

He wants to rob a bank while heroes and police stand aside while wishing him a good day.

**Cured**

A couple days before the start of the new school year, All Might gives Izuku two sealed vials and tells him what they contain. Tears fill his eyes and he thanks his mentor before quickly running home. The nightmare is drawing to a close and the renamed *Karma* is losing its grip on Japan and abroad.

Izuku wants his mother cured first before he’ll even think of taking the dose meant for him.

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*People are not born heroes or villains; they’re created by the people around them.*

~*Chris Colfer*

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Chapter End Notes

My, my.

What one missed meeting will do...
Chapter Notes

I don't know Mr. Compress's age in canon, so I'm just going to go with 29 when Izuku is 16. Reader and Mr. Compress have an age difference of seven years.

I kind of rushed this and it probably shows, but I'm gonna post it anyway. :D

EDIT: MOTHERFU--[found several while previewing]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You don't love someone because they're perfect, you love them in spite of the fact that they're not.

~Jodi Picoult, My Sister's Keeper

Distance

You are eight years old the first time you see the teenager on the apartment roof across from yours. His apartment building is one floor shorter than yours and you live on the top floor with your parents. You are permitted out onto the balcony only because they built a harness into the wall to attach to your body.

Standing outside, you watch the boy perform magic tricks, and the moment you think he’s done, you suddenly start clapping and cheering. He jumps slightly, not expecting someone to be watching him, and he quickly spots you on the balcony on the next building over. He stares at you for a few seconds before bowing with a hand gesture.

You laugh and clap again, calling over that he did a good job. He gives you an exaggerated wave before walking back to the door inside and he disappears from view.

It’s not the last time you see him practicing on the roof, and it’s not the last time he waves at you.

This went on for almost two years before you actually crossed paths on the street.

Introductions

He is the one who speaks first.

“Aren’t you the kid who always claps for me?”

Startled out of your thoughts about your summer homework, you look up to see a teenager you don’t think you’ve ever met before. Your confusion must show on your face because he chuckles.

“It’s me, the magician from the apartment building next to yours.”

You light up, “Ooh! You’re that cool boy!” You tilt your head. “I’ve never seen you up close before.”

You smile and introduce yourself, and he does the same, saying, “And I am Atsuhiro Sako.”
Decade

You tell him that you’re almost ten years old and he replies that he is seventeen. You praise him some more before heading home and he waves again, this time from up close. Smiling when you get home, your mom asks you what has you in such a good mood. You tell her you finally met the magician boy, and she laughs.

When your birthday rolls around, you are delighted to have Sako performing at your birthday party. The two boys you invited from school are not impressed, but you and the rest of the girls are, and you all clap after his magic tricks are done.

Before he leaves, Sako shows you another trick, putting a cloth over his hand before suddenly pulling it away in a flourish. In his once-empty hand is now a red rose, which he offers to you as a birthday present. You squeal and thank him, hopping in place with excitement because you’ve never had a rose of your own before.

He laughs and departs, waving goodbye once more.

Friendly

You wave and call his name whenever you see him outside, and you continue watching him from the balcony when you can. Sako has a lot of tricks he practices, though nowadays he usually faces your building more often than not. Sometimes he’ll ask you about school and you’ll complain while he either laughs or offers advice. You’re small, so you can’t really offer him much in return.

One day, he shows off his Quirk at the playground sandpit because for once there’s just you and him around. Your eyes widen in amazement at when some sand disappears, leaving behind a bowl shape in the ground. You stick your hand into the bowl shape and wave it around, but the sand is really gone. He smirks and shows you a marble before throwing it into the bowl shape and using his Quirk again.

The sand returns in a pile and you make the connection. “You can carry stuff in marbles?!”

Secret

He tells you that his Quirk is called ‘Compress’. You tell him that your Quirk is called ‘Flesh Manipulation’, but that’s not all that it does. He looks interested and suddenly you feel shy. Your parents told you not to tell and you were also told not to use your Quirk outside, but Sako told you and Sako showed you, so it’s only fair, right?

You tell him it’s a secret and he has to never tell anyone ever. He promises from his almost-kneeling position beside you at the sandpit. You look around and see no one, but you still whisper. You stop after two words and have to take a moment to summon your courage. Finally, you tell him.

“My Quirk lets me heal people.”

Impressive

Sako asks you a bunch of questions like he doesn’t believe you can do it until you finally glare over at him and tell him to hurt himself and then you’d show him! Sako stares at you and for one dreadful moment you think that he’s going to yell at you or leave and never talk to you again, but instead he just says, “Very well.”

He stands up and walks into the woods, ignoring your calls. Worried, you go after him and follow
him until he comes to a stop. He stares at a broken branch before nodding. You flinch and stifle a scream as he slaps the back of his hand against the broken branch, making himself bleed.

Heart pounding in your chest, you yell at him while grabbing his hand. You stare at his injury and he does the same. Before your very eyes, the wound closes up and most of the blood sinks back into his skin.

You let go and he wriggles his fingers before saying, “Wow.”

Skills

He leads you back to the playground and asks you questions about what you can do. You tell him that you’ve healed cuts and a broken bone on your mom, and you’ve healed your dad when he was sick. You tell Sako something you never told your parents: you healed your dad’s heart when it wasn’t working well. He asks what you mean and you tell him that your dad’s heart wasn’t pumping blood properly, that you knew it was going to hurt your dad, so you fixed it before it did. Sako says you did a good thing and you smile with relief.

Sako asks that if he’s sick if you will heal him. You nod your head because of course you would. After all, Sako was your big friend! He smiles and pats your head.

Then he walks you home because hey, you live in the apartment buildings next to each other.

Leave

One day Sako is waiting for you on your way home. It’s spring, and he just graduated from high school. He treats you to a soda before telling you that he’s leaving.

You choke on your soda, but at least it doesn’t go up your nose.

After you finish choking, you look up at him in dismay. “You’re going away?”

He nods, tossing up the black tube he said contains his high school diploma. He tells you that he’s going to be an entertainer.

You’re sad to see him go, but you smile and tell him that he’s going to be great.

He smiles back at you, but somehow, it seems a little sad.

Reunion

You don’t see Sako again until you’re fifteen. He’s twenty-two.

You are on a school field trip, the first and last of your middle school years, and your class has gone to Tottori, mostly because a few of your classmates were insistent on seeing the famous sand dunes. You don’t really have friends in your class and the friends you made in second year seem to have replaced you with news ones as they’re not in your class anymore. You sit alone on a massive sand dune, but there are a lot of people around, so you don’t think it’s strange when you hear shifting sand nearby.

However, you do bristle when someone sits beside you and you realize that it’s not any of your classmates or teachers. You glare at the stranger for a long before he smirks at you.

“What, do you not remember old Sako?”
Your glare transforms into a smile and soon you’re talking to him again like the past few years hadn’t intervened. The slight unease you feel at your age difference slips away before it can settle too deep in your bones.

**Villain**

You get a class-wide text from your teacher telling the students to return to the bus before five o’clock. You didn’t go as far away as some of the students did, just out of sight where the bus is, so you stick around to talk with Sako more. You tell him you have to leave in less than an hour, and he says something out of the blue that shocks you.

“I’m a villain.”

You stare at him with wide eyes as your heart starts jack-hammering in your chest. He laughs, and for one glorious second you think he’s going to tell you he was joking.

“You should see the look on your face. Completely priceless, my dear (Last Name).”

As you both stare at each other, you realize that he’s not lying. Sako, the boy on the rooftop across from you, has grown up and become a villain.

“Are you still Sako?”

**Questions**

He tilts his head at you in curiosity. “Now that’s a question. Hmm… well, I don’t remember suddenly changing my birth name, so I must still be Atsuhiro Sako, no?”

“Are you going to hurt me, Sako?”

He blinks. “That never crossed my mind.”

“Are you going to kidnap me?”

He grins. “Now, that has crossed my mind.”

You don’t run away even though common sense said you should have the moment he said he was a villain.

**Healer**

Atsuhiro would be the first to admit that kidnapping his young friend has crossed his mind more than once. However, the impulse always fades, and he always feels he made the right choice in not forcing her to be his pocket healer.

The first time he thought about it was the day he graduated. It was a whimsical thought and he waited for her, but when he saw her he changed his mind. He left her where she belonged, with those two indulgent parents who, like her, were much too trusting of him.

Randomly seeing her again in this place had made the impulse come back, but after talking to her it once again faded away. Perhaps he’s too fond of her, of that child on the balcony across the way who never once booed at him, not matter how many times he fumbled some trick.

No, he will not spirit her away. She’s only fifteen, and a child besides.
His life of wandering while trying to find work is no place for her.

“You’ll notice I haven’t acted on it, of course.”

**Self-Fulfilling**

She rolls her eyes, some of the tension seeping out of her. They sit in silence for a minute or two, watching students slowly drifting over the dunes back towards the bus.

She’s going to be the one leaving this time, the one walking of his life instead of the reverse. He doesn’t mind letting her go because she is not his to keep. She will continue on her little school trip and when it is over she will go home.

Home.

A place Atsuhiro hasn’t found yet. Despite his skill, it isn’t easy for him to find work.

He was joking with her when he said he was a villain, but he doesn’t tell her even as she gets up and leaves with a wave goodbye.

He’s glad he didn’t tell her, because not more than two years later, it isn’t a joke anymore.

**Favor**

Your parents aren’t home one afternoon when the phone rings. You let it go to voicemail but no message is left. This happens two more times before you lose your patient and pick up the phone, just barely keeping annoyance from your tone as you answer.

A pained, breathless voice says your name. You frown and ask who it is. You never expect the person to reply, “Atsuhiro Sako.”

Eyes widening, you feel concern wash over you as you listen to his pained breathing. “Are you hurt, Sako?”

He tells you he is and he asks if you would do him a favor.

After much trepidation, you grab your wallet and head out the door.

**Mask**

You show up at a grubby apartment complex three hours later, having stopped at a store and gotten lost on the way. Not wanting to hang around outside in a shady neighborhood any longer than you have to, you head inside up to the apartment number Sako told you about. After knocking, you wait for nearly two minutes before the door opens. Your eyes widen at the sight of a masked man pressing a bloodied towel against his left side.

You take a step back in alarm, ready to run away, before the man speaks. “Wait, (Last Name). It’s me. It’s Sako.”

“So you weren’t kidding about that…”

What little of his face is already contorted in pain, so you don’t notice when he grimaces for a different reason.

**Gentleman**
Sako’s black ski-like mask hides most of his face, but you don’t need to see his whole face to know that he’s in pain. The bloodied towel in his hand is partially brown, meaning that he’s been like that for a while. Most of you wants to run away, but a part of you can’t stand the thought of just leaving your once-friend to maybe die.

Sako leans heavily against the wall before asking, “What’s with the flowers?”

Ignoring his question, you step into the apartment and close the door behind you. Not bothering to remove the plastic, you unceremoniously plunge your hand into the bouquet of flowers you purchased a short while ago before reaching out with your other hand.

Said hand freezes in midair as you realize that nearly every inch of Sako is covered up.

“Um, I need… skin contact.”

He huffs. “Were I a lesser man, I would make an uncouth joke that would either get me slapped or abandoned here, but I am not, so I shan’t.”

Healed

She scowls at him for the implication and with that he sees that she’s not completely innocent-minded anymore. She’s a naïve fool for coming at his call, but he won’t betray her.

After pointing out the skin just below his gloves, she touches him, pressing her fingers against his wrist as though she was checking his pulse. In mere moments the pain fades away and Atsuhiro can’t stop himself from sighing in relief. At her command, he pulls away the towel from his side and he catches a glimpse of pink skin. In moments it’s as though that madman with the sharp teeth never tried to literally take a bit out of him.

The flowers in her hand seem to melt away and he realized that he was right in his first guess: she brought them for him.

Just not in the way he first thought.

He’s not disappointed about that.

She is, after all, underage.

Quirks

You finish healing Sako and tell him that he’s going to feel extra hungry for a few days. You tell him the damage he had and what you fixed up. Feeling cheeky, you scold him and tell him to be more careful. He chuckles and says he’ll take your words under advise.

It’s getting late, so you can’t hand around. Sako says he understands and will see you to a safer neighborhood. Before you can say anything else, his hand reaches out to you and suddenly the world becomes a small rounded room.

You scream and yell while pounding on the smooth walls, but to no avail.

When he finally lets you out, it’s in an alleyway and you can see the street from where you are. Angry, you punch his arm before turning and stalking away.

You don’t know if he’s still looking, but, before you reach the street, you throw a grudging wave over your shoulder without looking back.
Again

Over the next three years, he calls you now and again whenever he’s injured and you never tell him ‘no’ or ‘piss off’. Instead you respond to each of his summons, however reluctantly, and you always healed him back to perfect health. The only laws you laid down were that he must never summon you for another person nor was he to summon you too far away from home. Sako, or rather, Mr. Compress, as he was always wearing his villain costume when he called you, obeyed those laws.

One day, after finishing your latest healing session, he solemnly said your villain name was Mrs. Compress.

You turned red and averted your eyes, stammering at him not to tease you like that.

“You’re twenty now, aren’t you?”

You were, and you could get married now without your parent’s permission.

Mr. Compress, still wearing both of his masks, gently turned your face towards his.

“I know I’m an old man, but, (Name), will you do me the great honor of being my wife?”

Marriage

She took him home to her parents and once they both appeared to greet the two of them at the doorway, she immediately went into a deep bow. “This is Atsuhiro from before, and I’m going to marry him whether you agree to let me or not, but I really hope you agree, please don’t disown me!”

She had to repeat herself and he pitched in to explain the (bare bones) of the situation to them. They were against the suddenness of it all, but if she was bound and determined to marry him then they could wish her happiness. They weren’t going to disown her, of course, and she was a silly girl for even thinking of it.

Atsuhiro didn’t want a ceremony after the legal papers were submitted to make her (Name) Sako, but her mother ‘convinced’ him to at least have a small church wedding. She wore a wedding dress and her father gave her away.

Atsuhiro wore a suit without a mask and admitted, only to himself, that having a ceremony wasn’t so bad after all. There were few people in attendance, but the most important ones were there, and that was all that mattered to her.

He kissed his bride and finally, legally, stole her away.

We love the things we love for what they are.

~Robert Frost

Chapter End Notes

Personally, I think it's impulsiveness and foolishness on Reader's part, and a desire to posses her Quirk on his part.
Then again, maybe it's a little genuine one each side.

P.S.

Most of you know better and are super cool about supporting my various AUs, but please don't ask for an update to a specific one. It just makes me less likely to get around to it, you know? :

EDIT: This is still two years before the latest canon (or just over a year or so, anyway).
Childhood Friends AU (Part 1?)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**A friend may be waiting behind a stranger's face.**

~Maya Angelou, Letter to My Daughter

He is the boy who moves in next door with the parents you hardly ever see. He is blond and blue-eyed, and some of the women mutter ‘foreigner’ which in turn is repeated by the other children including yourself as a hurtful chant from either at a distance or as you all circle around him. He is small and thin. He is Quirkless.

He is **different** and difference cannot be abided by the neighborhood children, so he is excluded.

You join the other children in laughing at him for being Quirkless and taunt him when he cries. He is hurt and mocked and you are among his bullies, though that is not yet a word you attach to yourself.

You are eight years old and no one pays any special attention to your Quirk. It’s only useful if someone cuts a deep cut. Or at least, that’s what everyone thinks, and your parents want to keep it that way.

Father is a police officer and mother is a history professor. They read trends and patterns in their different lines of work and they know that a Quirk likes yours would bring danger to their doorstep, so they taught you to be secretive. ‘Flesh Manipulation’ is what they registered your Quirk as, but they know it’s something much more. They’ve seen you twist potted plants and transform fresh-cut flowers, and they have both been healed by your small, miraculous hands. But you are a child and they worry that you don’t truly understand the severity of your situation, of how fragile the thin coating of your safety is, so they devise a plan.

To show you just how scary the world can be, they arrange for his off-duty friend to kidnap you.

Suspecting nothing, you go about your day as usual and exaggeratedly snub at that Quirkless boy as he passes you on a bike while you are walking to the playground. He is heading to the playground too and will get there before you do, and that irrationally annoys you.

You’ve just gotten to the playground entrance and you ignore the man waiting by the car, thinking it’s just some dad or uncle picking up a kid or something. When the stranger calls out to you, slight wariness kicks in, but you don’t want to be rude, so you pause and answer his questions awkwardly.

Things change in an instant and suddenly the man lunges at you, too quick for you to get away. He is wearing gloves and a button-up with long sleeves, and your arms are too short to reach his face. You scream and try to pull away, but he’s too strong. You cry for help but there doesn’t seem to be anyone around. The man picks you up and begins carrying you over to his car, stifling your screaming and easily ignoring your kicking and struggling.

Tears are collecting in your eyes as horror stories your parents told you echo in your mind. You are being kidnapped. You are going to die.

No one is here to save—
“Hey!”

The man jumps, startled, and you feel his body shift as he turns to look at whoever just yelled.

“Guh?!”

The man’s grip loosens and suddenly a smaller hand is gripping your wrist, helping you escape the man’s grasp. Through blurry vision, you see a familiar and hated face. It’s him, that Quirkless boy.

He yells, “Come on! Run!”

You blindly follow after him on unsteady feet as the man grunts curses from behind you.

The Quirkless boy doesn’t let go of your wrist as the two of you run down the street.

Toshinori panted as he and (Last Name) hid in an alleyway. They had both run as fast and as far away from the kidnapper as they could, and after stumbling into an alleyway after she said she couldn’t run anymore, they had slid down against someone’s concrete fence, unable to stand any longer. The girl next to him was breathing hard and shaking.

As her gasping turning into sobbing, Toshinori didn’t know what to do. When he heard a girl screaming he had run to the source as fast as he could, only to see a grown man in the near distance attempting to abduct one of his bullies.

The thought of not helping never crossed his mind for a second, and before Toshinori even knew what was happening, his body started moving. The sand he had unconsciously grabbed from the sandpit as he ran towards them left his hand after he yelled to get the man’s attention. After temporarily blinding the criminal, Toshinori had helped (Last Name) get free and from there he held on to her to lead her away.

They didn’t know if the danger was past and they were exhausted. She had almost been kidnapped right off the street and who knows if she would have been seen again. Of course she was scared. Of course she would cry.

What should he do now? He was only just a kid like her, but he couldn’t just let her keep crying without at least trying to do something.

“Um, d-don’t worry, (Last Name)!”

She hiccuped and turned her head slightly from her knees so she could see him. He smiled uncertainly and his voice shook.

“I’m here, and I won’t let him get you!”

Toshinori yelped as (Last Name) threw her other arm around him and cried into his t-shirt. He stammered and flailed his free arm.

Neither of them registered that he had gone from holding her wrist to her holding his hand.

You screamed at your parents when they admitted that the man who tried to kidnap you had only done it because they asked him to. Betrayed by the people you loved the most, you ran to your room and slammed the door, locking it before throwing yourself onto your bed to cry yet again.

*(you would hold that incident against them for years to come)*
Later that night you awoke into darkness, exhausted with a mild headache. You laid there in silence, reliving your dreadful day until tears soaked into your still damp pillow.

Finally, you realized that if that Quirkless boy hadn’t been there then you would have been kidnapped, even if that turned out to just be a lie. Nothing changed the fact that you had been terrified like nothing ever before. No hero swooped down to save you, no adult came to protect you, and none of your friends with the Quirks they bragged about had been there to help you. The weak Quirkless boy you were only ever mean to had been the one to come and rescue you. He was…

He was your hero.

Toshinori blinked, uncertain and wary as (Last Name) stood in his path, hands clenching her skirt as she glared at the sidewalk between them. He hadn’t seen her in days, not since he dropped her off at home and had been dismissed by her parents. (Last Name) was frequently mean to him and he was worried she was going to yell at him for daring to help her when he was just a Quirkless weakling.

His eyes widened as she suddenly fell into a dogeza. He frantically glanced around and thankfully there was no one to see. He opened his mouth to beg her to get up, but she spoke first. Well, yelled first.

“T’m sorry!”

He froze in confusion. “Huh?”

She kept her head lowered. “T’m sorry for being mean to you ever since you moved here. T’m sorry for being… for being a jerk! You didn’t have to help me, but you did. You rescued me even thought I was only ever mean to you. So I’m sorry for being mean and calling you names and not playing with you!”

He flailed his arms around. “N-no, that’s fine! I’m used to it! P-please get up before someone sees!”

She explained she wouldn’t get up until he accepted her apology, so he almost yelled that he accepted it. She remained on her hands and knees for a few seconds longer before standing up and brushing off the dirt. She stared at him with a serious expression while he sweated on the spot. Finally, she spoke.

“Can we be friends?”

The memory of that moment still made him smile whenever he thought about it.

It wasn’t easy getting the other kids to accept him, but most of them did, especially after they heard how he saved her from a kidnapper. That started an argument among the kids about heroes and Quirks and how a Quirkless person couldn’t be a hero, and the differing opinions ended up dividing the neighborhood children permanently. There were kids who would always bully Toshinori, but not everyone did like they used to.

Primary school eventually became middle school, and by then you and Toshinori were each other’s best friend. You played together and hung out together, helping each other out with homework and just doing normal kid stuff. He worshipped heroes and longed to be one while you didn’t care for fighting crime and just wanted to be a wife and a mom.

However, despite considering him to be your best friend, you had yet to tell him about the truth of your Quirk. You had told him about how the kidnapping was staged but you thought it had been real
like him, but you hadn’t told him why your parents had done it. You didn’t tell him about what you could really do with your Quirk and only ever went far enough to heal the random scrapes he suffered.

Your parents wanted to plant paranoia in you to help keep you safe, and, in a way, they succeeded.

You kept a part of yourself from Toshinori, so it shouldn’t have come as a surprise when he started doing the same thing, and yet it did.

Sometime during second year of middle school, Toshinori started spending less time with you but wouldn’t say why. He’d make excuses that you saw right through, but you didn’t fight him about it.

If he had a secret he didn’t want to share, then that was only fair.

(Name) was his only real friend. Most of the other kids around him only went as far as tolerating him, and of course there were still the bullies that taunted him for something he couldn’t control. He had saved her on that long ago day, and in return she gave him friendship.

He wanted to tell her everything, to tell her about Nana and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity she was giving him, but he had been told not to tell anyone, so he couldn’t.

Every time (Name) gazed at him with the sad look in her eyes as he made excuses to go see Nana, Toshinori wanted to take a leaf out of her book and do a dogeza. He didn’t, but he had vague plans to do so someday, on a day he could finally tell her everything and apologize for making her sad.

He wanted to make a world where everyone could live with a smile, and her smile was at the forefront of his thoughts as he trained every day to make his dream a reality. He wanted her to smile. He wanted her to live a safe world.

He never wanted that terrible, fake kidnapping to ever become a reality.

So Toshinori threw himself into his training and hoped he could live up to Nana’s expectations.

Toshinori rejected your Valentine’s Day chocolates with an apology, saying he was on a special training diet.

All your repressed anger and resentment suddenly burst forth, and you threw the chocolates at him, screaming that he was awful because even if he was on a diet, he could have taken the chocolates and lied to you about eating them instead of outright rejecting all the effort you put into them. He was bewildered and hurt, and asked if you wanted him to lie to you like that.

Tears trembled on your eyelashes and fell and you clenched your hands at your sides and yelled, “You already are anyway, so what would be another one?!”

You didn’t see the stricken look on his face or notice him reaching out to you because you were too busy turning on your heel to run away.

As you ran away, you wished you hadn’t thrown the chocolates at him. What if he opened them and saw what you had written there?

You felt like an idiot.

Why did you pick today to tell him that you liked him as more than a friend?
Toshinori was crushed after seeing what (Name) had written in white chocolate. It was no wonder she reacted that way she did—her feelings were in those chocolates, and he had dismissed them without so much as a glance.

If only he had done things differently, he would be so happy instead of so miserable!

Nana knocked him on his back and asked why he wasn’t concentrating. He tried to sidestep the issue, but she wouldn’t let him, so he told her about what happened at school with his best friend. He looked up at his mentor and asked if it was possible to be a hero and if a hero could have a special someone in their life.

Nana sat down next to him and told him a little about her life. She said she was married and even had a kid. She smiled and told him it was hard work, but with an understanding partner it was possible to balance both love and hero work. She ruffled his hair and told him he was maybe a little too young to be think about love, though. After all, he and his friend were both still growing kids.

He whined and insisted he wasn’t a kid, but Nana just laughed.

It was a while longer before he asked if he could tell her about One for All. Nana was quiet as she stared off in the distance.

“There are going to be people in your life that you will trust with your life, Toshinori. It’s going to be up to you to decide who you tell when One for All is finally yours.” She looked over at him and grinned. “If you trust this girl, then who am I to say otherwise?”

Toshinori slowly smiled. He did trust (Name).

Once One for All was his, he would tell her!

You resented Toshinori and felt embarrassed for having your failed confession turn out the way it did. The day after you exploded at him, he tried to tell you that he opened the box, but you didn’t want to hear his answer, so you rushed past him without a word. Ignoring his bewildered calls of your name, you ignored him in that moment and proceeded to do so for the rest of the day.

Finally, after school, he cornered you on your way home.

“(Name), please talk to me.”

You kept your eyes averted and held a book close to your chest like a wall between you two.

“Look, I’m sorry about yesterday, okay? I-I should’ve handled that differently. (Name), about what you wrote—“

You couldn’t!

In a burst of humiliation, you forced your way past him and strode down the sidewalk.

“I feel the same!”

Coming to a sudden halt, you squeezed your book as your heart raced in your chest. Was Toshinori —?

“But I can’t be your boyfriend yet.”

Crushed, you missed the significance of ‘yet’. 
“I—I have something that I need to focus all my attention on. I can’t give you the attention you need; the attention you deserve. I… I’m afraid I’ll make you lonely. I think I already am, and if we start being boyfriend and girlfriend then I’m scared I’ll only make it worse. I’m scared I’ll only make you feel more lonely when that’s the last thing I want.”

Your back was still facing him as tears welled in your eyes. You were lonely. You did miss him. You had other friends, but none of them were Toshinori.

(the only person who ran to save you, someone who had every reason to let the worst happen to you yet never thought of letting you get hurt for even a second if there was something he could do)

“(Name), I… I’m going to be a hero! That’s what I’m so busy with lately. I’m in training, and I’m aiming for U.A. I’m going to dedicate my life to making this a world where everyone can smile!”

There was a pause before he spoke again, softly and warmly.

“A world where you can smile and be safe.”

You turn and look over your shoulder to see him standing there with a smile and tears in his own eyes.

She finally turned around to face him and he saw tears trickle down her face. He made her cry, but maybe she would let him make it better?

She took a deep breath and slowly exhaled before looking at him again. Her gaze was firmer this time and a lot of the sadness seemed to have finally gone from her.

“I… I understand that your dream is important to you. I’ll try to understand better and be more patient.” She gave him an uncertain grin. “I’m sorry for yelling at you and for throwing the chocolate at you.”

He shook his head. “I’m sorry for pushing you away. I should have explained things better.”

Stepped forward, he took one of her hands away from her book, feeling his face warm even as hers blushed. He held her hand between his and met her eyes. “I’ll tell you everything one day. I promise.”

Her eyes widened for a moment before she suddenly beamed softly at him. “Okay. When that day comes, I’ll tell you about my secret too.”

He stared for a long drawn out moment.

“What secret?”

But she just giggled and said she wouldn’t tell him until that promised day.

Well, now that was going to be at the back of his mind from now until then…

The promised day didn’t come.

One week during third year of middle school, Toshinori missed a few days and when he came back he wasn’t the same. There was something heavier about him, a sadness that dwelled in his eyes and on his back, yet he wouldn’t share what that was.
Toshinori just refused to let you back in again.

He grew distant and while sometimes you would catch him looking at you, he would always look away when he noticed you staring, noticed that he was caught looking.

As the end of third year raced towards everyone, Toshinori didn’t make any moves to bridge the distance he had promised to mend.

Heart breaking, you watched your best friend take his diploma and just… walk away from you.

Nana had a family. She lost her husband to him, to All for One.

Villains could take the loved ones of heroes.

Villains might take (Name) away from him.

All for One would take (Name) away from him.

This happened shortly after he promised (Name) that he would tell her everything someday, and he was still naïve enough to believe that he would be able to keep her a secret, that she wouldn’t be in danger from All for One. Toshinori still planned on telling her everything, on breaking the wall that stood between them. He wanted her in his life.

But then, just a few months later, All for One killed Nana too.

His beloved mentor, dead.

Her death tore him up inside and he knew he would never be the same again. Nana’s death would always hang over him because he should have done more. He should have protected her. He should have been there. Gran Torino told him to get his head out of his ass, that there was nothing a kid like him could have done, and wasn’t that the painful truth?

Toshinori couldn’t protect Nana, couldn’t save her.

Was that what he wanted for (Name)?

(broken, bloodied, dead)

His best friend, the girl he cared for, the girl he loved… No. He can’t.

(his mentor was married, his mentor was widowed, his mentor was killed)

He won’t do that to her. He won’t put her in danger like that.

Keeping her safe means keeping her away from him.

(means cutting ties and making her seem unimportant to him, making her as insignificant in his nemesis’s eyes as he could)

So Toshinori quietly pulled away from her and went to U.A. without looking back.

(a lie, a lie, a lie—he still has her photo and he cradles it sometimes and begs for forgiveness to empty air while dreaming of a life he let slip through his fingers)
I guess that’s just part of loving people: You have to give things up. Sometimes you even have to give them up.

~Lauren Oliver, Delirium

Chapter End Notes

Not sure if I'm going to make part two. I should since there's thing unresolved, but I'm gonna leave it there for now. :P
You know it's never fifty-fifty in a marriage. It's always seventy-thirty, or sixty-forty. Someone falls in love first. Someone puts someone else up on a pedestal. Someone works very hard to keep things rolling smoothly; someone else sails along for the ride.

~Jodi Picoult, Mercy

Consummation

His bride confesses to having dated boys in high school but insists she’s never ‘gone all the way’. He wouldn’t be broken up about it if she wasn’t a virgin, but it still makes him glad to think that no one has spoiled her before he made her his own. A cursory check below with his tongue confirms that she was telling the truth, and Atsuhiro can’t stop himself from smirking, at least to himself. He takes ample time to prepare her, to break through her discomfort and make her feel good. He is no virgin, having had plenty of experiences to draw on for her first time.

He makes her climax before even considering penetration, and it’s only then that he moves to join their bodies. He is no fool who brags about how ‘tight’ his partner is because he knows enough to pleasure his partner, to arouse them. She does not cry in pain and soon her discomfort slips away, eroded by pleasurable friction and skilled hands. She is not a loud partner, but she does cling, and her muffled noises are music to his ears.

She is young and energetic and, now, completely and utterly his.

Intertwined

Atsuhiro is a villain and he makes his living by committing crimes. He rarely stays in one place for very long, preferring to go from place to place in order to avoid getting dragged into conflicts he wants no part of. He’s searching for something, a purpose larger than himself, but he hasn’t found it yet and so he remains as an independent villain.

You are a civilian and a student on the path to becoming a nurse. You lived in a shabby apartment near the nursing training school you were attending, but since marrying Atsuhiro he has moved you into a better apartment. Your husband is rarely home, but you’re so swamped at university that you rarely have the time to miss him when he’s gone.

He doesn’t force you to abandon your goals, nor does he force you to accompany him, but sometimes he will return to the apartment with various wounds, some already healing as he doesn’t rush back to you for every little thing.

Your paths in life couldn’t be more different, but somehow you’ve intertwined them for better or worse. The day may come when Atsuhiro is imprisoned or killed, or even when you may be targeted
for being his wife, but that is in the maybe-future.

You like your life, and Atsuhiro doesn’t seem to have any complaints about his either.

**Achieved**

You are twenty-two by the time you complete your third year and graduated from the nursing training school with a diploma. The national nursing license exam had followed soon after, which including a Quirk appraisal that you lied to hell about, and then there was the required postgraduate clinical training you had to complete, but you got your nursing license and successfully completed the postgraduate clinical training. You had done it! You were now a nurse!

You just had to find a job, but still.

Atsuhiro had been away for almost that entire time, but you sent him a text message and two days later you returned home after several job interviews to find him waiting with flowers. Your fatigue slipped away, washed over by excited happiness at finding your husband at home, and you threw yourself into his arms as he congratulated you. You kissed and he told you he was proud of you. He teased you about wanting to do you in your nurse’s uniform when you got one, but you just laughed and told him he’d have to settle for a costume.

He took you literally and three months later he came home and showed you your new illegal costume.

**Regalia**

As a villain, Atsuhiro’s costume reflected his overall nature and inclination towards being an entertainer.

The costume he brought home for you looked like a mix between a nun’s clothing and a nurse’s uniform, with an overall dark-colored theme. Red crosses were visible on several parts but had no white background to sit against. The only white part was your mask, a blank copy of the various ones Atsuhiro wore as Mr. Compress. Included with the costume was a balaclava, also copied from his own costume. He insisted you try it on, so you did, and you had to admit it didn’t look as terrible as you first thought it would.

He admitted he was having second thoughts about calling you Mrs. Compress. If anyone discovered his identity, then it would be easy to find yours as well. Granted, the connection from him to you would be inevitable as you were his wife, but if you had a different villain name then there was at least a chance you could play dumb if police or heroes ever came knocking at your door while he was away.

So after some brainstorming and back and forth between you two, the name you finally settled on was ‘Nightingale’, after that long-ago famous nurse.

**Outing**

You were a week from starting your first job when Atsuhiro came home and asked if you would be willing to go out with him in your villain persona. You reminded him that you lacked the physical capabilities to keep up with him, not to mention that you were easily intimidated by others. He replied that he would compress you and carry you around, and so for being intimidated, only exposure could help you overcome that. Against your better judgement, you agreed, and thus tentatively began your career as a villain.
When he let you out of the marble, you found yourself in an unfamiliar alleyway. Atsuhiro, no, Mr. Compress, offered you his hand and helped you to your feet. He then led you into a bar where you took seats at a booth. However, instead of sitting across from each other, he had you sit next to him so he could block people from easily getting to you.

The night was nothing you thought it would be, and instead of being outside committing a crime and fleeing from heroes, you sat in a slightly smoky bar with your husband and neither of you drank the alcohol he ordered. There were some introductions that night, and you hardly said a word, but Atsuhiro seemed pleased enough when it was finally just you two again.

**Exposure**

Being a nurse was a demanding job and it wasn’t often that you were able to go out with Atsuhiro in your costumes. In fact, it was difficult to even spend time at home with him in his civilian guise because he was so often away. Truthfully, you weren’t entirely sure if you were relieved or annoyed by your current predicament.

You were only a couple months into your new job at a nearby hospital when news of an attack on a class of first-years at U.A. broke out. Being married to a villain gave you a slightly skewed worldview and while you were mildly horrified at the thought of high school kids being attacked, you didn’t really pay much attention to it. The kids seemed to come out fine as they still participated in the Sports Festival a couple weeks later.

Then, as with most people, you heard about the Hosu incident and how Endeavor captured the Hero Killer. Atsuhiro came home and showed you a video featuring said Hero Killer and asked you what you thought about it. You had no strong opinion, but noted that Atsuhiro seemed captivated by the other villain’s words.

It really shouldn’t have come as a surprise when he announced he was joining the League of Villains, but it still did.

**Separation**

Atsuhiro warned you that his absences might be longer than usual as he planned on staying with the League of Villains for an indefinite amount of time. You told him you understood and promised that if he called with an emergency that you would rush to his side as soon as possible. The League was stationed three prefectures away, so it was not an insignificant distance that could be quickly traveled. Neither of you would be able to make easy visits to the other, so before his departure you devoured him like you were never going to see him again.

Your husband leaves you waiting at home and you continue going to work.

Through the news you hear of the League of Villains’ attack on a U.A. training camp trip, and later, with the rest of Japan, you witness the destruction of Kamino Ward and the true form of All Might.

And you wonder if you could treat such advanced malnutrition, a thought at the back of your head that you want to explore, but later, at a time when you’re not too busy being horrified by the destruction wrought by the League of Villains’ supposed leader.

You call Atsuhiro repeatedly but his phone isn’t on so you can’t even leave a message for him.

In despair, you quit your job after telling your supervisor that your husband was at Kamino Ward, and then you break the lease on your apartment while taking precious few things while abandoning the rest, though your parents pack up and rescue what you leave behind.
When he finally answers his phone, you blurt out, “I’m coming to your side, Atsuhiro!”

**Commitment**

His wife informs him that she quit her job and broke the lease on their apartment and it takes him several moments before he decides that he’s pleased by this development. He married her to have access to her Quirk, to make sure that no one else would take her away from his reach, and he had been somewhat frustrated by her determination to have a normal life and career.

Of course, he puts some stock into the old adage that a happy wife means a happy life, so he never argued with her about what he’d like her to do because it was still her life. He wasn’t going to be an abusive husband as the mere thought left a sour taste in his mouth.

He tells Shigaraki that he’s going to go get his wife and when the volatile leader starts screaming at him that he can’t, he smoothly counters with the fact that she’s a healer. The young man’s mentor was captured only a few days ago, so now probably isn’t the best time to bring in new people, but for her Mr. Compress is willing to risk some anger. The distraught leader quietens but grudgingly giving him permission to fetch her, so that’s what he does. He meets her at the station without his costume and greets her with open arms. The sheer relief on her face when she sees him makes him smile.

If he stops at a love hotel before bringing her back, well, that’s their little secret.

**Introductions**

They change in an abandoned building a few streets away from where the League is currently hiding out, and he compresses her before calling Kurogiri. Warping over to where the League is collected, waiting to see Mr. Compress’s wife and their new member, he bows and releases his wife from her marble.

He is gentler with her releases and their practice from before their separation pays off. She appears with nary a stumble, and eyes flicker over the red crosses on her costume. She curtseys slightly and introduces herself.

Shigaraki glances over at Toga, but before Toga can move, Mr. Compress is by his wife’s side and explains that her Quirk doesn’t work on herself. If Shigaraki wants a demonstration of her abilities, he himself is more than happy to serve for said demonstration. Toga gleefully stabs his proffered arm, his sleeve pulled back before the stab.

The League witnesses Nightingale heal Mr. Compress’s wound in seconds, leaving behind only a faint pink mark where the stab was made.

Shigaraki announces that she isn’t worthless and that she can stay.

**Disowned**

With the heroes and police on high alert, Shigaraki scatters his League for the interim.

You call your parents on a burner phone only to learn that the police have been looking you ever since you suddenly quit your job. Your father asks why the police would be looking for you and why they felt the need to have hero support present. Atsuhiro is with you, donned in his costume as you both stand on top of a random building far away from anyone else from the League. You tell him your parents want to know why you’re suddenly wanted by the police for questioning.

“You can tell them, if you want.”
It is difficult to admit to your parents that you are married to a villain and that you have decided to become one as well. Your father is furious and you hear your mother crying in the background.

“I have no daughter!”

Atsuhiro holds you and rocks you, and wipes away your tears as you cry your broken heart out.

Disgust

As Mr. Compress has already found a new member for the League in you, his orders were to train your healing ability as you hadn’t been able to do so previously. That statement was mostly true, if cats weren’t included. For the past several years, you had practiced your Quirk on the various strays in your city. You were capable of modifications and even regeneration. In addition, you could create and manipulate bacteria and viruses, although the latter required more time.

However, you did not tell your husband the whole truth. You admitted that you might be able to regenerate lost limbs and organs, but such endeavors required time and material. Later, after he had built a temporary base-slash-torture chamber and had kidnapped a random person, you regretted saying anything at all, especially after he casually used his Quirk to remove the victim’s arm.

After you finished throwing up, he apologized for his sudden action, musing aloud that you must not have seen many wounds during your short stint as a legal nurse in a hospital. While true, it wasn’t just the blood and screaming that got to you, it was also the sheer *ease* with which he had performed the amputation that pushed you over the edge into vomiting your stomach’s contents.

Limitations

Mr. Compress used his Quirk to bring you small trees, roots and all, though that meant he also brought along a fair amount of dirt. As it wasn’t a permanent base, neither of you bothered to clean up the dirt that was left behind after he used his Quirk to grab it to throw it out. The man, possibly correctly guessing that you were only doing what you did because of your partner’s insistence, frequently tried to beg you to help him escape. This continued until Mr. Compress suggested you try muting the man with your Quirk, which you soon did. It was not as though the thought hadn’t occurred to you, it was just that you hadn’t wanted to modify him against his will as he was already being tortured.

The healing and regeneration of missing limbs went on until Shigaraki called Mr. Compress with orders to return. You held back a sigh of relief, glad that it was over and hoped that the man would be able to go home to live his life.

You didn’t expect Mr. Compress to behead the poor man.

“What did you do?! I can’t fix dead!”

Greedy

His wife is upset with him and Atsuhiro can admit to himself in his mind that he might have been too hasty in his disposal of their guinea pig. He should have used his Quirk on her first before disposing of the evidence. His wife would have to get used to the violence and death that came with being a villain, but he can admit that for someone who probably would have stayed a civilian, it was probably best to take it slow.

For now, though, he had an angry, silent wife to manage. He warned her that he was going to use his Quirk on her, and he only got a disgruntled hum instead of her usual, accepting “Okay”. Slightly
perturbed by her cold shoulder, he nonetheless compressed her and safely tucked her away before heading out.

As he made his way to the rendezvous point, Atsuhiro wondered if he had done the right thing in marrying her.

Actually, in all honestly, he knew it wasn’t the right thing. The right and honorable thing would have been to walk out of her life and never talk to her again, but he wasn’t so noble as to be able to do that.

He was well aware he was much too selfish to just let her go, but what was her reason for marrying him?

Brooding

You are sullen and quiet when released from your marble, but you don’t make a scene, and the others don’t know you well enough yet to realize that you’re angry with Mr. Compress.

The place you are let out in is a dirty and apparently abandoned building of some sort. Other members of the League are present, but you note that Kurogiri doesn’t seem to be near. Your husband takes a seat that places him above everyone else and Toga sits on the ground near his feet. She cheerfully pats the spot next to her, asking you sit down. Somewhat wary of the homicidal teenager, you take a seat and immediately find yourself being peppered with questions about how you met Mr. Compress and if you’ve ever stabbed him.

You quietly tell her that no, you haven’t stabbed your husband, and she eagerly advises you to do so before falling into a spiel about Stain and how she wants to become him. Endlessly thankful that you’re not a man and therefore (probably) safe from her obsession, you absently nod along. Shigaraki finally tells Toga to shut up.

Twice is almost there, and he’s bringing company.

Love

Negotiations break down and the yakuza boss somehow explodes the top half of Magne’s body. Your husband is leaping towards Overhaul before you and Toga are even on your feet, and you don’t think he registers Shigaraki’s yell telling him to wait. Before Compress can manage to touch Overhaul to compress him, you are finally on your feet and moving with Toga, and in your head echoes the fact that you can’t fix dead, so there’s nothing you can do for Magne at this point.

“Don’t touch me!”

That is the shout you hear from Overhaul just before your husband’s arm explodes, completely obliterated.

“Husband!”

Atsuhiro is the boy from across the alleyway, the boy with the magic tricks, and no matter how despicable you may find some of his actions, a part of you will always be charmed by him.

Atsuhiro is the young man on the Tottori sand dunes, a half-forgotten face that turns into a charmer who confesses to being a villain, but you aren’t afraid enough to run away, not from him.

Atsuhiro is your husband, the fool who keeps worrying you by getting hurt, and you accept his proposal because you’re tired of worrying that every call is the last call, tired of being away from
You love Atsuhiro, so that bastard who hurt him has to pay.

Divergence

Compress’s wife is right behind him as he surges forward to touch Overhaul, to disintegrate the arrogant bastard. Compress is on the ground, and Shigaraki assumes that’s who she’s headed for, to stop the bleeding before it becomes a problem.

Overhaul yells for a shield and suddenly Shigaraki is touching some random mook, his own Quirk already working as the bastard proceeds to crack and break. A flash of movement from beside him makes him look, and he sees Nightingale leap forward, reaching towards Overhaul.

This time Shigaraki notices a dart that suddenly pierces the arm reaching for Overhaul.

“Don’t tou—!”

Overhaul’s agitated yell breaks off and the random mook between them breaks and falls apart enough for Shigaraki to see that Nightingale had her hand wrapped around Overhaul’s wrist.

Then, men wearing masks similar to the yakuza boss’s either fall from above or break through the wall, and more than one of them shouts for their boss, reaching out to either shove or pull Nightingale away from Overhaul.

Nightingale surprises them all, tightening her grip on the other man’s wrist and screaming, “I’ll swear I’ll fucking kill him if you move again!!”

He feels, though, that the dramatic effect is somewhat ruined by the obvious fact that she’s in tears, because even if they can’t see her face, they can clearly hear it in her cracking voice.

Advantage

Overhaul is frozen in place and the threat stalls the movement of the others long enough to Shigaraki to pull himself together.

“I do believe you heard the lady,” he said, staring at the gangsters that were perilously close to his new healer.

Silently, he eyed the captured yakuza boss and noted the bulging veins across the man’s arms and face, as well as the sweat that had quickly formed. Whatever Nightingale was doing is dramatically visible, and her threat gains more credence for it.

Idly waving his hand, he gestured for the party-crashers to step away. “Careful now. Any sudden movements and your boss dies.”

His mind raced as the other gang slowly made their way a few steps back from Nightingale and Overhaul. Getting close to Overhaul would probably set them off, so…

“Nightingale. Pull out that dart in your arm and show it to the class, will you?”

Alliance

His little healer does as he asks, and he follows up by asking Overhaul’s men what that is. After a moment of tense silence, one of them finally admits that it was a Quirk negation drug. Shigaraki can’t
help the interest that flares in his mind, and he asked why it failed on his bird. They don’t why, so Shigaraki makes a mental note to ask Nightingale later, as right now he doesn’t want to give up any advantages.

Things weren’t going well, but with the other side’s kingpin in his metaphorical grasp, Shigaraki laid his demands out and ordered Nightingale to let Overhaul speak. Negotiations restarted with the League of Villains having the advantage.

However, there was little point in having unwilling subordinates, so he suggested an alliance instead, something that Overhaul reluctantly agreed to, in return for borrowing members from the League.

He laughed right in Overhaul’s face for asking for Nightingale.

No, his healer wasn’t leaving with or going to the headquarters of the gang whose boss she just held captive with only her frail hand. Seeing as they couldn’t agree at the moment, Shigaraki said they could settle on it later, but for now, it was agreed that they would form an alliance.

**Balance**

He told Nightingale to let go of Overhaul and was displeased by her immediately answer.

“No! He took my husband’s arm. I demand an arm in return!”

Well, he was displeased by her refusal but felt asking for an arm was fair, and said so. Grinning widely behind Father’s hand, he declared it was up to them to decide who was going to give Nightingale their arm.

Compress, his arm bandaged by one of the others, stood up and stepped forward. “Once you decide, I’ll be doing the… procedure.”

In the end, it was the tall, thin man in black who gave up his arm.

Shigaraki felt a surge of savage satisfaction as he watched Compress collect.

**Regeneration**

After Overhaul and his little gang had gone, Shigaraki watched as Nightingale regrew Compress’s arm. She used the arm that had been collected, but because of a difference between the way Compress and the other man were built, there was not enough ‘material’ to full reconstruct Compress’s arm.

“I’ll finish the rest later,” she promised, making skin grow over the stump that ended at Compress’s wrist.

“Do you need fresh pieces of living people to be able to do this?”

She flailed her free hand, the one that wasn’t placed over Compress’s remaining hand, and said that she could use any living thing, including trees, so there was no need to use people. He filed that bit of information away and finally asked her two important things: what did she do to Overhaul, and how did she not succumb to the Quirk negation drug?

Her answers filled him with vicious glee.

“I’m beginning to see why you married her, Compress.”
The man chuckled softly beneath his mask and drew her close to him.

“Yes, I did rather well for myself, didn’t I?”

By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you’ll become happy; if you get a bad one, you’ll become a philosopher.

~Socrates
Same Age AU (Part 1)

Chapter Notes

...You know better than to hope for happiness, right? :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You remember your first love because they show you, prove to you, that you can love and be loved, that nothing in this world is deserved except for love, that love is both how and you become a person and why.

~John Green, Turtles All the Way Down

You are three years old when your parents put you in a school for little kids and it is there that you make your first friends. Hina and Yuki are your best friends in the whole world!

You are four years old when your Quirk manifests.

Bakugo pushed Midoriya too hard, and Midoriya, the Quirkless kid, falls too hard and hurts his hands. His little hands look wrong with scrapes and blood, and they look like they hurt. The tears in his eyes tell you so, and while you don’t like him because he’s Quirkless, you still kneel beside him and take his hands to help clear the dirt away.

Just moments after touching his hands, you feel something, and you stop moving as you stare.

Before everyone’s eyes, Midoriya’s hands seem to spit out bits of dirt before they heal over, looking as though they had never been hurt. When you move again, blinking and coming out of your thoughts, everyone cheers and even the teacher who just arrived claps and congratulates you on your amazing Quirk.

Midoriya, the Quirkless weirdo, looks at you with big, bright eyes and you want him to stop.

You don’t like making Midoriya cry, so the times he chooses to chase after you instead of Bakugo, you let him. That’s not often, and it would be great if it was just that because you almost never see him outside of school, but that’s not all he does. Even though everyone says not to use your Quirk in public places, everyone in class still does, so Midoriya keeps coming to you when he’s hurt. The other kids do too, but none of them are Quirkless.

Bakugo makes everything worse and keeps telling you that you’ll catch Quirklessness from Deku if you keep touching him. You made such a fuss the first time he said that—and you believed him because he was so smart—that your mom had to come get you. The teacher said you kept screaming you’d catch Quirklessness and end up like ‘Deku’, and while your mom nodded along, she still made you explain everything to her when you got home.

She gave you a disappointed look before giving you a talk. She told you that Quirklessness was something you were born with, not something you caught, and that anyone who told you otherwise was lying. She told you not to judge someone based on what other people were saying, because
what if someday it happened to you? Wouldn’t you want people to listen to you instead of rumors? She made you talk to her, to repeat everything in the way you understood it, until she was sure that you understood that what you did was wrong and mean, and that you shouldn’t just believe what most of the other kids were saying.

Then she went on to ‘Deku’. She pried his real name from you and made you repeat it one hundred times. She said that name-calling was a bad habit and that you shouldn’t grow into it. The only exceptions were nicknames between friends and lovely-dove-y couples. She made you promise to call Midoriya by his name and you pouted, but when she threatened to take away desserts forever, you yelled a promise that you would call him by his name.

Thus did Quirkless, useless Deku become your classmate Izuku Midoriya once again.

Quirk counseling is boring and yours gets named ‘Skin Growth’, which is creepy and lame. Bakugo and the other kids make fun of you at first, but when you refuse to heal them when they get hurt because they teased you, most of them stop doing it. Bakugo never comes to you for healing, so he keeps calling you names and makes fun of you for letting Dek—Izuku follow you around.

Your parents tell you to ignore Bakugo, but to tell them if he ever hurts you. He doesn’t, but that’s only because Midoriya keeps putting himself between him and you the few times he gets angry enough to try. You hate Bakugo for being a bully, and you think it’s stupid now how everything treats him like he’s the greatest thing ever.

No matter how cool his Quirk is, Bakugo is still just a jerk.

You are five years old before you finally think that Midoriya is more than just ‘Quirkless’ and a ‘Deku’, things you don’t say but still think inside. You’ve seen him stand up to Bakugo more than once, and you’ve patched him up every time you’ve witnessed that, but it’s only when he comes to your rescue that you really think of him as a different kind of ‘cool’.

There was a hole in the sandpit that you didn’t notice, and you fell into it, your foot twisting painfully as you fell forward. Tears come fast and hard because it hurt and it surprised you, and not in a good way. The only person who comes running is Midoriya while the others ignore you because he is already there, and he is different and disliked.

It is then that you learn that your Quirk doesn’t work on you. It is that moment when Midoriya steps forward and helps you limp home while never making fun of you for crying or for being unable to help yourself.

With your arm around his neck and his arm around your waist and his other hand pressed against you to help keep you balanced, you look at him and you see him.

You wonder how you never saw him before.

(you wonder why you wasted so much time hating him when you could have been his friend from the start instead)

You ask, and he smiles brightly as he cheerfully replies that yes, you can call him Izuku.

You are six years old when Izuku comes out of the woods in tears and you accost him to demand to know if Bakugo hurt him again and if he needed you to heal him. Izuku stumbles over his words, saying he isn’t hurt, but it takes you prodding him before he finally admits what made him cry:
‘Kacchan’ said that Izuku would end up alone because no one would want to marry a Quirkless loser like him.

Immediately, you put your hands on your hips and yell that **you** will marry him when you both grow up. He stares at you in surprise and asks why. Why would you marry him when you know he’s Quirkless?

Your face warms up a lot before you finally let the words out of your mouth.

“I think you’re really cool, Izuku.”

He doesn’t understand why and you can’t explain it, but you hold out your pinky and promise that you’ll marry him when you grow up. You stammer that it’s okay if he doesn’t want to, but before you can finish your sentence, his pinky is linked with yours and he’s smiling again, wiping away his tears.

“Oh, (Name). When we grow up, you’ll be my wife and I’ll be your husband!”

His mother laughs when he brings you home and introduces you as his future wife, and your mom does the same, but your dad pulls Izuku aside where you can’t hear, and neither of them ever tell you what they talked about.

Only once does Izuku ever comment on it.

“Your dad really cares about you, (Name).”

He is seven years old when they find out that she can heal broken bones. For once, it’s not Kacchan’s fault he gets hurt. They were playing heroes on their own and he was going too fast when he remembered the shallow ravine was nearby. He fell hard and broke his ankle, but he tried not to cry because that would only make her cry, and what sort of husband makes his wife worry like that?

He tries to send her for help, but she carefully slides down the slope to join him on the rocks along the shallow creek, her face pale as she catches sight of his leg. Tears come to his eyes when he sees them in hers, and he tells her to stop, to not touch him, but she doesn’t listen. Instead, she places her hand on his knee on the leg that is hurt, and in less than a moment it suddenly doesn’t hurt anymore.

When he looks, the bone is still broken, his ankle still swollen and scary-looking, but it doesn’t hurt. He thinks he can get home like that so his mom can take him to the hospital, but his wife doesn’t let go of him and he watches with wide eyes as the balloon-like swell deflates. It takes a long while wherein they seem to hold their breath forever, but finally, she lets go.

He doesn’t have time to marvel before he’s suddenly panicking, catching her before she can fall all the way to the ground and maybe hit her head. She leans against, smiling slightly and saying she’s so glad that he’s okay, and then suddenly she’s asleep. It’s scary to be alone in the wooded park, and even though she’s right next to him, it *feels* like he’s alone.

The Bakugo hero team passes close enough for Izuku to call for help and when Kacchan peers down at him, he asks for help. Kacchan refuses at first, but then Izuku gets mad, angry on her behalf (*but almost never on his own*), and asks what kind of hero team would turn their backs on someone who needed to be rescued. Kacchan glares and yells, but he comes down and helps him get (Name) up out of the ravine.

He gets left alone right after that, though, and he carries her home on his back. He’s soaked in sweat by the time he gets to her apartment building, but luckily there is a buzzer system that lets him call
her mom down to get her. Although he wants to carry her the whole way, Izuku knows he won’t be able to carry her up the steps and he doesn’t want to risk dropping her, so calling her mom is the best thing to do.

He has to explain everything that happened and when he finishes, her mom asks him to promise not to tell anyone what she did. He asks why and he is horrified when she says that (Name) might get kidnapped for her Quirk, so he promises to keep it a secret.

He doesn’t even tell his mom, and later, when Kacchan finally asks how they ended up in the ravine anyway, he says he fell in first and that’s enough for Kacchan to focus on him instead of her.

You are eight years old when you get your mom to help you make special chocolates for Izuku for Valentine’s Day. He blushes and stutters his thanks and promises a gift in return.

On White Day, you get cookies in a colorful cellophane tied with a white ribbon, and you hug Izuku, calling him the best husband ever. He admits his mother helped him, and you laugh and say your mother helped you too.

Bakugo glares at both of you on both holidays, but you’re too happy to care why.

He is nine years old when he considers stopping calling her his ‘wife’. The whole neighborhood knows by now that he and she have promised to get married when they grow up, but now that they are both bigger kids, his mom says that maybe it’s time for them to stop calling each other by those names.

He asks (Name) what her opinion is and she takes a long time to think about it as they sit on the swings next to each other. When she finally speaks, she says they should call each other that until one of them decides they don’t want to keep the promise to marry each other.

He is Quirkless, and outside of Kacchan, she is his only friend. He doesn’t want to break the promise. He doesn’t want to end up alone.

“Th-then, you’re still my wife!”

She grins back at him, familiar and endlessly cute.

“Okay, my husband.”

You are ten years old when you figure out that you can do more than heal skin, flesh and bones. You can make pain go away, but you can also put someone in pain with a touch.

Bakugo and his friends are beating up your husband again when you find them. Rage covers your vision and you plunge into the fight, Quirks everywhere, and you grab hold of someone and think of pain.

A terrible scream puts an end to the fight in an instant, and everyone scrambles away from the screamer. It’s the boy with long fingers, the one whose name you can never remember. Your hand is still digging into his arm and he is still screaming.

Bakugo bellows at you to stop, but it’s Izuku’s cries that pierces the blood rushing in your ears. You look at him and see him staring at you in horror, and it’s the look on his face that makes you let go of his bully. The boy keeps screaming and now both Bakugo and Izuku are yelling at you to fix him,
though Bakugo is yelling in anger and Izuku is yelling in panic.

The boy fights to keep you away but you manage to grab hold of him again and you think away his pain, willing it to stop. His screams stop and crumble into sobs as he curls up into a ball. Bakugo shoves you away and Izuku catches you.

He calls you a villain and Izuku gasps.

You sneer right back at him as your husband helps you to your feet.

“That’s rich, coming from you, Bakugo.”

What was general animosity becomes a bitter, biting hatred of each other.

The only thing you’ve ever had in common remains the same, but Izuku, though he doesn’t stop hanging out with you, doesn’t look at you in the same way anymore, and the times he calls you ‘wife’ slowly dwindles down to almost never.

He is eleven years old when he suggests calling each other boyfriend and girlfriend instead of husband and wife.

He regrets it instantly when she runs away in tears.

You are twelve when you start at the all girls’ middle school you requested your parents send you to, and you make it your mission to fade out of Izuku’s life.

If he’s going to put Bakugo above you, what’s the point in playing make-believe?

He is fourteen and alone with his memories of a girl he let down when the chance of a lifetime is presented to him. He agrees to take up All Might’s legacy and throws himself into the training with zeal.

Every time he gets hurt, he wishes (Name) was still there with him.

You are fifteen when you decide to take a plunge and make a gamble.

You write to Recovery Girl at U.A. and tell her about your Quirk. You tell her you want to make the most of it, but you’re not a fighter. You ask her for advice on how to legally make the most of your Quirk.

Her reply fills you with optimistic hope, at least at first. She meets you at a hospital where willing patients have agreed to submit themselves to your Quirk in exchange for her using her Quirk on them. Your Quirk surpasses all expectations, healing everything put in front of you, though those are only a few patients with relatively easy injuries. You are given something harder—a burn patient—and your Quirk makes them well again. Your tiredness is noticed and the testing is put to a halt.

Recovery Girl asks you what you want to do with your life. You tell her that you want to heal people.

You are dismayed to learn that she seemed to have filtered your words until they came out as ‘I want to be a hero’.
You get a personal recommendation to U.A., and if you accept then you’ll be starting in the Hero Course as part of Class 1-A.

(a girl named Momo Yaoyorozu loses her recommendation place to you because Recovery Girl’s word trumped even her wealthy family’s word, and in turn she bumps out the girl who was going to go in Class 1-B, and though she was alerted and given the choice between that or taking part in the exams, she took the recommendation)

Mom and dad talk you into accepting her generous offer, and you prepare to enter the halls of U.A. as a hero-in-training.

He is thirty, exhausted, and not looking forward to another batch of new students, but he gets an earful from Recovery Girl and talked at by Nezu until he finally promises to not expel the new healer coming in.

He mutters ‘If she shows promise’ under his breath and gets a cane to the knee for it.

He is fifteen and pissed as all hell when he opens the door to find her in his classroom. Their eyes meet and the familiar anger flares in her eyes as though it hasn’t been years since they last saw each other. He sneers and makes a move to stomp over to her, but she snubs him, turning her nose up at him, and halfway through his yelling at her he finds himself intercepted by the four-eyed robot from the exam.

He’s so busy arguing with the four-eyed snob that he forgets his ire at her and soon enough he’s distracted by Deku’s arrival.

And then he’s reminded that she is here when the nerd freezes, apparently locking eyes with her.

The lovebirds reunite.

Revolting.

He is fifteen and has just arrived at his classroom for the first day when he sees her.

He is so surprised he blurts out a word containing all his heartfelt regret and suddenly remembered feelings.

“Wife?!”

The future for me is already a thing of the past -
You were my first love and you will be my last.

~Bob Dylan

Chapter End Notes

Ah. I probably shouldn't let The Road Not Taken overtake The Greatest Healer in the World in wordcount, but I can't help it. These AU are fun!
Surround Yourself with People Who Believe in Your Dreams:
Surround yourself with people who believe in your dreams, encourage your ideas, support your ambitions, and bring out the best in you.
~Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

“Husband.”

Your reply to his call is instant and automatic, as though the years of middle school and separation hadn’t been a thing.

There is a split second where everyone registers what just happened, and then there is an explosion of noise while both you and Izuku turn beet red, a color not helped by the catcalling or yelling from your fellow classmates. A brown-haired girl enters the classroom with a bemused expression and asks what she just missed. A girl with pink skin gleefully volunteers to fill her in on what just transpired, but before she can rehash much, a voice cuts into the noise.

“If you’re here to make friends, then get out.”

Your homeroom teacher quickly makes a memorable appearance, interrupting the uproar simply by appearing at the doorway in a yellow sleeping bag. He chastises the class for taking eleven seconds to calm down, and then he ordered everyone except you to change into their gym clothes and head outside.

When you asked what you were to do, he said you were going to attend the entrance ceremony. A clamor followed this announcement, with shouts that that was unfair and questions as to why you were getting different treatment. Aizawa, as the teacher introduced himself, told everyone to either deal with it or leave. He shuffled out of sight and after a short pause, the rest of the students quickly began filing out. A boy with glasses and flailing arms requested (practically demanded) that you take notes about the ceremony and tell him everything later.

Izuku’s eyes met yours and you saw that he wanted to talk to you, and he said so before leaving and speed walking after the rest of the class.

Flummoxed, you stood in an empty classroom and wondered just where the hell you were supposed to go.

It was your good fortune that not a moment later, you heard the class next door moving around, and, sticking your head out the door, you saw a teacher moving his students along. He asked you what you were doing when Aizawa usually had his entire class outside instead of at the ceremony, and you replied that Aizawa told you to attend the ceremony instead. That seemed to mean something to him, and he nodded, saying you could follow his class, 1-B, to the auditorium.

Sitting alone in the Class 1-A section and being subjected to many, many stares was not an experience you wanted to have again anytime soon.

Sekijiro Kan, also known as the Blood Hero: Vlad King, had been confused as to why there was a random student left in Class 1-A when he knew Aizawa’s tendency to put his first year students
through the wringer on the first day, but when he heard her repeat Aizawa’s instructions, he realized that she must be Recovery Girl’s personally recommended student, the potential healer who had been discussed at one of the staff meetings prior to the start of the new school year. Feeling a measure of pity because she had been clearly left to find her own way—count on Aizawa not to coddle his students—he invited her to follow his. The grateful look on her face did not bode well for the teacher-student relationship between herself and Aizawa, but he could be wrong.

The girl seemed well behaved enough, trailing just behind his students, though a single glance was enough to tell him that she was feeling nervous. He could imagine why, because what student expects to go alone to the entrance ceremony when the rest of their classmates were told do something else entirely?

Deciding to keep an eye on her for today, Vlad indicated the usually empty 1-A section right next to where he lined up his own students. She seemed so small standing there by herself and he found himself worrying about her. Was that girl going to be okay under Aizawa’s instruction?

You follow Class 1-B back since they’re right next to 1-A, and you thank the teacher when you catch his eye, but when you enter the classroom there still isn’t anyone back. Perplexed, you sat in the left-most front desk and tapped your hands against the desk, not knowing what else to do.

A minute or two later, the P.A. system turned on and you heard Recovery Girl’s voice telling you to come down to her office. You hasten to obey, taking your school backpack in case you weren’t coming back for the day, but ended up getting briefly lost before another teacher pointed you in the right direction.

Arriving at the nurse’s office, Recovery Girl sat you down and asked you what you thought about U.A. so far. Diplomatically, you said you hadn’t formed an opinion yet as not much had happened on your first day so far. She nodded along before telling you that some of your Hero Foundational Studies classes would be with her instead.

Still a little resentful of the fact that you ended up in the Hero Course, you nonetheless brightened at the chance to learn from the famous hero. She used her Quirk in hospitals and that, ultimately, was what you wanted to do. She laughed at your eager expression and said she’d definitely arrange for you to go back to the hospital again, hopefully sometime soon.

Not long after, a knock came at the door and Midoriya entered the room.

Locking eyes with each other, you both froze before slowly turning red as you both remembered what happened in class.

Recovery Girl seemed amused. “I take it you know each other?”

“W-we’re childhood friends,” he answered, stumbling slightly over his words. He swallowed nervously. “(N-Name), Aizawa said that class is out for the day, and he told us to let you know if we saw you.”

“O-okay,” you stuttered, standing up robotically. “I-I’ll go back to class?”

“No need,” Recovery Girl said. “Knowing Aizawa, he’s already gone, and your classmates will be leaving for the day anyway. If you want, you can wait for Midoriya outside.”

“I-I’ll do that,” you said, walking stiffly to and out the door.

Sitting down on one of the chairs in the hallway, you immediately started panicking. Why did you
say that you would stay?! You should have run for it while you had the chance!

Burying your blushing face in your hands, you wondered if there was anything you could do for damage control.

Recovery Girl healed his finger, but he sat on the stool longer than was strictly needed. His reluctance to leave was finally commented on by the nurse.

“It’s not nice to keep a girl waiting, Midoriya.”

He startled, blushing again as he remembered who might be waiting out in the hall for him. He stammered wildly, trying to make excuses for accusations that weren’t said. The nurse prodded his leg with her cane and told him to stop stalling.

Standing before the door, Izuku swallowed hard before summoning his courage and pulling it open. He exited out into the hall, closing the door behind him, and froze as he saw her waiting off to his right. She seemed frozen as well, holding her backpack on her knees as her wide eyes met his own.

“(Name).”

“Izuku.”

He forces his feet to move forward and she stands as he approaches. Soon they’re facing each other, and he wonders when he finally got taller than she did.

The silence is long and heavy as their eyes flit over each other’s features, taking in the changes since they last saw each other face-to-face like this. Her eyes glance away first, and he remembers that he was the one who suggested calling each other something other than wife and husband, of how that must have seemed in light of their pinky promise to call each other that until one wanted to break it off. He remembers middle school and her absence, the regrets that plagued him and constantly weighed at the back of his mind.

When he lifts his hand and offers his pinky, he holds his breath and he swears his heart almost stops as she stares at it.

An eternity later, happy tears fill his eyes as her pinky links with his, and he reflects her smile back at her.

This time, he swears, he won’t make her cry.

(Izuku points out Iida and Uraraka walking ahead and apparently headed for the same train station he)
used. You also used the same station, but since your family didn’t live in the same neighborhood anymore, your stop was further along the line than his was.

As you walk, you push away the urge to hold Izuku’s hand. You used to do so with casual ease back in grade school, but as a high school student and a teenager, you probably shouldn’t, right?

Catching up with Iida and Uraraka at the station, Izuku took the initiative to introduce you when the latter spotted him and waved you both over. The girl, Uraraka, gave a bright smile and introduced herself, and was quickly followed suit by Iida who seemed a little too loud and serious for your tastes. At first, you only listened as they rehashed the Quirk Apprehension Test for your benefit, but then Uraraka asked a question.

“So, is it true that you two are, um, husband and wife?”

Iida then launched into an explanation of marriage laws and how both of you were too young to get married, even with family permission, but Izuku waved him down, blushing madly as he explained that that was a childhood promise between you two.

Uraraka giggled. “That’s so cute!”

When the subject of Izuku’s name came up, you politely asked that she refrain from calling him ‘Deku’. She explained her interpretation of it, and you hummed thoughtfully.

“I suppose that could be the biggest ‘fuck you’ Izuku could give Bakugo.”

Iida chastised you for your language and requested you not do it again, to which you shrugged.

Uraraka backtracked on calling him ‘Deku’, and Izuku stammered that wasn’t what he wanted to do to ‘Kacchan’ at all. Uraraka, thankfully, latched on to Bakugo’s childhood nickname and gushed over it.

She asked if the three of you were childhood friends.

Izuku, as much as he would like to say yes, remembered full well the animosity between you and Bakugo, so he scratched the side of his face and left you to answer her question.

You scoffed. “We’ve known each other since childhood, but ‘friends’ isn’t what I would term myself and Bakugo.”

It was almost a shame, really, considering you remembered being impressed by him before his Quirk manifested. Perhaps, in another lifetime, you two could have been friends.

You didn’t participate in the first Hero Basic Training class, but you got your costume at the same time as everyone else.

In keeping with your goal of becoming a nurse, your costume was appropriately themed and mostly stain-resistant white with pink accents and pink crosses. Just as Recovery Girl had a visor, so did you, though yours was pink. To keep your hair out of the way, a white balaclava with a wide opening for your face was also part of your costume. On your head was a white nurse’s cap with a bold pink cross dead center. As your Quirk needed skin contact, you hadn’t included gloves in the design you submitted. A note that came with your costume confirmed that your clothes were specially made to be stain-resistant and capable of protecting you from most common knife-slashes, stabs and low-level bullets.

Izuku, who exited the boys’ locker room and emerged last, stopped dead at the sight of you. Trying
not to blush, you held your skirt in a curtsy-like motion and bashfully asked, “What do you think?”

He ran the short distance between you and gleamed. “You look great.”

The moment was immediately ruined by a cooing Ashido and catcalling Kaminari. Remembering that you weren’t alone, you hastily took a step away from each other and paid strict attention to All Might in order to ignore some of your snickering classmates.

Recovery Girl called you to her the observation room where she was set up for students to come see her while she could watch said students participate in the class exercise. The fact that your husband had to face off against Bakugo made you visibly cringe.

“There’s no way this ends without Izuku getting hurt.”

Unfortunately, you were right.

Kacchan came for him, as predicted. They fought, and he managed to turn Kacchan’s predictability back at him by grabbing his incoming right arm and throwing him down to the ground.

When he searched for something to yell at Kacchan, Uraraka’s words came back to him, and he yelled, “I’m the Deku who always does his best!”

Kacchan got angry with him again, but since the other’s attention was on him, Uraraka was able to get away to go face Iida. As Izuku took an opportunity put some distance between himself and Kacchan, he heard his childhood friend yell after him about how Izuku hid his flashy Quirk, which, of course, was far from the truth.

Then, for some reason, he also yelled, “You’ve been flaunting her Quirk all this time as well! She shouldn’t be wasting her time on a useless wonder like you!”

The only ‘her’ that popped into his mind was (Name). Izuku didn’t understand why Bakugo would bring her up now. Still, she wasn’t on the field, so he should concentrate on accomplishing the exercise!

You flinched every time Bakugo landed a solid hit or explosion on Izuku. Pain wasn’t something you were familiar with and never wanted to become familiar with, but you were beginning to realize that as a hero, Izuku would be subjecting himself to all sorts of pain during his lifetime.

You clenched your hands on your lap as you stared at Izuku’s form being loaded onto a stretcher. Holding back tears, you spoke. “Recovery Girl, I… I want to learn as much as I can, as fast as I can. I want… I want to be able to help him, no matter what injuries he suffers.”

Recovery Girl let out a soft sigh from next to you. “I can already tell you’re going to have your work cut out for you, little missy.”

You blinked away the tears in your eyes. “Whatever it takes… I want to be the best I can be.”

There seemed to be a soft smile in her voice as she answered you. “I’ll help you get there. Just you watch. You’re going to be great. I know it.”

(Todoroki was the unlucky person who ended up alone, but it turned out he didn’t need a partner to win.)
After watching the remaining matches, Izuku had to go to the nurse’s office for additional health care and (Name) went with him. She wasn’t permitted to use her Quirk on anything deeper than skin and shallow cuts, so while she was able to heal his burns, she wasn’t allowed to fix his bones, even though they both knew that was something she could do. He ended up falling asleep with her holding his hand.

*(she was gracefully sent out of the room to return to class, and Recovery Girl chewed out All Might for how he was raising Izuku)*

When he got back to class, he was enthusiastically greeted by some of the others and properly introduced to them. Glancing around, he saw that Kacchan wasn’t there, so he said goodbye to everyone to catch up to his childhood friend and try to explain himself.

He ended up revealing the fact that his Quirk wasn’t his own, something All Might disapproved of, but it seemed his friend hadn’t believed it.

In the confusion of his confession, he forgot to ask what Kacchan meant when he referred to (Name) earlier, but by then Kacchan was long gone.

He is reprimanded by All Might for telling Kacchan and is told not to tell anyone else. His stomach sinks a further when he realizes that means he can’t tell (Name) either, and that he’ll be keeping a secret from her.

There was a plethora of reporters outside the school the next day, but thankfully, you were able to get past them while they were busy harassing other students, including Izuku. He caught up with you and you giggled at his betrayed face before he managed to grin back at you. He was due at the nurse’s office so you ended up at class before he did.

That day Aizawa made you all decide on a class president and, surprisingly, Izuku was elected. You hadn’t voted for him, preferring to give your vote to Todoroki who seemed serious enough to handle the responsibility of being class president, so you wondered who voted for him. After the kerfuffle at lunch, though, he handed the reigns over to Iida. As Iida had performed admirably and calmed down the situation, you approved. He and Todoroki, the elected vice-president, seemed like a reliable duo so you had no qualms about their election.

Aizawa announced Wednesday’s Basic Hero Training class as being Rescue Training. He informed you and the class in general since they were in the same room that you wouldn’t be participating in these sorts of classes much during your tenure at U.A., but you would be today, in order to get you acclimated with disaster zones.

Aizawa gave the class an option as to whether or not they were going to wear their costumes, but everyone, including you, opted to wear them. However, Izuku ended up wearing his gym clothes as his hero costume hadn’t survived the last class.

On the bus ride to the training site, you sat next to Izuku and your seat also happened to be across from Iida, who was suffering disappointment that his earlier zeal about seating arrangements had been defeated by the way the seats were set up. On Izuku’s other side was a girl who insisted on being called by her given name, which was Tsuyu. She commented that Izuku’s Quirk resembled All Might’s, an observation that made him stutter and you briefly wonder, but the conversation goes somewhere more interesting, and you smirk when Bakugo gets called names.

The Unforeseen Simulation Joint is an impressive marvel of engineering and architecture, and you’re
looking forward to class with Thirteen and Aizawa, though mildly disappointed that All Might won’t be showing up today.

When the Space Hero brings up the point that their Quirk could kill and that no doubt some of the class possessed similarly dangerous Quirks, you thought back to first time you hurt someone with your Quirk. That boy with long fingers, the one who used to bully Izuku along with Bakugo and a couple others, you hurt him by attacking his nerves. Since then, you’ve read a lot about human biology, and by using your parents to practice your ‘sensing’ skills, you knew by now that you could indeed easily kill someone. It was a sobering thought and a heavy responsibility.

Just seconds after Thirteen finishes their speech, that’s when things get legitimately dangerous, as a dark portal appeared on the plaza down below. Aizawa bellows for the class to huddle up and not move before ordering Thirteen to protect everyone. When he yells that the figures pouring out of the portal are villains, you feel your legs go weak. It’s the first time you see such a large number of villains in the same vicinity as you.

You are slightly reassured when Izuku takes a step to place himself in front of you.

He intercepts the students as they attempt to make their way to the gate. He introduces their organization and states their intention, their goal to kill All Might, the Symbol of Peace. A pair of students attempts to attack him, but their effort doesn’t yield results. As per the plan, he uses his Quirk to scatter them across the facility.

He doesn’t get them all, but one in particular who caught his eye goes exactly where he intended.

He will let Shigaraki decide the fate of the child in the nurse costume.

(he lands in the water and once he’s on the boat with Asui and Mineta it takes a massive effort to shove down his panic when he realizes that she’s not there, that he doesn’t know where she is in this emergency, and all he can do is hope that she’s with someone who can keep her safe)

You fall out of the darkness with a startled yelp and a graceless fall to the ground, landing hard enough to scrape the heels of your hands.

“Hm?”

That simple syllable is enough to send chills down your spine because you don’t recognize it as being anyone from class or one of the two teachers present.

“Kurogiri… why send this bride NPC here?”

If someone sees only your back, they would see predominantly white, but your costume is very modest and, in all honestly, rather plain.

“Wait. Maybe a nun…? Ah, who cares? All Might isn’t here. Maybe a dead kid—“

Your head snaps up in terror as the stranger contemplates murdering you, and it’s his words that hammer home the fact that yes, you were warped to a villain’s location. Surprisingly, you’re not far from where you started. You’ve been hearing the sounds of fighting, but your attention has been focused on the voice. With your head raised, you can see a villain with amputated hands all over him reaching out to touch you.

He stops, perhaps surprised by your sudden movement, but then he speaks.
“A cross? Oh. Oh.” You can’t see his face but you can hear him smile. It’s not a nice smile. “Girl. Are you a healer?”

Vaguely, you hear Aizawa call your name, but your eyes are focused on the villain’s outreached hand as your heart jackhammers in your chest. Your Quirk requires skin contact and works best through your hands. The fact that he’s reaching out to you, apparently weaponless, is enough to instill the fear of death in you because you know that some Quirks work through finger contact.

Stiffly, with tears behind your pink visor, you nod.

“Yesss.” The word comes out like a hiss as the hand withdraws. “I’ve been wanting a healer to add to my party.”

You let out a muted sob and quake on the ground.

The villain orders you to stay where you are, and you lower your head into your arms in compliance.

Again, you hear Aizawa yell your name.

They all recognize the white figure on the ground near a villain, and it’s all Izuku can do to keep himself from running out there into the open to get to her side. Their teacher is being slowly murdered in front of them, their classmate is danger by close proximity, and there’s nothing they can do about it.

Suddenly, a villain is right there in front of them and reaching out of Asui’s head and they’re too slow to react before he’s touching her. There is a moment where nothing happens, the villain calls Aizawa cool, because even broken, and bleeding as he is, he’s using his Quirk to protect them.

Izuku, flushed with adrenaline once again, bursts into action, striking out to punch the villain threatening Asui, but then that thing is there, taking the full force of his hit without so much as a mark.

(left alone, she moves, shoving herself forward and dashing over to Aizawa, her hands on his bleeding face and partially disintegrated elbow, using her Quirk on their injured teacher, and while she’s doing this, All Might has arrived and then he’s there at Aizawa’s side and she’s there and she’s safe, they’re all saved because he is here)

All Might arrives, and before he knows it, Izuku finds himself, his classmates, his wife and his teacher all collected and moved out of range of the villains. He stares at All Might’s back, missing the way Asui is watching Aizawa’s injuries slowly repair while (Name) keeps her hand on their teacher’s bloodied skin. All Might tells them to take Aizawa because he’s unconscious, but then their teacher groans and struggles to lift his head. It’s only then that he notices what his wife has done, and he feels a swell of pride and relief mixing in with his worry over All Might.

The first thing their teacher says is to order (Name) to stop using her Quirk on him, and she complies. All Might exchanges a few words with the still injured man, and Aizawa agrees with assessment of getting the students to safety and admits that he’s still too injured to move freely. He barks at them to get moving, and All Might throws himself at the creature. Izuku and Mineta carry their teacher while Asui and (Name) lead the way.

Aizawa asks (Name) what she was doing out there on the plaza, and Izuku finds his attention going back to her when she says the villain with the hands was interested in the fact that she was a healer.

“H-he said he’d been wanting ‘a healer to add to his party’.”
“Video game lingo,” Mineta comments.

Aizawa grunts darkly and orders them to move faster.

Izuku finds himself torn between his worry about the villain’s interest in his childhood friend and about All Might’s secret and limitations. Despite his teacher’s protests, he hands him off to Asui and ignores their homeroom teacher’s yells as he runs back towards the fight.

Then Kacchan is there, and then Todoroki and Kirishima.

Kacchan reveals the warp villain’s weakness, but the villains are undeterred. The creature, the Nomu, gets back up and regenerates the limbs it lost to Todoroki’s ice. It attacks, but All Might saves Kacchan’s life, and then they hear the distant yell of Aizawa telling them to run away.

The villain speaks, and they want to help All Might, but the hero tells them to get out of there. The leader of the villains tells the Nomu and Kurogiri to handle All Might while he himself will handle the ‘kids’.

All Might moves, and the hand villain retreats back as he and the Nomu begin fighting.

He shows them what it means to be on the top, to be the strongest, and the Nomu is sent flying, crashing out of the building and completely out of sight.

It’s just All Might and the two villains now. Kirishima tells Izuku it’s time to head back, but Izuku only had eyes for the steaming All Might, a fact concealed by a dust cloud, and he knows that the hero’s time is almost up. He imagines the worst happening to the hero, and he can’t bring himself to leave. Never does his expect the hand villain to stop suddenly in his agitated neck scratching as though he just remembered something.

“I think I lost this boss battle, but there’s no reason I can’t have a consolation prize.”

Something freezes inside his stomach when the villain looks in the direction of the gate where the others are.

Where she is.

(no, no, no, no, no, no—)

They’re on the stairs when he feels a slight shift in the air, and as much as he wants to react, his body and even his neck are still too damaged to move quickly. His students cry out in surprise and then he, Asui and Mineta are rolling painfully down the stairs, the world spinning. His Quirk flares as his vision changes in flashes of different sights; the stairs, Asui, the plaza, the stairs, (Last Name) and the villains reaching for her, the ceiling again, Mineta, the stairs—

His students scream their classmate’s name, but by the time Aizawa lands haphazardly at the bottom of the stairs in a burst of agony and manages to look where his student should have been…

There is nothing, and then Midoriya crashes into the stairs, screaming and with what looks like shattered legs.

His colleagues arrive, just a few seconds too late, and Aizawa internally curses himself.

(Last Name) has been taken.
Some days punch us in the gut so hard it seems we can feel the whole universe gasp with despair.

~Curtis Tyrone Jones
Hanahaki AU (Izuku, One-shot)

Chapter Notes

So I'll give a happy ending a try.

Background on the setting: Reader and Izuku don't meet like they did in The Greatest Healer in the World, and thus they went a few years more before actually talking to each other, as will be seen in the story. Because she doesn't know Izuku, Reader ends up being alone when the rabid dog finds her, and she gets injured. She falls in with Daiki's crowd similar to the main story, but she refuses to let Daiki and Shizu do what they want and she's more assertive.

Izuku grows up pretty much like in canon, right until they meet in the story down below. Things derail from canon from there.

Hanahaki AU.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It's more like you meet someone, and you fall in love, and you hope that that person is the one —and then at some point, you have to put down your chips. You just have to make a commitment and hope that you're right.

~Rainbow Rowell, Landline

Izuku is ten when the seeds for the flowers are planted.

It’s the first Friday afternoon of the new school year, and he needs a new notebook, so he decides to go buy one right after school. Later, with his purchase in hand, he decides not to rush straight home, preferring to take a look around the shopping street and just unwind after a hard week of facing Kacchan and the others. When he finally decides to head home, he has the bad luck of crossing paths with Kacchan and his… ‘friends’. He doesn’t know what sets off his childhood friend, but it’s not long before the blond is painfully digging his fingers into his scalp, palm dangerously smoking against his green hair. He’s terrified, and the other boys are cheering Kacchan on, and no one ever intervenes, so—

So it’s a surprise when a shout suddenly cuts into their little world.

“HEY! What do you punks think you’re doing?!”

Both he and Kacchan turn their heads to see a group of high school boys and girls staring at them, six of them total. The one who shouted is a girl wearing long socks and silver hairclips in her hair. She looks angry, but neither of them know why.

Kacchan is the first to react, all pride and belligerent shouting. “What are you fucks looking at?! This is none of your business, so stay out of it, you ugly hag!”
All six of them narrow their eyes in varying degrees, but it’s the tallest and buffest of the group that replies. “Aa? You little shit, did you just disrespect my girl in front of my face?”

One of the girls fitters in amusement, poking the first girl’s shoulder who scowls back at her in response.

As Kacchan yells, Izuku really doesn’t like where this is going, so he tries to intervene, raising his hand towards the teenagers. “A-ah, wait! This isn’t what it looks like!”

One of the two girls behind the first raises her eyebrows as the rest, save the one facing off Kacchan, stare at him in disbelief. She asks, “So he’s not bullying you for no reason whatsoever?”

He winced. “U-um, no…”

The girl who yelled sighed and folded her arms. “Look, Midoriya, I’m not blind, okay? You were minding your own goddamn business and this little bastard—“Her friend grabbed Kacchan and prevented him from rushing at her, but she didn’t so much as flinch”—clearly went up to you unprovoked. I don’t know why you’re covering for him, but don’t treat me like a fool.”

Izuku flinched from her hard glare.

Explosions went off in Kacchan’s hands and the teenager half-threw him away, while the other half was Kacchan blasting away from the other’s grip. His childhood friend landed and took a low stance, mini-explosions going off on his palms. “You fuckers! I’ll kill you!”

“Smile~!”

They finally notice that the third girl from their group is holding up a phone and recording everything. She gives them a cheeky grin. She laughs at Kacchan. “You’re on camera, superstar!”

“Unlawful Quirk use on a public street,” the other girl states, a smirk in her voice if not on her face. “Are you going to leave quietly, or are we going to have to report you to the police to have them find your parents for a little talk? You wouldn’t want to damage your chances of being accepted into a hero school, would you?”

Kacchan fumes on the spot, and Izuku is honestly afraid that he’ll do something drastic. Instead, he flinches as his childhood friend turns on his heel and stomps away, yelling at his friends to ‘fuck off’ when they chase after him. Not knowing how to register everything that just happened, Izuku is left standing on the street staring after the retreating back of the one who always used to win.

(because he just lost, and Izuku knows it, and Kacchan himself knows it, and the order of their world isn’t the same anymore)

“He honestly, I hate punks like that.”

He blinks, bringing himself back to the present moment, and when he looks over at the teenagers, he finds the first girl staring at him with concern. His mind freezes up again because he almost never gets anything besides pity, derision, disgust or apathy from other people, and yet here is someone who apparently not only knows his name but feels obligated enough to acknowledge that something was happening to him, that something needed to be stopped.

She leaned forward slightly, eyes softer now that she isn’t angry at him or Kacchan. She asks, “Are you okay?”

The tears come then, and he can’t stop them, because no one besides his mother has ever stepped in
to help him or ask how he was. He doesn’t know who this girl is or why she cared, but she can’t
know about him, otherwise she wouldn’t have done that, and maybe he’ll never see her again so he
doesn’t have to tell, but the words blurt out before he can keep them in, because he has to let her
know before he can get used to her kindness only to have her find out later and push him away then.

“I’m Quirkless!”

She doesn’t even blink.

“I know.”

Her answer is so unexpected that he stops crying. She isn’t reeling from him in disgust or looking
like she regretted her actions on behalf of a Quirkless person. She stared at him for a moment before
slowly pointing at herself.

“I live in the same building.”

Silence.

A slight grin crossed her face. “You… have no idea who I am, do you?”

He shook his head.

She sighed and straightened her posture as her friends snickered in the background. She shook her
head before looking back at him. “I’m (Full Name). I live one floor below yours. Nice to finally
meetcha, little neighbor.”

He stared as he wiped his face. “Really?”

She nodded. “Really. I’ve known you were Quirkless since ages ago. Mom likes to gossip.”

His shoulders slumped. “Oh.”

She huffed and suddenly she was lifting his chin and dabbing a handkerchief across his wet face. He
couldn’t move or speak, too caught-off guard by her unexpected action to react. After his face was
reasonably dry, she pushed the damp cloth into his hands and stood up. With a hand on her hip, she
looked down at him before tilting her head.

“Wanna walk back home with me?”

Dumbly, he nodded and followed after her as she started walking. Her friends congregated behind
him and he hunched his shoulders, suddenly realizing he was among a group of big kids that could
potentially hurt him.

“So, little man.” He flinched when the teenager who faced Kacchan spoke to him. The bigger boy
grinned widely, amused by his reaction. “Got a name?”

“I-Izuku Midoriya,” he stammered, relieved he managed to actually get it out.

“Izzy,” cheered the girl who claimed to have been recording everything, reaching out and ruffling his
hair. He flinched and she laughed. “Twitchy little rabbit, aren’t you?”

“Try living a day in his shoes,” the more refined girl drawled. “Let’s see how you come out of it,
Kyoko.”

“Aw, Shizu~!”
“Don’t pick on Midoriya,” (Last Name) said without even glancing back at them.

Every last one of them drawled an affirmative and no one touched him again or called him names or nicknames. Was she the leader of their group like Kacchan was the leader of the other boys?

Arriving at their apartment building, (Last Name) really did seem to live there as she and her friends climbed the stairs with him.

“Well, this is my floor,” (Last Name) said. She gave him an idle wave. “Later, Midoriya.”

“A-ah, b-bye…”

She and her friends gave no indication of having heard him speak. He watched as they went down to a door and entered the apartment after she unlocked it. That big girl, she really did live here in the same building as he did.

Going up the stairs in a daze, Izuku didn’t know if he was happy or scared.

Kacchan gave him a hard time after that first encounter with (Last Name), and less than a month later he crossed paths with her in the stairwell. He was coming home with slight burns and singed hair, and she was wearing a skirt, long socks, a green t-shirt, and had numerous bracelets on her wrists. She came to a stop and he did too. He trembled nervously as her eyes seemed to take in his entire form.

She didn’t say a word and instead continued on her way down the stairs.

Something in his chest hurt at her silence, but what did he expect? Just because she was kind once didn’t mean she always would be.

He went home and applied ointment and lost himself in online videos of All Might.

On Monday, Kacchan yelled at him for being a Quirkless loser just as the teacher walked in.

“Bakugo Katsuki.” Surprised at being addressed by the teacher, his childhood friend looked away from Izuku to him. “That is quite enough of that. In the future, please refrain from verbally assaulting your classmates. Yes, including Midoriya.” The man went to the teacher’s podium and faced the class. “Now, take your seats everyone.”

Glancing around, Izuku saw that he wasn’t the only one perplexed by their teacher’s sudden change in attitude. Just last Friday the man hadn’t said anything when Kacchan yelled at him for being a useless weakling, so why now?

Growling, Kacchan threatened under his breath. “This isn’t over, Deku.”

Some of the teachers are turning the same blind eye they always have, but other teachers including even the principal no longer seem to be ignoring his existence. Or, more accurately, they were no longer ignoring the bullying going on at school. It isn’t just Izuku; the teachers are beginning to intervene between various school kids in order to stop bullying. It’s… strange, but not unwelcome.

Kacchan gets detention the first week of the new change, and Izuku goes home feeling as though he’s moved to an alternate universe.

For some reason, she’s been in the stairwell every day after school, like she’s been waiting for him
even though she rarely says anything beyond ‘hello’ and goodbye’ in response to his own words. It makes him nervous to be under her stare, but she never makes a move to hurt him.

On Friday, she looks him up and down. He is free of burns and scrapes. She nods, pushing herself away from the wall, and then she walks down the stairs past him.

“H-have a nice day!”

He turned and smiled weakly at her, unsure of his reception. She looks surprised before smiling back at him.

“You too, Midoriya.”

He learns that she is a delinquent and that her friends are too, even the refined-looking girl named Shizu. They’ve never directly caused trouble in the neighborhood, but sometimes the boys come driving loud motorcycles with the girls riding behind them, and they’re either picking her up or dropping her off. He witnesses one of these departures on his way home, and she sees him, and smiles and waves at him. He’s intimidated by her friends and their machines, but it’s not hard to return her silent greetings. They leave, and he stares after them.

In time he notices that she whenever she wears a skirt or something short, she always wears long socks. He doesn’t mean to ask, but after finding her at some nearby vending machines, the question just slips out.

“Why do you always wear long socks?”

He doesn’t expect an answer and he’s spewing apologies as soon as his rudeness registers in his mind. She glares darkly at him for a moment before sighing andshrugging, apparently deciding she doesn’t care.

“A dog bit me. Even with dad’s Quirk to help smooth out my skin, it left my leg with ugly marks.”

He apologizes and doesn’t ask for any more details.

They end up walking home together in silence, and she gives a lazy drawl and a wave over her shoulder in response to his farewell.

Somehow, he thinks she’s cute, and his chest itches inside.

He is twelve when he coughs up the first petals.

Over the past couple of years, Izuku is secure in the fact that he is definitely on friendly terms with his neighbor from downstairs. She and her friends don’t express the same aggressiveness or apathy towards that they give to most everybody else. Daiki, the big teenager who held Kacchan back that one time and again on two other occasions, sometimes ruffles his hair or pats his back, and it’s… nice to receive positive attention from an older male figure, someone who is almost like a big brother.

He learns the given names of the others but not their family names because they’re always calling each other familiarly, and they refuse to let him call him by their family names. The refined girl is Shizu, and the cheerful girl is Kyoko, and the boy with blue hair is Sora, and the plain-looking boy with close-cropped black hair is Katsu. They all called Midoriya until he finally insisted if they wouldn’t tell him their family names, then they should call him Izuku, and they did.
(Last Name) became (Name) because she demanded not to be left out, and he sheepishly agreed to her request, more embarrassed about calling her by her given name than the others because she was his neighbor while the others still lived ‘out there’. Nowadays when she saw him, she was more inclined than ever to actually speak to him, if only a word or two.

Somehow, Izuku knows that it’s because of her that her friends treat him the way they do. If it weren’t for her then he doubted any of them would give him the time of day. She is the one who makes his world a little brighter, even if she doesn’t know it.

However, she is eighteen, worlds away from him, and going farther still.

One weekend, she finds him buying another notebook and asks if it’s for school. Blushing from embarrassment, he mumbles, admitting that it’s going to be another one of his hero notebooks. When she asks what that is, he tells her that he writes notes on Quirks and says that it could be considered his hobby.

He is surprised when she asks to see one of his old notebooks, but he doesn’t really have a reason to refuse. They stop at a café on the way home and he shows her the last notebook he filled up with his notes. Trying to not fidget in his seat, he nervously waits for her verdict. He doesn’t expect her to start grinning or for her to turn that grin on him.

“Hey, Izuku. If some of my friends showed you their Quirks, do you think you could do this for them?”

He stammers through his excited agreement, and on their way home they make plans for him to go out with her that weekend to meet up with her friends. That is, if his mom gives him permission. Asking means that (Name) has to formally introduce herself to his mom, and Izuku worries because he knows his mom sees (Name) and her friends as the delinquents everyone says they are. Izuku isn’t one to disagree with that assessment, but he would make allowances for them because they’ve never been actively mean or malicious towards him.

As predicted, his mother frets over their plans, but she buckles under his pleading eyes, on the condition that he called her hourly while they were out and if (Name) would give her the address they would be at. (Name) provides the requested address and says it’s a martial arts studio, and she reassures his mom that he won’t be in danger or made to fight.

He spends the days before their meeting nearly hopping with excitement, and he buys an extra notebook and two new pens for the occasion. When (Name) comes to pick him up, his mom says goodbye at their door, fretfully hovering over him to the last second before he follows (Name) to the stairs and down to the street.

Izuku is torn between hesitance and excitement at the sight of two motorcycles waiting. Sora is there, no doubt who (Name) will be riding with, and Daiki too, whom Izuku hasn’t seen in a long while. He gets hoisted up on Daiki’s bike and a helmet is secured to his head. He’s shown where there are handles for him to hold on, but is also told that he can hang on to Daiki if he wants.

(he doesn’t hear his mother’s frantic cry from several stories above, Inko looking down at the street after only just remembering that (Name) and her friends use motorcycles, and her baby)

He clings hard to Daiki, heart pounding in his chest, but Izuku can’t deny the thrill mixed in with the fear and trepidation as the city flies by. Wind whips around him and he’s glad (Name) insisted he wear a jacket. He is twelve years old and this is amazing.
After calming his mom down and promising to return home by more mundane means, they finally
get to the reason they’re there. (Name) opts to sit on the floor near him while her friends Daiki, Sora,
Katsu, Haruto, and Kai fight in turns, utilizing their Quirk each time. He makes rapid notes and after
the fights are done, he has each of them sit with him in turn and answer his questions. He’s so eager
to dissect their Quirks that he forgets to be nervous and only much later will he realize that they all
obeyed his instructions without complaint, though he won’t know what to think of that.

For Shizu and Kyoko, their Quirks aren’t action-oriented, and they give him a summary of their
Quirks and demonstrate how they use said Quirks. He has to think differently for them, but in the
ends he hopes he made some useful suggestions for improvement.

He has so much fun that he has to be reminded each hour to call his mother.

Later, as promised, (Name) and Sora take him home, this time in a car. Sora sits in the front with the
unnamed driver, and (Name) sits in the back with him, and Izuku moves from his window seat to the
middle seat so he can talk to her and easily show her his notebook. She made copies of the pages
before they left the building, and everyone there thanked him.

He is Quirkless, but somehow today he managed to be useful, and it’s all thanks to her again.

She has to go home, but she waits until he waves down from the stairwell window before the car
leaves. When he walks into the apartment, his mom welcomes him home and eyes him up and down.
Seeing that he isn’t hurt, she smiles and asks him how it went.

He lights up.

He remembers that (Name) didn’t ask him to review her Quirk, so the next chance he has he asks her
why. She gets a faraway look in her eyes that makes him regret his question, but she gives him an
answer.

“My Quirk is healing-related and I already have a team of people who do that.”

He doesn’t think that’s the whole truth, but something in her expression makes him keep quiet.
Instead he changes the subject and talks about All Might’s latest exploit.

That’s the day he learns that she doesn’t like heroes. Not because she yells at him for talking about
All Might, but rather he notices that she doesn’t seem engaged in the topic so he ends up asking who
her favorite hero is.

“I don’t like heroes. They weren’t there when my mom and I needed one the most, so I’ve stopped
liking them since then.”

“I want to be a hero.”

The words slip out before he can stop them, and it takes a moment to register what he just said. He
wants to slap a hand over his mouth, but now that it’s out there, he might as well keep going.

“All Might is my hero, and I want to be a hero just like him. Do… do you think I could be a hero?”

She pinched her thumb and forefinger on either side of his upper arm, making him twitch in surprise.
She doesn’t sugarcoat her next words.

“Not with these puny arms, you can’t.”
He feels his heart being crushed at yet another person telling him he can’t.

“You have to train your body to even have a shot at being hero, otherwise all you can do in your state is be a meat shield.” She lets go to brush her hair behind her ear. “You have brains, Izuku, but you also need some form of brawn. Start a training schedule, maybe start a martial arts class. Take up jogging and work on your stamina. Eat healthy and get proper rest.”

It slowly sinks in that she isn’t telling him he can never be a hero. She’s telling him that it takes effort to be a hero, effort she isn’t seeing from him so she’s pointing the way.

She’s still talking when she notices that he isn’t walking beside her anymore. Turning around, she sees him where he stopped, and he stares at her with wide, watery eyes.

“You… you think I could be a hero?”

She frowns. “Izuku. You’re a good kid, a good person. I see no goddamn reason why you can’t be a hero. Hell, I already like you a lot more than a bunch of other—hey, hey, a-are you crying?”

—he ends up kneeling and crying into the sidewalk while she pleads with him to stop, but how can he when the joy in him has no end?

After her finally manages to pull himself together, she hands him another one of her handkerchiefs to wipe his face. He apologizes for never returning the last one and she tells him that it’s no big deal. He can even keep the one she just gave him and while he doesn’t say anything, he gladly plans on doing exactly that.

He asks her again if he can be a hero and she tells him it won’t be easy, but it’s not impossible either. He’ll need support equipment, but before that he has to prove himself and get into a hero school. Being Quirkless, he likely won’t get into the hero course for his first year, but he’ll have three years to prove himself.

Before that, though, he has less than three years to put himself in shape. That means he has to make plans, and he builds them off her comments on what he could do to start improving himself. She was right. Why didn’t it occur to him before now to start training his body? Why did he wait so long to start his journey? Saying he wanted to be a hero was only the starting line. She pushed him over it and now it was his responsibility to travel the rest of the way.

(Name).

He curls around a pillow as her image came to his mind.

And then the coughing started.

It was mild at first, and as it persisted he thought of getting up to get some water. However, it soon became rough, and he found himself sitting up and bent over as he coughed hard, finally dislodging something from his chest. Breathing hard, it took a moment for him to open his eyes.

Flower petals rested on his lap, looking innocuous, yet the very sight made him hold a hand over his mouth in horror.

Hanahaki.

The disease is slow to grow because she has gone away, moved out to attend university, and is rarely
back. That means that his disease isn’t being fed by her presence, and the disease came too soon for him to be completely affected by her absence. If she stays away long enough his feelings might wane away and take the disease with it. Such is not an impossible outcome, though it is exceedingly rare in comparison to those who die with their love unrequited.

(so many are in love with heroes, celebrities or the unattainable, and many, many flower-choked corpses fill morgues all over the world)

He rarely sees her, and, perhaps mercifully, it’s when she’s in the distance and doesn’t have time to even exchange words with him, and most times she doesn’t even notice him. Each sigh of her gives a little life to the flowers that waning, and he thinks he might actually live to see his love die away.

(he’s a useless Deku who can’t even love someone properly, die properly from hanahaki)

He is fourteen, rarely coughs at all, reasonably in shape, and yet his relationship with Kacchan hasn’t changed for the better. If anything, it’s become worse, and he suspects it’s because he’s in shape but he’s not one-hundred-percent certain.

Kacchan doesn’t bully him at school, but all that means is that he waits until after school and a block or two before he accosts him for whatever reason. However, that particular day Kacchan is mad because of his choice in high schools. Izuku wants to attend U.A., and even if his classmates and teachers don’t believe in him, he has someone who does.

She told him it wasn’t impossible, and he wanted to prove her right, not only to justify her words, but also to prove it to himself, to that four-year-old boy who sat in front of a computer screen and asked his mother if he could be a hero.

His childhood friend finishes his tirade against his Quirkless self by blowing up the notebook he had been annotating as he slowly walked. Honestly, Izuku knows he should know better by now, but sometimes he just had to write down his thoughts right away in fear he might forget them. The notebook is tossed into the street, and he waits until Kacchan is some distance away before picking it up and deciding on an alternate route home.

Fate comes knocking, and by sunset Izuku accepts a once-in-a-lifetime offer, forgetting in his excitement that he still has flowers in his lungs.

Time flies and he makes new friends at U.A. while learning how to use his new Quirk and how to become a hero.

He hasn’t seen her in months and he doesn’t cough much anymore. He still hasn’t told All Might, but Recovery Girl knows because she took x-rays of his body and the smudges on his lungs are all the indication she needs to know that he has the disease. Knowing that he is All Might’s successor, Recovery Girl solemnly informs him of the operation and tells him that it’s an option open to him.

Something in his chest aches at the thought, prompting his first coughing fit in months. Staring at the flower petals covered in salvia, Izuku calmly replies that he’s fine for now. He has it under control. He doesn’t need the operation.

(he doesn’t want to forget)

He ends up asking her to not tell All Might or Aizawa. She sighs and tells him that they’re going to find out anyway, but agrees, on the condition that she’s going to tell them anyway once the disease begins reaching critical levels. Before he starts choking to death on them, he’s probably going to
have to choose between his love and his dream.

*(how was he supposed to do that when she neatly tied herself to it by telling him he could?)*

His coughing remains at a manageable, concealable level.

__(sometime during the school year, Ochaco starts coughing up flower petals and it’s the worst timing ever because she needs to be alive to take care of her parents)__

*but, like Deku (though she isn’t aware of his circumstances), she decides to put off asking for the operation and manages to keep it a secret, even the inquisitive Mina who becomes exceedingly curious and nosey every time someone has a coughing fit)*

__(every damn year he has students with hanahaki and it’s not unknown for him to expel students for it they’re kids, he doesn’t want to watch them die in front of him, choking on petals and blood, and god forbid another one confesses their feelings for him with their last breath)__

*he’s not the only one who has to deal with the problem, and U.A. has a system in place to prevent teachers and the school from being sued for rejecting the feelings of students and—unintentionally—leading them to their deaths*

_Midnight’s attitude is severely curbed when it comes to handling the students, and every teacher knows to keep their distance, but it’s difficult, more for some than others*

*he’s a rational man, he’s never had hanahaki, and he’s damn near watched Hizashi die from it—the operation was forced on him and he forgot before he could tell anyone so no one knows who his love was—and he’s seen his students die from it, but no more*

*he now has a class ‘policy’, the ultimatum he told his class on the first day after the Quirk Apprehension Test: if they have or get hanahaki, they have to get the operation or leave*

*he’s not going to watch his students die in front of him again, and while he will give them some leeway, will let the disease progress to a certain point, he won’t let them try to hide it from him forever, won’t let them trick him into watching them die*

*no more students drowning in their unrequited feelings—he can’t stand to watch anymore*

*so Uraraka, no matter how she tries to hide it, is on a ticking clock*

*and maybe Midoriya too, if he catches the boy coughing again)*

_Izuku is fifteen when the petals start choking him._

His first year has been chockfull of experiences and events, among which are the Sports Festival, facing the Hero Killer Stain, a forest training camp, and, of course, Kacchan’s kidnapping, rescue, and the revelation of All Might’s true form. During all that, he hasn’t had much time to think of her, thus the flowers were manageable, and no stray petals incriminated him.

After All Might comes to his house and before he and the other students move into their dorms, she comes back and crosses paths with him again. It comes as a surprise because he wasn’t expecting her, and he was lost in his thoughts as he came home from the convenience store, no doubt muttering
under his breath because she laughed.

“You’re doing that thing again, Izuku.”

His head snaps up and there she is. She’s wearing black jeans and a two-toned top, her hair swept up in an elegant knot and a gold bangle on her wrist. She smiles at him, her delinquent phase apparently long behind her, and his breath catches.

And then he’s coughing, but he brushes it off as something caught in his throat. The concern on her face melts away and she bids him goodbye, continuing on her way, saying she’s going to be late if she doesn’t get moving. She pauses at the foot of the stairs and turns back. “Ah, Izuku. Here.”

Slowly, he descends the stairs as she opens her clutch and pulls out a card. She extends it out to him and he takes it from her.

“I’m a registered healer authorized to use my Quirk on consenting patients,” she explained. The card in his hands displayed a clinic’s name, address and phone number. “If you ever need healing, give that number a call and tell them your given name. Any message you leave will get to me within a half-hour.”

He manages a wobbly smile, holding back a cough. “Th-thanks. Um, I go to U.A., and Recovery Girl is there, so I might not need to call…”

“Okay, but keep it just in case. If your mom ever gets hurt, you can send her there.” She grinned wryly. “So it turns out you had a dormant Quirk all that time, huh? I saw you bust yourself up at the Sports Festival, but I figured U.A. would take care of you, so I didn’t reach out to you then. Still, I’m doing it now.”

“Th-thank you,” he stammered, heart jackhammering as he forced down the impulse to tell her the truth, that it wasn’t a ‘dormant’ Quirk at all, that he was given that power.

She startled. “Oh, shoot! I’m actually going to be late at this rate.” She left. “Later!”

He clenched the card in his hand and went home to his room. Falling gently on his side on his bed, Izuku felt his lungs begin to ache.

She looked so grownup.

(so lovely)

In the days before the licensing exam, in a moment of weakness, he calls the clinic and asks for her cellphone number, not really expecting to get it, but he does, and the flowers in his lungs multiply. He texts her rather than calls, but she replies to him, giving him hope when she’s none the wiser that she’s slowly choking the life out of him.

He coughs and remembers Aizawa’s threat, his announcement on the first day. His disease is still manageable, but it’s getting harder to keep it a secret.

He knows he has no chance with her. He knows that when the time comes, he’s going to have to choose his dream because he can’t let All Might down, can’t let her encouragement go to waste even if he won’t remember it after the operation. He knows that at some point he’s going to have to let go of this feeling, going to have to let himself be rescued, but he’s going to drag it out because he wants to remember her for as long as he can.
He won’t remember her after, so now was the only time he had.

It gets hard to breathe that night because her friend uses her phone to send everyone on her contacts list a picture of her singing karaoke. She looks alive and like she’s having fun, and he gazes at the moment he wasn’t present to see.

(“I see no goddamn reason why you can’t be a hero.”)

The flowers get closer to overtaking him.

Izuku is not the only student who has hanahaki. It’s not uncommon to see students bent double, coughing and hacking up flower petals slick with saliva and even blood. The more advanced cases have students coughing up partial or whole flowers, and in some dire cases, students will collapse from the flowers suffocating them.

U.A. has surgeons on site, and every student and their parents or guardians have signed permission slips in that in an emergency, the U.A. surgeons have permission to perform The Surgery. Izuku himself has signed that form, but it’s not unheard of for it to be too late. Perhaps that is why Aizawa gave that ultimatum. Recovery Girl doesn’t participate in the surgical removals herself, but if the student is deemed sufficiently able-bodied then she will use her Quirk to speed up the healing process.

Izuku thinks of this as he, Iida and Uraraka step aside to let the robots race by with a student on a stretcher, another victim of advanced hanahaki. He hopes that they make it out of the surgery with their ability to love still intact. It’s rare, but it happens sometimes that after the surgery, in addition to forgetting about the one they love, a person may completely lose the ability to love. These two consequences of the surgery are what make people so reluctant to have it until it’s almost too late, or even not at all, preferring to die.

Izuku doesn’t want to die, so when the time finally comes, he’s going to take the surgery.

Coughing slightly into his hand, he moves along.

The licensing exam comes, and Uraraka coughs up flower petals in front of everyone just before the start of the second-half. The girls are by her side in an instant, and Ashido is too concerned about the advanced state of the disease to tease her about it. The coughing subsides and she brushes aside the tentative suggestion that she sit out the rest of the exam. She’s going to finish what she started, and she would appreciate it if no one told Aizawa. Iida says he’s going to have to soon if she doesn’t, if only because those were a lot of petals she just coughed up. An expression crosses Uraraka’s face, one that Izuku recognizes because he’s seen it in the mirror a time or two before.

Whoever she’s in love with, she wants to hold on until the last possible moment.

Izuku can relate to that.

Everyone from Class 1-A with the exceptions of Todoroki and Kacchan, pass the exam and get their provisional licenses. He sends a picture of his own to All Might, his mom, and her.

She is quick to reply, congratulating him.

[You’re going to be a great hero. You’re already my favorite.]

Two sentences.
(of course it’s the problem child who is the first to exhibit the advanced state of hanahaki, and as the boy’s teacher, Aizawa curses himself for letting it advance so far under his nose)

the boy falls to his hands and knees, coughing up flowers and blood as tears fall from his eyes, but as bad as it looks, Aizawa, from experience, knows that this is not yet fatal, but if Midoriya doesn’t stop coughing soon then he was going to treat the situation like an emergency

as if knowing what was on the line, the problem child stops coughing and Aizawa rubs circles on his back as the attack tapers off, his fellow classmates making a scattered circle around them, a partial barrier between them and the world

he asks his problem child if he was going to get the operation or leave U.A., and there is a strained silence before Midoriya softly cries that he’ll have the operation, but he needs to see her one last time

the boy opts to return to U.A., and he herds his students onto the bus, and the ride is silent as eyes glance or outright stare at the one who hid his disease so well

the boy is seated near him, and he asks if ‘she’ could come onto campus to see him before it was done, and Aizawa says he’ll ask Nezu, though he suspects the principal will allow it

at U.A., he sends his students to their dorm and escorts Midoriya to the medical wing where his mother and the object of his affection will eventually arrive

his mother and All Might arrive and see the boy before the unknown female is announced at the gates, and Aizawa fetches her, partially expecting an adult and he’s proven right at the sight of a young woman in slacks and a sleeveless blouse, but there is also a young man there, and he has to tell them that Midoriya was only authorized one unknown visitor, and, surprisingly, they didn’t kick up a fuss, her escort saying he’d be waiting there for her

walking her to the medical wing, Aizawa learns she isn’t an unknown to Midoriya’s mother, and the green-haired woman weeps as she greets the visitor, though said visitor seems to be feeling awkward about the whole situation

she is waved into the room where Midoriya is waiting, and Aizawa watches as the door closes behind her

It’s seems like both forever and no time at all before she enters the room. He sees her pause at the doorway as their eyes meet, and for a second he’s afraid she’ll turn around and leave. She stays, and closes the door behind her, quietly walking over to take a seat next to his hospital bed.

“Izuku.”

Tears fill his eyes as he rasps her name, a wobbly smile gracing his face.

He didn’t tell her why he wanted her to come, only that he begged her to. He was going to send her more texts, but that one request was all he sent before he froze, wondering how he should phrase the reason. However, before he could type another message, she sent a reply back, saying she was on her way.

He couldn’t believe it. Why? Why was she so willing to fulfill his request for her to come see him? Perhaps because of the way it was worded? He did literally include the word ‘beg’…
Forgive me,” she murmured, eyes glancing him up and down. “But I don’t see any injuries. The way you texted me, I thought for sure something terrible had happened…”

He winced, sinking into his bed a little. “Ah, well… it’s not… external.”

She placed her hands on her lap. “You don’t seem to be in immediate danger, so I suppose we have the time for you to explain.”

Silence filled the room as he tried to summon the nerve to tell her about his hanahaki, about his feelings for her. He found his face warming under her patient gaze, and he squirmed slightly, resisting the urge to wring his hands. He took a slow and measured breath, trying to not agitate the flowers.

But she is right next to him, and he doesn’t succeed.

As he coughs, loud and hard, turning away so she won’t see the petals, he flinches when he feels her hands touch him, one making soothing circles on his back while the other rests against the back of his hand that is clenching the thin blanket beneath him.

Skin contact.

Her hand is cool against his own, and the flowers explode in his lungs because contact.

Despite everything—the flowers in his lungs, the petals he’s coughing up, the sensation of her hand on his, the knowledge that the disease has gone from nine to ten—it isn’t long before he realizes that the flowers aren’t suffocating him anymore. The fullness in his chest recedes and he is able to breath freely for the first time in ages.

There can only be one reason, and he turns to her with wide eyes.

“W-what did you do?”

(He feeling is still there, the clench in his chest at the sight and sound of her, the one who never said he couldn’t do it because he was Quirkless)

She pulled her hands away from him and saw back in her chair with an undeniable air of smugness.

“My Quirk lets me repurpose biological material. Hanahaki is just flowers growing in the lungs, and flowers and lungs are both made up of biological material. It isn’t hard for me to melt the flowers away into a patient’s body.”

A thrill of terror went over him. “Y-You did The Surgery?”

She frowns. “Hey, no. God, no.” The frown leaves her face. “One of my friends has hanahaki and she didn’t want to lose the memory of the one she loved or risk never being able to love again. She’s the reason I learned how to treat hanahaki without destroying the origin point.”

She cocked her head. “Although I am curious as to how you knew I could do that. As far as I remember, I didn’t tell you much beyond the fact that I’m a registered healer.”

A red flush quickly spread over his face and Izuku could feel his ears burning as he broke eye contact to stare at his lap. “Uh, w-well, I… er…”

“Wait.”

He froze at the tone in her voice.
“You… Izuku, you…?”

Forcing his eyes back to her, he saw her staring at him with a surprised expression.

He closed his eyes and nodded painfully, squeezing out the words he had kept inside for so long.

“I love you.”

Silence filled the room as his declaration went unanswered. He felt the flowers blooming in his chest, reappearing slowly as the silence dragged on. Even if (Name) could treat it, it would only come back. Perhaps… perhaps it was best just to get it removed.

He heard her exhale. “Wow. Just… wow.”

He kept his eyes closed and his hands clenched. She was older than him, a grown adult. There was… just… no… way…

“You know, that’s my first love confession. I wonder if anyone’s ever loved me before this and just never told me. Do you ever wonder that?”

Thrown by her words, he opened his eyes, still averted from her, and slowly shook his head. Who would ever love him? He was just… him.

“Look. Izuku. Look at me.”

Her voice didn’t bode well, so he was slow in lifting his gaze back to her face. She wasn’t scowling, but she wasn’t smiling either.

“I don’t know if I could return your feelings.” She held up a hand as he cringed. “You’re underage, Izuku. People may say age is just a number, and yeah, there are certain allowances in the law in regards to hanahaki, but in my eyes, you’re still a kid. I’m not even going to entertain the idea at this point in time.”

He latched on her phrasing. “‘This point in time’?”

She nodded. “The age of consent in Japan is thirteen. Allowances in the law are made for people suffering hanahaki, but again, only for those who are thirteen and over. The age you can get married is twenty, but there is also the option at eighteen, if you have your parents’ permission. You’re what, fifteen?”

“Sixteen,” he corrected quietly.

“Well, tell you what. If you don’t grow out of these feelings for me by eighteen, I’ll marry you if your mom will let you. Or, first, I guess I could bend my morals a little since you won’t be quite so young anymore and try to return your feelings then.”

It… it wasn’t a terrible compromise. For someone with an age difference like theirs, it was even considerate since she wasn’t flat-out rejecting him. It was just… he didn’t… Did she have any feelings towards him at all? Or was this just pity?

His vision of her was blurred. “Do you… do you even like me at all?”

“Well, I do,” she replied immediately. “Why else would I be here? I was in the middle of an important meeting, you know. Granted, I probably shouldn’t have left my phone on, but I do what I want.”
Izuku felt his eyes widen. She was in an important meeting and came to see him anyway?

She leaned forward slightly, meeting his eyes with her own. “You know, Izuku, I want to protect you.”

He felt his heart skip a beat. “Wh-what…?”

She smiled at him. “At first I did it just because you were my neighbor and I couldn’t in good conscience walk by you when you were being bullied.”

That first time with Kacchan long ago.

“Then, as I watched you, I realized that almost no one else was even trying to help you. As far as I could see, you were a good kid, so it made me mad. I didn’t like the way you were so downtrodden, so I tried to do something about it. I used my connections, and I tried to make school a safer place for you.”

Now his eyes were definitely wide. The changes in grade school and middle school were because she wanted to protect him? He was a kid she barely knew or spoke to, and yet…

“You know, I meant it when I said you’re a good person. In fact, you were a much better person at that age than I was, and I was older than you.” She tilted her head slightly, her smile becoming fond. “From what I can see, you still are. You’re a good person, and you’re going to be a good hero. So I want to protect you.”

“So yes, Izuku. I do like you. I just can’t bring myself to try falling in love an underage boy, that’s all.”

He reached out, faltering in the motion. “C… can I hold your hand?”

She deliberated on his request for a long moment before nodding and placing her hand in his. He clasped it between both hands and locked eyes with her.

“I love you, (Name). When no one else believed in my dream, you gave me a push and told me to fight for it, to put in the effort for it. Okay, you didn’t say those words exactly, but that’s how it felt. I… There was no one else. No one else believed I could do it, not even my mom.” He blinked back tears and squeezed her hand. “That’s why I love you. You were a delinquent and your guy friends were scary, but you were always kind to me. You didn’t think I was worthless or useless, and you even praised me for my intellect.

“You… you gave me hope when I had nothing. You were light when it was dark.”

He leaned in closer, still holding her hand. He smiled brightly, tears still glimmering in his eyes as he laid everything bare.

“I love you.” He asked softly. “W… when I turn eighteen, do… do you think you could try to love me back?”

Her face which had been so composed was now a combination of blinking eyes, slightly gaping lips and a light blush.

“Holy hell, Izuku. You’re really going to make waiting two years really tough, aren’t you?”

Hearing her answer, he laughed and brought her hand against his face. He nuzzled into it and gazed at her lovingly.
“You stole my heart, (Name). It’s only fair I steal yours in return.”

Izuku is sixteen when the flowers which had been growing back disappeared as she laughed and brought her other hand up to cradle his face.

Hanahaki doesn’t need words for someone to believe their love is returned.

It is not what they say, but the reaction that tells you everything you need to know.

~Shannon L. Alder

Chapter End Notes

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO END TRAGICALLY!! DX Izuku was supposed to get the operation and forget Reader, but then... my beautiful angst-y end! Where did you go~?!

[sigh]

Anyway, yeah. U.A. finds out Reader can treat hanahaki and she lets them drag her into a part-time job because Izuku turned puppy eyes on her. So Ochaco and the rest of the student body are no longer quite at risk at choking to death on flower petals. She eventually works out a drug that is pushed through legal stuff and she eventually breaks free of U.A.

And yeah, the Kami no Kage are still a thing, but that's another can of worms I'm not gonna touch. :P
Izuku goes to class that morning, but at lunchtime he’s told by Ectoplasm that the principal wants to see him, and he arrives at a boardroom to find Nezu, Aizawa, All Might and Recovery Girl present. He gulps nervously and takes a seat when directed to, sitting in a lone chair and facing them. All Might and Recovery Girl look a little grimmer than usual, but Nezu and Aizawa seem to be the same as ever. Nezu starts things off with idle greetings before getting into the reason they called him there: the healing done to his limbs.

“Recovery Girl says you will not divulge the information regarding your mysterious benefactor, Midoriya. Is that true?”

He nods stiffly. “Y-yes, sir.”

Nezu, still looking as cheerful and approachable as ever, asked, “Why is that, Midoriya? Surely you understand that, as teachers and adults entrusted with your welfare, we need to know about any entities that have such access to even a single one of our students?”

Izuku inhaled deeply and nodded once. “I understand, sir.” He opened his eyes. “However, both I and my mother trust this ‘entity’ with my health and wellbeing. In turn we were entrusted with maintaining secrecy on said entity.” He met the principal’s eyes. “It is not my place to reveal that person to you.”

“Young Midoriya,” All Might spoke, gaining his attention. He shifted uneasily under his mentor’s concerned gaze. “Are you being coerced into silence? Has this mysterious person… demanded anything of you?”

He was almost offended. Taking a moment to calm his agitation, Izuku shook his head. “No, I’m not being forced into silence. I… I heard the reasoning for why they should be kept secret, and I agree with the assessment. And no, nothing has been demanded of me.”

Recovery Girl asked, “What reasoning might that be?”

He hummed slight, touching his chin as he lowered his head in thought, trying to organize his points before saying them. “Well, it’s mainly the fact that that person in question has a rather potent healing Quirk.” He looked up at them. “Those are rare, thus there is concern for their safety and a desire to keep themselves under the radar. It would be terrible if villains got their hands on them.”

“You raise a point,” Aizawa said, his dead expression now locked on him. “How can heroes protect this person from villains if you will not reveal their name and location?”

Izuku ducked his head, suddenly vividly remembering the day (Name)’s mother told him about the Alleyway. He murmured just loud enough for them to hear. “Heroes weren’t there to protect that person when it was needed, so they and those around them don’t trust heroes anymore.”
“An unfortunate occurrence,” Nezu commented quietly. “So this person who healed you, they hold little to no trust towards heroes?”

He nodded, clenching his hands on his knees. “It’s not an exaggeration to say that I’m the only hero they’ll trust.” He flailed. “I mean, not that I’m a hero yet!” He paused and slowly lowered his hands. “That person… doesn’t want to be involved with heroes or villains. They just want an average life, or at least right now they do. Maybe they’ll change their mind, but until then I’ve promised to keep their confidence, and I won’t betray that trust.”

Silence filled the room at his solemn statement.

Recovery Girl was the one to finally break it. “Midoriya, this person, have they had any sort of formal training?”

He thought about her question. “I… don’t think so. Not outside the mandatory Quirk counseling most people get when they’re younger. I think they’ve learned mostly based on hands-on experience in the safety of their home where their usage of their Quirk isn’t considered, technically, illegal.”

(He misses the way Nezu’s eyes gleam briefly, latching on to that tidbit of information he hadn’t meant to let escape—whatever is healing him is likely doing it in the comfort of their home, so, if things came down to it, they could locate this person by observing him while he is unaware)

Recovery Girl hummed thoughtfully. “Would this person object to becoming my apprentice?”

Izuku finds himself floored. Recovery Girl wanted to take (Name) as her apprentice?! Well, considering his arms were rather busted up and she apparently healed him perfectly, perhaps it shouldn’t come as a surprise. Why wouldn’t Recovery Girl want to nurture such a rare Quirk?

He frowned in distress. “I… I don’t know. I’d have to ask.”

The old woman nodded. “Please do. And you don’t have to worry about their age too much. Whether your age, or older or younger, if they will accept being my apprentice, I’ll teach them everything they’ll need to know.”

Izuku wanted to ask more questions but didn’t want to give anything away. He just nodded and said he would deliver the message.

The meeting continued and eventually boiled down to one unpleasant conclusion: U.A. wasn’t going to allow an unknown person to handle one of their students, thus said person must either come in to meet with Nezu and Recovery Girl or cease ‘interfering’ with his health.

It wasn’t fair, he thought mulishly, uncharacteristically agitated against U.A. Thankfully, All Might managed to catch him before he even left the building and after a short talk, Izuku felt less resentful against Nezu and the others.

Now he just had to go talk to (Name)’s parents. That should be… easy…?

(They listened grimly as Izuku told them about his meeting with some adults at U.A. and how they requested that he ask his ‘mysterious healer’ consider meeting with the principal. If not, they ‘politely’ request that they leave the healing of U.A. students to Recovery Girl, a licensed hero.

Their daughter scowled cutely. “You told me that she ‘refuses to heal that sort of injury’ anymore. She’s not doing her job right, is she?”)
He mused quietly next to his wife. “Perhaps that could be considered grounds for a case against her.”

Izuku flailed his hands. “I don’t want to sue Recovery Girl!” He winced as they all turned their attention on him. Hunching slightly, he nonetheless reaffirmed his stance. “I don’t want to sue Recovery Girl or U.A., please.”

“Well then, it seems as though we will have to leave you in their, er, ‘tender care’.” His wife sighed, reaching over to grasp their daughter’s hand. “Sweetie, it seems as though you won’t be able to heal Izuku for now.”

“No!” Their daughter became distressed as tears welled up in her eyes. “I said I’d heal Izuku! I can’t abandon him!”

Izuku felt his heart clench as his young friend’s distress. She was like that because he couldn’t take care of himself. She honestly believed that if she didn’t heal him then no one would.

He tried to placate her. “(Name), it’s not so bad. Recovery Girl won’t abandon me, no matter what she says. If she can help me, then she will. After all, she’s a healer and a hero.”

“Seems mean,” you pouted.

Her dad laughed. “Sweetie, you know as well as I do that if you don’t like someone then you’re not going to go out of your way to heal them.”

She flushed red and growled at her dad.

Izuku blinked, realizing that (Name)’s pool of people she will heal is rather small. Aside from himself and her parents, he wasn’t sure if she extended that courtesy to other people.

“You’re not licensed, dear,” her mother pitched in calmly, rubbing her thumb against the back of her daughter’s hand. “Perhaps that’s why the heroes and adults at Izuku’s school don’t want you healing one of their students.”

Tears pooled in her eyes as her bottom lip trembled. “It’s not fair! I’m good at healing. You know I’m good at it! So why?” She turned her heartbroken face on him. “Why won’t they let me help you?”

He felt his heart constrict again and his own eyes welled up in sympathy. “Uh, w-well… I guess it’s because they don’t know you and they’re worried about my safety.” He lifted his hands as she threatened to full out bawl. “I know I’m safe with you!” He smiled as she sniffled. He repeated kindly, “I know I’m safe with you. It’s just hard for my teachers to accept, that’s all.”

She rubbed her eyes and repeated sullenly, “Not fair…” She huffed and looked back at him determinedly. “If you’re dying, I’m gonna heal you no matter what anyone says!”

He chuckled. “Thank you, (Name).”

Thus did his young friend reluctantly accept the reality that he was no longer permitted to turn to her.

And now for the other foot.

(You frowned as Izuku finished talking again. Before your parents could react, you asked, “What’s
an apprentice, and who is Recovery Girl?”

Before your first question could be answered, Izuku lit up and launched into a lengthy explanation of who Recovery Girl was and what she did for U.A. Glancing at your parents, you saw them smiling slightly at Izuku, same as you. This wasn’t the first time your older friend became like this and probably wouldn’t be the last.

Catching on that he was babbling, Izuku stopped mid-sentenced, cleared his throat, and said, “Yeah. Recovery Girl is a hero with a healing Quirk.”

Your dad turned to you. “An apprentice is someone who learns a trade under a master. In this case, I assume Recovery Girl would be teaching you how to heal people and how to deal with various legal issues concerning using your Quirk on other people.”

You inhaled deeply and slowly let it out as you mulled over the information you’d been given. Finally, you turned your gaze on Izuku.

“If I become Recovery Girl’s apprentice, will I be allowed to keep healing you?”

He blinked his green eyes as your parents shifted in their seats. “Uh… I… I don’t know? You’d have to ask her, I think.”

Nodding once, you then turned to your parents.

“I want to heal Izuku, and if the only way I can do that is to be Recovery Girl’s apprentice, then I’ll do that.”

(A very long conversation followed, but no one made him leave, so he stayed and listened, answering any questions they directed at him as best he could. When things were finally settled, (Name) got permission to accept Recovery Girl’s offer. Izuku would deliver the message, as well as their home phone number for Recovery Girl to contact them.

Her dad walked him to the door and placed a hand on his shoulder as he stared down at him.

“Please, Izuku. If you can, keep her safe.”

He resisted the urge to swallow nervously. After all the fear they put into him regarding (Name)’s continued safety, he couldn’t help but empathize with what they must be feeling, if only a little. After all, by becoming Recovery Girl’s apprentice, (Name)—small, frail, nearly defenceless (Name)—was taking her first steps into the world beyond the safety of her home.

He nodded firmly. “I’ll do my best.”

Her dad stared at him for a moment before sighing and patting his shoulder. “I know you will.”

He left, stepping out into the late evening air, and sighed. Staring up at the night sky, Izuku hoped that things would work out.)

The next day seemed to be a blur of activity, and almost before you knew it, you and your parents were being escorted into U.A. The three of you met with Principal Nezu and Recovery Girl, and it was agreed that you would become Recovery Girl’s apprentice. Your lessons would take place after
school and you would be given things to study on your own.

“Being a healer isn’t easy,” Recovery Girl warned. “There’s all sorts of things you have to consider.” She smiled. “But then, that’s what our arrangement is for. Don’t worry, (Last Name). You’re in good hands with me.”

You nodded, thinking clearly of Izuku.

“Okay. Please teach me.”

The mental image you had of him shifted into one of his smiles, and you clenched your hands as Recovery Girl continued talking to your parents. Silently, you vowed.

‘I’ll protect you, Izuku.’

“Vows are powerful things,” he said. “They set things in motion.”

~John C. Wright, Orphans of Chaos

Chapter End Notes

We had no power for two days. Please spoil me.
Age Swap AU (Part 4)

Chapter Notes

So I realized I wanted to write a certain scene for this AU and that means I had to update to get closer to that, so here you go! Now I'm a little closer to where I want to get. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.

~Benjamin Franklin

Truthfully speaking, they don’t actually want their daughter to be Recovery Girl’s apprentice. In fact, if they could have their way, their daughter would be a safe shut-in, a NEET, for the rest of her life. That way, she would be safe and secluded away from the dangers of the world and away from the claws of those who would use her for her Quirk. Stereotypically, they wanted to wrap her in bubble wrap and protect her from the world.

Unfortunately, their finances are not what one would call plentiful and the bottom line was that even if they did allow her to be a shut-in as long as they were alive, when they died, their daughter had to be able to function in society on her own. Thus, allowing her to become Recovery Girl’s apprentice was their first step in preparing their daughter for life without them. Not that they had plans to die anytime soon, but unforeseen circumstances could happen and losing their lives to violence or villain attacks was not a zero probability.

Their daughter’s life and ability to function in society had long been a topic of discussion between the two of them, so when their daughter declared she would take up Recovery Girl’s offer, they did not put up as much resistance as they would have if they had not already discussed similar topics out of earshot of their child. They were greatly apprehensive and nervous about the whole thing, but they —reluctantly—accepted the fact that they could not keep her hidden away forever.

And so, their family settled into a new routine of dropping off their daughter with Recovery Girl.

(You were not happy to have to spend extra time at a different school after regular school, even if it was U.A., but sacrifices had to be made if you wanted to continue healing Izuku. That had been your greatest condition for becoming Recovery Girl’s apprentice, and while it would probably be a while, maybe even a long while, before you got to heal Izuku again, as long as you stayed on your current path, you would be able to do so again someday eventually. ‘Eventually’ was better than ‘never’, and you hoped it wouldn’t be too long before said day would come.

Despite your young age, Recovery Girl didn’t exactly go easy on you when it came to assigning reading material and/or homework. Since the body was a complicated biological machine, she wanted you to have as much a grasp of it as possible. That meant learning about everything about the human body. Stuffing your head full of knowledge was not a new thing, but the tests to check on your memory and understanding were, and you loathed Recovery Girl’s frequent tests and quizzes.
While Izuku and his classmates were off on ‘internships’, Recovery Girl explained that you being her apprentice was one long such internship (“Unpaid work,” dad explained). After listening to the various accounts of your healing since your Quirk manifested, she got permission from your parents to take you to a hospital to test your Quirk.

Despite your claims of being capable of more, the testing started small with cuts and scrapes, and the observations of your ‘patients’. After that, you were moved on to deep cuts and first-degree burns, and more observations of the patients. You outwardly scoffed at the idea of watching your patients for side-effects, but internally you sweated buckets despite the fact that mom, dad and Izuku hadn’t suffered any obvious long-term effects from your healing. When the official results came back that your Quirk hadn’t negatively affected anyone, you sighed with relief, much to Recovery Girl’s amusement.

By the time Izuku returned to school from his internship, you had graduated up to patients with mild internal bacterial and viral infections.

No one told you anything about Hosu, an event you only briefly registered dad mentioning at breakfast, something you dismissed as not affecting you or your life—and no one sought to inform you of Izuku’s involvement, least of all himself.

Izuku listened with a smile as (Name) chattered on about all the stuff she did and was doing under Recovery Girl’s tutelage. The young girl, his little friend, was no doubt already wowing the staff at the hospitals the aged hero took her to, and he was just so proud of her. Beaming, he told her so.

The smile that lit up her face at his words humbled him inside.

Was he… was her All Might?

\( \text{the hero he looked up to, the hero he wanted to be, the symbol of peace, the symbol that all was right in the world as long as he was there, his idol} \)

…Nah, couldn’t be.

Right…?

(The coming and going of a young girl at the U.A. school grounds did not go unnoticed, but neither was it blown out of proportion. While some students were curious in varying degrees, most dismissed the sight of her after a glance. The adult next to her was given the same treatment. A mother and child on campus grounds was not exciting enough to keep the interest of the students. Eventually it was just the child with a visitor’s badge, but one who rebuffed all attempts to help her and ignored questions about what she was doing on campus. The teachers had no problem with her presence and would, in fact, chastise any student caught ‘bothering’ her. The kid was a mystery, at least until she was seen going into Recovery Girl’s office, and once that bit of information spread, everyone dismissed her as Recovery Girl’s granddaughter.

Something the old nurse didn’t bother to correct, so that must be the kid’s real identity. She was just visiting her grandma at work, that’s all.)
You had been moved on to patients with second-degree burns and broken bones by the time Izuku’s final exams rolled around. Recovery Girl was immensely pleased with your progress in regards to your Quirk, but she said you needed to keep improving your base knowledge, as your written tests were barely passable levels. Then again, you were only ten and had years yet to improve on that front, so she was mostly focused on honing your skills. The doctors at the two hospitals she shuttled you between were also eager to see you improve your healing abilities and hoped to move you on to internal organs before the end of summer, though that, in your mentor’s opinion, was too ambitious and didn’t want you rushing out over your head.

By now, it was noted that your Quirk had the side-effect of making your patients hungry, and though the severity of said hunger wasn’t much at the levels they had you at, it was theorized that those with more severe wounds whom you healed would feel it more keenly and perhaps over a longer period of time. Also, you had a harder time manipulating bones and took longer to deal with those, with the noticeable effect of sapping your stamina. These were two things you hadn’t really registered before, so you decided that the Quirk testing wasn’t entirely useless.

Since you had a harder time with bones, that was the current focus of your trips to the hospitals with Recovery Girl. It wasn’t that you couldn’t manipulate bones, it was just difficult because they were harder to ‘see’. Stubborn as you were, you weren’t going to let bones escape your manipulation. Izuku had broken his bones and fixing those made you tired, so you had to get better at fixing them so that it wouldn’t make you tired.

You were going to be the best damn healer so that nothing Izuku did would hurt him for very long.

(so that he wouldn’t be that boy in the stairwell again, the one who to struggle and hobble along on his own with nary a care from anyone else)

“I’m going to get better at all of this,” you muttered in the hallway, sitting on a hard plastic chair with a juice box in your hands and a dead serious look on your face.

Recovery Girl chuckled kindly from a nearby seat. “I’m certain you will, dearie. You’re got the same fire in your eyes that the best students in the hero course do.”

Did that mean you had the same fire as Izuku?

The old woman nodded in good spirits. “You’re going to be a great hero yourself.”

Your thoughts derailed and you froze in place as the wreck of your thoughts blazed in a heap.

Stiffly, in slight jerking movements of your head, you turned a nearly derisive look on your mentor.

“A hero?” You practically spat the word out. “I didn’t become your apprentice to be a hero. I only did it because it was the only way to keep looking after Izuku. I don’t care about being a hero. I’m doing this for Izuku and mom and dad and Miss Inko.” You scowled and looked away from her, shaking your head. “If you didn’t hold Izuku over my head, I wouldn’t be here. I admit that I’m learning a lot under you, but I still resent you and the other grownups who tried to keep him away from me. I’ll learn from you, and I’ll do what you say—but don’t you ever call me a hero.”

(almost six years later and you still resent them for not being there, and Izuku is the only one you’ll forgive for being one, the only one you’ll cheer on because you’ve known him since you were six so you know that he’s everything a real hero should be)

Sliding off the chair, you stalked over to the recycle bin, drained your juice box, and tossed it in. Wiping your lips, you looked back at the old woman. “Are we done for the day, or is there still
Recovery Girl stared at you for a long moment. “…If you’re up for it, there’s another burn patient with a second-degree burn on their face that the doctor and I would like to see you heal. The face is a delicate area, and we want to see how fine your healing is in that area.”

You nodded. “I can do it.”

The old woman got off the chair. “Well then, let’s go.”

You followed after her without a single regret for anything you just said because you said what you felt.

If they hadn’t held Izuku from you, then you wouldn’t be here right now.

(It’s true that they did issue an ultimatum. It really shouldn’t be a surprise that they are resented for it.

Even if this child has the potential to be a great healer, it was still her choice if she wanted to hide away, maybe for the rest of her life. That they forced her out of her hiding place by basically taking away someone she cared about… yes, of course it’s understandable that there would be negative feelings.

That girl wasn’t doing the apprenticeship out of her own ambition or for the countless strangers she would someday save. No, she was only doing it because she wanted to help a student they wanted to keep out of her unlicensed grasp.

Perhaps someday her feelings would change. Maybe someday she would want to be a hero of her own accord. Today was not that day, and perhaps no day soon.

Chiyo could only hope to show (Last Name) the good she could do with her versatile healing Quirk. She could only hope that the girl would someday look beyond Midoriya and want to help others, would want to be a hero.

In the meantime, perhaps Chiyo herself could learn a little more about her reluctant apprentice, perhaps understand why she so disliked the notion of being called a hero.

Perhaps the parents would be willing to divulge.)

Izuku had a brief discussion with her mother and it was agreed that they wouldn’t tell her about his encounter with a villain at the mall either.

He didn’t like the idea of keeping secrets from her, but none of them liked the idea of worrying her either, especially since she still didn’t have permission to heal him again. Feeling uneasy at keeping yet more things from her, Izuku made time to take her to the convenience store for a snack and, more importantly, to talk to her and listen to her on their walk there and back.

After all, after Kacchan, she was his oldest friend, the only other one he had before coming to U.A. Age difference or not, he wasn’t going to easily let her slip away.

…and maybe some things Recovery Girl said to him made him worry about her.
Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

~Carrie Fisher

Chapter End Notes

When I mentioned that 'we had no power for two days', I meant the whole community. It was some kind of mass power outage. Cooking-over-fires (or barbecues)-stuff. I'm just so glad we had running water. T^T
Age Swap AU (Part 5)

Chapter Notes

As usual, no beta, so there's probably spelling and/or grammar mistakes. :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.

~Edmund Burke

Summer break, a time of fun, sun and freedom!

For most people.

While it was a fact that you still had most of the days of the week off from school, you still had your apprenticeship with Recovery Girl, and summer vacation meant that you could spend whole afternoons at the hospitals with her, and which you did, three times a week.

Lying on your bed in dread of one such afternoon that very day, you signed and wondered what your other friends were doing. Izuku, you knew, was away at some kind of summer training camp, so you probably wouldn’t see him again for the rest of summer vacation, but you did have other friends, even if you didn’t trust them enough to reveal the true power of your Quirk. They were the ones you were spending most of summer vacation hanging out with, well, when you weren’t with Recovery Girl or studying, anyway.

Getting up from your bed, you left your bedroom to go whine to your mom and beg for ice cream. You didn’t get the ice cream, but you did get a popsicle, so you counted that as a win.

(Before leaving for the summer training camp, Recovery Girl called him to her office. When she got to the real reason why she called him in to talk, he felt his stomach sink. Since he wasn’t injured, he sort of figured it would be about (Name). He listened grimly as she recounted his young friend’s outburst in the hospital hall where she decreed that she didn’t want to be called a hero. The aged hero asked him if he knew why, and he scratched the back of his neck.

He knew the story, he knew about the Alleyway, but it wasn’t his place to tell. He told her so, but added that she could ask (Name)’s mom as that was where he had heard the story from. Recovery Girl nodded and thanked him for the hint.

“That girl looks up to you, Midoriya,” the nurse said, almost out of the blue.

He blushed slightly. “I know.”

She stared at him sternly. “Midoriya… Don’t let that girl become like you are towards All Might.”

He blinked, uncertain. “Um… what… what do you mean?”
She sighed and clarified. “Don’t let that girl look up to you like you’re a god.”

*(he is her All Might, why, he’s nothing like All Might, not yet, not even close, so why—)*

Feeling suddenly thunderstruck, Izuku gaped. “I… what?!” He shook his head. “I don’t… I don’t look at All Might like—”

She cut him off. “You do, Midoriya, and it shows in your actions more than you’d think. You put him on a high enough pedestal that you’ve put yourself here in this office more times than any of your other classmates who are in the same year as you.” She gave him a stern glare. “That girl is starting down a similar path in regards to you, entirely too willing to push herself too far in hopes of being some use to you. Now, I’m doing my best to dissuade her of making you a god in her eyes, but you have to do your part too. Tell her not to push herself too hard. Tell her to be careful. And for goodness’ sake boy, don’t let her admiration of you go to your head!”

He slumped in his seat. He didn’t want her to hurt herself. That’s the last thing he wanted. But how was he supposed to make himself less in her eyes? Would that even be a good thing to attempt? He was the only hero (in-training) that she seemed to look up to and he didn’t want to ruin that. He wanted to be a hero she could look up to, like All Might was for him. He didn’t think his admiration for All Might went to ‘god’-like levels, but there was no denying he really liked All Might and what the hero stood for.

Sighing, Izuku ran a hand through his hair. “I’ll… I’ll try.” He lifted his head with a determined stare. “I’ll try to be a hero worthy of her admiration!”

*thwack*

“Ow!”

Recovery Girl had hit him with her cane.

You yawned as you sat on a chair in the hallway outside your latest patient’s hospital room. Said patient had damaged nerves in both of their arms as a result of some accident and today’s test had involved reconnecting and healing the severed and/or damaged nerves. It hadn’t been hard, per se, but when the patient—a pianist—started crying as she moved her fingers, Recovery Girl noticed you looking uncomfortable and had sent you out into the hall, and now you were bored. Scratching your cheek, you made a mental note to start carrying around a pen and notepad, or at least something to keep you occupied at times like this.

Perking up as the door to the patient’s room opened, you straightened as Recovery Girl came out. She informed you that your healing procedure seemed to have gone well, just as the others had before it. Since the doctor you were just with was going to busy for a while yet, he suggested the two of them go back to the burn ward to have the doctor there oversee you healing another patient.

Grumbling slightly under your breath, you followed her obediently, expecting another boring case. It wasn’t as boring as you feared, though. Yes, the first patient was a standard second-degree burn victim and not something you considered challenging, but after you muttered about it in the hall, the doctor—seemingly annoyed by your complaints—suggested you try your Quirk on someone with a more severe burn. Bursting past Recovery Girl’s admonishment towards the doctor, you loudly accepted the challenge.

Sighing, Recovery Girl said that you would probably find certain sights too disturbing at your young
age and your parents probably wouldn’t want you to see a bad burn victim, but you pointed out that you’d have to get used to such things eventually anyway, so why not start now? Your parents had already given their permission for her to take you to these hospitals to use your Quirk, so why not actually try testing the limits of your Quirk? So far all you learned was that it took longer for you to mend bones while everything else was just more of stuff you already knew how to do!

Your mentor stared at you for a long minute before grimly giving in, but added that if the sight disturbed you too much then you wouldn’t be getting into things like that until you were older. Not exactly grinning in victory but feeling accomplished all the same, you turned to the doctor and told him to lead the way.

He led you to the pediatric burn ward.

(She watched as one child approached another, her apprentice on her own feet in an apron and the other on a hospital bed wrapped in bandages and attached to IVs. She glared up at the doctor whose eyes were glued onto her young apprentice. If this was some kind of test, it was a pointlessly cruel one towards both children. Thankfully, when (Last Name) failed, Chiyo would be able to use her own Quirk—

“Looks like it hurts.”

Recovery Girl resisted the urge to put her face in her palm. It seems that working on her apprentice’s bedside manner was going to have to come up sooner rather than later.

“Hur’s… lo’s…” Hurts lots.

One of the child’s arms wasn’t wrapped up, the smooth skin free of any blemishes. Her apprentice reached out and placed her hand over that one, just as Recovery Girl remembered that they hadn’t yet gone over what (Last Name) was expected to try, ergo they had no idea what she was going to attempt at that moment. Opening her mouth to tell her apprentice to stop, she was too late.

The child on the bed whose lone visible eye had been hazy with pain cleared and blinked rapidly in confusion. “Doesn’t… doesn’t hurt?!”

“Pain sucks,” her apprentice commented drily, still holding her hand over the other child’s. “It looked like you were hurting lots, so I made it stop.”

The child’s eye filled with relieved tears. “Th-thank you…!”

“Shush, I’m not done.” Her little apprentice frowned, staring down at where their hands were touching. “Oh, ouch. You got burned really bad.”

“My house burned down at night,” the child explained, slowly blinking away their tears. “My name’s Takeshi. Who’re you?”

“Not important, stop talking,” she replied. She huffed and scowled back at the doctor. “Takeshi doesn’t have enough fat.”

They both blinked. He asked, “What?”

(Last Name) sighed as though she was put upon. “When I heal people, I use their bodies to fix them. Takeshi doesn’t have enough fat for me to fix all of him, just the deeper parts so he doesn’t hurt so badly anymore.”
That… that was news to her, to both of them. Recovery Girl frowned. “How long have you known that you need fat to heal someone?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. Since I was seven? Anyway, since Takeshi doesn’t have enough fat, I need fresh flowers or plants, and a probably a lot of them.”

The doctor raised his hands. “Slow down. Why do you need fresh flowers or plants?”

She frowned as though it was obvious what she needed them for. Her answer and its implications floored them both.

“So I can change them to finish fixing Takeshi.”)

The patient, Takeshi Kobayakawa, had lost his parents in the fire that destroyed his home. His only family was a twenty-one-year old sister who had signed papers with the hospital allowing them to do whatever they needed to do to look after and heal her brother, which was why the doctor let you near him in the first place. Wanting to see whether or not you actually could do what you said, the doctor had sent someone out for freshly cut flowers.

When the person returned with a large bouquet of plain flowers, you didn’t complain. Instead, you took to flowers by unceremoniously shoving your hand into the depths of the bouquet and holding it that way as you turned to walk back to Takeshi’s bedside. As you moved, you ‘melted’ the flowers into paste since that was easier for you to use.

This time, you held out your hand to Takeshi. “Ready?”

He eagerly put his hand in yours, smiling beneath his bandages. “Yeah!”

Focusing on him, you brought the paste over to his uncovered arm and laid it against his skin, ignoring his surprised yelp of “Cold!” Staring at nothing while ‘seeing’ his body, you manipulated the paste and his flesh like you did with the cats back when dad was helping you learn more about your Quirk.

You don’t know how long you stood there, but when you finally finished, you had used up all the paste and you still weren’t done with Takeshi. Scowling, you let go and wiped your sweaty brow.

“Takeshi still has burns on his lower body,” you said to the room in general. “I fixed his face and neck because those seemed like the most important parts, plus his burned hand and the ruined nerves along his arm. There’s still a lot left, but…”

You had finally turned to look at the three adults in the room. Recovery Girl, the doctor and the person who brought the flowers were just staring at you. Feeling woozy, you didn’t stop scowling. “What?”

You weren’t happy when the doctor and the other man said you were going to be a great hero someday.

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Sometimes the most scenic roads in life are the detours you didn’t mean to take.

~Angela N. Blount, Once Upon an Ever After
Ahh, and now there’s an Aizawa/Reader/Kan (Vlad, AKA Class 1-B teacher) AU in my head. __.
Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

~Søren Kierkegaard

Before you could maybe shout at the doctor and the other man in the room, Recovery Girl noticed something about you and said firmly, “That’s enough for today, I think. You’re tired, and don’t try to hide it.”

You huffed but didn’t refute her, not when it was true. Using the paste was almost as hard as fixing bones. Besides, you had fixed the worst of Takeshi’s wounds and he wasn’t in such pain anymore, so technically you could call this a successful visit.

“Feels wrong to leave it unfinished,” you murmured as you followed Recovery Girl out into the hall.

She chuckled softly but didn’t explain what was so amusing about your comment. Instead she said, “Doctor Fukui back there will let Takeshi’s sister know about this development. She has already signed a non-disclosure agreement with the hospital, so she can’t talk about how her brother was healed without legal repercussions. They may make Takeshi sign one as well.”

You thought back on your previous patients. “That’s what the others had to sign as well, right?”

She nodded. “Yes.”

You didn’t say much after that. After leaving your apron at the front desk for next time, you followed Recovery Girl out of the hospital and into a vehicle. You were dropped off at home and said goodbye before heading up to your apartment. Once there, you greeted your mom before heading off for a well-deserved nap.

You didn’t wake up until close to midnight, hungry enough to sneak out into the kitchen for a snack.

Your mom startled you by unexpectedly turning on the kitchen light. She laughed before shooing you into a chair at the table.

She made a quick, light meal and made you brush your teeth before tucking you back into bed.

You don’t notice that you’re already in your pajamas and that you had woken up from under your bed covers. Instead, you simply drift off in the comfort of knowing that you are loved.

(His wife received a call yesterday afternoon shortly after their daughter returned from one of her afternoons with Recovery Girl, and it was the hero who was calling. The aged hero requested a meeting to discuss their daughter and asked both of them to attend, so he took the afternoon off and went with his wife and child to the arranged meeting.

It was… not a comfortable meeting.

In order to better understand their daughter, Recovery Girl asked about her apparent abhorrence of heroes and reluctance to be labeled as one. Haltingly, with their daughter between them and leaning against her, his wife told the story of the Alleyway back when (Name) was only four. After
explaining what happened and the subsequent secrecy regarding their daughter’s Quirk, his wife said that after that night, (Name) didn’t look at heroes the same way anymore.

“They weren’t there,” their child hissed, face pressed against her mother while holding his hand. “We needed one, any one, and no one came.” Her face fell. “All the stories about heroes saving people in need were lies.”

They did try to explain to her back then that not even heroes could be everywhere, but for a child who had wholly believed in the idea that ‘heroes save’, no blow could be greater than no hero appearing when the life of her mother was in danger. She stubbornly refused to forgive all heroes, including All Might, for not being there on that dreadful night. She stopped playing games and pretend, and threw out all her hero toys and posters. She tolerated the hero worship in her peers well enough, but as far as she was concerned, each and every one of them was a liar.

They tried to tell her the folly of thinking in absolutes, but nothing they did seemed to have an impact on her. It was only with the introduction of Izuku into her life that she began to change the way she thought, if only by a little. She had learned early into their tentative friendship that Izuku wanted to be a hero, and though she expressed derision to them about it at first, since then she came to believe that Izuku, if he was a hero, then he could be someone she could believe in, someone she knew had the right stuff to be one, even if he couldn’t be everywhere.

As far as they could tell, Izuku was her only chance of believing in heroes again, of forgiving them for not being there in that alleyway.

Not that that was something they could articulate to the aged hero in front of them.

They listened as Recovery Girl tried to explain that heroes couldn’t be everywhere, but, as they thought, her words were in vain and their daughter would not be swayed. Sighing, the hero changed the subject and discussed what had happened at their daughter’s internship at the hospital yesterday.

It was his turn to sweat as the hero turned sharp eyes on him, mentioning cats and ‘paste’. Ah. Excuse the expression, but the cat was out of the bag.)

It was almost funny watching dad stumble through his explanation of why you knew how to make paste and why you knew you could rearrange living things including animals. Things took a serious turn, though, as she imparted the severity of your abilities and what it might mean if people found out before you could protect yourself. Your mom hugged you to her side while dad squeezed your hand. Recovery Girl wasn’t saying anything new, just confirming what you and your parents already feared.

“And that’s why I have a proposal!”

Startling, the three of you turned your heads to the now open door and the two… and the creature and the (painfully skinny) man standing there. You blinked as the animal asked the room if he was a dog, bear or mouse, and that made you think ‘I should learn the differences between animals’, and you formed vague plans of getting your mom or dad to take you to a pet store. The animal proceeded to introduce himself and his companion as they entered the room and closed the door behind them.

“I am Nezu, principal of this school, and this is one of our teachers, Toshinori Yagi.”

You know it’s rude to stare, but you can’t tear your eyes away from that man’s sunken face. Your eyes follow him as he and the principal move to stand near Recovery Girl. When he came to a stop,
he noticed you staring and fidgeted slightly under your scrutiny, making your mom poke your side to get you to stop.

Instead, bluntly, you declared aloud, “I don’t know how and I don’t know when, but someday, I’mma get my hands on you, and you’re going to get well.”

The adults had varying reactions, all of which you missed as you realized something that made you flail your hands as you hastily corrected yourself. “I mean! Unless it’s something to do with your Quirk, in which case, I’m sorry for assuming!”

The skinny man rubbed the back of his neck as Nezu and Recovery Girl chuckled. Your mom sighed and patted your head, reminding you, “Consent is a thing, sweetie.”

You blushed in embarrassment. “R-right. Sorry.”

(He observed the girl who had caught Recovery Girl’s interest, the young child who apparently not only had an amazing healing Quirk, but, if he was not mistaken, was also young Midoriya’s friend. Ever since his successor’s busted limbs had been fully healed, this girl was of great interest to not only to U.A., but also to him personally because such a Quirk could only be helpful in young Midoriya’s journey to becoming the greatest hero. Not that the boy had such a shallow reason for being friends with the girl, of course not. If he remembered correctly, once young Midoriya had actually opened up about the girl, the fact that she’d been his friend since he was twelve was something he brought up often, as well as how amazing she was.

Now this young girl wanted to use her Quirk for his benefit. Not All Might’s, just Yagi’s.

Of course, he had no intention of letting her actually get her hands on him any time soon. After all, she was only a young child, and as Recovery Girl said, she still had a lot of room to grow.

Still, it was reassuring that such a person was determined to stay by young Midoriya’s side.

Smiling, he listened as Nezu explained the proposal regarding young (Last Name)’s safety and security.)

It was somewhat reassuring to hear that U.A. was taking their daughter’s safety seriously. If they would agree to it, then Yagi would be in charge of the rotating staff who would watch over their daughter from now on. Of course, there were conditions. One, she had to continue her apprenticeship with Recovery Girl. Two, when the time came, she had to attend U.A. And three, after graduation, their daughter had to work at U.A. for five years.

Before they could say anything, their daughter piped up, willful as she always was in the presence of heroes, those people whom she held a grudge against, no matter who they were.

“Three years, or you can shove it.”

Holding back a sigh as she pinched her daughter’s cheek, she supposed she should just be grateful her little girl didn’t add something like “where the sun doesn’t shine” to her blunt haggling.

U.A. argued them up to four years, but she added that (Name) didn’t have to take the entrance exam, and her husband added an exit clause. If at any time they failed to protect their daughter from kidnapping or great physical harm, she would not be expected to serve those four years after
graduation. Their daughter grumbled under her breath but agreed, and a literal contact was signed by all three of them along with Nezu on U.A.’s behalf with Recovery Girl serving as a witness.

The three U.A. employees thanked them for their cooperation and were informed that starting that very day, someone would now be shadowing their daughter. Thanking the other three in turn, they left, and were reminded that their daughter was expected to report to Recovery Girl tomorrow, as usual.

Unfortunately, the next day, Recovery Girl called to cancel, saying something urgent had come up.

Later, they only learned why when Inko, in tears, showed up at their door and asked—practically begged—if their little girl would go see Izuku and heal her son’s badly broken arms.

They got the story out of her, of how the students’ summer training camp had been attacked by villains and how Izuku had been injured just last night.

“Where is he?”

Startled, the three of them looked to see (Name) standing there with her hands clenched at her side as her eyes burned. Their little girl met Inko’s eyes and asked again.

“Where is Izuku?”

With that, they knew there would be no stopping her. There was almost never any stopping her when Izuku was involved, so they bowed to the inevitable and let Inko take their daughter.

Shortly after they’d gone, he remembered.

“Oh. That security that was supposed to be following (Name)… Do you think they’ll tell Recovery Girl where she’s headed right now?”

Not that he thought U.A. could stop the combined force of both Inko and his little girl.

His wife gave a short laugh, apparently of the same mind as he. “I’d like to see them try to keep that duo away from Izuku.”

As he joined in with her laughter, he wondered. Did that boy know just how lucky he was?

He’d better.

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

—Lao Tzu
It’s hard, seeing Izuku on a hospital bed.

When Inko had opened the door to his hospital room, you had frozen at the sight of a prone body, unmoving, and you thought for sure that this was the wrong room because you’ve never seen Izuku lying down like that during the day. His mother shuffles you further into the room, and you see.

You see him lying there, eyes closed and body still. His arms are wrapped in thick casts, and there’s a sheet over his lower body. There are bandages wrapped around his head.

The tell-tale signs of imminent tears afflict you as you see your friend for what happened to him. He was attacked out there, and he hurt himself fending off a villain, hurt himself with his Quirk just like at the Sports Festival. When you finally touched him, what damage would you ‘see’? How badly are his arms broken to be wrapped up like this?

He breathes, chest rising and falling, and that’s the only comfort you get from him.

He is alive.

Fate willing, you’ll always be within reach to help keep him that way.

*(the boy in the stairwell, the boy with the smiles, the boy with the good heart)*

“Did you sign the required forms?”

You sniff after speaking, and hear Inko’s wavering reply. “Forms…?”

Turning to her, you clarified. “We are not in the privacy of either of our homes. Unauthorized use of my Quirk here will be considered illegal. You’ll have to get his doctor to discuss the details with you, but basically you’ll need to get his permission before I do anything to Izuku.”

She half-turned to go look for said doctor, worry written clear across her face. “And if he doesn’t agree to let you use your Quirk…?”

You didn’t narrow your eyes or clench your fists. Still staring at Izuku, you spoke quietly with iron underlying every word.

“Then I’ll do it anyway. There is no law I would not break for him.”

You started slightly when Inko’s hand settled on your shoulder. Turning your gaze on her, you saw her smiling tenderly with tears brimming in her eyes. “Oh, (Name)… Izuku wouldn’t want you to do that.”

Your shoulder slumped. “Yes… I know.”

But that didn’t make it any less true.
Inko found her son’s doctor and told him that she had brought someone in to heal her son. He thanked her for not going ahead in using an unauthorized Quirk in the hospital before starting with questions about the person she brought in. Truthfully, Inko told him that that person had been healing her son since he was twelve and that she trusted that person unconditionally as the two of them were friends. When she added that that person was Recovery Girl’s apprentice, the doctor phoned the aged hero to confirm her words.

He put the aged hero on speaker phone and though she seemed put out by having her apprentice over there, she said it was fine if her apprentice (Last Name) used their Quirk on Midoriya. However, she instructed the doctor to have Inko sign the necessary papers before doing so.

After the call, the doctor gave in and did as the hero said. Once the papers were signed by her, the doctor put them on a clipboard and brought them for (Last Name)’s signature as they headed for her son’s room.

The doctor was surprised by the silent revelation that (Last Name) was only a child, but aside from a change in expression, he didn’t balk. This was Recovery Girl’s apprentice, and the aged hero had said that (Last Name) would be able to handle Midoriya’s injuries. The girl quickly signed everywhere the doctor indicated, and once it was done to his satisfaction, he waved his permission.

Inko watched as (Name) put her hand against her son’s face, and she felt relief slowly ease the tension from her body. Realizing that she was relying on a child to take care of her son, Inko brought a hand up to her mouth as her tears brimmed again. It seemed backwards to think like that. Shouldn’t it be her son protecting (Name)? Shouldn’t it be adults looking after them both?

Oh, why did her son have to keep putting himself in these kinds of situations? Was it because he knew he had (Name) waiting in the background, ready and willing to fix him up so he can head out again right away?

Maybe… maybe they were both taking little (Name) for granted…

Sweat beaded your forehead as you finished healing up Izuku’s arms. Sighing quietly, you let go of him and wiped your forehead with the back of your arm.

“Done,” you announced, not looking away from those closed eyes. “His bones were really shattered this time. It was… pretty bad, actually. If he kept abusing his arms—”

“He risked permanently losing the use of his arms.”

You finally turned and looked at the doctor. The man held the clipboard loosely at his side as he stared down at Izuku. “I’ll have to take another x-ray to confirm your words before I remove his casts. Given that you have Recovery Girl’s confidence, I’m sure his arms are fine as you say, but this would still be standard procedure in the use of unknown Quirks.”

You nodded. “I understand. You’re a doctor, and he’s your patient, so you have to look out for him.”

There were a few more words exchanged before the doctor left, leaving you and Inko alone with Izuku. The woman offered you a hug and you accepted it. She patted your hair and softly said her thanks. You nodded against her and carefully broke away from the hug.

You both stayed long enough for Inko to peel and cut up some apple slices, but Izuku didn’t wake up even as you were both leaving. Casting one last glance back at him, you clenched your hands as you stepped out into the hallway. Due to your time with Recovery Girl at the hospitals, you now
noticed that it took you longer to deal with bones, and you had had to take a lot of time just now to fix his arms. You hadn’t noticed back when you were healing him after the Sports Festival, but now you definitely registered that it took you longer to heal bones than flesh. You were still inexperienced, still learning how to wield your Quirk efficiently.

Because of things like this… because of things like this, you were going to be the best damn healer you could be!

With a new fire in your soul, you left that hospital and went home with Inko.

(There was finally time for another afternoon at one of the hospitals for your internship, and you asked Recovery Girl if you could focus exclusively on bones. She relented, and while a doctor was looking up patients you could visit, she added that for now she was going to have you study bone structure. Feeling agreeable, you nodded and said you would work hard.

And you did.

That afternoon, you visited five patients with different bone problems. One patient, a high school boy, had a broken collarbone from playing sports. You were told that broken collarbones were particularly painful and not easy to treat. For you, it was simply a matter of carefully mending his collarbone back together.

The second patient had a broken hand, and Recovery Girl told you that there were twenty-seven bones in a normal hand, something you knew from ‘seeing’ but never really registered before. That patient had broken sixteen of the bones in his hand, and in addition to that there was nerve damage as well, plus some mutilated flesh you had to restructure. When you were done, the man flexed his hand in wonder.

The third patient was girl with broken kneecaps. This poor child had been removed from an abusive home just recently and was a timid little thing that seemed to want to shrink and disappear into her hospital bed. You healed her broken kneecaps and fixed several hairline breaks in her left arm. You tried very hard not to think of her too much because it made you hurt inside.

(how could anyone do that to a little girl?)

The fourth patient was an old woman with a broken pelvis. She cried tears of joy when you were done. Then, because you had ‘seen’ that her bones were porous—“Osteoporosis,” the doctor said, looking at the woman’s chart—you offered to fix that for her, if she let you use the pretty bouquet by her bedside. She said it was a gift from her good son, her only child, but said he’d probably be happier with a stronger mother than some flowers that were only going to wilt anyway. You made paste out of the flowers and used it to strengthen her fragile bones.

The fifth patient was a middle-aged man with a damaged spine. More specifically, several of his vertebrae had been knocked out of alignment and he was in near-constant pain. The nerves were the easiest to deal with, but you only fixed those once you pushed his vertebrae back in place. The man was profuse in his thanks.

By then, you were well-exhausted, and it was well into the afternoon, almost evening. When you got home, you drowsily crawled into bed and fell asleep.

After sleeping soundly through the whole night, you woke up the next day and dedicated most of it to studying the human bone structure in all the textbooks you had in your room, varying from grade
school level to university level. You didn’t actually understand everything, but you promised yourself that someday you would.

(Instead of taking her apprentice on another afternoon at one of the hospitals, Recovery Girl opted to keep her at U.A. so they could study a replica of the human skeleton. Her young apprentice noticed that the (fake) skeleton was missing its pinky toe joint, meaning it was a replica of a person who would have had a Quirk.

“Feels wrong to not see it,” the young girl murmured, carefully sliding her fingers down along the left radius bone.

“You say that sometimes,” Chiyo noted. “What do you mean by ‘see’?”

The girl blinked, slowly frowning as thought about her question. “When I touch people or flowers or plants… it’s like I see everything about them, even if I’m just staring at one spot with my normal eyes. I don’t… I don’t know how to explain it. I see normally with my eyes, but when I use my Quirk, I see everything about the living thing I’m touching. Everything that makes it work, everything that going’s wrong… Even if I don’t know the words to explain what’s going on, I just know.”

Something chimed in Chiyo’s mind. Carefully, she asked, “When you were smaller, when you ‘felt’ something wrong in your parents, did you ever ‘fix’ it?”

The girl nodded, looking away at something else. “Yeah. Sometimes mom had cuts, and sometimes she or dad had little invaders. One time dad’s heart was going to go wonky and I knew that wasn’t ‘right’, so I fixed it.”

“Did your parents ever know?”

“Sometimes? Mom noticed when she cuts disappeared. I don’t know what they thought I meant when I told them I defeated the little invaders that were threatening them, but last year dad scared us both by suddenly yelling that he understood what I meant. He started feeling bad at work, but after he came home I held on to his hand a little longer than usual, and while we were eating, that’s when he yelled. He said the little invaders were illnesses and that I had killed them off so they wouldn’t get sick.” She giggled, “Mom scolded him for scaring us though.”

“Did he ever know about his heart?”

She shook her head. “I didn’t tell him. It scared me to think something bad almost happened to dad, so I didn’t tell either of them, ever.” She looked back at her with narrowed eyes. “And you better not either.”

It was one thing if it was just her family in their home, but… “(Last Name). Did you ever use your Quirk on anyone else?”

“Izuku and Inko,” she replied instantly. “Sometimes my friends when I noticed they had little invaders.”

“Did you tell them?”

“No.”

Chiyo spent a long moment in silence before sighing. Then, she began telling her student exactly
why she shouldn’t have done that and why she should do that. She looked somewhat rebellious, but nodded.

Her parents may have tried to impart the importance of consent on the girl, but Chiyo could understand that it was difficult to watch someone you cared about get hurt or sick. Still, if she wanted to be able to use her Quirk legally, such things would have to stop.

As old as she was, Chiyo could admit, if only to herself, that she had underestimated just what kind of person her young apprentice was. This girl was not a blank slate or shapeless clay—this girl was strong-willed and had firm opinions and beliefs. It was not going to be easy to keep her on the straight and narrow, and she counted her lucky stars that at least the girl didn’t seem to have villainous inclinations.

What a disaster that would be.)

Less than a day later, you sat on the couch, pressed up against your mother who was pressed up against your father, and the three of you watched as the world fell apart in Kamino Ward.

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Every manmade disaster begins when one man thinks for another. However benevolent they begin, the ultimate outcome is tyranny.

~John Kramer, Blythe
The world we see is a painting colored by our fears and desires.

~Tim Fargo

As the devastation at Kamino Ward continued, you learned at the same time as everyone else just what was All Might’s true form. Worse still, you recognized the skinny man that stood revealed after a terrifying display of power from the villain wreaking havoc. All Might’s costume hung off his thin form as he stood between the villain and a trapped civilian, but you remembered that blond hair and gaunt face.

“Yagi…”

Apparently your mother did, too, his name escaping her in a whisper. Her hand squeezed your upper arm and you wondered whether she did that in a comforting motion or not.

Biting your lip, you cursed your age and lack of skill. If only you were older, if only you were licensed. If only you could have had a chance to do what healing you could, would Yagi—All Might—be doing better in this battle?

(would Izuku someday be facing villains like this? where would you be then?)

“I need to be better,” you hissed fervently, clenching the cloth of your shorts in your hands.

Your mother rubbed your arm, a definite soothing motion this time.

By the time fight ended with All Might’s hard-won victory, you gazed at the ruined city on the screen and knew that someday you would be called to deal with the aftermath of such scenes.

A part of you wished that you were already able to help out, already on-call and even on your way to lend your aid, but unless your loved ones were among them, it wouldn’t be for the masses. No, you’d run to lend your aid, but only because of Izuku, the hero who would win such fights, the one who would look your way when his part of the fight was over.

(crushed ice, winds, and broken fingers

broken bones from fending off villains

his body a shield, his smile a light)

Your mom coaxed you off to bed, but your sleep was fitful and broken.

(Before they left to rescue Kacchan, Izuku had woken to find that his arms didn’t hurt. It had been a distant thought, his mind still numb from the fact that he had failed to rescue his childhood friend. He saw the cut applies his mom left but didn’t eat them, although that was partially due to the fact that his arms were still in casts.

His classmates and friends dropped by to see him, at least those who could. Kirishima presents his plan and even though he knows Iida and the others don’t agree with the idea, he knows that he’s
going to go along with Kirishima to go rescue Kacchan.

Before things can get too heated, a doctor came in with a nurse, and they dismissed the others. They carefully cut his arms free, and he was told that not only did Recovery Girl stop by to heal him, so had the hero’s apprentice. He blinked at the news and stared down at his arms. He still had scars, and he remembered asking her once to leave them.

A nurse wrapped his arms in bandages despite the fact that he didn’t need them, not if (Name) had gotten her hands on him, but he let the nurse do her work without a fuss. He listened as the doctor gave his diagnosis, how if it wasn’t for Recovery Girl’s apprentice how he had been risking losing the use of his arms. The doctor tells him that Recovery Girl isn’t happy with him, but it’s not all bad news. The doctor gives him a thank you letter from Kota, and Izuku knows he’s going to keep it forever.

*(like he keeps the memory of her words, that happy exclamation from someone who didn’t like heroes but thought he’d be a great one anyway)*

When the time comes, he meets Kirishima, and their group heads off. Because of the bandages, no one realizes that his arms are perfectly healed, and even in himself that fact is a distant thought in the face of the task in front of him.

Focused only on rescuing Kacchan, there’s no room for thoughts of expulsion, his mother, or (Name).

But to be fair, if it was his mother or (Name) who had been kidnapped, he wouldn’t have had any thoughts for Kacchan or anyone or anything else. It’s just the way he is, the way he feels, the way he deals with what’s in front of him when everything else is safe in the background.

He can’t help it, and doesn’t even yet realize it.)

You wake up the next day to find the news of Kamino Ward everywhere. That and All Might’s true form are all anyone’s talking about, especially your friends when you meet them at the park. They reenact the fight, and everyone wants to be All Might, because even if he’s a skinny dude, he’s still All Might. You can’t stomach the sight for very long and beg off, retreating home by saying you’re not feeling well.

Saying you’re not feeling well, implying that you’re sick, that is a tactic which is often a lie. You haven’t been sick since before you were four, though you are still susceptible to stomachaches and headaches. Mom and dad are aware of this ability of yours, and they like that you haven’t been sick since you were small. Apparently you had had a flu once, and it was not an experience they wished to relive.

Entering your apartment, you sighed and retreated to your air conditioned room. Recovery Girl had given mom a short call, saying she was going to be busy for the interim, and you understood. She told you to keep up your studying because she was going to test you when things settled down, and you took the mild threat seriously. To help yourself study, you drew various bones by hands and labeled them, not caring that they were wonky and off-scale.

You pretended they were Izuku’s bones, and you had to pause, because even at ten, you knew a thought like that was firmly in creep territory.
It’s the day after he met All Might on the beach, that painful evening when he finally accepted that the age of All Might was over. He has had time to sleep and eat and make himself feel human again while the knowledge settles deep into his bones and thoughts.

She comes to visit to see how he’s doing.

“Could you have healed All Might?”

The question slips from his mouth as he stares at her across the kitchen table, glasses of juice in front of each of them while his mother has left to do some shopping. He had been staring at her, the little girl with so much potential packed into her small frame. It’s not an accusatory question because as far as he knows, she’s never met the hero in person in either of his forms.

However, she corrects his misconception with a frown and slow reply. “I… think so. I didn’t know he was All Might, though. I just wanted to see if I could help him not be so… skinny. It hurt to look at him.”

His eyes widened. “W-wait. Where did you meet All Might?”

She looked at him then, something unidentifiable in her eyes as though she was seeing something she hadn’t noticed before. “I met Yagi, but only briefly, back when Nezu arranged for my… bodyguards, I guess.”

He faltered, derailed by the concern that the principal thought she needed protecting. “Bodyguards?”

She nodded, shifting in her seat. “Yeah. He said they were for my protection, and he and my parents set up a contract after Recovery Girl learned that I could make and use paste.”

Izuku repeated, “Paste?”

Her eyes slowly widened. “You… that’s right. I’ve never used paste on you or in front of you, so how would you know?” She grinned. “I can make paste from living things and use it to fix other living things. Dad’s the one who came up with the idea, and I learned how using flowers to fix cats.”

She set down her glass cup. “There was a burn patient, a really badly hurt one. he didn’t have enough body fat, so I told the doctor and Recovery Girl about the paste. The doctor sent someone for fresh flowers, and when the flowers arrived, I showed them. After that, Nezu brought up the idea of bodyguards for me.” She shrugged. “We’re not rich, so to repay Nezu for the bodyguards, I have to go to U.A. and after I graduate I have to work there for four years.”

A frown slowly formed on his face as he digested her story. “But… that seems kind of…”

“Underhanded,” she finished. “That’s what dad said later, but he and mom are worried enough for my safety that they agreed to it. At least it isn’t five years like Nezu wanted at first.”

Shaking his head, Izuku tried to convince himself that it was for the best that she had bodyguards, especially if she eventually became known for her amazing Quirk. He shuddered at the thought of All for One or someone like him getting their hands on (Name) and he swore to himself that he would never let that stand, or even happen if he could help it.

Forcing his thoughts away from the dark path they were taking, he reflected on her earlier words and sighed wistfully, unintentionally murmuring his thought aloud as he so often did.

“She might have been able to heal All Might. If not his organs, then perhaps just a general healing of his internal damages. That paste, though. Would Kamino Ward have turned out differently if she had been allowed…?”)
Izuku is not one to be intentionally cruel. You know that.

However, one of the worst feelings you know of is the feeling that of letting down someone you care about, and in this case that’s Izuku. You know that All Might is his favorite hero, so naturally he would wish that you could have been able to heal said hero. Perhaps you might have even pulled it off, if not perfectly, then at least adequately until you could regrow organs.

You don’t like All Might, but you like Izuku. You like him a whole lot, and you look up to him. You want to protect him, and you want to be able to help him. You want to make Izuku happy.

If only you had been allowed to at least try to make All Might well again.

Was it your age? Did that hold them back from asking you to help the hero?

You don’t care about the opinions of others beyond your small circle of family and friends, but you care very much for the happiness of those in your circle. You want to be able to keep your family and friends healthy and happy.

This time, maybe not intentionally, you let down Izuku. You couldn’t heal his hero, so you failed him.

You failed your friend.

Izuku is lost in thought long enough for you to blink away your irrational tears, but you don’t forget that no one let you help, and you need to hear why.

(When Chiyo finally got back to (Last Name)’s apprenticeship, she tested the girl on the human bone structure. She scored within the ninety-seventh percentile, an impressive feat of memory for someone her age. No doubt she would have preferred playing outside to studying, and Chiyo hoped that (Last Name) remembered to have a childhood. It wouldn’t be good if she burnt herself out while she was still young.

“You knew.”

The slightly accusatory tone in the girl’s voice made her look away from the test she had finished grading. “Hm? Knew what?”

The girl glared. “You knew Yagi was All Might.”

Ah.

The glare fell away, replaced by confusion. “Why didn’t you let me help him? You know what I can do with paste. I could have done something.”

Chiyo was missing something here. She’s known (Last Name) long enough to know she doesn’t actually care about the former Number One hero, so why this line of thought out of the blue?

And then she realizes: Midoriya.

It’s no secret to her that that boy looks up to All Might like the former is a god. The age of All Might is over, but before that, in the dusk of that age, a certain someone had been found. (Last Name) and her miraculous Quirk contained untold possibilities. Her healing abilities alone, never mind that
mysterious paste… Not to mention her own declaration of getting her hands on Yagi someday to work her magic. If the girl had been older, more experienced, they probably would have let her try her hand at healing the hero.

However, ten was simply too young. She was barely into double-digits, and he had been the greatest hero. They simply could not have risked it, risked either of them in something going wrong.

*(the ease with which she handled young Takeshi said differently, but even then…)*

Chiyo sighed. “(Last Name). This may be difficult to understand, but just because you have a certain Quirk, it does not mean that the weight of the world is on your shoulders.”

The girl gave an undignified snort and mumbled something that sounded suspiciously like ‘All Might’.

She tapped her cane. “Don’t compare yourself to that fool Toshinori. He took on too much for too long. If I have any say in it, I won’t let either you or Midoriya go down that sort of self-sacrificial path. It’s simply not good for a person to bear such weight alone.”

“Izuku won’t be alone,” she muttered defiantly.

It’s one thing to want to be there for a friend and quite another to slowly destroy yourself trying to meet unreasonable expectations, even if they’re one’s own.

“Neither of you will do the other much good if you’re forcing each other to worry yourselves in circles.” Handing the girl her marked test, she tried to change the subject. “Good work on memorizing the human skeletal structure. Keep in mind that mutant-types may have a different bone structure or even no bone structure at all.”

There were a few minutes of silence before her young apprentice spoke up again, reaffirming what Chiyo already knew.

“Izuku… in his eyes, Yagi is always ‘All Might’. It’s like… that’s literally all he sees.”

The girl can’t articulate her thoughts very well, but Chiyo understands just the same.

Izuku Midoriya doesn’t differentiate between Toshinori Yagi and All Might. To him, it’s like Yagi the man doesn’t exist at all.

To Izuku Midoriya, All Might the hero is all he sees.

“Don’t be like he is,” Chiyo pleaded softly. “Remember that your Izuku and the hero persona he takes on are different things. Remind him that he’s not only his hero name. Remind him that he is a man, a person. Don’t let him take on the weight of the world alone.” She paused and huffed. “Remind everyone not to be reckless fools.”

She wrinkled her nose. “…Do I get to hit people?”

She chuckled. “Sometimes, but only if you build up your reputation as a healer first. People tend to cower before nurses on a warpath.”

The girl laughed, and, unhappily, Chiyo realized that was the first time she’s heard it.

Hopefully her resentment would eventually melt away for something better to take its place.

‘Bonds,’ Chiyo thought, watching as her apprentice murmured the correct names of the bones she
We need to help her make bonds with people beyond Midoriya. If she has more friends, if she can see the good in more heroes and/or heroes-in-training, then maybe she won’t disappear at the end of those four years.’

Perhaps it was shady thinking of ways to keep the girl on the side of heroics, but Chiyo was willing to do that, because the alternative didn’t bear thinking about.

(a healer who could fix villains up and send them back out within minutes instead of days or weeks or months, tipping the scales in favor of evil instead of good, sowing chaos instead of hope)

No, (Last Name) would be a hero.

At least, she will be, if she truly intends to stay by Midoriya’s side.

Chiyo tried to take comfort in that thought, and a part of her sincerely hoped that the girl didn’t fall in love with Midoriya. A broken heart could make people do drastic things…)

Panic and terror aren’t the only kinds of fear. There are deeper kinds, more terrible kinds. Apprehension and heavy, heavy dread.

~Veronica Roth, The Traitor
Hide not your talents, they for use were made,
What's a sundial in the shade?

~Benjamin Franklin

There was a plan announced that U.A. students were to move into dorms, and when Izuku told you on one of his visits to your apartment, tears immediately filled your eyes as something that felt like betrayal squeezed your chest tight.

“You’re moving away?!”

He winced, not denying your distressed yell. “W-well, (Name), in light of everything that’s been happening, U.A. feels their students would be safer on campus grounds.”

You shook your head. “It’s not fair!” Burying your face into your hands, you wailed. “First they dangled you over me and now they’re taking you away!”

Vaguely, you heard Izuku try to placate you, but you were too upset to be soothed even by him.

Izuku was already so busy with high school and now he was moving away into dorms, and that meant you’d get to see him even less! Why? He was already going to leave after high school, why does he have to leave even sooner?!

“(Name)!”

Ignoring Izuku’s call as you dashed away from the kitchen table, you ran to your room and slammed the door shut before throwing yourself into your bed where you immediately screamed into a pillow and kicked your legs. You ignored the knocking at your door and the muffled sound of Izuku’s voice in favor of continuing to let your emotions out.

(“Better let out than held in where it breaks you,” mom soothed, gently patting your hair as you sobbed into her chest after having finally let go of pretending you were okay. She shifted to hugging you and slowly moved in a rocking motion. “You shouldn’t hold it all inside like that, sweetie. It’s just not healthy.”)

Time passed until exhaustion slowly settled over you and your legs fell still as you pulled the pillow away from your face again, just slightly. Both cloth and your face were damp, and you sniffled wetly, hiccupping.

A soft knock came from the door.

“(Name)?”

He hadn’t left.

You let out a small moan and hid your face in the pillow again, curling up as you did so. Why was he still here? He was going to leave anyway!

The door clicked open and you curled further into yourself. There was a soft rustling of cloth and a slight dip on your bed, you knew right away it wasn’t enough for someone to be sitting down.
“(Name)?”

You twitched at the sound of Izuku’s voice from behind you, low and soft.

“Please look at me.”

For the first time in forever, you ignored his request, something you just didn’t do. And yet, here you were, stubbornly facing the wall and hiding your face.

“(Name)…” He sounded hurt. After a long moment when you didn’t change positions, he sighed quietly. “I can’t change school policy, (Name).” His tone brightened slightly. “But that doesn’t mean I’m going to forget you, you know.”

You turned your head minutely, just the slightest bit. It seemed to encourage him.

“You’re my friend, and you’ve been my friend since I was twelve. From then until I got into U.A., you were my only other friend besides Kacchan. Everyone else didn’t want anything to do with me because I was Quirkless and weak, but you didn’t care about that. You were my friend even when yours were teasing you about… well, me.

“You stood by me when I didn’t have anything. You don’t like heroes but you thought I’d be a great one anyway, just because you thought I was a good person. (Name). I’m never going to forget any of that.

“I’m never going to forget you.”

You could hear him smiling, gentle and kind.

Turning onto your back and facing him with bleary eyes and headache, you asked, “Promise?”

The smile you heard grew warmer and he took the hand you offered.

“Promise.”

(After Izuku had set up his room, amidst all the All Might merchandise plastering his room, there was a photo in an All Might-themed frame. In it, he stood in his school’s winter uniform while a young girl stood next to him in a coat. They were both standing in front of a stairwell and smiling brightly for the camera. During the king of the rooms contest, no one really noticed or asked about it, so he didn’t have to stutter through an explanation.

As the rest of summer passed and he and his classmates prepared for the provisional license exam, he made sure to keep in contact with (Name) through texts.

He was shocked to learn little ten-year-old (Name) got a provisional license before he did, and even with the explanation she gave of how it was limited, he was still a little envious that she had permission to legally use her Quirk in public.

Mostly though, he was just so super proud of her and told her so.)

Recovery Girl hadn’t wanted to take (Last Name) to get her first provisional license because she was so young, but after over a week of the cold shoulder treatment and the visibly growing resentment in her about the dorms and Midoriya moving out of their apartment building, Chiyo finally gave in to
the doctors’ recommendations to get the girl tested. If it was something the girl and her parents wanted to go through with, then it should be a viable distraction from the girl’s ire.

Her apprentice immediately stopped sulking when she brought it up. “A license to use my Quirk?”

“A provisional license, yes,” Chiyo confirmed.

The girl lit up. “Yes! I want to get one!”

After confirming with her parents that they gave their permission, Chiyo arranged for (Last Name) to be officially examined by a government official and an outside doctor at a different hospital. There were questions about her Quirk, both about known abilities and limitations, as well as side-effects. After that, the examiner and doctor gave her a series of patients to heal ranging from mild wounds to serious injuries and even those suffering from illnesses, a type of patient that not even Recovery Girl could help as internal sicknesses were unaffected by her boosted healing Quirk.

(“A knife wound, several millimeters deep and several inches long… no infection, melding the flesh back together, reconnecting severed nerves, facilitating skin growth… done.”

“Broken left femur, no bone fragments… done.”

“Second-degree burn along the right arm, swelling due to damage to the skin, restricting the damaged area… done. Wash off the dead biomaterial as you would plain dirt. It’s not harmful. I used some of your body fat so you may experience a mild increase in appetite, if you feel anything at all.”

“Third degree burns along the back, charred skin and damaged flesh. Numbing pain receptors, patient should be free of pain. Patient lacks sufficient fat stores to fully restructure damaged area. I need—ah, thank you. Freshly cut long grass, transforming into paste… I need more. While I wait for it, I will begin with what I have. Restructuring damage at deepest point, replacing burnt flesh and fixing damaged muscles…” Almost four minutes passed. “Done. Patient’s lower back healed. Beneath this charred waste… voila. Oh. More grass, creating paste… completing restructuring process…” Close to five minutes passed. “Done. Patient’s back fully restructured. Pain receptors returned to normal levels. Regarding the level of healing needed, much of patient’s body fat has been used. Patient will experience increased appetite for several days.”

“What sliced off half your face?! Oh, sorry, that was rude… Insufficient body fat to restructure face. Converting grass… using paste… facial muscles, matching thin fat thickness… skin growth facilitated… damaged eye fixed…” It’s not on the test, but would you like me to fix your liver? It’s in the stages of failing… yes? Fixing damaged liver… fixing… done. Patient’s face fully restructured, failing liver restored to peak performance.”

“What’s bronchitis? Wait, basically you want me to remove the little invaders, right? The things that don’t belong? Okay, looking at patient… Huh… there’s… not living stuff in his lungs… I’m going to remove it. Numbing pain receptors, collecting non-living matter in membrane shell… pushing through left lung, healing left lung… pushing through body, healing behind it as it moves… pushing through the skin… healing skin. I don’t know what this stuff is, have the hospital find out what it is. Anyway, patient cleared of little invaders.”

“Wow, your heart is trying to do that thing my dad’s did. They were going to cut you open?! Geez… Wait, my Quirk doesn’t work on me! Aaah… we’re not even in the same boat, sir, because you’ve got me. Anyway, yeah, your heart is fixed. Hey. Are you going to use your body fat for anything? I could probably remove it and—ow! Why’d you poke me with your cane?! What, I can’t? Pfft.
Excessive body fat can be detrimental to one’s health, I don’t see why… okay, okay. Huh? I can? Alright, watch this. Except you, sir. You, uh, might want to close your eyes… no? Well, okay, tell me when to stop…” Paste collected on the man’s right arm around where her hand was pressed against his skin. “Stop? Okay. Congrats, sir. You just lost, like… a lot.”

“What do you mean I can’t use the paste I made from that man? It’s the same general thing I make from plants. Legal issues, huh? Gotta watch out for those…”

“Yes, I’m tired. I’m, like, gonna sleep for a day straight or something.”)

Her apprentice passed with flying colors and got a legal provisional license granting permission to use her Quirk in public, albeit strictly for healing purposes. She was further restricted from using another person’s body fat to heal another, even if it was ‘paste’.

The girl grumbled about the restrictions, but smiled and laughed when her mother, who had been present for the whole practical part of the exam, hugged her. “I’m so proud of you, (Name)!”

The girl giggled, “Mom!”

Standing off to one side with the examiners, Recovery Girl became grim as the government official hinted that others would be looking in (Last Name). Such a versatile Quirk had been brought to their attention and in the wake of All Might’s retirement they weren’t going to let a gem like that slip away.

Recovery Girl made a mental note to speak with Nezu right away.

They weren’t going to let the government take the girl away to possibly be put in a room. If there’s one thing that the principal would not abide it was experimentation. Add in the fact that (Last Name) was a child and Chiyo could almost pity the fools who tried to make a move to take the girl.

Almost.

It is a funny thing that for most men the whitest conscience is no protection from some apprehension in the presence of police.

~John Wyndham, Wanderers of Time
Two Lovers AU (Part 1)

Chapter Notes

Sorry, not the next part to the Age Swap AU. Instead, it is the start of the Aizawa/Reader/Kan AU I mentioned earlier.

...I wrote like over 4000 words of backstory you probably don't need before I said screw it and wrote this instead. Ehehe... heh... OTL

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Some people meet you for a reason, while others meet you to stay there in your life.

~Akansh Malik

He notices her as a new tenant in the building, one who looks fairly young, but he’s not one to pry so he makes no comment on it. In fact, it’s over a year after she moved in before he says anything to her at all, and he only speaks because—

“So you’re Pandora’s owner.”

The young woman startles slightly, not doubt not expecting him to butt into her secluded world like that. It is uncharacteristic of him, but Pandora—identified by their red collar—is such a vibrantly healthy cat that he can’t stop himself from speaking when he finally finds the elusive owner. Or at least, he thinks she’s his owner.

“Y-yes,” the young girl confirms, her hand resting on the purring cat’s back.

She had made noise in removing the screen from her window and the noise kept his attention after his eyes had trailed after the grey cat with white socked feet. Said cat had climbed up from down below using the fire escape that went past his window, a feature he didn’t mind because one, he could look after himself, and two, there was literally nothing of value to steal from his apartment anyway. The cat had stopped to preen under his attention, but then it heard the noise from that window and gracefully strode off. He had seen the friendly cat around and had been curious as to who the owner was, and now that mystery was solved.

“He’s well-looked after.”

“Th-thank you.”

“Hm.”

Giving the cat one last glance, Aizawa pulled his head back into his apartment and closed the window.

(you sighed in relief and gently lifted Pandora into your arms)

He recognizes her as a fellow apartment tenant, but not one he’s ever spoken to. She lives on the
same floor, but farther from the elevator. He stops to help her when her plastic bag suddenly splits, spilling oranges and a couple of mangos. She gathers them up in her arms, but they keep escaping until he’s finally gathered most of them in his own arms. Her face is flushed with embarrassment as she looks up at him, even though they’re both kneeling.

“A-Ah, thank you,” she manages to say after the long minute where she just stared, a fact he doesn’t bring up to help her save face.

“It’s no problem,” he says, standing. “That bag won’t hold these anymore, and they seemed determined to escape your arms. Is it alright if I help you?”

Mutely, she nodded and stiffly proceeded down the hall. She fumbled with the key and another orange escaped, falling prey to gravity. The door opened and she bent down to grab the wayward orange, only to have two more escape.

“Oh my god.”

He couldn’t help a light chuckle escaping at her tiny voice as he bent down and picked up the wayward oranges. “It’s fine. It happens.”

The young woman’s ears were tinged red, as was her face. Moving stiffly once more, she turned and entered her apartment. Tentatively, he followed after her and came to a stop just inside the door.

She stood in the short hallway, identical to his own, and he saw the nervousness in her stature. Before he could gracefully excuse himself, she turned and quietly asked, “Would you like to come in for tea?”

…but it wasn’t like he had anything urgent at home, and this probably wouldn’t kill him, so why not?

“Please pardon me, then,” he said politely, accepting her invitation.

Without using his hands, he toed off his shoes and nudged into a neat lineup before slipping on the visitor’s slippers she pointed out. They were slightly small, but he could deal with that. Arms full of oranges, he followed her down into the kitchen where he carefully placed the oranges in an empty fruit bowl.

“Thank you for your assistance,” she said as she prepared the water. “I don’t know how I would have gotten them home. Of all days to forget my reusable shopping bag…”

“It’s fine,” he repeated, taking a seat at the table. “I am Sekijiro Kan, by the way.”

She half-turned towards him and introduced herself before returning to the tea.

He spoke of generally inoffensive topics such as the weather and perhaps the slightly nosy topic of why she purchased so many oranges. Laughing, she confessed to wanting to try freshly squeezed orange juice and wasn’t sure how many she’d need. Almost before he knew it, they were almost done drinking their tea.

Eyes wandering back to the fruit bowl, he tried to remind her that she should put the melons away or they wouldn’t be as good, but somewhere between his brain and mouth, the signals got mixed up and what came out of his mouth was: “Good melons.”

The room seemed to freeze as his words and the (entirely unintentional) innuendo hit them both at the same time. Sekijiro buried his face in his hand, unwilling to look at his no doubt embarrassed host and it was his turn to mutter, “Oh my god.”
The uncomfortable silence dragged on for a short moment before a snort came from her side of the table. Surprised, he lifted his gaze to see her shaking, muffling laughter behind her hand. She glanced up, met his eyes, and couldn’t hold back any longer.

“Pfft-hahahaha!”

Her face was red but she didn’t seem upset. Relieved, he chuckled along with her.

By the time she bid him goodbye at her door, she looked more at ease than he had ever seen her.

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**Despite the fact that he thought her quite interesting at their first meeting, John Robinson could not be said to be infatuated with Mirusia Jansen at first sight.**

~Monika Barbara Potocki

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Chapter End Notes

I am existing on less than two hours of sleep. Aizawa, HOW YOU DO LIVE WITH DRY EYES CONSTANTLY???

Next update likely to be a continuation of this AU.

EDIT: Please note, Aizawa and Kan do not live in the same apartment building or even the same neighborhood, and this update took place within one week of each event.
No one comes, not even when you start calling heroes by their names. All Might, Endeavor, Best
Jeanist… none of them come.

When someone finally arrives, they’re not heroes, and mommy is just… so… cold.

You let the memories slip away because it hurts too much to remember.

The couple that found you, the man who dragged you away from your mommy and gave you to a woman stranger; the police showing up, and the flashing lights; the ambulance that came, the people in uniforms who wrapped you in a blanket; the body bags being brought out from the alleyway (asking where your mommy is); the hand-off to the police and sitting alone in the backseat; daddy showing up in the room they put you in, disheveled and wide-eyed; daddy holding you tight enough to hurt, and the sound of him crying; the bath and the way the water was red as it swirled down the drain; crying because it was mommy who always washed you, not daddy; screaming for mommy in the small space, daddy crying again; sleeping in daddy’s arms and waking up, confused before you remember that mommy isn’t coming home again; the blur of time before the wake; seeing mommy in her coffin, frightening without the glow of life and warmth to her; being brought back into the room to find ashes where her body was just a while ago; clumsily wielding chopsticks before giving up with a sob, picking up a bone fragment with your bare hand and getting ashes smeared against your skin (mommy’s ashes).

You don’t want to remember, so you don’t think of anything as you lie in bed or on the couch or on the floor. You eat and sleep and go to the toilet, but that’s all you do. You don’t laugh anymore, or smile, and you barely hand on to daddy when he carries you around. It seems as though the most you can do is cry, curled up in a ball as you wait in vain for your mommy to come back. You know she’s not coming back, but it doesn’t stop you from hoping it was all just a long and sad dream.

Daddy moves you out of that apartment and away to another city.

(it’s not Musutafu, the place you would have gone in another life if you had saved your mother, but it’s still close enough that the shadow will form, not that you know of either things)

You see daddy trying to hang up your hero posters and you tell him to stop. Your voice is too quiet for him to hear you despite you repeating yourself, and he’s hung up two posters and is starting on a third when you finally sit up and shout at the top of your lungs for him to stop.

Burning inside with levels of anger you’ve never felt before, you get up and try to tear down the posters, screaming that heroes are liars and fakes, but you’re too short and you end up pounding your ineffectual fists against the wall before you slide down to your knees in tears. When daddy hugs you, you cling to him like you’re drowning, bawling into his chest that heroes are fake because they didn’t save mommy even though you called. You don’t want anything to do with heroes anymore and you don’t want their pictures in your room, and you don’t want your hero action figures, hero books or hero clothing anything. You hate them!

After crying yourself into exhausted sleep, when you wake, nothing of heroes remains in your room, and nothing of heroes ever makes their way back into it again.

It’s hard to make friends when you have zero interest in heroes, but somehow, you find one anyway.

His name is Katsu Akiyama, and not long after you first meet, he finds out that you don’t like heroes. After you grudgingly bite out that bit of information, you are certain that he’ll laugh and make fun of you for it. You don’t expect him to immediately agree that heroes aren’t all they’re cracked up to be.
(desperate, he clings to the other loner on the playground, frantically trying to form a bond that won’t be forgotten in the wake of his damn Quirk, and if it means making a real friend, he’ll throw out all his hero merchandise without a second thought)

You perk up slightly, interested that you might have found someone who wasn’t stupidly blind to the lies that heroes and just about everyone else spouted. You let him introduce himself and you agree to let him join you in the sandpit where you’re making fish out of sand. You give him the pudding mold and you both spend some time making and destroying the damp sand shapes.

When you leave, you forget why you’re in such a good mood, but when you go back the next day and see him, you remember and call his name.

“Katsu!”

(you don’t know it, but in that instant you gain a friend for life)

Daddy falls down the stairs on your way out to do some shopping for dinner, and he snaps his leg bad enough for the jagged end of a bone to stick out. Blood beings to slowly pool beneath the injured limb and you find your breathing becoming erratic. Daddy is talking, but you can’t hear him.

Shaking, you force a smile on your face as you look at him, asking if everything will be all right. His lips move, but you can’t hear him speaking. Robotically, you reach out and touch the exposed bone, stiffly declaring that you’re going to push it back. More muffled noise from daddy and weak attempt to push you away fail to deter you from your task.

Your fingers touch the exposed bone and suddenly you see. You see everything wrong in dad’s body, and somehow you know that the bone sticking out of his leg shouldn’t be doing that, so you correct the abnormality. Time passes, though you don’t know how much. By the time you are satisfied that daddy isn’t broken or in danger anymore, you feel weak and sweat is dripping down your face.

Daddy catches you and when you wake up, you recognize the ceiling of your bedroom.

After that, daddy makes you promise not to tell anyone about your Quirk, about what it can do. It’s not ‘Cessation’ as it says in your official forms, filled out in the terrible days after the Alleyway, no, it’s something more. Your Quirk is rare and valuable, and rare and valuable things tend to get stolen, so you have to pretend your Quirk isn’t special, that it’s just the dangerous ‘Cessation’ the forms say it is.

You promise with fear in your heart.

Katsu is your closest friend throughout grade school. When he tearfully informs you that his parents are sending him to a different school than yours, you ask your dad if you can go to Katsu’s school instead. He makes the arrangements and Katsu lights up when you tell him the good news.

Dad takes a photo of the both of you in your school uniforms at the front gate, and Katsu takes a photo of your dad and you, also at the front gate. You wave goodbye to your dad and enter middle school with Katsu by your side.

You both notice Daiki Hayashi before lunch period even ends, and, by proximity, you notice Sora Tanaka as well. It takes less than a week for delinquents Hayashi and Tanaka to try to bully you and Katsu for being a ‘stupid couple’. Unfortunately for you, Hayashi picks the space between the school and the gymnasium to stage his ambush, and the alleyway-like setting brings back memories you
would rather stay buried. The boys are picking on Katsu as your breathing picks up, and when Hayashi shoves Katsu down, something snaps inside and you screech bloody murder before launching yourself at Katsu’s attacker.

You grab Hayashi’s face and, since he was within reach, you also snap a hand over Tanaka’s face. You ‘see’ them, but somehow, thankfully, you manage to keep yourself from killing them outright, settling instead for paralyzing them for a few moments. When they fall down, you don’t keep their faces from painfully hitting the ground. Instead, ignoring the fallen boys, you turn around and reach out for Katsu’s hand.

He grabs it, and the two of you run away from there.

Somehow, and you don’t know why, Hayashi does a one-eighty degree turn in one night and you suddenly find yourself with two new ‘friends’.

Katsu is not happy with sharing.

Kyoko Maeda inserts herself into your life not unlike Hayashi, and she drags along Shizu Sasaki, again not unlike how Hayashi comes as a pair with Tanaka. The bubbly girl thinks your little group is interesting and points out that with her and Shizu your group would have an equal number of boys and girls. You firmly tell her that you are not forming a group date, but you regret your words when she teases you about your ‘harem’. To stop the harem jokes before they spread, you sigh and tell her ‘whatever’.

You know Katsu wasn’t happy with Hayashi and Tanaka refusing to take a hint, so you know that he’s probably doubly unhappy with Kyoko inviting herself and Shizu along. On the way home, you tell him that he’s still your best friend, and neither Hayashi nor Maeda would change that. He seems doubtful, but smiles back anyway.

It’s easier to just follow the whims of Hayashi and Maeda than it is to futilely struggle against their overpowering personalities, so you prefer to go along with the flow. It helps that Hayashi isn’t a fan of heroes and that Sasaki’s disdain of the same demographic is enough to sway Maeda away from her blind admiration. Tanaka doesn’t care either way, and Katsu still maintains his dislike. With your group of people who mostly disdain or don’t care about heroes, you find yourself feeling more at ease with them than you would have otherwise.

Maeda’s favorite activity is karaoke so the group ends up going and are often mistaken as a group date. Sasaki insists on studying so you end up spending more time doing that than you would have on your own. Hayashi like picking fights and Tanaka is always right behind him, so you end up witnessing more fights than you care to see. Katsu just likes being where you are and doesn’t wander away despite all the trouble Hayashi manages to drag the group into. Your group of friends is a strange mix of delinquency and studiousness, and even Hayashi gets above average grades, if only because it turned into a competition between the boys.

During Hayashi’s many fights, when you have panic attacks, it’s Katsu who helps you through them, though on occasion when he’s dragged into Hayashi’s fights as well it’s Sasaki or Maeda who picks up the slack. Through exposure and with the presence of friends, by the end of middle school, you manage to mostly move beyond the panic attacks. Before that, however, in before the end of summer in first year, by a riverbank at dusk, you tell them the story about the Alleyway and the first time you used ‘Cessation’.

Before summer vacation in second year, Hayashi becomes Daiki, Maeda becomes Kyoko, Sasaki becomes Shizu, and Tanaka becomes Sora. That summer, at the mercy of the rollercoaster of the
young teenage mind, you snap at your father and yell at him for being overprotective and smothering, and you run away with Daiki to a beach, dragging the rest of your friends along, even if Katsu and Kyoko have to catch up later after prying themselves away from their families.

You and your friends spend two days playing vigilantes in order to fund your ‘vacation’ by robbing small-time crooks and gangs. With Sora’s ‘Shield’, Daiki’s ‘Stamina’, and Katsu’s ‘Forget Me’, the boys take on the bulk of the fights while you girls stay in Sora’s range. However, during those two days, your luck runs out, Daiki gets too cocky and is shot point-blank after leaving Sora’s range. His shooter goes down with one last punch from his fist, but by then reality has crashed down on the lot of you. Suddenly, none of you are invincible or immortal.

Daiki is bleeding out, and you know there’s no way you’re going to let him die in that sea-smelling warehouse. Fighting back tears, you reach out and clasp his exposed forearm and place your other hand over the wound. You ‘see’ and fix what is broken, and your friends witness Daiki’s breathing improve, watch the pain melt away from his face.

Daiki opens his eyes and mumbles, asking why everyone is hovering around him. Sora gives a shaky laugh and tells him he was shot. Shizu acts as the voice of reason and gets the group to agree to leave. Katsu helps you to stand on wobbly feet, and the lot of you manage to get out before the local police show up, summoned by a concerned citizen who heard the gunshot.

That night, far down at the beach house you’re all renting out, you sit in the living room and break the promise you made to your father. You tell your friends that your Quirk isn’t ‘Cessation’. You don’t know what to call it, but anything alive under your hands is something you can ‘see’ and shape. Shizu asks you a bunch of questions and makes Daiki your guinea pig. By dawn, she has a new name for your Quirk, a word, a secret you will all keep close in the years to come.

‘Biokinesis’.

Third year is spent terrorizing delinquents, crooks, villains and gang members while wearing theatre masks. The boys wear the sad face version while you and the girls wear the laughing face version. You spend more time in dark alleyways and abandoned buildings than you care to, but you do it because the things you’re learning you can do with your Quirk are too amazing to let bad memories stand in the way.

You can twist the human body and reprogram the human mind. It becomes unfailingly true that anything alive is clay in your hands.

Your most impressive modification is the erasure of Quirks, something you did to a boy from another school who pulled a knife on Katsu and blinded him in one eye. Katsu had been coming to meet up with the group and had sent a frantic text, saying he was being chased and had been forced into the alleyways (or so Shizu quickly deduced from the nearly incoherent text messages). Chasing after Daiki and Sora who took off, you three managed to just keep them in sight as you all raced through the alleyways in search of Katsu. Hearing Katsu’s voice cry out, you all found him at someone’s feet, face bloodied while he attacker gloated above him.

Daiki and Sora were quick to race towards the unknown boy for retaliation, and after the fight moved away slightly, you and the girls rushed to Katsu’s side. You healed his blinded eye with no problems, but that did nothing to quell the rage bubbling in your blood. Hayashi only had to hold on to the nameless boy for a moment before you paralyzed him with a touch. Looming over the boy whose eyes darted fearfully back and forth, you said nothing while trying to decide what punishment would suffice for hurting your childhood friend.
You decided on something Shizu had theorized about but you had never tested: you found the boy’s Quirk factors and told Daiki, “Come here.”

In an alleyway at the tender age of fourteen, you copied the boy’s Quirk over to Daiki and felt your heart stop when Daiki started dying. Letting go of the paralyzed boy, you turned your full attention on Daiki and the breakdown happening in his body and brain. Frantically, you rearranged things repeatedly before forcing everything to work. Daiki’s brain swelled, so you thinned his skull before strengthening the weakened bones.

Daiki groaned, “What the fuck.”

After confirming he wouldn’t die if you let go, you turned from him back to the boy who was still staring with wide, fearful eyes. Again, you didn’t say anything, not one to monologue, and you touched the boy’s face. Reaching for his Quirk factors again, you stared into his eyes as you melted them away, amputating a part of him as surely as if you had cut off one of his limbs.

An unpleasant smile spread across your face, and you stole his memories as well.

Daiki stops picking fights when All Might’s presence in your city unexpectedly increases. The rest of third year is spent studying for high school exams as you all want to go to the same one, and that meant applying for more than one high school just in case.

At one study session at Shizu’s empty house, Kyoko comments that you’d be a great hero if you wanted to be.

You’re not the only one who burst out laughing, and even Kyoko laughed at her own words.

Because you still hate heroes for being fakes and liars.

(for failing mommy who isn’t at home when you return each day, whom you still miss, even if the wound doesn’t ache like it used to)

Daiki tries to convince you to form a gang but you shoot the idea down for a year before Shizu presents a plan. Her mother died recently, so you don’t have the heart to refuse her, and she knows this and takes advantage of it, but you can’t bring yourself to really hate her because you remember what it’s like to lose a mother.

(irreplaceable, beloved, lost, gone, empty, disbelief, aching, lonely, sorrow—)

She doesn’t have a grandiose plan for taking over a whole city, just a few neighborhoods where smalltime gangs already roam, a place to takeover and make the group’s own. Daiki calls the new gang the Kami no Kage, and you get vetoed trying to veto the name.

All Might has finally left the city, but you still take things slow. By the start of third year, the gang is generating a modest income and has grown slightly with a few members under Daiki and Shizu respectively. Your Quirk sees a fair bit of use, as does the theatre mask from middle school, but you don’t mind too much because you get to continue the experiments with copying and pasting Quirks.

Daiki still has only two, the limit you are willing to risk on your friends. His Quirks are his original ‘Stamina’ and the copied ‘Tracker’ which allows the user to track up to either five people within one kilometer or one person within four kilometers. Daiki places a tracker on you and swears he’ll never let it go so you never have to worry about getting kidnapped. Shizu adds to that by suggesting you get a tracker placed in one of your teeth, but you refuse because you’ve managed to stay out of the dentist’s chair aside from checkups for this long and you’d like to keep it that way.
Shizu, in addition to her ‘Data’, requests a copy of the Quirk ‘Digital’ which belongs to a Ryou Kurosawa who is in her employ protecting the gang’s digital files. Kyoko asks you to copy Sora’s ‘Shield’ because her ‘Organization’ doesn’t offer her protection. Sora agrees to let his Quirk be copied over and Kyoko gets ‘Shield’. You don’t erase Kurosawa or Sora’s Quirks, nor do you kill either of them. Shizu and Kyoko experience the same painful modifications Daiki went through, but by Kyoko’s turn you had managed to cut down on the time it took to settle in the second Quirk in your friends’ brain.

Sora and Katsu put off asking for a second Quirk, as at the moment they know you refuse to add a third to any of them. They’ve gotten by fine with what they have so far, so they’re content to wait just in case an impressive Quirk comes up. You shrug and let them be.

The summer of your third year in high school, you hate heroes all the more when your dad dies at work, his building brought down by a couple of villains with Quirks that turned them into giants. Once again the heroes have proven themselves useless and again the world takes away someone important to you. If your friends had not been there, if Katsu had not held your hand, you would have tried to catch up with dad, to reunite with mom—but they had been there, so you stayed because you were not allowed to slip away.

Left an orphan with nothing to your name but ill-gotten money you wouldn’t be able to explain and at the mercy of the government as a ward, a silver lining comes in the shape of Daiki and Shizu who hatch a plot to give you fake adoptive parents so you can live by yourself. Shizu finds someone to make the paper trail and it is Daiki who moves in two doors down in a new apartment building so you’re not left completely alone in a new place.

You cope through your grief by inflicting pain on others before Katsu quietly leads you to a new hobby. He gives you a freshly cut rose and asks if you can turn it blue. You do, and you find yourself captivated by the thought of growing flowers. Shizu finds a flower shop and buys it, and you spend a lot of time in the greenhouse on the roof with Katsu.

It is there that you cry on his shoulder for the parents you lost too soon, for the love that will never come again.

Spring comes again, and with it, graduation.

Amid cherry blossom petals, you remind Shizu of her suggestion of getting a tracker implanted in one of your teeth, and tell her to arrange it for you. It’s done before the last of the cherry blossoms disappear for another year.

Shizu, Kyoko and Katsu move on to attend university, while you, Daiki and Sora opt otherwise. Daiki takes over management of a night club in the gang’s small territory while Sora helps out. You stay at your flower shop and greenhouse.

With the gang’s territory stabilized and a steady income of money, you cut back on your time using your Quirk for the gang. Daiki is fine with it because he has his territory, the place where only your word has more power, even if he will hear out Shizu most of the time. Shizu is okay with your decision because she agrees there’s no need to be greedy and expand the gang’s power, and besides which, she’s busy with university and would find it difficult to juggle both that and the gang’s management if things were busy with the latter. Kyoko and Katsu don’t mind for the same reasons as Shizu, and Sora is fine with whatever Daiki decides. The Kami no Kage quietly slip out of sight, and no one goes looking because they’ve made no splash and aren’t lauded for miracles.
For the first time since dad died, you feel like maybe things will actually be okay, if only eventually.

Less than six months out of high school, you wake up one night when your door bursts open with a loud crash and bang, causing you to sit up and scream. Before you know what is happening, a figure has hauled you up out of bed, comforter and all, and you realize with an angry start that it’s Daiki.

Then you notice the black smoke pouring in from the hallway he’s just come through.

You flinch when the comforter is thrown over your face and you are deprived of sight. You feel Daiki kick out and hear glass break. This fucker is going to jump out the—!

A scream tears itself from your throat as Daiki leaps and gravity pulls. The landing jolt hurts, but you don’t have time to dwell before Daiki is moving again. You can feel the cool of night against parts of your body, and you remember from your brief glance that Daiki was shirtless and perhaps shoeless. You were certainly lacking in shoes…

When Daiki finally stops running, he lets you wriggle in his arms to throw off the comforter from your head. When you finally get a look around, you see your apartment building in the process of burning down. The floor your lived on is now engulfed in flames.

Dumbfounded, you stare at the scene for a long time before you manage to speak.

“Thank you, Daiki.”

Your friend huffed, also staring at the fire across and down the street. “No problem, boss.”

The fire took everything, but Shizu had long since insisted you make digital copies of every pictures and important document in your apartment, so you don’t lose those sentimental items at least. You’re grateful you didn’t have a pet because Daiki probably wouldn’t have stopped to grab them, not with how fast the fire seemed to have spread.

With the loss of the apartment building, Daiki moves into one of the apartments near the night club and assumes you’ll be following along as his new neighbor. However, you balk at the idea of living so damn close to him or the others. Even with the recent rescue from a burning building, you hiss and fight your friends until they agree to let you move where you like. They don’t like the idea of you being more than five minutes away from any of them, but you don’t want nannies around you all the time, so you put your foot down and move into a new apartment building.

In fact, you move into two different apartment buildings.

One is where you said it would be, and that’s where you put all your new stuff. The second place, however, is a secret from your group, or at least it is until they’ve stalked you to it, which you’re sure they’ve done by the time late autumn rolls around. Still, they aren’t blatantly about knowing about your secret hiding place, and it’s an apartment you keep very empty. Aside from a bed in the bedroom, spare clothes in the closet, bathroom items and kitchen items, your second apartment is, in a word, bare.

Sitting in the empty living room, you decide to get a cat and all the things it will need. On your way to purchase said cat, you decide to remake it, and since you’re going to remake it anyway, you get one from a shelter.

You name it Pandora, after Pandora’s Box.

By winter, Pandora is remade, the perfect cat that will never starve and will always be affectionate.
It’s strange.

You feel guiltier over possibly murdering a cat—the original mind and temperament of the rescue cat whom you twist into Pandora—than you do over all the people you’ve hurt so far.

…Is it because you love Pandora, as opposed to hating him or being irritated with him?

You don’t like your past, so whenever someone asks, you tell them something different from the truth.

Your neighbor with the fire escape and interest in your cat never asks, but the neighbor who helped you carry the fallen oranges eventually does, and you lie to him without remorse.

It baffles me that people think that obliterating the past will save them from its consequences, as if throwing away the empty cake plate would help you lose weight.

~Timothy B. Tyson, Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story

Chapter End Notes

I have so many regrets. Like, I could have finished working instead of writing that. Ahahaha.

Yeah. Fanfiction > Work, every time. Why? Because I am addicted to comments, and many authors will tell you the same. :(
Two Lovers AU (Part 3)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*A good deed is never lost.*

~Alexandre Dumas, Twenty Years After

Pandora’s owner is a secluded person. Sometimes she disappears for days, but somehow Pandora manages just fine without her. It irks him a little more than he’d like to admit, and it’s something of a secret from anyone not his longtime friend that he has a soft spot for cats. Seeing Pandora go through what seems like neglect makes his blood boil, just a little.

However, at the end of every absence, Pandora is more than willing to return to his owner, purring like a mini motor as his human greets him at the windowsill. From the fire escape in front of his window to hers, there is a small ledge, barely enough for a little over half Aizawa’s foot, optimistically, and it’s along that ledge that Pandora travels to and fro, and sometimes even into the distance around the corner.

Aizawa doesn’t like sticking his nose where it doesn’t belong, at least not when it comes to civilians, so he really does try not to pry. After a lengthy absence of five days, however, he can’t keep a cold remark from escaping his mouth when she removes the screen to greet Pandora. He’s fed Pandora and the cat ate the food he set out, so what did it say about his owner that she let him go days without eating?

“You’re back.”

She pauses, hand just above Pandora’s back. Impatient, the cat arches its back towards her palm and she takes that as her cue to begin petting him. When she speaks, her tone is low.

“I live here.”

He resists the urge to huff. Of course, it’s likely that when he thinks she’s gone he is, in reality, probably only just missing her. Besides which, it’s not as though he paid attention to her comings and goings before, and, finally, it’s really none of his business if she leaves for days at a time. Hell, he sometimes leaves for days at a time.

“Does someone feed Pandora?”

Not mentioning that he did, of course.

“I look after Pandora. Isn’t that right, pet?”

She coos the last part, leaning her face close to the cat who affectionately bops its head against hers. *(he’s not jealous, don’t be ridiculous)*

Over the course of the next few months, grudgingly, he internally admits that Pandora isn’t suffering from her absences. In fact, he’s almost an abnormal pet, constantly affectionate and always healthy. Perhaps it has good genes.
Of course, he doesn’t expect to literally find out. One early morning he simply comes back home via the fire escape and manages to upset a momma cat on said fire escape, five little furry jellybeans curled up against her. Pandora is there and merely languidly stretches before purring and nudging his head against his mate.

Odd. Male cats typically aren’t paternal…

He is just returning to the window after tossing his yellow goggles aside when he hears the screen next door being removed. Watching from where he stands, he sees Pandora leap up onto the ledge with a kitten in his mouth. The cat sees him, swishes his tail and plods along.

“Kitten!”

He winces slightly at the loud squeal, but thankfully it is the last one from his neighbor. Watching the cat ferry his offspring one-by-one, Aizawa takes a moment to wonder.

Just who is his neighbor, that young woman who owned such an enigma for a cat? She certainly seemed to have struck the lottery in the cat category…

Sekijiro now takes notice whenever he sees his neighbor. She does the same for him, and the exchange greetings if they’re within earshot of each other. The times they end up in the same elevator are sometimes filled with idle pleasantries or comments about the weather. Previously, whenever they crossed paths, they hadn’t said anything to each other. However, after his unintentional gaffe and their laughter over it, there’s a new openness in their acquaintanceship and he finds he doesn’t mind talking to her in those brief moments.

It’s inevitable that he eventually comes across her while out with his dog. He’s just stepping out into the hall with his bulldog Bosuke and is closing his door when she suddenly greets him.

“Good evening, Kan.”

Shutting the locked door, he looks over to see her with an empty reusable cloth bag hanging off her arm. Probably going out to do some shopping and just happened to meet him as he was heading out. He nodded and greeted her in return. He noticed her glance down at his dog. He’s had Bosuke for a couple years now, and he knows that bulldogs aren’t a popular type of dog with women. It seems to hold true with her as she seems slightly apprehensive.

“A dog almost bit me, once,” she admitted out of the blue, averting her eyes from Bosuke. “A friend intervened and got bit instead… Is… Is it safe to be near your dog?”

Softening slightly at her story, Sekijiro reassured her. “This knucklehead is a softie. He’s pretty mellow and won’t bite as long as he isn’t aggravated.” He grinned. “Like people, old Bosuke can only be pushed so far.”

She hesitated. “That… that’s true.”

“He tilted his head in the direction of the elevator. “Heading out?”

She nodded, clutching the straps of the cloth bag. “Yes. I need to grab something for dinner.”

“I’ll walk out with you, then.”

He fell in line next to her as she started walking. Bosuke trotted along, tongue hanging out of his mouth as he panted happily. His neighbor still seemed somewhat reluctant to be so close to his dog,
but Sekijiro was confident that Bosuke wouldn't harm her. He was, after all, a good boy.

When the elevator arrived, the three of them boarded it and waited in silence as the doors closed and the metal box descended to the ground floor. The young woman twitched slightly in response to Bosuke suddenly sitting down to scratch at his body with his hind leg but relaxed when the dog didn’t make any movement towards her.

On the ground floor, he waited to allow her to exit first. There was a moment of awkward silence as she seemed to wait for him and Bosuke to leave first instead. The doors dinged to shut and he put out a hand to keep the doors open. He glanced over at her and saw her turn red in embarrassment before stepping out, skirting Bosuke.

“See you later, Kan,” she called, swiftly leaving the lobby.

“Sure,” he replied, finally stepping out of the elevator. He watched her disappear through the door before he sighed, rubbing the back of his neck.

Not that he had been hoping for it or anything, but it seemed that she was another woman who wouldn’t be a part of his life. After all, if a woman couldn’t accept Bosuke, then Sekijiro wasn’t going to invest in what could have been a potential relationship.

“Come on, you big lug,” he said to his four-legged friend. “Let’s get you walked.”

“Ruff!”

You really ought to know better than to go shopping when you’re hungry. Struggling slightly with a heavy plastic shopping bag while feeling an almost equally heavy cloth bag digging into your shoulder, you made your way home under the early evening sky. Coming to a stop at a crossing, you were waiting for the light to change when a voice called out to you.

“Hey.”

Startled, you glanced that way to see your neighbor Kan and his dog Bosuke. Forcing a smile on your face and internally cringing because it probably looked as fake as it felt, you acknowledge him, “Hello again, Kan. Uh, f-finished your walk? That’s what people with dog do, right? Walk them?”

He grinned as he came to a stop near you. “Yes, to all your questions.”

Feeling your face warm slightly, you just nodded and turned your eyes back to the light across the street and prayed it would change color. Ah, but even if it did, aren’t you and Kan headed the same way? Damn it… it’s been years. Why are you still afraid of dogs when you weren’t even the one who got bitten?

(your best friend’s arm is mangled and your hands are slick with his blood while in your peripheral vision you see Daiki chucking the dead dog into an alleyway)

Katsu isn’t in pain anymore, and you thank him for getting in the way, for protecting you)

“Those look heavy,” Kan comments, snapping you out of your thoughts. You look up at him to see him offer a hand. “Need help?”

You shook your head, “Oh, I couldn’t.”

He kept his hand held out. “It’s no trouble, and we’re both heading for the same building anyway.”
He added, “We’re even headed for the same floor.”

You faltered, feeling the weight of the plastic bag digging into your hands. “W-well, if you’re sure…”

“It really is no trouble,” he repeated.

“Then, I gratefully accept your assistance,” you say, relieved you managed at least that much without stuttering again.

Lifting the plastic bag slightly, you sighed quietly in relief as Kan took it off your hands. Just as he took it, the light changed and you both crossed the street. While walking, you shifted the cloth bag from one shoulder to the other, gratefully rolling the abused area even as the weight settled on the opposite side.

The rest of the distance was spent in silence, but as you walked, your thoughts began to drift towards your neighbor. Glancing over at the tall and bulky man next to you, you briefly admired his physique before quickly returning your gaze to the sidewalk in front of you. Honestly speaking, you were confused as to why you were even eying him in the first place. You hadn’t shown much of an interest in muscly men before, so why now?

…Was it because he made you laugh that time? Because he was being helpful, both back then and right now?

Trying not to blush, you deliberately shoved away that line of thought.

Taking your bag back from him at his door, you bowed slightly in thanks and mostly definitely did not rush off back to your main apartment. Things were totally normal. You definitely weren’t wondering what he would look like without a shirt.

Definitely not.

Ever since Pandora brought the kittens to her, his neighbor has been home more often. In fact, from what he can tell, she’s been back every day. He’s seen both Pandora and the momma cat coming and going from the fire escape, and he’s noticed that she’s been leaving the window partially open.

“That’s dangerous,” he comments, startling her when she opens said window all the way to stick her head out. Catching her wide-eyed stare, he clarified. “Leaving your window open like that, I mean. It’s dangerous, considering it’s practically a welcome mat for all sorts of criminals.”

“I guess,” she hedges. “Although, it’s not like there’s anything here to steal.”

Perhaps she lives a frugal life or doesn’t care for a crowded apartment. Then again, maybe she’s lying through her teeth.

“Be careful anyway,” he advises.

“Oh okay,” she says, no doubt just saying it to placate him.

It’s then that the smell of cooking wafts over to him from her open window and that his stomach growls loudly in response. Dead silence falls as he internally asks his organ, Why? A giggle escapes his neighbor and she grins over at him.

“Want some? I always end up making too much.”
He’s not one for socializing or mooching food off strangers, so his answer is instant and blunt.

“No.”

Her grin doesn’t falter. “I’ll bring it to your door.”

With that she slides the window shut and he’s left there, cautiously wondering if he has another potential Hizashi or Nemuri on his hands. He doesn’t need another, thank you very much.

Pulling his head back into his apartment, Shouta hopes she doesn’t carry through with her declaration, but less than five minutes later there’s a knock at the door. Sighing, he trudges over to it and opens it to see, yup, his neighbor. The plastic container in her hands no doubt holds the food that made his stomach rumble, but he doesn’t like accepting food from strangers like this.

“I said no.”

She stares at him for a second before shoving it at him and letting go. Catching it so it won’t fall down and potentially make a mess in his *genkan*, he casts a glare at her unrepentant face.

“Well, it’s in your hands now. Do what you like with it.”

And she leaves him standing there with the warm container in his hands, gone with a spring in her step despite his abrasive rejection. Sighing, he stepped back and closed the door.

Depositing the container on the counter, he elected to ignore it and make his own dinner of a glorious juice pack. Only to open his fridge, find it empty, and remember that he forgot to buy more despite having run out of them just that morning.

It’s not long before he gives up on finding something else to eat and grudgingly opens the plastic container to find a serving of stir-fry over plain rice.

It’s… not bad.

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**Some people are like egg. The more you apply heat to them, the harder they become. To hatch them, just use a gentle heat, and to keep them alive, just keep them cool.**

~Ernest Agyemang Yeboah

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Chapter End Notes

Genkan - Japanese entryway
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The complexities of adult life get in the way of the truth.

~Mortimer J. Adler

The apartment complex doesn’t have name plates identifying which apartment belongs to which person and/or family, and that’s one of the reasons Aizawa chooses to live there. Neither he nor Pandora’s owner seem to share any inclination of learning the other’s name, and he’d like to keep it that way. Their casual, almost non-existent relationship as neighbors is preferable to some kind of weird friendship that will inevitably die because they simply don’t interact often enough to really get to know each other.

They occasionally talk to each other when they’re both at their windows at the same time, and that’s generally it. That’s all he wants it to ever be because he doesn’t need another friend and he certainly doesn’t need another Ms. Joke trying to get him to date or marry her.

His plan to keep his distance works perfectly.

And then a cat comes yowling one evening beneath her window.

He is in his sleeping bag when the noise brings him back to consciousness, his light sleep slipping away before the distressed calls of a cat. He’s out of his sleeping bag and has his window open before hers is, and then he pauses, unwilling to stick his head out and be discovered that a distressed cat’s calls had summoned him.

He hears her remove her window screen and then, “Oh, you poor baby. Stay right there, I’ll be right down.”

She doesn’t close her window so he can faintly hear her apartment door opening and closing. Carefully, he positions himself so he can look down into the alleyway below, and sure enough, a couple minutes later, his neighbor is there by the now pitifully meowing cat.

He can’t hear her if she’s talking or cooing, but he can see her crouch down and fumble with something at her side. She pulls out what looks like small jar, opens the lid and scoops out some on the contents. Carefully, she reaches out to take one of the cat’s paws and she applies… a salve?

It isn’t long before the cat stops meowing in pain and after a few minutes, his neighbor wipes her hand on her pants while her other one strokes the now quiet cat. Now long after, she stands up and this time he can hear her.

“Be careful now, mister cat. Goodbye.”

Cat and human part ways, and he has a dozen questions.

Most importantly: did that cat come specifically in search of her because he knew she could help him?
“What was that.”

You startle, letting out a small shriek. Sticking your head out the window, you see your neighbor leaning out of his own, staring over at you.

He repeats, “What was that just now.”

Ah, shit, he saw you down in the alley?

Trying not to sweat, you answer him. “The cat was injured. H-he’s been here before, so I think he knows he can come here whenever he’s injured. He’s not the first or only cat who does that.”

Dead, tired eyes bore holes into your head. “Did you use your Quirk just then, out in public?”

Definitely sweating now, you hedged. “There wasn’t anyone else around…”

“It’s still a crime.”

You winced. “Uh, well, I made that salve before I went out. So technically I didn’t use my Quirk in public?”

A fat lie. You totally did just use your Quirk in public, although since it’s an alleyway and you hadn’t noticed him, it wasn’t ‘public’. And besides, it’s true that you made that paste—salve, Shizu advised you call it when you had to identify it aloud—before you went out. Oh, god, don’t let him try to get you arrested for public Quirk use!

He continued staring hard at you for a long, uncomfortable moment. Just when you thought things were going to have to get ugly and you’d have to put out an SOS to the gang, he let out a weary sigh.

“Fine. Just remember, don’t use your Quirk outside of your home if you’re unlicensed.”

You nodded quickly. “Okay. Thanks. For not trying to throw me in jail or something.”

He gave an amused huff. “I still might, if you slip in the future.”

You laughed nervously. “I’ll remember that…”

____________________________________________________________________________________

“You think a girl would learn!”

Kan almost paused as a shout broke the calm of the evening.

The sound came from around the corner and he debated waiting for the female shouter to leave. It sounded like she was distressed about something personal and given how quiet the streets were, she probably hadn’t meant for anyone to hear her. Then again, her frustrations might have just exploded after becoming too much to bear.

Shrugging to himself, he kept walking and came up to the corner. Curious despite himself, he glanced to the left and—it was his neighbor, surrounded by one too many bags again. Those didn’t look like they were full of food, though. Not that he’d judge her for it, not when there were Quirks out there that required high calorie intake or something similar.

“(Last Name)?”

Having been distracted by her phone, she jumped with a slight shriek. Her head snapped over to
where he was and she visibly sighed in relief. “Oh, it’s you, Kan. You startled me.”

“Apologies,” he said sincerely. There was a pause before he glanced down at her shopping bags. “Would you like some help?”

Inexplicably, she turned red and yelled. “I’m not doing this on purpose! I swear I’m not doing this on purpose!”

Bemused, he asked, “Doing what on purpose?”

“I’m not!”

He clarified, “What are you not doing on purpose?”

She gestured to the bags around her feet. “This! I’m doing this on purpose. I swear. You just show up when I have too much to carry. I don’t plan these meetings!”

As she continued trying to convince him that she wasn’t doing it on purpose, a slight grin crossed his face. The thought that she might be doing it purposefully hadn’t crossed his mind, but now that it had, would it be such a terrible thing if she was?

It wasn’t as though she was unattractive, and she didn’t say outright that she hated dogs, so maybe there was chance there that she could eventually accept Bosuke.

He chuckled. “Well, if you were, you needn’t go to such elaborate plans to get my attention.”

His words sent her into silence as she hid her reddened face behind her hands.

“Oh my god,” he heard her whimper.

Carrying two bags to Kan’s four, you walked in silence next to him, still reeling from his teasing.

You didn’t need to go to such elaborate plans to get his attention? Did that mean he was… interested in you? If so, what kind of interest? You didn’t want to commit to someone at this point in your life, because you knew you’d have to lie to them constantly. You still worked for the gang, and Shizu had plans for after her graduation, and you’d be even busier then, so that meant less time with a significant other and more lies to tell them. You didn’t see a relationship with you ending in anything other than resentment and heartbreak.

But what is it Kyoko said?

“You can be happy with someone you’re not going to spend forever with”?

Also her general advice regarding one-night stands and boyfriends… Actually, Kyoko probably isn’t someone you should imitate.

On the other hand, if Kan offered or put the moves on you…

“Are you okay? Do you need to rest?”

Shaking your burning face, you tried to reassure him. “I’m fine.”

Your squeaky reply probably didn’t do much to accomplish that.
Lust and flirting are dangerous because at first they are not noticeable.

~Sunday Adelaja

Chapter End Notes

Your 'relationships' with Aizawa and Kan will include the adult element of sex. So, serious question: should I include the smut here, or leave it as vague as I can, such as done with Mr. Compress?
“So, uh…”

Kyoko was staring at her phone but hummed to let you know she was listening.

“If a guy puts the moves on me, what should I do?”

Your friend froze for a few seconds before slowly turning her head towards you, glee and concern warring on her face. When a wide grin spread across her face, you knew it was glee that won out.

“Is there a guy we should know about?”

You grimaced at the thought of the others learning about Kan and/or scruffy-tired neighbor. “No.”

She blinked. “Oh… confidential stuff, huh?” Putting her phone down, she leaned her head back against the couch to stare up at the ceiling. “Well, when a guy puts the moves on me, if I’m feeling like it or if I’m attracted to him, I go for it. Then again, I do it freely because I have you to, er, ‘take care’ of whatever consequences there might be.”

True, you did treat Kyoko like clockwork once a week and have since late middle school.

She rolled her head to look over at you. “We know that illnesses don’t take to you, so you probably don’t have to worry about STD’s, not to mention you could treat your partner before he went anywhere near you. So that’s one thing you don’t have to worry about.”

Kyoko sat up and crossed her legs. “That leaves birth control. Again, as far as we are aware, chemicals have an equally difficult time actually working on you. They don’t count as living things, so we don’t why they don’t work, but there you go.”

She hummed slightly. “Guys aren’t all the same. Some wear condoms religiously while others will do anything to get out of wearing them, even going so far as despicably using deception or slight-of-hand. Typically, most are reassured by the knowledge that their partner is on the pill, even if they also insist on still wearing condoms.

“So! My advice: keep a stash of condoms at your place and get birth control pills.”

You frowned, confused. “But the pill won’t work on me.”

She waved her hand. “I’m getting to that. What you’ll want to do is, in case your partner asks for proof that you’re on the pill, show him the box of pills you’ll get. They’ll come sealed individually in packs. Before it comes to that, open the box and pop out several of the pills, perhaps a little over half. Get rid of them, like, completely, and voila. You’ll have ‘proof’ to show him that you’re on the pill.”

You thought about her words and cocked your head, still confused. “But won’t I also be deceiving him with deception?”
Kyoko leaned back. “Yeah, but who cares? Semen is biological material, we tested that—“you shuddered at the reminder that you had to touch semen at one point—“so even if your boyfriend or one-night stand goes bareback, you’ll be fine. You can just magic it away.”

You rolled your eyes and tossed a couch pillow at her. “It’s not magic.”

Catching it, she laughed. “Yeah, well, your Quirk seems like magic.”

Later, you took her advice and from that day on, you had open and ‘used’ birth control packets stored safely in your nightstand with a pack of unopened condoms at both of your apartments.

‘Just... just in case,’ you thought to yourself, sitting on your bed and staring at the now closed drawer of your nightstand.

Heat slowly crept up your face before you fell back in bed and started rolling in embarrassment.

Pandora’s family tended to all leave in one group and arrive separately. With Pandora, his mate, and their three juvenile kittens, Aizawa wondered if his neighbor qualified as a cat hoarder. It couldn’t be good for so many cats to be in one apartment and when he brought up the subject she smiled ruefully.

“The kittens and their mom already have homes lined up. They’ll be gone this week.”

And sure enough, soon, the only cat to come and go from her window was the affectionate Pandora.

Kan noticed a slight change in how his neighbor reacted to him. Nowadays, when they crossed paths, she would avert her eyes and sometimes stutter. He would be worried he had somehow offended and frightened her, if he hadn’t noticed the slight blush that would grace her features, or how sometimes she stole glances at him. By now he was fairly certain that she was attracted to him.

He hadn’t quite worked up the nerve to test that theory yet, though.

Aizawa held back a long-suffering sigh and Hizashi and Nemuri shoved a cupcake in his face with a single candle on top.

“’Happy birthday, Shouta!!’”

He walked right past them to his desk, but that didn’t put them off. Hizashi took his seat next to him while Nemuri borrowed the seat on his other side so that he was between them. Hizashi put the cupcake on his desk.

“Come on, blow it out!”

He snuffed the flame between his thumb and middle finger. “No.”

Nemuri laughed. “This makes you twenty-nine, doesn’t it?”

“Sure does,” Hizashi answered for him.

The two extroverts continued their conversation over him, planning his birthday celebration as an evening visit to a bar. As long he didn’t have to drag one of them home, he’d count that as... not a win, but not a terrible birthday either.
Sekijiro was on his way home after a visit to a convenience store when he noticed his neighbor walking just ahead. Quickening his pace slightly, he managed to catch up to her. As her gaze turned towards him to see who was beside her, he greeted her. “Good evening. Mind if I walk with you?”

She shook her head, “Not at all.” She smiled slightly, hugging a bouquet of flowers closer to her chest. “And good evening to you, too.”

He couldn’t help noticing. “Those are some nice flowers. Were they a gift?”

If they were from a boyfriend, then he’d have to put away the idea of asking her out.

She shook her head. “I took these from work.” Looking down at the flowers, she gently traced a bright lush petal. “Just a little something to brighten up my apartment.”

“They’ll certainly do that,” he mused. “What are those, tulips?”

She nodded. “Yes. Yellow tulips, as you can see from the bright yellow. They once meant hopeless love but their meaning changed to something more positive. Now they mean hope and cheerful thoughts.”

He laughed. “So you know the language of flowers then?”

She laughed as well but shook her head. “Not well. I just like growing flowers, really. It’s soothing.”

He tilted his head. “When you say you took them from work... does that mean you’re a florist?”

She paused before slowly answering. “I... don’t know about ‘florist’, but I do own a small flower shop and I grow most of the flowers myself.” She shook her head with a laugh. “I’m not very good at making bouquets, so I leave that sort of thing to my workers.”

They arrive at their building and board the elevator. He pushes the button for their floor and a comfortable silence falls between them. When they come to his door, they bid each other goodbye, and Sekijiro enters his apartment to be greeted by Bosuke.

“I’m back,” he greets, bending down to pet his dog.

Briefly, he imagined calling that out and hearing someone (her) greet him back.

People are like chains, the closer they are, the stronger they become.

Federico Chini, The Sea Of Forgotten Memories

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so general consensus is 'go ahead, we can handle it', with one 'vague', so! I will try to do vague, but I will add smut chapters that (hopefully) won't have anything much to do with the story itself, and I'll post those with * in the title, or (smut) to indicate that you can skip that particular chapter if you don't want to read it.

EDIT: Just remembered Reader doesn't know Aizawa's name yet, so changed that part to 'scruffy-tired neighbor'.
Two Lovers AU (Part 6)

Chapter Notes

One down and one to go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

No matter how close people get, they never reach each other. Including us now. Even now, there's a place where each of us is alone.

~Peter Høeg, The Quiet Girl

It’s early December and his neighbor has long since stopped opening her window. Pandora hasn’t made an appearance outside in ages, and with the cold temperatures and snow, he doesn’t blame the cat for staying indoors. It’s more difficult nowadays to tell if his neighbor is home or not, but by now he (mostly) firmly believes that Pandora isn’t being neglected.

Crime tends to dip a little in the colder months of the year, and it’s because of this that he ends up going home earlier than normal, but it’s still fairly late. Thus, he is somewhat surprised to meet his neighbor in the stairwell. He is less surprised and more concerned when he notices that she is trying to hobble up the stairs, so he deduces that she must be injured somewhere.

“What happened?”

She lets out a startled gasp, half-turning to face him, and she lets out a sigh of relief when she sees that it is only him. Really though, she should be warier, because even if he isn’t, what if he was some kind of murderer or criminal?

“It’s just you…” She doesn’t say his name because even after all this time, they haven’t gotten that far. She grumbles. “I was coming home and I slipped on a patch of ice. My ankle hurts.”

His eyes go down to her legs but he can’t see. She’s wearing black jeans with a silver design up one leg and heavy but feminine boots. It’s a wonder she slipped in those, considering they look like they have good traction.

Well, he can’t just abandon her in the stairwell. The next person to come along might have less than noble intentions, and if something happened to her because he left her there then his conscience would nag at him forever.

“Here.”

He offered her his arm and was met by an uncomprehending stare. He didn’t look away. “Lean on me. I’ll help you up to our floor.”

It takes a minute, but eventually have an arrangement that allows her to shamble up the stairs more easily. While they are close together, he can’t help but notice that she smells like flowers, too many to identify, yet not overpowering.

When they finally arrive on their floor, she doesn’t let go and he doesn’t force her to, not when their
Apartments are down towards the middle of the building. He goes past his own apartment and only when they arrive at her door does she let go.

“Thank you so much,” she bows in gratitude. “I was on the verge of calling a friend for help, so you’ve saved us both some trouble.”

“It’s nothing,” he replied. “Put some ice on your ankle, and maybe get it looked at tomorrow.”

She nodded. “I will. Goodnight.”

He grunted in response and headed back to his apartment. By the time he unlocked the door, she was closing hers.

The next day, sometime in the early afternoon while he’s in the kitchen cooking something at the stove, he hears voices out in the hall and then the closing of a door. Tilting his head, he makes out his neighbor’s voice amidst at least two or three others, mostly female, but one male.

“—Dora’s food?”

“I have it, (Name).”

“Did someone lock the door?”

“Yes.”

“I can walk!”

“You don’t have to.”

The voices fade and he supposes those were some of her friends. It seems she has left the building, though for how long he isn’t sure, but long enough that she felt the need to take Pandora along with her.

A small part of him wonders if they’ll come back.

It’s been about two days since your friends dropped you off at your main apartment, and Pandora has been exploring his new surroundings. Your ankle feels better, but it’s still hard to step directly on it. Since this is your main apartment, it has your books, television, laptop and computer, and everything else you own. And yet, you still feel yourself going stir-crazy, despite the fact that it’s been less than four days since your sprained ankle restricted your movements. It’s a light sprain and you should be fine by the end of the week, but still, you need to move.

So, against all advice given to you by your friends, you decided to go to the nearest convenience store. Not for anything in particular, just to prove that you could and to get some fresh air. It’s not too long before you bundle yourself up and step outside with the cane you’ve been given.

Halfway to said convenience store, you consider just turning around since it’s freaking cold, but you’ve been seized by a strong desire for cup noodles, and you don’t have any more back at the apartment, having eaten the last one only yesterday. Deciding to soldier on, you make it to the convenience store and gratefully hobble into the warm store.

After making a few purchases—not a lot this time, ha ha, fate can’t put him in your path this time—you put on a brave face and step back out into the elements.
You make it all the way home and... you just have no words for how disappointed you are that you actually didn’t see Kan.

After your ankle heals and you go back to your regular schedule, you still haven’t seen Kan around. It strikes you then that despite being attracted to him and knowing where he lives, you don’t really have any contact with him. You sure as hell weren’t bold enough to just go up to his door and tell him you missed him, so, feeling frustrated, you pack up Pandora and return to your secondary apartment, the one that your friends definitely now know exists because they picked you up from it just last week.

You arrive at the building in a taxi and you’ve just hauled out Pandora’s carrier and shut the vehicle door when you turn and see scruffy-tired is just arriving as well. You greet him briefly as you hurry into the lobby, grateful that despite the general shabbiness of the place, at least the inside is warmer than outside.

“I see your ankle has recovered.”

Scruffy-tired nods at your ankle and you grin slightly in return. “Yes. I can walk again, so I’m back.”

He nods again without a word and proceeds to the staircase. You follow not far behind and remain careful not to jostle Pandora’s carrier too much. When you look up from your feet, you see your neighbor, remember how Kan hasn’t been around, and your (stupid) mouth blurts out:

“Will you have sex with me?”

Scruffy-tired doesn’t even stop.

“No.”

Mortified by your words but also humiliated by his instant rejection, you keep blabbing despite your red face and burning ears. “I had all my checkups last month and they all came back clean, thank you. It’s not like you’d risk catching anything from me.”

“You could be risking catching something from me,” he replies drily. “…Not that you would catch anything, but with a stranger you’d be risking it. Didn’t anyone ever teach you about safe sex?”

You thought about it. “…No, actually. My parents died before the subject could come up and high school only covered the scientific angle. Most of my friends don’t talk about it to or with me, aside from one, and I’m pretty sure she’s not someone I should take as a role model.”

You arrived on your floor.

“Look it up,” he said, still walking in front. “Double-check everything you read and you should eventually learn enough to know safe from risky.”

“Fair enough,” you conceded, still walking even as he came to his door. You waved one hand at him. “The offer’s still open indefinitely.”

“Then the indefinite answer is no,” he retorted.

“If you change your mind,” you called, drawing out the last word even as his door closed.

Left alone in the hallway, you held it together long enough to enter your apartment and let Pandora out before you slid down to the floor and curled up into a ball of mortification.
You hissed to yourself, “Why did I say that? Why did I do that? I’m an idiot.”

As he fixed himself a cup of coffee in preparation for tackling some work on his laptop, Shouta idly compared his neighbor and Ms. Joke.

Ms. Joke was… very curvaceous, loud, excessively cheerful and energetic, and constantly trying to get him to marry her. He’s half certain she means it as a joke and a way of annoying him, but the other half of him dreads that she’s completely serious. He’s managed to stay away from her for over a year now, and he’s thankful he hasn’t had to refuse her marriage offers or put up with her irritating teasing. She’s a competent pro-hero, but not one he likes to team up with if he can help it.

His so far nameless neighbor has less of a figure and he doesn’t know much about her. He knows she likes cats, and that’s something in her favor, as is how healthy and happy Pandora seems to be, but that’s pretty much it. She’s civilian through and through. Today she went from ‘okay to interact with’ to ‘keep away from’ with her sudden offer. What even brought that up?

Taking his cup of coffee over to his kotatsu, the lone piece of furniture in his small living room, he sat down and began his work. As he worked, he couldn’t help remembering that it had been a long time since his last bed partner. He didn’t particularly crave sex or general physical closeness with anyone, but sometimes the need still hit him. Usually he ignored it, preferring not to waste time searching for a willing partner, but his neighbor’s words kept coming back to him even after he pushed them away time and time again.

Halfway through reviewing a class’s hostage resolution evaluations on Nezu’s request, Shouta came to a stop and stared unseeingly at the laptop screen. This… was distracting.

When even masturbating and climaxing didn’t settle his thoughts down, he grumbled to himself before standing up.

Not long after, shortly before midnight, he was knocking on her door. She opened it, no doubt after peering through the peephole in her door, and he bluntly presented his terms.

“No names and don’t bring emotions into this. If you start getting attached that’s your signal to break things off. If that isn’t acceptable, say it now and we’ll never speak of this again.”

She gaped for a moment before her expression lifted. “That’s fine! I accept the terms you’ve laid out. Um, please hear out mine.”

He waved his hand for her to continue.

She straightened. “If I say stop, you stop. Don’t call me names. And, uh…” She glanced away, turned deep red, and mumbled so quietly he almost didn’t hear her.

“I’d like you to go bareback the first time.”

He thought about it for several long moments as tried not to fidget under his gaze. He didn’t have an issue with the first two terms, but that last one…

“I’m not coming inside you.”

He wouldn’t let someone trap him with a baby.

(ugh, just the thought of being a father made his skin crawl)
She lifted her gaze, still blushing like a teenager and making him increasingly consider changing his mind. “I’m on the pill, but that’s fine.” She stepped aside and opened her door. “Shall we, then?”

He carefully entered her apartment. As the door closed behind him, he commented, “You act like this is the first time.”

She didn’t answer, and he should have realized that was an answer all on its own.

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**Love is the answer, but while you are waiting for the answer, sex raises some pretty good questions.**

~Woody Allen

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Chapter End Notes

Who are you and what have you done with the real Aizawa? O_o

lol Yeah, I can't picture rational Aizawa actually doing this, but whatever. It's fanfiction, and that world is under the mercy of mine fingertips. Mwahaha.

If anyone is wondering where Kan is, he's just busy with work and they keep missing each other, even with his daily walks with Bosuke. He shall return!

He has to. It's literally 'Two Lovers', after all.

EDIT: Whoo! I finally passed the 500,000 word count for things I posted on AO3! 8D

...But considering that some of that comes from quotes... Waah. I still have a ways to go. Oh well, at least I'm still closer to posting a million words now than I was earlier! :D
I felt like an animal, and animals don’t know sin, do they?

~Jess C. Scott, Wicked Lovely

After the deed is done, you fully expect scruffy-tired to leave, and you kind of hope he leaves soon because you’re tired and you’ll have to lock the deadbolts behind him. He didn’t even take off his shirt or fully remove his pants, so it shouldn’t take him long to leave the apartment. However, he did take a moment to lie down, and you saw that he was staring up at the ceiling. He is silent and still for about a minute or two before something suddenly jumps up on the bed.

Without even looking, you know it’s Pandora, and apparently scruffy-tired knows this too, because he doesn’t so much as lift his head. Knowing that Pandora wants to cuddle, you pull down your t-shirt which had been scrunched upwards and left like that, but you take a couple seconds too long and before you know it, Pandora is on scruffy-tired’s stomach. Your cat then proceeds to purr as he kneaded the man’s stomach, making you muffle a giggle at his continued stillness.

Pandora turns around before curling up in a ball on his stomach, purring loudly in the silence of the sex-smelling room. Scruffy-tired doesn’t move and you wonder if he’s going to just stay that way for Pandora’s sake. Your eyelids feel heavy and they’re slowly blinking closed, so you murmur quietly into the not-so-silent room.

“Wake me up… when you leave. I’ll need… to lock the deadbolts… behind you…”

Aizawa is mentally berating himself for taking so long to leave that a cat had time to take up residence on his stomach. The creature is still purring contentedly, so he can’t quite bring himself to push it off just so he can leave. He’ll take this as a lesson, though, to not stick around after they’ve finished. He doesn’t want to make a habit of getting trapped by a cat, thanks.

Of course, promising to avoid this situation in the future does nothing for the present. He is still on his neighbor’s western-style bed and her cat is still on his stomach, a warm ball of life still purring away. Okay, when it stops purring, he’ll carefully turn over and gently slide it off. Yeah. That’s the plan.

…Her ceiling is the same as his.

…He’s about a third done with the work Nezu pushed over on him.

…His neighbor is still asleep and therefore currently unavailable to move her cat.

…Yeah, he’s definitely got to avoid getting trapped by Pandora.

Scruffy-tired wakes you up at freaking four in the morning with Pandora between you two. Stifling a yawn, you put on panties and shuffle towards the door. He’s already gone, so you lock the deadbolts and head back to bed, pulling Pandora up onto your stomach. Idly, you pet him twice before his motor starts up again, more quietly than usual but still there.
It isn’t long before you’re drifting off to sleep again, and it seems much too soon before you’re awakened by a text from your cashier from the flower shop. You text a reply back, saying you won’t be in for a while, and after setting down the phone you close your eyes.

Only to realize that you’re awake for the day because you feel gross from last night’s activities.

Grumbling, you drag yourself out of bed and over to the bathroom for a shower. After that, you’re more or less wide awake, so you check out the group chat Shizu set up on Kyoko’s instance. There are a lot of memes from the ones still in the education system, even from the straight-laced Shizu, and you grin as you remember something.

Today is karaoke night!

Katsu Akiyama has long since accepted the fact that he’s apparently not (Name)’s type, but that doesn’t stop him from looking at her like she hung the moon and stars. Before anyone else who isn’t family, she noticed him and remembered him, and even now after she has Shizu, Daiki, Kyoko and Sora, she doesn’t forget him or shunt him to the side.

He’s busy with college and studying, so he can’t spend as much time with her as he did growing up, but this period of time won’t last forever. Someday they’re going to take over a hospital as planned and with the majority of them in the same building, he’ll be able to see her more often.

Karaoke night comes once in a fortnight and is followed by dinner together as a group, and those nights are always good for catching up.

The door to the karaoke room opens, and there she is, entering the room before Shizu. A smile spreads across his face but before he can even open his mouth—

“Katsu!”

For moments like that, for times when she says his name and reminds him of that playground, the second time they met, when she forgot only to remember him and smile…

Yes. He’ll do anything for her.

(even follow Daiki or Shizu’s orders, even though they make him a criminal, because with them she’s safer because they’re friends first before they’re villains, because she doesn’t have to worry about anything if they’re in charge, she just has to be, she doesn’t want to worry about mundane everyday life and she doesn’t have to if she follows them, and he’ll follow her, he’ll help her by helping them)

Kan is headed home from U.A., finally free, at least for the moment, and he’s in the elevator when the building’s front door opens, letting in a gust of cold air and his neighbor. Seeing her, he holds the elevator open and she dashes over, lightly jumping into the metal box to join him.

She’s breathless with laughter. “Thank you, Kan.”

“No problem,” he replies, letting the door slide closed. He can’t help but think that right now, she looks pretty in her happiness, face red from the cold but smiling just the same. He notes, “You’re in a good mood.”

“Yes,” she confirms, beaming up at him. “I just got back from karaoke with friends, and you’re here, too. If you don’t mind me saying so, I’ve missed you.”
He chuckled as the door opened on their floor and they stepped out. “Does that mean you had things to carry around?”

She laughed and shook her head. “No. I just haven’t seen you in a while, and it made me a little forlorn. But! I see you now, and that’s just more icing on my already cake-like day!”

They’ve arrived at his door, and she’s in the middle of raising her hand to bid him goodnight when he suddenly blurts out, “Are you free tomorrow?”

She pauses, no doubt surprised by his sudden question. However, she seems to digest his words fairly quickly after that because she follows up with an apologetic smile. “Oh, I’m sorry, Kan.” She shook her head. “I’m not looking for a relationship right now.”

The sting from her apparent refusal is suddenly replaced by confusion by her next words.

“But I won’t say no to a casual relationship, because I like you.”

His confusion quickly becomes surprise. “What?”

She tilts her head, looking upwards as she tries to remember. “I think my friend called it… friends-with-benefits? Although in our case it’s probably more neighbors-with-benefits.”

Sekijiro… isn’t one for one-night stands, not really. He’ll do them once in a blue moon, sure, but with his neighbor, he kind of hoped it would be more.

(he blushing young woman with the escaping fruit, who laughed when his words came out wrong, who seemed like she might learn to accept Bosuke’s presence if not dogs in general, she who looked so pretty from the cold, laughing and leaping into the elevator)

Of course, she’s just dashed his hopes for a possible long-term relationship, but does he really have to turn down her offer? Maybe he can get her to change her mind.

Clinging to that hope, he finally grins down at her in response.

“Then may I take you up on that?”

---

Don’t put off till tomorrow anyone you could be doing today.

~Emma Chase, Tangled

Chapter End Notes

There's scenes I want to get to in both this AU and the Age Swap AU and I'm torn between them. orz
There had been strange reports for weeks. Shizu kept an eye on the news, Daiki and the boys kept an ear out on the streets, and Kyoko trawled the web, helped by Sora and Katsu. None of them liked the recent trend, thus all of them encouraged (Name) to go straight home every day and stay home every day. Sora and Daiki would give her rides back to her apartment; Sora because of his Quirk ‘Shield’ to protect her—and also because he usually followed her home, without her knowledge—and Daiki because (Name) would be on his motorcycle. The two of them would walk her right up to her apartment door, something she hadn’t let them do previously, but had caved in the face of all five of them insisting it needed to be done. They weren’t going to be taking chances, not in the recent climate.

Not when things were eerily echoing many a horror movie, specifically of the walking dead type.

Oh, heroes were containing things, sure, and some civilians were reported as having used their Quirks against ‘dangerous assailants’, but the scattered incidents weren’t stopping. There were small riots across the country, each seemingly contained by the joint effort of heroes and the police force, and yet… Well, none of them really placed much faith in heroes, not when it came to their individual safety, and especially not in light of their… less than lawful activities.

Shizu sat with Kyoko in their usual karaoke room, feeling her stomach ache as it had been doing so lately every time she had to be outside of her home. Kyoko was with her, and she kept darting between her phone and the door. They both flinched as several knocks suddenly came from the door, but Shizu sighed in relief as Daiki opened the door and entered, closely followed by Sora and Katsu.

Before she could say anything, though, Daiki spoke up as he sat heavily across from her. “Kai and Haruto came back from Tokyo.”

She frowned. “I wasn’t aware you sent them out.”

He growled angrily. “I didn’t. The assholes took it upon themselves to go and follow up on some rumors Kai’s older sister was telling him. She lives in Kabukicho, you know, the red light district in Tokyo? While they were there, they witnessed a couple of people stagger out of an alleyway and into a crowd where they began attacking people.” He pulled out his phone, fiddled with it, and then handed it over to her. “This is what they saw. Haruto started recording just shortly after the screaming started.”

She wanted to snort at the typical rubbernecking attitude, but refrained in favor of taking his phone. Kyoko sidled up next to her and she pressed play. Screams immediately started issuing from the phone as the slightly wobbly image started moving. Haruto, unseen as he was recording the video she was now seeing, took a couple steps close to where a small group of men were trying to pull away the attackers from their victims. A voice, probably Kai’s, tells him not to be stupid and stay back. There is blood pooling in the street, and the attackers have turned on the men trying to pull them away. One man screams as one of the attackers bites into his forearm, and then he’s using his
Quirk, whole body glowing uselessly as he punches the head of his attacker in an attempt to make him let go. More Quirks are coming out, but by then two riot police are there to restrain the two deranged cannibals. Kai’s voice is heard again, telling Haruto that they’ve probably seen enough. He mentions getting his sister and getting out of there before the video stops. Shizu hands Daiki his phone back, frowning now too.

“Haruto’s not the only one who recorded the incident, though of course the official released report is that it’s just another violent incident in Kabukicho. Katsu found some similar videos on the web, and while some say it’s fake or staged, there are others who say otherwise.” Daiki’s finger swiped the screen a few times and her phone dinged, signaling she had received the video via attachment to an email. He put his phone down and folded his arms. “Kai brought his sister back, and then he and Haruto came to find me to give me that video and report what they saw, which is why we’re late.”

Kyoko, who had been visibly struggling to hold back her outburst, couldn’t take it anymore, and she blurted, “Is this for real? Is this, are we, are we in a goddamn zombie movie?”

“It’s no movie, unfortunately,” Shizu replied grimly, hands folded on her lap as she stared at the junk-food laden table. She pursed her lips for a moment before looking up. “I’m pretty sure this isn’t something of (Name)’s making. She’s terrified of zombie movies.”

The boys smirked briefly. Yeah, they knew that.

She continued. “So, in light of this new information and the fact that incidents continue to trickle in, I propose that we use the gang’s current funds to find someplace to bunker down in case this becomes a full-blown emergency.”

“Apocalypse,” Kyoko muttered direly, hugging her knees and glaring at the top of them. “If it gets bad—”

“It might not,” Shizu interjected, “What with this being the age of heroes and all. However, in case the worse comes to pass, we’ll want somewhere to run to and hole up.”

“Can’t be just the six of us and our families, though,” Daiki put in. “Kai says he wants to go where we go, and he plans on bringing his sister. Haruto wants to bring his brother and mother. The two of them are useful, and I know a few others I’d want to have at my back in case we need to defend our new place.”

“From either the dearly departed or the asshole living,” Sora commented, slowly eating some popcorn.

Shizu sighed, already anticipating that this was going to be a headache. “All right. I’ll find us a place. Kyoko, Daiki, get me an estimate of how many people we’re going to have with us. Sora, Katsu, you two are going to be shopping for things in bulk and packing them in some delivery trucks I’m going to rent. Or buy.”

They nodded.

Okay, so she’s going to have to make a zombie survival plan for an unknown number of people on the fly.

Great.

Shizu and Daiki cancelled the plan to run off to a beach for some of the summer holidays, and honestly, you were grateful. You did not want to be far away from home right now, not with how
weird things have been in the past few months. The news said everything was under control, but you
didn’t put much stock in what the news or heroes said, not with how these ‘incidents’ haven’t
stopped. Straying from home just seemed like the worst idea, and you were glad that you didn’t have
to put your foot down and be the wet blanket.

With Sora and Daiki picking you up and bringing you home every day for a good while now, the
neighbors thought you were a delinquent, which… wasn’t far from the truth, really. Of course, since
Izuku was still small and weak—you hadn’t gotten very far on modifying him—you worried about
him and managed to convince Inko to let your friends pick Izuku up and drop him off like they did
for you. He had to wear a helmet, which only you and the girls did, but that was fine as you would
have insisted on it anyway. Izuku worried about the rumors at first, but after you lied to him, he
accepted that your friends were just a little rebellious and not dangerous (although ‘to me’ went
unsaid).

Since the boys couldn’t bring their motorcycles to school, they dropped off Izuku first and then
parked the bikes about a block away from school. The walk between their bikes and school was
always tense, and they tended to herd you away from all alleyways and even jaywalk you across
streets if they thought someone nearby even looked slightly suspicious. It was reassuring to know
that Daiki and Sora were there to protect you, and that Izuku wasn’t left to his own devices in these
dangerous times.

…Not that many people seemed to think these were dangerous times. In fact, most people seemed
oblivious, and the reports of violent attackers were barely talked about (although that might be
because very few reports actually mentioned the cannibalism). Heroes and villains still had control of
the spotlight, and the police kept insisting everything was fine. Daiki and Shizu didn’t seem to think
so, and you trusted them, so you preferred to believe them. Despite how much you didn’t want to,
anyway…

You only occasionally saw clients these days, and you noticed that they were high paying ones.
Thankfully, the policy has always been that they stick their hands into the hole in the wall the be
treated, and not you risking your neck by doing the opposite.

The others were busy with something, and when you asked what they were doing, Shizu told you
they were preparing a safe place in case things went south. It reassured you to know that there was a
plan in place, though you made it clear that where you went so did your parents, Izuku and Inko.
Shizu then told you that the safe place would be able to accommodate a fair number of people with
space for a few extras.

With things seemingly under control, you went about your days with most of the worry and fear held
at bay.

Now, if only the nightmares would stop…

Izuku was eleven years old and holed up in his bedroom because his mom wouldn’t let him outside
after school. She told him that (Name)’s friends were to pick him up and drop him off with her each
day and that he wasn’t to walk anywhere alone, so that’s what he’d been doing. It wasn’t so bad.
(Name), his damsel, was also put under new, similar rules, so that meant they spent more time
together than usual. Today she was on his bedroom floor, reading manga on her tablet while he sat
on his bed looking up the latest All Might news on his phone.

A pinging sound made him look over at her and he saw her pulling out her phone. Mystery solved,
he went back to reading. Rumor was that All Might had gotten his costume updated, and true
enough, the Number One Hero was recently seen wearing gloves, but according to rumors, his
whole costume was now more durable—

“Izuku.”

The tone of (Name)’s voice instantly made him concerned. She sounded tense and scared. Looking over at her, she was sitting up, gripping her phone tightly and obviously trying to not seem frightened. He slowly lowered his phone and cautiously asked, “Y-yeah?”

“Pack a bag.”

He blinked, bewildered by her random comment. “Huh?”

She repeated herself as she stood up. “Pack a bag. Pack clothes and whatever things you don’t want to leave behind.” She paused, still gripping her phone. She met his eyes and something in them made him realize that she was completely serious.

“Pack a bag like you’re never coming back here.”

She moved towards his door and he reached out to her. “(N-Name), wait! What are you talking about?”

“Just do it,” she snapped. “I have to go tell your mom something, and then I have to go home. I need you both ready to leave as soon as possible.”

She left, leaving him confused and slightly hurt. Still, since she was acting like that, he’d probably better do as she said…

Inko waited in the stairwell, trying not to shake as her eyes darted around, keeping a lookout for anybody (for the danger she can’t see but knows is there, just out of sight). Holding Izuku’s hand and with a bag in the other, she let out a sigh of relief as the (Last Name)’s door opened. Coincidentally, just then, down below, she could hear a heavy vehicle pulling up.

“Inko, Izuku,” (Name) greeted, looking relieved to see them waiting.

“What’s going on?”

They all looked down at Izuku. Her poor son, he was completely bewildered by their actions. She squeezed his hand, making him look up at her. She tried to smile. “I’ll tell you later. For now, be quiet and do everything you’re told, okay?”

He stared for a moment before nodding slowly.

Footsteps were coming up the stairwell, and Inko moved back, pulling her son behind her. A teenage boy appeared, and she recognized him as—

“Daiki,” (Name) greeted.

He nodded back at her, and then eyed their group, apparently counting them. Then, he jerked his head towards the stairs behind him. “All clear, for now. Let’s move.”

She descended the stairs behind him, carefully holding on to her son’s hand. The teenage boy went ahead of the group and carefully looked around at each floor before waving them forward. After they made it safely to the street, Inko couldn’t help her eyes widening. The heavy vehicle she had heard earlier was not one vehicle but three—a passenger bus with black vehicles in front and behind. Daiki knocked on the bus door and it opened, revealing… a bus driver.
“Hurry,” Daiki urged.

Inko boarded the bus first on the off chance there was danger so that it would get her first and give Izuku time to run (which she hoped he would, in case anything ever happened to her, but she worried). Taking her first look at the seats, she saw that they weren’t the first. There were already a few other teenagers, adults, kids and even some elderly. In fact, it seemed as though Inko and her group were the last ones, as there were only enough seats for them plus Daiki. Izuku clambered onto the bus after her, followed by (Name) and her parents. Inko put Izuku next to the window, and she idly noted that (Name) sat down next to another teenage boy near them while her parents took the seats behind her.

The bus doors closed and soon the convoy was moving.

“Mom?”

She looked over at her anxious baby boy. He leaned against her, trembling slightly. She immediately wrapped an arm around him.

“We’ll be okay, Izuku. Everything’s going to be okay.”

It wasn’t very long after you’d been picked up that an abrupt shout startled most of the passengers.

“STOP!!”

The bus driver ignored Izuku’s yell, but you immediately perked up and turned in your seat to look at your hero. You asked, “Izuku, what’s wrong?”

He looked at you frantically, tears glistening in his eyes. “Kacchan! We can’t leave Kacchan!”

Your face must have showed your dislike, because he tried to crawl over his mother to get to you, not in anger, but in desperation. “Please! We can’t leave him behind!” His tears started falling. “It’s about all the attacks, isn’t it? That’s why this is happening, isn’t it? Someone is trying to protect us, but no one is trying to protect Kacchan! We can’t leave him!”

Inko gathered him into her arms and pulled him down onto her lap where he proceeded to wail into her chest. His crying wrenched at your heart and you knew that if—when—he found out that your group had organized this extraction but you hadn’t done anything to ‘protect Kacchan’…

You met Inko’s eyes, resigned.

“Where does Kacchan live?”

Of all things Masaru expected when he opened the door that evening, Inko, a strange teenage boy, and the bus behind them in the street were the last things on his list. Perplexed, he invited them inside when she asked to come in. Then, after he had called his wife over, Inko blurted out yet another thing he never expected.

“You need to pack your bags and come with us, now.”

Well, naturally they couldn’t just up and leave without any explanation or warning, but Inko was insistent.

“Do you know about the attacks that have been happening the past few months?”
They did. However, due to their consistent repeated similarities, it had slipped their notice recently.

Inko was pale and shaking as she choked out her next words.

“It’s a contagious disease that makes the infected violent and senseless, and containment measures have failed. There are riots breaking out, and they’re only growing. We need to escape the cities while we still can.” She grabbed Mitsuki’s hand and pleaded. “Please, Mitsuki. Come with us. Izuku won’t leave without little Katsuki, and I know you want to keep him safe, just like I want to keep Izuku safe.”

His wife blinked rapidly for a moment before frowning. “Sure this will all blow over? It can’t be as bad as you’re making it out to be.” She glared at the teenager behind him. “And who is this, anyway?”

“Hayashi,” the teenager said in response. “I’m helping out with the extraction of certain people, which happens to include the Midoriyas. You lot weren’t on the list, but an exception has been made in your case, provided you come with us now. Please hurry and make your decision, as every moment of delay puts the others at risk.”

His wife fired off a series of rapid questions, most of which were given short answers, if at all. Finally, the boy looked at his phone and frowned. “Miss Midoriya. We really can’t delay any longer.”

Inko, who hadn’t let go of his wife’s hands, squeezed them. “Please, Mitsuki! Just this once, trust me.”

His wife stared at her best friend for half a moment before nodding. She turned her head to him.

“Pack bags for us, honey, and grab a few of the sentimental things.” She scowled. “I’m going to go grab our stupid son.”

Izuku, who was on your lap, hadn’t been able to stop crying, and he looked up when the bus door opened. His lips wobbled as he saw his mom, but he lit up when he saw a blond boy being pushed ahead by someone who looked enough like him to be his mother, and probably was.

“Kacchan!”

The blond boy’s scowl immediately went from being directed at his mother to being directed at your hero. “Deku! Is this shitty sudden trip your fault?!”

“Oi!” The blond woman smacked the boy’s head. “Indoor voice! You’re not the only one here!”

Of course, not that she seemed to be using her own indoor voice…

There were no seats left, so the emergency folding chairs were brought out and the three-member family sat in the aisle, the wife at the back, the son in the middle, and the husband in the front. Izuku returned to his own seat and soon the convoy was moving again.

Sighing, you massaged your temple and muttered under your breath to Sora. “Tell Shizu we picked up three extras.”

“Sure thing,” he replied, pulling out his phone to do so.

You leaned your head back as Musutafu passed by outside the windows. This convoy was headed to a small town about an hour or so away. It probably wasn’t wise to have the so-called safe house so
far away from where everyone lived, but it was the only place to meet Shizu’s mysterious criteria. All you knew about the place so far was that it was apparently an old factory or business office building built of brick. It was supposedly sturdy and close enough to some things and far enough from other things, and yeah, whatever, as long as it’s a safe place.

Shizu and her father would be arriving separately with her… comatose (braindead) mother. They were going by ambulance with another bus and two-vehicle escort, most of that being taken up by a few medical professionals and their families, plus the no-longer-a-secret research and development team she had been hiding from you (goddamn it, Shizu).

These two convoys weren’t exactly discreet, but hopefully the police and heroes would be too busy with the ‘riots’ to bother them.

Static came from up front near the bus driver, and you stared over at him in mild curiosity. The bus driver—his wife and son sitting right behind him—spoke into it before the bus made a turn, following the vehicle in front of it where you knew Daiki was, along with a driver and a couple of other of his fighters.

As the bus turned, you looked past Sora out the window, and in the distance you saw fire and a crowd of people, making you shudder in fear. Other must has noticed before the was a short swell of noise before the scene was out of sight. The bus descended into mutters, and a few children started whimpering if not going into outright tears.

“Cutting it kind of close,” Sora mused quietly. You knew that three people on this bus made up his family, even if he only reluctantly included his father at the last minute.

“Yeah,” you agreed, unhappy. “But if we had done this earlier, people would have gotten restless and left the safe place. Then where would we be?”

“I guess,” he murmured. “…I’d like to sleep, but we don’t know what might happen between here and the safe house. Gotta stay alert.”

You hummed slightly in response.

Gradually, silence fell over the bus, and you stared ahead, deliberately avoiding looking out the many windows.

(you’re no hero)

You can’t save them, so you would prefer to avoid seeing them.

I need to stop fantasizing about running away to some other life and start figuring out the one I have.

~Holly Black, The Darkest Part of the Forest

Chapter End Notes

That kid with the Zombie Quirk from that OVA... is not responsible. The nameless idiot responsible had a Quirk called Virus and was Patient Zero, and zombified his family
(parents and younger sister) who eventually shambled out of their house after attacking some curious neighbor dropped by, opened the door, left it open, walked in, and got ambushed.

Not that that's important or will ever be known. [cough]

I made this because I was bored. I don't know if I'll make part two where Reader saves the world (maybe).

And about Izuku being 11 and this being what was Reader's fateful sixteenth summer--they're still six years apart, Reader just needs to turn seventeen.

Don't worry about the Two Lovers AU and Age Swap AU, they aren't abandoned.
Mommy hits the scary man with the plastic shopping bag and then before you know it, you are being carried while mommy runs. You can see over her shoulder, and your eyes widen as he starts to chase after you two.

(frustration doesn’t even begin to cover his ire—close to twelve hours of near continuous chase, staying in communication with his sidekicks, trying to coordinate them, closing in multiple times, only to lose the villain entirely)

You scream and clutch at mommy when the scary man suddenly lunges the last distance, and then the world jerks as he drags mommy off the street. Someone pulls at the back of your shirt and, surprised and stunned, you can’t hold on. Mommy yells your name as you go flying and then land hard on the ground.

(his ears twitch at the sound of screams, and despite his creeping exhaustion and short temper, his sense of duty moves his feet towards to sound)

They alleyway is dark and cold, and the scary man hurting mommy doesn’t seem to care that you’re both screaming. He’s laughing as he keeps stabbing mommy with a knife. Shaking, crying, you do the only thing you have the power to do, the one thing you believe in.

You cry out for a hero.

(the screaming and laughter is closer, and amid the noise he hears a child calling the names of heroes—including his own)

Suddenly the alleyway isn’t dark anymore as something charges around the corner from the street, bursting onto the scene lit with flames.

You hiccup as the new figure grabs and hauls the scary man off of your poor mommy. The scary man is slammed hard against a brick wall, and something flares in your chest as you recognize the new person. A relieved smile forms on your face as you cry out again.
(with the assailant pinned to the wall by his neck, he casts a glance at the child calling his name, and he sees her sitting amidst trash not too far away from her bleeding mother—with a harsh crack, he knocks the man against the wall again, knocking him out completely before unceremoniously dropping him to call for an ambulance and see what he can do to possibly keep the civilian from bleeding out)

When you get a better look at your mommy, the excitement at being rescued by a hero quickly bleeds out of you. Seeing her so pale as the Number Two hero tries to help her is too much for you, so you can’t bring yourself to really talk to him. You try to answer his questions, but nothing you say seems to help much.

After what seems like forever, an ambulance comes and you get taken away with your mommy. One last glance out the ambulance doors gets you a glimpse of the still burning hero, and then the doors close.

(after the paperwork is done, he doesn’t spare another thought for the mother and daughter victims)

Mommy is going to be okay! Mommy is going to live!

You and daddy are so happy that you both cry. Mommy is tired and in pain, but she smiles too.

Mommy holds your hand and daddy holds both hers and yours between both of his.

Oh, you love them so, so much. You don’t know what you would have done if mommy had died. You don’t even know what daddy would have done.

Endeavor was so cool! You called and then bam! There he was!

You couldn’t choose before, but now you know you have a favorite hero: Endeavor!

Her daughter, who used to shrug when asked who her favorite hero was, will now enthusiastically shout the Number Two hero’s name. Well, considering that he did save them from a rather tight spot, she can see where the hero worship comes from.

(over the next few years, slowly, Endeavor merchandise takes over the majority of her little girl’s hero items from posters to even bedding)

She and her husband discuss moving away from their current neighborhood, but by the time she is finally released from the hospital and allowed to go home, they’re still debating it. Sure, their experience was an unfortunate one, but it was the only bad run-in they had had since they moved in some three years before their daughter was born. They leave the conversation hanging…

Until the day their young daughter’s Quirk manifests.

She is in pain, stitches aching from her many stab wounds, and she has to stop and lean against the wall. Her baby finds her there after coming out of her room and dashes over to her, concern written all over her small face.

“Mommy?”

She lies, and says she’ll be fine in a moment. She clasps her daughter’s hand, trying to reassure her,
but her little girl frowns, eyes now staring at where the worst collection of stitches are located. A particularly strong throb of pain makes her grit her teeth, but then, so unexpectedly that it makes her eyes open wide, the pain in her body starts melting away.

Her little girl, guileless, smiles up at her, and asks, “Are you okay now, mommy?”

After managing to calmly return her daughter to her bedroom, she calls her husband and tells him to come home from work as soon as he can manage. When he arrives, she doesn’t mince words, instead just whipping off her shirt to show him.

Her stitches are now sunk into perfectly healed flesh.

He agrees with his wife that their current location is now too undesirable to stay. Most of their neighbors are aware that his wife and daughter were attacked and that his wife was injured and just barely home from the hospital. Sure, they could say that the attack wasn’t as bad as it seemed and that she didn’t have much to recover from, really, but staying where nosy neighbors might somehow put two and two together to get four—to realize that their daughter has some kind of healing Quirk—is too much of a Sword of Damocles for them to handle.

He finds a new job and uproots his little family.

Mommy and daddy don’t want you to let other people know when your Quirk really does. Instead they say that your Quirk lets you manipulate skin and they call it ‘Skin Control’, which is gross and makes you get teased, but mommy and daddy are so serious about it that you agree to not show anyone what your Quirk really does.

Eventually, you make a few friends, and most of you go to same grade school. Not everyone likes Endeavor, and they don’t understand why you do, at least until you tell them that he saved you and your mom when you were four. Your friends accept that your favorite hero is the Flame Hero, just as you accept that their favorites are whoever.

Watching one of Endeavor’s televised villain fights, you jolt upright and stare avidly at where the Number Two hero is injured: a cut on his face bleeds, and the reporter comments on how rare it is for a villain to get a visible hit in like that. Suddenly, you know what you want to do with your life, with this Quirk that your parents insist that you hide.

Turning around, you leap onto the couch and stare at your mother in the kitchen and loudly announce your life’s ambition.

“I’m going to be useful to Endeavor!”

Turning to look at her daughter in surprise, she sees the look on her face and feels her stomach sink. Her daughter’s eyes are gleaming and she’s smiling widely, all but wriggling with excitement at her own declaration.

Oh dear.

Maybe… maybe they can talk her out of it?

A fan letter arrives at a certain hero agency, one of many never so much as glanced at by the hero it was intended for. The letter itself is short and written in a childish scrawl.
'Dear Mr. Endeavor

Thank you for saving me and my mommy! I should have said thanks earlier, but I did not know how to write too good when I was only four. But I can now, so thank you so much!

I know you are a busy hero because you are the Number Two hero. I saw you get hurt a little on TV. I’m sorry you got hurt. But! Now I know what I want to do when I grow all up.

I am going to be useful to you! My Quirk is special, or at least my mommy and daddy say so. I can’t say what it is, but it is really good! I think it would be very useful to you, even if you do not get hurt that much.

I will come work for you when I grow up. That is a promise!

Your Fan,

(Name)'

Endeavor Agencies doesn’t keep physical copies of fan letters, so this becomes one of many which are scanned and archived by one of the more sentimental employees working there, a task done almost exclusively on their own free time.

Growing up, you swiftly come to realize that mom and dad don’t think you can be of help to the Number Two hero. Or rather, they don’t want you to become someone who can help. They want you to be safe, but being safe means being ordinary. You don’t want to be ordinary, not anymore.

(fire chases away the dark and cold)

They tell you about the dangers that await someone with a Quirk like yours, and dad tells you of rumors of someone who could steal Quirks. You admit that their concerns have some merit to them—though those Quirk-stealing boogeyman rumors dad tells you about seem fake—but in the end you decide that you don’t want to be swayed.

(you called, and he answered, and mom is alive)

Your Quirk lets you see everything about the human body, but you don’t understand what everything is, so you set out to learn and devour everything you can. Your teachers assume that you’re going to be a doctor or a nurse, and they encourage your studies as it makes you one of their most studious pupils. Your kiddy social life starts drying up but you hardly notice, engrossed as you are in learning about human biology.

It’s only when you witness and attempt to help a cat that got hit by a vehicle that you realize that your Quirk is capable of so much more. The cat, on whom you desperately tried your Quirk on, not quite believing it would be able to help since the cat isn’t human, is a pivotal point of your development. Because of it, you realize that you can affect more than just humans—you can affect animals, plants, anything that’s alive!

You throw yourself into learning more about and understanding what your Quirk can do. Almost before you know it, high school is just around the corner.

Mom and dad won’t let you go to a hero school! They. Won’t. Let. You. Go!

Screaming, you slam your bedroom door shut as tears threaten to fall. They won’t sign the consent
forms that would let you try for U.A., Shiketsu, or even the smaller, lesser known hero high schools! They refuse to consider any high school that has a hero program!

Why? Why are they doing this to you?!

Their daughter attends an all-girl’s academic school with a medical student track. They know she’s angry with them, but they’d rather deal with her anger than the worry they’d feel if they let her attend a famous hero high school with a Quirk like hers. If she applied to and succeeded in gaining entry to one, then the truth about her Quirk would come out that much sooner, meaning she would spend less time being safe from evil villains or greedy government types.

It’s difficult, though, to see the anger in her eyes whenever she looks at them.

She doesn’t rebel or become a delinquent—she’s too busy studying and doing god-knows-what to the stray cats in the neighborhood—but she’s distant from them.

Her high school years are almost over before things finally settle between them, but things never go back to being quite the same.

Maybe… maybe they are trying to hold on too tightly for too long.

After all, little birds always leave the nest.

You graduate from high school, but until you’re twenty, you’re still a minor under your parents’ authority. That means, just like with high school, they have the power to deny you to try for a healing license or change your Quirk registration information. It’s infuriating! You never thought that the greatest barrier to being useful to Endeavor would be your own parents, one of whom who owes their life to him.

You’re not blind. You can read and so some pretty good research. These things mean that you are aware that Endeavor is not exactly the best hero or even a good person. Rumors of excessive force, troubles in his personal life… you know of these things.

But none of that matters to you.

Perhaps you are being willfully blind, but you don’t care if Endeavor isn’t a good person or a good hero. You owed him your mother’s life and your own life, and you decided long ago on how you were going to repay him.

All that remained was making good on your own words.

Becoming an official doctor would take too long, and besides which, you heard that Recovery Girl, one of the most famous healers in Japan, was a school nurse, so you could probably skate by with a nursing license in addition to whenever you finally got the longed for healing license, which wouldn’t be until you were at least twenty. Thus, you went into a nursing program right after high school, and by the time you were twenty, you were halfway through said program.

Luckily for you, since healing Quirks were rare, the licensing procedure for them differed from how hero licenses were distributed. Instead of waiting for one of two certain times each year, after you turned twenty and no longer needed parental approval, you immediately applied for a healing license. Your application took almost a month to process, and your exam took another month to arrange, but eventually your Quirk and abilities were put to the test.
Less than two months after your twentieth birthday and after over a decade of waiting, you finally had it: you had legal permission to use your Quirk!

It was only a provisional healing license, meaning you could only use your Quirk under the supervision of licensed doctor or two licensed nurses, or in the event of a life-threatening emergency, but still! This was a long-awaited achievement worthy of celebration!

…Oh.

You… didn’t really have friends.

Their daughter came home depressed the same day she left for her provisional healing license exam. Assuming it went poorly, she tried to comfort her daughter only to be told that she did get her license. She was just depressed to realize that she didn’t have any friends.

Biting her lip while patting her daughter’s hair in an attempt to comfort her, she thought about it and realized that yes, her daughter lacked real friends. Her little girl had been so focused on becoming useful to Endeavor that nearly everything else fell to the side, including the developing friendships she had had back in grade school and even middle school (she couldn’t recall her daughter talking about friends from high school at all).

“Well,” she finally said, resting a hand on her daughter’s shoulder, “At least now you’re aware of it. That means you’ll be more aware of any future friendships that may develop.”

Her daughter snorted into her pillow. “Right.” She sighed and mumbled into her pillow.

“At least I’m almost there.”

She sat in silence for a long minute before quietly speaking.

“You don’t have to do this, (Name). I’m sure he doesn’t even remember saving us. He’s a hero, and it’s his job. You don’t owe him anything.”

Her daughter is silent, and for one wild moment, she thought her baby would put aside all this nonsense. Then, in a low but subdued voice, her daughter shattered that hope.

“I still want to do this. That hasn’t changed, and I don’t think it ever will.” Her daughter turned in her bed to look at the two posters hanging on the closest wall, of All Might and Endeavor, respectively. She said, “All Might is too unreachable. For all that he is the Number One hero and despite all the good he does as the Symbol of Peace, I don’t even want to try to reach him, to try to be useful to him. It feels like there’s too much distance to even try.

“But Endeavor… I know he’s not a good hero, or a good person. There’s too much said about him for me to just blindly brush it off. But mom… when we needed someone, he was there. He came and chased away the evil and the cold, and because of him, I still have you. I can argue with you, and laugh with you, and see you every day.

“I can be happy, because he was there.”

She sighed. “He’s a married man, (Name).”

She bolted upright, “Mom! I’m not a homewrecker! I know he’s married! Geez!”

She laughed as her daughter flopped back down into bed and hid under a pillow. She gave her
daughter’s shoulder a shake.

“Do your father and I a favor, honey; don’t bring home someone who’s twice your age.”

“Moho~m!”

You change your official Quirk registration, going from ‘Skin Control’ to ‘Biological Control’, as per instructions that came along with your provisional healing license. You spend the next six months between a hospital and the nursing program you are enrolled in. You want to get your nursing license so that no one can call you a hack or fake nurse, and you keep going to the hospital so you can work under the supervision of a doctor or two nurses, whichever setup they have for you from day to day. A shady government-type person follows you around at the hospital, but after your initial refusal of his offer, he merely stays in the background observing your Quirk in action.

At the end of those six months, you nearly cry tears of joy after being handed a healing license. Not a provisional license, but an actual, full-fledged license! At this point, you can join a hero agency and legally be the sole medical personnel on payroll. It wouldn’t be recommended, but you could be!

Closer to twenty-one than being twenty, you finally go to the Endeavor Hero Agency to apply for a job.

Less than three days after you submit your application, you get a call to go in for an interview.

This was it, the final hurdle!

Would you make it in?

Endeavor has a qualified medical staff on hand for minor injuries (although let it be mentioned that he counts broken bones as ‘minor’) and, for the most part, they are adequate for the needs of his agency. However, when HR brought a specific application to him, he knew that if this was real then he couldn’t waste time. If this potential employee really had a ‘Biological Control’ Quirk then he had better snap them up before someone else did (like a certain blond someone who will not be named).

The job application informed him that the potential healer was female, so that’s what he was expecting when the time finally arrived. Normally he left hiring to the HR department, but for this he had the HR manager come up to his office to conduct the interview there. His secretary informed him when the applicant arrived around twenty minutes prior to the scheduled time for the interview, and he had her send her in on the dot.

A young woman entered his office and both he and the HR manager saw her pause at the enormity of his office, though she was at least quick to snap back to her senses and approach them. She seemed nervous, not something that reflected positively on her, but she managed to conduct her half of the interview at least on an adequate level.

Eventually, they got to the heart of the matter: her Quirk.

The HR manager danced around the subject, getting her to explain the abilities and limitations of it, but he finally ran out of patience and told the man to get to the demonstration already. The young woman seemed confused, but her expression cleared as five of his sidekicks entered the room, each with a different injury.

(he noticed the uncertainty vanish from her eyes and posture at the sight of them and approved at the resolve that settled in its place)
As he watched, she healed a broken leg, a shattered hand, and regrew an eye, two fingers, and apparently fixed a collapsed lung.

A feral smile split his face even before the fixed collapsed lung could be confirmed by the medical staff.

“You’re hired.”

The smile that lit up her face stayed with him long after she had gone.

It does not matter how long it takes to reach the goal. With persistent focus, commitment and enthusiasm, you will make it a reality.

~Lailah Gifty Akita, Think Great: Be Great!

Chapter End Notes

I got stuck on all the other AUs, so I wrote this as fulfillment of an earlier request. Probably not what they meant, but hey, at least it's done.

No AU is abandoned. Just... a Work in Progress.
Who you are is too vast to be captured by the reflection of a mirror, classified by the state of your attitude, or categorized by the opinions of others. Therefore, if any of these are defining you, you have yet to be defined.

~Craig D. Lounsbrough

The fact that you had Kan the day after you had scruffy-tired is not something you intentionally aimed for, nor was it something you expected scruffy-tired to keep up. It seemed as though that one time would be the only time, and you were answering booty calls from Kan because hello. It was weeks before scruffy-tired showed up at your door again, stating his intentions clearly, and though you could have turned him away, you invited him in.

So now you had two neighbors-with-benefits.

“Am I a slut?”

Your plaintive whine made Kyoko choke on her juice and made Shizu freeze at she stared at her tablet.

Kyoko stared at you with wide eyes. “W-what makes you say that?” She then noticed Shizu staring in her direction and glared defensively. “Hey! I had nothing to do with this!”

Shizu kept staring and Kyoko amended. “…Probably.”

Nervously fiddling your fingers, you explained. “Well, you know I have two different apartments, right?”

“I still want you to move out of that empty one,” Shizu said.

“No,” you replied. You continued, “Well, yeah, I have two apartments in different parts of the city. So that means I have different neighbors, and, um, I may have accidentally started seeing one in each building?”

Kyoko snorted, trying not to laugh. “S-so, you’ve done the dirty?”

You glared at her. “Don’t talk to me like I’m a kid.”

She leered. “So you’re having sex with two different men?”

Shizu asked, “Why do you assume she’s seeing men?”

Hiding behind one of yours hands, you listened as Kyoko recollected the time you asked her for advice on what to do if someone made a move on you. Since you hadn’t corrected her about the condoms and birth control pills, Kyoko had assumed you were referring to male partners.

Shizu turned to you. “Is she correct?”

Younodded. “Y-yeah. I’m seeing two guys.”
Kyoko seemed deeply interested and leaned in your directions. “Then, basically you’re asking if sleeping with two different men makes you a slut?”

You nodded and she waved her hand. “Pfft. Of course you’re not. It’s perfectly fine to have sex with different partners as long as all partners give their consent. And if they don’t know about the other, well, did either of them ask you if you were exclusive to them?”

“No really,” you replied. “One made it clear it was only sex, and I turned the other down when he asked for a date but told him I’d be a willing neighbor-with-benefits, and he accepted that answer. Anything else hasn’t come up.”

Shizu settled back in her seat, resting her phone on her lap. “Then I don’t see the issue. As Kyoko said, you are all consenting adults. If they find out and complain, just temporarily paralyze them and walk out of their lives.”

Both you and Kyoko stared at her and then glanced at each other.

Sometimes Shizu said things that made you glad that you were the one who got your Quirk and not her.

Weeks went by before Aizawa relented and got his neighbor’s number from her. It was easier to text than to show up at her door or wait for her to stick her head out the window. Granted, he didn’t often go to her anyway, but at least this way he didn’t have to waste time wondering if she should try knocking at her door. As per their agreement, she didn’t store a name in his phone, and her number was listed under ‘Pandora’s owner’. In trade, his number was stored in her phone under ‘scruffy-tired’, which, honestly, was a rather apt description of himself.

Aizawa could count on one hand the number of times he’d had sex with his neighbor, but if either Nemuri or Hizashi found out about her, they’d probably call her his girlfriend or something equally unpleasant. Therefore, it was a good thing that he didn’t let anyone borrow his phone except for dire emergencies (and no, Hizashi, calling your own phone isn’t an emergency and you shouldn’t have misplaced it in the first place).

Although, thinking about it, his neighbor hadn’t been home in a while now. She had texted him, requesting that he feed Pandora and give him some water. She typed that if he agreed, she would send someone over with the keys to her apartment. He agreed, because he couldn’t stand the idea of letting a cat suffer in the apartment right next to his, but later he had to wonder. If she was sending a friend, why not have that same friend do it for her? Was she not coming back for a while yet?

The young man who showed up at his door was plain with dark hair and dark eyes. Wordlessly, he held up a key ring with three keys on it and Aizawa accepted it. No words were exchanged and the man didn’t look back even as Aizawa stared at his back. When the man disappeared down the stairs, Aizawa suddenly couldn’t recall what he had looked like at all. ‘Plain’ came to mind, but what was ‘plain’?

Feeling slightly off-put, Aizawa put it down as the man’s Quirk. After all, it wouldn’t be the first time he’d come across a person whose Quirk altered the perceptions of people around them. Still, he made a mental note to tell his neighbor not to send that particular person if she ever needed to drop off her keys again.

Shaking his head, Aizawa closed and locked his apartment behind him before heading to see Pandora. It was winter, and he wasn’t allowed outside, which was probably the deciding factor in his neighbor texting him to ask this particular favor.
Kan stared at his phone as he glumly reread (Last Name)’s most recent text. He’d asked her if she wanted to come over, but apparently she was busy with work and couldn’t make it. She said ‘another time’, but when would that be? It has already been weeks since they last met up.

Grumbling, he set aside his phone and picked up the remote control. Flipping absently through the channels, he settled on the news and hoped she would be back soon.

It wasn’t just the sex that made him want to see her. (Last Name) was really growing on him. He knew he shouldn’t think about her like that, not when she made it clear she wasn’t looking for anything else, but he couldn’t stop himself. He just… found himself thinking about her at random times, like recently on his and suddenly found himself wishing she was there because it started snowing and he wanted to share the moment with her.

Rubbing a hand over his eyes, Kan mumbled to himself.

“I’m setting myself up for disappointment, aren’t I?”

Bosuke answered him from the floor with a whine.

“I have no words for how mad I am,” you said coldly, hands on Sora’s bare torso as you knitted up his mangled legs. He’d been injured in a fight between the Kami no Kage and some new gang that sprouted up in the area. You glared over his body at Daiki and demanded to know.

“What did this?”

(he almost bled out, Sora, this idiot, but your idiot, someone nearly killed him—)

Kyoko and Shizu wore sterile gloves as they continued placing biological paste on Sora’s bare thighs. Daiki was cradling a broken arm, waiting for his turn under your Quirk. He scowled.

“The Crimson Claws.”

“Lame,” Kyoko denounced.

“That’s what I said,” Sora joked. “Next thing I know, I’m on the ground and my legs are making me wish you were there, (Name).”

Daiki growled. “One of ‘em had some kind of sleep Quirk or something. They took out Sora first because of his shield Quirk. There’s probably some kind of limit on it because he’s the only one that went down at first. The boys say I went down about four or five minutes after.”

“Definitely a Quirk,” Shizu said, no doubt recalling that Daiki’s Quirk was ‘Stamina’ and therefore wouldn’t have gone down so soon like that.

“Haruto, Kai and the others made them clear out, though,” Daiki added. “Good thing, too, otherwise you girls would be on your own about now.”

Shizu wondered, “What made these Crimson Claws come at us? We’ve been keeping low profile for quite a while now. It’s only lately that we’ve had (Name) busy converting drugs, and that’s supposed to be a close-knit secret.”

“I doubt it was that,” Daiki said, watching as the last of Sora’s legs healed up. “They probably came for us just because we’re here. We’re not high-profile or even very active since we’re already settled
in, but we exist. Heroes come sniffing around occasionally, but we don’t rise to that kind of bait. Harassing the girls in our territory though, we couldn’t not do anything.”

The sound of a door opening made everyone pause.

“I’m back.”

Katsu’s call didn’t make anyone let down their guard.

Daiki called out, “The first time we all met?”

“Twelve,” Katsu called back, coming through the short hallway to Daiki’s living room. “I see Sora’s ready to get back on his feet.”

The blue-haired man snorted. “Shit joke, Katsu.”

Sora got up and moved aside for Daiki. You only needed one hand to mend Daiki’s broken arm and while you did, Shizu and Kyoko closed the container for the biological paste.

“’Scruffy-tired’ is right,” Katsu said in your direction.

You smirked slightly.

“More details,” Kyoko ordered, as curious as ever about your ‘boy toys’.

Katsu shrugged. “Dark, scraggly hair down to his shoulders, needs a shave, looks done with the world in general.” He hummed thoughtfully. “Looks kind of old, though.”

You shrugged at Kyoko’s aghast look. “Not that old. I don’t care about his age.”

Sora snorted, feeling much better now that his legs were back. “You don’t care about his name, either. What do you call out when you’re doing it? ‘Oh, yes, scruffy-tired, right there’?”

Your friends laughed as you threw a cushion at Sora’s head. Daiki flexed his arm to test out its mobility.

“If you must know, we’re quiet,” you said.

“We don’t exactly need to know,” Shizu started.

“I’d love to hear all the details,” Kyoko cut in.

“I wouldn’t,” Daiki grumbled.

Katsu and Sora just shook their head. You huffed and crossed your arms.

“Whatever. What are we going to do about these Crimson Claws?”

Daiki was quick to answer, his voice hard and cold.

“Kill ‘em.”

You frowned as Sora and Katsu voiced their agreement. As Shizu joined them in plotting the demise of the rival gang, though, you threw your arms up and told them to do what they wanted. Although, if you had really objected, you would have said so.

But, you remembered Sora’s mangled legs and Daiki’s voice over the phone as he called you for
help.

(your friends, your friends, your friends—)

The Crimson Claws nearly took away one or even two of your friends. They were going to get what was coming to them, and it wasn’t going to be pretty.

Two wrongs don’t make a right, but neither does one. Revenge may seem petty by day, but on some nights she becomes Justice.

~Ashly Lorenzana

Chapter End Notes

I have plans for tiny Reader from the Age Swap AU, but the roads diverge, so I might end up making an AU of an AU, but that's nothing new, just a matter of which one comes first. 8]
Morality is simply the attitude we adopt towards people we personally dislike.

~Oscar Wilde, An Ideal Husband

Your life has been busy and a little stressful ever since you got your provisional license.

Recovery Girl and the doctors are more willing to let you handle difficult cases, but only if there is a distinct lack of blood oozing out from the patient. You are torn about it as on one hand, your Quirk could heal practically anything and you wanted to prove that, but on the other hand, you were glad they were keeping you away from excessively bleeding patients because a metallic tang in the air made you queasy. As long as they weren’t giving you too many ‘easy’ patients then you wouldn’t complain too much. Practice made perfect, and being good at using your Quirk meant being able to help Izuku out in the future more easily.

The stressful stuff, though, nearly every bit of that comes from ‘the government’.

Dad refuses to work with the shady people in suits. He calls them ‘employees of the government’, but his eyes say unkind things you can only guess at. You had been involved in the first meeting in your home because they had insisted on it, but the moment they brought up you working for them, dad had sent you away to your room.

They kept trying to talk with you but it had gotten so bad that now mom and dad wouldn’t let you outside by yourself. Mom would walk you to and from school, and if you wanted to go out then she had to come with you, something you couldn’t bring yourself to ask for since she was usually busy with housework. You didn’t need to play outside anyway. You could have fun inside by yourself.

Really.

(not really)

The days are a blur and you can sense that you’re getting better with using your Quirk. The doctors have moved you on to organs and despite Recovery Girl’s lack of faith in you, not a single patient dies under your hands.

(she worries about the one that will, the one who will be the real test you must face, and she just doesn’t want it to happen when you are so, so young)

Izuku has already happily confirmed that he got his own provisional license and he was already several days into his internship. He couldn’t talk about it to you, but you understood since you couldn’t talk about your patients to him. He hasn’t suffered any large injuries lately, and you’re grateful for that even as it makes you sad that he doesn’t need you.

He’s so busy with school and chasing his dream of being a hero that you can’t help but feel lonely staring at his back (though from the distance between you two, you can’t even literally do that much). Aside from the generic good mornings and good nights, his texts are further apart. He’s hinted that he’s really busy with something important and you try to understand, really you do.
It’s just… it feels like you are being left behind.

And you don’t like it.

What is a hero?

According to one definition, a hero is a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.

According to what you remember of Izuku has said on the subject, a hero is a person who saves others and does it with a smile.

What is a villain?

One dictionary defines a villain as someone who deliberately harms other people or breaks the law in order to get what he or she wants.

In the eyes of the law, villains are those who use their Quirks to break the law and/or bring harm to others. This is the view Izuku holds as well, though knowing him, he’d break the law and use his Quirk if it meant saving someone. And yet, even then, he would not see himself as a villain.

So what, then, is a villain? What, really, is a hero?

That Stain guy seemed to have the right idea. You couldn’t put it into words, but something about the way he talked about what a hero was… you just couldn’t accept someone as a hero if they did it for a paycheck or for the fame. You refuse to give your respect to a ‘hero’ like that.

Izuku wants to save people. Izuku is a hero.

If Izuku is what you look for in a hero, then what makes a villain in your eyes?

A cruel person, a lawbreaker, a murderer… many things make people villains in your eyes. Some of them just happen to wear costumes is all.

So what are you, then?

Are you a hero?

Or are you a villain?

You save people, but that’s not because you want to. It’s not because you care, or because you want to change the world, and it’s not even for something as mundane as fame.

You heal people, you save people, but only because someone held Izuku out of your reach.

You resent that person, those people. You resent the laws that say, no, you can’t use your Quirk on Izuku because reasons.

Never have you wanted to be a hero, to step into the limelight. Heroes are fakes and they’ll let you down at the worst possible moment. They’re busy, and lives hang on their actions and decisions. You never want the responsibility or the expectations.

That’s not to say that you wanted to be a villain, either. Villains are on the run from the law and they lead double-lives. You never wanted that kind of scrutiny either.
And yet here you were, being groomed to become a hero, a replacement for Recovery Girl. Heroes will depend on you, and villains might put on a target on your back to either eliminate you or horde you for themselves.

Sitting in a hospital hall and drinking juice, you stared at the vending machines across from you and grimly acknowledged that your thoughts had taken a dark turn. You should go home and rest.

Things would probably look better tomorrow.

It’s not Recovery Girl who summons you after Izuku’s internship makes a drastic development, nor is it the doctors at the hospital where they’re at who do.

A government employee shows up at the door, and you’re the one who answers it because dad isn’t home yet and mom is in the middle of cooking dinner.

This time it’s a woman. She’s wearing the same black suit outfit the men wore, only she has a skirt instead of pants. Pulling off her sunglasses, she introduces herself to you, but you don’t bother to remember her name. You’re in the middle of turning to call your mom, ruined dinner or not, when the woman captures your attention with a single name.

Izuku Midoriya.

Giving you the bullet points and occasionally glancing over your shoulder, she tells you that Izuku was on his internship with Sir Nighteye’s hero agency. There was a raid on a villain hideout to rescue a girl and several hero agencies had joined up. There were injuries.

She didn’t lie, but she let your mind fill in the blanks wrong.

(when calling her daughter produces no answer, she abandons dinner to check
at first it looks fine, but her daughter isn’t home and her shoes are missing
dinner never gets done and she calls her husband in a panic)

You are beyond annoyed when, on the car ride to the faraway hospital, the woman suddenly informs you that Izuku isn’t gravely injured at all. Rather, the hero he was working for is the one who needs your help.

She delivers this news after you finish converting a pile of fresh flowers into paste, a task you did frantically because you thought Izuku needed it. She tricked you, and you hate it, hate her and the people she works for.

Scowling, you fold your arms and glare out the window.

The only reason you don’t pitch a fit and demand to be taken home is because you might get to see Izuku if you go with her these two—the liar and the driver—the whole way.

(but there’s another part, a scared part that worries if you do demand to be taken home that they will tell Izuku, and if that hero dies then wouldn’t Izuku blame you?
you can’t risk that)

The hospital you arrive at doesn’t grab you or inspire any feelings. The only feelings you do feel are the ones that come when you think of Izuku being inside this place. It feels like it’s been forever
since you’ve seen him last.

“We have to hurry,” the woman says, ushering you along beside her. She has a medical containment box on one arm because it’s heavy after you’ve converted all those flowers that had been in the back seat with you.

She uses her authority to blow past the few people who try to get in your way. The jacket you didn’t zip up flares behind you as you rush to keep up with her. You don’t see Izuku, but you do see Recovery Girl. The old heroine is surprised to see you and disapproves of the woman’s decision to bring you here.

There is arguing, and you resent them because they talk about you as though you aren’t right there next to them. The woman says you need to be making the most of your Quirk while Recovery Girl says that you are ‘too young’. Yes, you are young, and part of you is grateful that at least she isn’t expecting you to do the impossible, but right now you’ve had enough of being pulled between being coddled and being used.

But you don’t say anything.

They argue long enough that All Might arrives. There is a spark of hope in his eyes before it goes out, and he reluctantly agrees with Recovery Girl that there are some things you shouldn’t be exposed to yet. Sir Nighteye’s sidekicks talk with All Might and it isn’t long before Izuku suddenly walks into the room.

(there’s someone beside him but you don’t even register them)

“(Name)?!”

He sounds so surprised to see you. He says All Might’s name next, as though just noticing the other hero. He glances between the two of you, unsure of whose presence surprises him more.

The doctor and Recovery Girl are grim as they tell him that there is nothing more that they can do for Sir Nighteye.

That’s when his eyes instantly turn back to you and you see the hope in his eyes.

(it does something funny to your heart)

The look he gives you galvanizes you. You turn and stride towards the room that doctor came from. Said doctor, Recovery Girl, and the woman quickly follow, the former two protesting.

Sweeping into the room, you pause at the sight of the man in the intensive care bed, at the numerous tubes sticking out of his stomach. The doctor and Recovery Girl said there was nothing they could do for him, that this man wouldn’t even see tomorrow. For a moment, the sight daunts you, but then you feel Izuku’s eyes on your back.

Eyes narrowing in determination, you step over to his bed and onto a booster so that you can reach him more easily.

“You aren’t going to die.”

Quickly pushing up the sleeves of your jacket and the shirt beneath it, you point your arms upwards and sterilize them by killing the bacteria that covers any human.

You don’t notice his eyes crack open. You forget that Izuku is close by, that there are others who
followed you into this room. In this moment, all that exists is you and this man, and you tell him why he isn’t going to die.

You don’t register the fact that the machines indicate that his heart missed a beat.

You don’t hear the choked gasp Izuku makes.

You don’t see All Might’s eyes widen, nor notice Eraserhead’s eyes narrow.

You don’t witness the pained look on Recovery Girl’s face.

Instead, you place one hand on the hero’s exposed skin and snap the fingers of the other to wordlessly order the woman to bring you the paste. The world has shrunk away and your words just now have flown from your mind, unacknowledged by yourself for who you just echoed. All that matters is saving this man because Izuku is counting on you.

You are watched in silence, but as you work, your words echo in Izuku’s mind over and over again. Tears have welled up in his eyes, but he doesn’t wipe them away. All he can do is stare and marvel at how he never noticed before just how wonderful you are.

The words that thunderstruck at least half of the people in the room?

“I am here.”

Sometimes people don’t understand the promises they’re making when they make them.

~John Green, The Fault in Our Stars

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays. All that good stuff.
You are ten years old when the marks start appearing.

The marks don’t hurt. Soul marks never hurt, not even for the most gruesome of injuries.

However, given the frequency in which the marks occur, you can’t help but worry about your soulmate. Why do they get hurt so often? Are they clumsy, or is someone hurting them on purpose?

But, more than you worry, because you haven’t met your soulmate, you hate the marks. You hate how often they appear on your body, especially when they appear on your face. If your soulmate is clumsy, you can forgive that, but if someone is hurting them instead, well, they had better hope that you never get your hands on them.

You are twelve years old and the marks don’t stop coming. Some of them are indicative of burns, or so your mom said when you asked her what kind of injury the one on your arm looked like.

Your Quirk is amazing, but it’s useless since you don’t know who your soulmate is and you can’t heal them because you don’t know. They could be on the other side of the world for all you knew.

The summer uniform doesn’t hide a thing, and there are more rumors about your soulmate than anyone else’s because literally no one else in school gets as many marks as you do. Kyoko thinks your soulmate is a hero, but Shizu plays the devil’s advocate and points out that your soulmate could be a villain. The other girls think your soulmate is a delinquent and they play a mean prank on you, arranging things so that you get cornered by the worst delinquents in first year: Daiki Hayashi and his friends Sora Tanaka and Katsu Akiyama.

Thankfully, ‘cornered’ in this case just means that they arrive seconds after you do to the gym storage shed. They aren’t interested in you and are only annoyed that they got tricked into showing up for a fake meeting with the physical education teacher. Daiki mocks the marks on your legs, but that is the worst they do.

Shizu and Kyoko had nothing to do with that prank so they are the only two in class that you don’t shun.
You are fifteen when you and Shizu are hit by a car while crossing the street on the third year school trip to Tokyo. Heroes chase after the fleeing vehicle while your classmates scream on either side of the street and your teacher rushes to your side. She tells you to stay still, that help is on the way, and then she leaves to check on Shizu.

The strangled croak from your teacher’s throat is enough to catch your attention for a second despite the pain prominent through your whole body, but it is Kyoko’s scream that galvanizes you to turn your head. Teacher is trying to lead Kyoko away from where Shizu is carelessly strewn on the street, but she screams anyway, wordlessly and wretchedly.

You can’t see very well, and you can’t focus, but you know that something is horribly wrong.

Shizu is your best friend, one of only two that you have. You haven’t told her the truth of your Quirk, but if you stayed friends then you knew that someday you would use it for her sake.

“Shizu! Shizu!”

Something in Kyoko’s voice tells you that Shizu is more than hurt.

You want to move. You want to use your Quirk to help Shizu.

But you are weak, unable to muster the will to move your broken body.

So Shizu, the intelligent and graceful girl you wanted to be friends with all your life, who died seconds after impact and who could have been saved if only you could have touched her, is lost forevermore.

She takes a piece of you with her, and a piece of Kyoko too.

You and Kyoko do not stay in touch after middle school.

Midoriya Izuku is almost ten years old when soul marks appear on his legs and arms.

At first he is excited because at last he has proof that even a Quirkless kid like him has a soulmate.

However, his excitement is quickly punctured when Kacchan cruelly points out that he has marks on his face. He can’t see, not while in class, and his teacher won’t let him leave so he can go look in the mirror in the toilets, so he has to wait until lunchbreak before he can.

Staring at his reflection, Izuku is horrified to see that sheer amount of soul marks on his body. The worst of it is focused on his left side, but that doesn’t mean he lacks any on the right. Something terrible has happened to his soulmate, and he doesn’t even know who they are.

Kacchan is crueler than usual, saying that there’s no way his soulmate survived such an accident but that that was good because at least then they didn’t have to live with a Quirkless loser like Izuku.

Crying, Izuku skips the rest of school and goes home where his mother is shocked by his appearance. He continues crying as he repeats what Kacchan said, and then he breaks down even further, saying that he doesn’t even know who his soulmate is. What if Kacchan was right?

What if his soulmate was dead now?

Inko has no answer, no comfort that she can give.
All she can do is hug him and cry with him, lying through her teeth and telling him that his soulmate is probably okay.

He can’t bring himself to believe her.

You are sixteen and permanently scarred in more ways than one.

Heroes caught the hit-and-run driver who ended Shizu’s life and he goes to prison, but he won’t be in there forever. You hate him, because he removed Shizu from your life. You memorize his name and the length of his sentence, and something in you constantly burns at the fact that he is alive while Shizu is dead. Something ugly burrows into your heart, and you settle in to wait out the eight years (seven, now) until he is released, at least, if he survives that long in prison.

But what to do until then? Revenge won’t heal the scars permanently left on your body by the hit-and-run, marks you’ve no doubt left on your soulmate, wherever they are.

Revenge won’t bring Shizu back.

You hate yourself, for being too weak to save Shizu or to even salvage your friendship with Kyoko.

You feel guilty, so you do the one thing you swore to never do after heroes failed to save you and your mother when you were four: you set yourself on the path to becoming a hero.

You can’t run around fighting villains, but your Quirk can help save a multitude of people. None of them will ever be Shizu, the friend you failed and lost, but maybe by saving them you can appease the guilt that hangs heavy in your heart.

The robots are immune to your Quirk, and you refuse to even consider using it on the other examinees, so you fail the practical part of the exam with zero points in both categories. You make it into the General Education Department of U.A. on marks alone for the written portion of the exam.

In the first week of school you make the time to see Recovery Girl about your Quirk. She is interested when she hears what it can do, and she understands when you say why you haven’t renamed it yet from what your parents named your Quirk. She says this as she watches the flower in your hand morph shapes, turning from one kind of flower into another.

She asks about the blotch on your leg, but you reassure her that it’s just a soul mark.

In almost no time at all, you become her apprentice. You insist on staying in the General Education Department for your whole time at U.A., but you still serve Hero Course practicums and internships with her each year.

After New Year’s Day in your second year, when you are seventeen, Recovery Girl and Principal Nezu introduce you to All Might. He seems surprised that you aren’t excited about meeting him, but also relieved. However, you are surprised when he suddenly deflates into a smaller and less muscled version of himself.

You are told that he was gravely injured last year by a terrible villain. You are told the extent of his injuries and it is revealed to you that All Might is continuously losing mass, hence why he now looks less than he should. Recovery Girl has been pushing you hard the past few months, and now you know why.

By the start of summer, you finish the healing they insisted you do in small stages rather than all at once or in fewer sessions. All Might regains the full use of his Quirk and his appearances no longer
suffer absences or rushed sightings. He thanks you, and Recovery Girl says that you and she will be keeping an eye on him from now on.

Thankfully, he never gets hurt again to the point where he needs you. Instead, you just get to listen to Recovery Girl scold him from time to time, and occasionally you check his health but he’s always in peak condition.

However, he is not above asking you to help other heroes. Recovery Girl considers it par for the course since you will someday take her place as the best healer available. You express no strong feelings one way or the other.

They worry about you where you can’t see. A look into your past reveals the hit-and-run, the friend who died just feet away from you, and they think they know you. On some level, they’re right that you became a hero because of that event, but you have an ulterior motive for coming to U.A. to learn how to utilize your Quirk.

*(the need for vengeance never dies out, the embers are only waiting)*

By the time you graduate, despite remaining in the General Education Department, you have a hero costume and a job lined up with one of the major hero hospitals with recommendations from Recovery Girl and Principal Nezu. Your hero name is Nurse Nightingale, after the famous nurse.

The soul marks have never stopped appearing.

---

You are twenty when All Might confides in you that he is searching for a successor. He explains that even though he no longer suffers the loss of time in which he can use his Quirk—all thanks to you—he understands that he cannot be the Number One Hero forever.

You ask him why not, especially since you can now reverse the aging process.

He laughs, and says he was not meant to live forever. He will raise up a new Symbol of Peace, and he hopes that you will support that person just as you have supported him.

You don’t look at him when you answer.

“T’ll think about it, but I make no promises.”

Awkwardly, he tells you about a candidate the principal showed him, one whom Sir Nighteye approves of, a boy from U.A. with a phasing Quirk.

This time, you look at him with pure scorn.

“He already has a Quirk. Why are you going to give him another?”

Disgusted, you leave him standing in you hospital office as you return back to work.

You don’t see the surprised look you leave him with, nor the thoughtful look that soon settles over him.

However, you do get an irate phone call from Sir Nighteye in the next day or so, ranting at you and demanding to know why you convinced All Might to search for a *Quirkless* successor.

You refuse to give him an answer and hang on him mid-rant. When he calls back, you dismiss the call and block his number. When Nighteye starts stalking you to demand answers, you tell All Might to get his sidekick away from you.
They have another fallout because Nighteye can’t accept that All Might is going to pass over Mirio for some Quirkless person he hasn’t even found. All Might doesn’t stop the fallout but he doesn’t tell Nighteye why he is doing what he is doing.

All Might can’t let the next Symbol of Peace be without a healer to support him. Recovery Girl will retire eventually, if not soon, and the only suitable replacement is Nurse Nightingale, the same young healer who saved his career as All Might. If she won’t support a successor with a Quirk, then that leaves finding one without a Quirk.

And before long, he finds Izuku Midoriya.

After seeing All Might’s demise and then being proven wrong when a healer came out of nowhere to avert that future by years, Sir Nighteye swore to never look so far into the future on any individual again.

He regrets that decision now, considering that he might have been able to foresee Nurse Nightingale’s influence on All Might’s decision regarding his successor. He takes Mirio under his wing after the boy makes him laugh, and he swears to himself that he will make this boy into such a suitable successor that All Might will reconsider his decision.

He is incensed, then, when All Might tells him he found someone, a Quirkless boy named Izuku Midoriya. They argue over the phone, but All Might will not be dissuaded.

Looking into the person known as Izuku Midoriya, Nighteye feels a moment of triumph when he uncovers the fact that Midoriya and Nurse Nightingale lived in the same apartment building while growing up. She moved out after graduating from U.A. in order to live closer to work, then when she was nineteen she moved her parents to a better neighborhood and bigger apartment.

He pointed all this out after meeting up with both All Might and Nurse Nightingale at All Might’s hero office, but apparently that is news to the healer. All Might texts Izuku, and the boy texts back, saying that he never met the (Last Name) family and that his mother only knew of them in passing.

With his lead debunked, there is nothing more Nighteye can say. He never seriously considers the idea of using his Quirk to see into the futures of either All Might or Nurse Nightingale, but the nurse is wary of him anyway and keeps All Might between herself and him. Nighteye sighs and informs her that he has no intention of using his Quirk on her, but she insists on keeping him at arm’s length.

He can admit, at least to himself, that maybe he overreacted the first time All Might told him that he intended to choose a Quirkless successor because of a conversation with her.

He leaves, but he reaffirms that he doesn’t believe that Midoriya is a good candidate for One for All.

All Might says his mind is made up and that Izuku will be a good hero.

Nightingale doesn’t comment.

You are twenty-one and enjoying a day off when suddenly your legs and arm are more than half-covered in solid soul marks. Apparently your soulmate just went and badly broke not only both their legs but also one of their arms. Pulling out a compact to inspect your face, you note with annoyance that your soulmate was also slapped at one point. Thankfully, the marks don’t stay long, so perhaps they either saw a healer or had a recovery Quirk, though you doubt it was the latter.

Sighing in half-relief and half-exasperation, you find yourself wondering if you even still want to
meet your soulmate after all this time.

In less than a month, your soulmate proceeds to break his legs again, and you find yourself wondering if they are some sort of, what do you call it, the opposite of a sadist… Geh. Whatever. You just hope they don’t like pain for fun.

You are in your twenty-second year of life when Recovery Girl asks you to assist her in yet another U.A. Sports Festival. This is not unusual, and you schedule the event into your work calendar every year. You are there as Nurse Nightingale, so you are covered from head to toe.

Recovery Girl is able to handle all of the students’ injuries so far, so you watch the matches on screen. The Calvary is over, and the matches are well under way. When Midoriya, the boy you said you wouldn’t mind helping if he was All Might’s successor, fight Shinso and breaks his finger, you find yourself understanding Recovery Girl’s complaints about him.

Midoriya doesn’t seem to take her scolding to heart, because in his next match against the Todoroki boy, you can see his fingers purpling as he continuously breaks them.

“That boy,” Recovery Girl grumbled. “If it’s not his legs, then it’s his arms! When will he learn? I need to have another talk with Toshinori, it seems.”

The word ‘legs’ echoed in your head.

Numbly, you pulled off your gloves and stared at your hands.

Recovery Girl noticed and trailed off mid-sentence. “Is some… thing…”

Your fingers are dark with soul marks.

Your soulmate is someone you least expect to be.

~Priyanka Agarwal, PiKu & ViRu

Chapter End Notes

EDIT: Minor change: moved the quote from the top to the bottom.
The Road Not Taken (Part 1)

For fate may hang on any moment and at any moment be changed.

~Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry

Reluctant Resolution

There was no reason to go back to the beach. You made Yagi healthy and he was going to get well.

There was no reason to go back. He had no reason to go back. Going back and waiting would only be making a fool of yourself.

So you didn’t go.

You wanted to, but you didn’t go back to that beach. Instead, you put away the memory of Yagi’s smile, the one that made you want to watch him live. There wasn’t room for a civilian in your life, at least not one who wasn’t Izuku.

To distract yourself, you rescheduled Izuku’s rescue simulation for that day and determinedly thought of something else whenever Yagi crossed your mind.

No Heir

Experiment 13 frowned slightly.

Damsel had changed the future and now there wasn’t going to be a baby in the next month.

…Ah, but looking further, perhaps that is for the best.

Damsel with a baby but sans her parents means his interference in discovered that much sooner. Besides which, headquarters gets raided, she ends up splitting off from her hero by faking her own death, and while all that is delicious drama for his viewing pleasure, it also means that Damsel is more miserable and takes more effort from First, Second and the others to maneuver her around. Things take so much longer for the gang to accomplish… no, it’s better that such a future is discarded.

They will be on Kanmon Bridge, but All Might will intervene.

They will live.

Contact Lost

Yagi waited and waited, and even though Naomasa kept an eye out nearby, that girl didn’t come back. As noon arrived, he had to give it up.

“Sorry,” he said to his friend as they left to find his car. “I hoped she would come back one last time, but since she finished healing me I guess she didn’t have any reason to.”

“We thought that might be the case,” Naomasa said. “We’ll just have to keep an ear out for anyone by her description or by rumors of a Quirk like hers.”
Yagi huffed. “Yeah.”

---

**Unenthusiastic Resolve**

You don’t like All Might but now it seems you owe him your life twice over.

First he rescued you from a flying villain, and now he had protected not only you but also your parents from a potentially deadly situation.

The bridge your family was on, in a vehicle on your way for a short vacation, had suddenly been taken hostage. Frantic texts to Shizu got you a reassuring reply, that Experiment 13 didn’t see either you or your parents dying today. The reason was quickly apparent when an announcer came in over the radio, saying that the villains had been captured by All Might and that the bridge was secure.

“Thank goodness for All Might,” dad sighed as traffic started moving again.

Mom smiled at you via the rearview mirror. “See, (Name)? Sometimes you can count on heroes.”

You huffed and stared out the window to your left. “I guess.”

Thinking about it, no, you still don’t like All Might. He wasn’t there when you were four, and he might have broken Izuku’s heart if the Number One hero had given him the straightforward answer he had given you when you asked him if a Quirkless person could be a hero.

But… yeah, even if you didn’t like him, you could still be grateful that he was here today.

Looking at your parents in the front as they talked to each other, your gaze softened.

Okay.

You didn’t like All Might, but for what he did today, you are grateful.

If you can, maybe you’ll even get to pay him back some day.

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**Editing Identity**

Experiment 13 advised the gang’s leaders to ‘edit’ the history of their education. The girls and Daiki had their middle school records removed and replaced with Cadavers with fictional similar names and appearances while only Katsu and Sora’s records remained the same. For high school, none of them were recorded as having attended the high school within the gang’s territory.

With Digital Jack, Digital Jane, and Shizu to edit the electronic records, it was Katsu who removed their physical records. Class photos were switched out where possible, though nothing could be done about the memories of the teachers and graduated students who once shared their classes. It wasn’t a perfect solution, but according to his vision, it would be enough for now to make the lead investigator overlook them.

Using his Quirk, Thirteen laughed quietly to himself.

That the Kami no Kage had someone with a Quirk like his wouldn’t occur to the heroes for quite some time.

In the meantime, he was looking forward to jerking them around and sending them off on wild goose chases.
Waiting Game

Sir Nighteye reunited with All Might in order to capture the Kami no Kage.

The hero investigated the schools at opposite ends of the gang’s territory, certain that he was looking for villains within a certain age group, but even with that narrowed down search parameter, locating suspects was difficult at best.

At the same time, while combing the gang’s territory for possible headquarter locations, it eventually became obvious to the heroes that the gang somehow caught wind of their investigation and scarpered from sight. The Doctors were no longer seeing patients or making house calls. The citizens in the area were also somehow aware of this and were less than cooperative when it came to interacting with the heroes.

Even All Might was stonewalled when he asked for information.

No one would deny that he was the Number One hero, and he even had quite a few fans in the area, but not a single person gave him more than rumors that were already known. Either the citizens really didn’t know about the gang, or they pretended not to.

Detective Tsukauchi’s subtle investigation revealed several people who knew about the gang but lied to his face about it. Those people were tagged and followed for days, but, frustratingly, revealed nothing.

The Kami no Kage had gone into hiding.

So Sir Nighteye settled in for the long game against the Kami no Kage in between other cases.

He was certain that they couldn’t hide forever.

Mild Anxiety

You were amazed when Daiki showed you the robots he had ‘acquired’ from somewhere. Putting your hand against the unresponsive robot, you turned incredulous eyes back on him.

“They make kids fight robots like this?”

“And bigger,” Daiki nodded.

You brought your hand to pinch the bridge of your nose. “And how the hell is Izuku supposed to bring a robot down?”

“Hm. Dunno. Kid’s still too weak to punch them to pieces, so like Shizu said, he might have to resort to kill-stealing. Rescue points are probably still his best bet, though.” Daiki came over and rapped his knuckles against the robot. “The main thing is getting the kid acclimated to facing robots bigger than himself. He does fine against living opponents in a safe environment, but real opponents and the robots for the entrance exam are different ball games.”

You sighed and folded your arms. “All right. So, are we using during the next rescue simulation or what?”

“Nah,” Daiki said. “Shizu said she didn’t want you on the same floor as the robot and I gotta agree. We’ll be pitting him against the robot every other week. You know, a rescue simulation one week,
and then the next it’s the robot, and then back to a rescue simulation, and so on and so forth.”

You nodded. “Alright. Then is he facing the robot this upcoming weekend?”

A savage grin appeared on Daiki’s face.

“I bet the kid cries the first time he sees this bad boy.”

You gazed up at the robot with deadpan eyes. “I’d cry too.”

__Crossed Line__

“(Name).”

You looked up at the sound of your name and frowned in concern. “…Shizu?”

Your friend grunted as she sunk into a seat on couch in the karaoke room. She had dark circles under her eyes and she yawned. She had asked you to meet up with her earlier than usual on karaoke night and now you were even more curious as to why. You almost never saw her like this and it was always because she had thrown herself into researching some subject, but you hadn’t been aware she had needed to do that recently.

“What’s up?”

Shizu stared at the glass table. Her head nodded a couple times before she yawned behind a hand. After her yawn, she looked up at you with grim eyes.

“(Name), earlier this week I came to the conclusion that there is no possible way that Midoriya’s modifications can be kept secret.”

Her words sank like a stone in your gut.

She continued. “U.A. is not likely to overlook the many changes made to Midoriya’s body. There will be questions, especially since his medical record clearly states that he has no Quirk of his own. This means that the people closest to him will be investigated, and that in turns means scrutiny will fall upon you. Is his mother aware that you can do more than heal?”

Thinking about it, you slowly shook your head. “No, Inko doesn’t know that my Quirk does more than heal. She knows I can rearrange bones and stuff, but as far as I’m aware, Izuku hasn’t told her about what I’ve been doing. If he had told her, I rather imagine she would have already come to me with concerns and questions.”

Shizu nodded, though you weren’t sure if that was because she was agreeing with you or because she was tired. “I see. Well, my earlier conclusion led me to research laws regarding modifications via Quirks. The outlook isn’t good as body modifications require, at minimum, a license and a consenting adult as the modified person. You don’t have a license and Izuku is a minor who didn’t have parental permission. As far as the law is concerned, you are criminal and Izuku is your victim.”

She couldn’t have hurt you worse than if she had punched you in the gut.

“He’s not my victim!”

(you try, you try so hard to keep him as close to his original appearance as possible and you don’t mess around with his brain, and he wanted you to help him—he isn’t your victim!)}
Shizu raised a placating hand. “He practically worships you, I know. You don’t mean him any harm and you only have the best intentions in mind, I know. However, the law will not see it that way, hence our current situation.”

She folded her arms and gave you a grim and solemn look.

“(Name), there is no outcome where you are not arrested. You are twenty this year, and Midoriya is only fourteen. His body has been changed far beyond the base he was born with. His mother was not informed of this, and she did not give you her permission to meddle with her son’s body. As far as the law is concerned, if she wants to throw the book at you and demand that you never come near her son again, you will be forced to comply.”

She grumbled. “I’m exhausted and rambling…” She lifted her gaze. “The point is, if things go on like this, it seems likely that the truth of your Quirk’s power might be revealed. If Izuku gets into U.A. or any other high school with a hero program, his body modifications will be discovered. That will lead to questions and an investigation. At the very least, your Quirk will be revealed as being more than just ‘Flesh Manipulation’. With enough scrutiny and the right Quirks investigating you, your family, and the Midoriya family…”

She sighed and wearily waved her hand as she closed her eyes.

“You will be outed.”

The whole time she had been speaking, the sinking feeling in your gut morphed into a painful twisting. Weakly, you asked, “So, what now then?”

Shizu opened her eyes in a squint.

“We stage a kidnapping.”

She shifted her eyes to lock onto yours.

“And you will ask for forgiveness rather than permission, just as I must.”

Because apparently, she had already carried out his kidnapping.

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**Guilty Conscience**

As you stared at the screen depicting an unconscious Izuku in an empty cell somewhere, you came very close to using physical violence and your Quirk on your best friend and the others in the room.

None of them, not Daiki or even Katsu had been the ones to actually kidnap your hero. That had been a job assigned to a series of people both within the gang and not. Right now, you didn’t know where Izuku was, and none of your friends would tell you.

They refused your orders to release him and return him home.

Angry, betrayed, and halfway to crying, you can’t bring yourself to look at any of them.

You aren’t allowed to go home until after your mother informs you that Izuku is missing because by then it won’t be strange that you are apparently broken up about something.

Dealing with Inko is terrible and gut-wrenching because you know that Izuku is all that she has in the world, and you can’t tell her that you know Izuku is safe.
The guilt is a weight on your back and you lose your appetite. You stop going to class and you refuse to do anything that Daiki, Shizu or the others ask you to do. Moving back home, you hole up in your room after telling your parents that you don’t want to see anyone except Izuku.

The days drag by, and though you give a brief interview to a policeman, you don’t have much to contribute to the investigation. A laugh, considering that it was your gang that abducted your hero, all because they wanted to protect you.

It is cowardice that keeps you from going to the police yourself.

Well, that, and you’re fairly sure that someone from the gang is watching your apartment building, ready to intervene and/or rat you out if you left or if police came to your apartment again.

Inko comes by, thinner and paler, and she tries to comfort you. She’s being kind, but you can’t even bring yourself to look her in the face.

Shizu said Izuku wouldn’t get hurt. Slightly starved but not hurt, not badly.

You can’t face the world, not when Izuku isn’t free.

He’s been kidnapped, imprisoned, and he doesn’t know why. His mother is worried, and there are bags under her eyes. Mom says that Inko cries. The suffering of both Izuku and his mother…

This is your fault.

Heavy Secret

It’s a little over four weeks when Mom convinces you to take another bath. She seems so confident that today will be a better day, but you don’t know how she can be so optimistic. According to Shizu’s plan, Izuku isn’t due to be released for at least nine more days (an eternity), so you don’t know how today can possibly be good.

Scrubbed, dried, in a clean change of clothes, and having ignored the meal your mom set out for you, you return to your bedroom to find that the bedding has also been changed. Pulling the comforter back, you fall into bed and wrap yourself up, more than willing to hide away from the world so that it can’t see your guilt and shame.

Your stomach aches for food, but just the thought of eating seems like too much effort. You’ve lost weight, enough for it to be obvious, and you wonder what you will look like when Izuku is finally freed.

Vaguely, you hear the doorbell ring, but that hasn’t interested you in days. You don’t care what Shizu and the others have to say, not when they’ve been so cruel to Izuku, to you, so you’ve had your parents turn them away since you first returned home.

A couple minutes later, more clearly, you hear your bedroom door open. You assume that it is your mom coming to try to convince you to eat something today, but you don’t want—

“(Name)?”

That unsure voice is like a lightning bolt infusing your lethargic body with energy.

Bolting up and turning to face the door, you feel your heart miss a beat when you see him there.
“Izuku?”

He’s thinner, and there are bags under his eyes, but he’s here.

You don’t even realize you’re crying until Izuku is sitting on your bed and his arms pull you in for a hug. His voice cracks as he speaks, but he doesn’t stop.

“I’m okay, (Name). I’m fine. I-I’m alive. I’m back home.” His arms tightened their grip. “You don’t have to cry anymore.”

You can’t stop yourself from crying, nor can you stop yourself from apologizing as you hug him back. He tells you that you have nothing to be sorry for, but he doesn’t know the whole story. He doesn’t know that your friends are the ones who arranged for his kidnapping and imprisonment, all so that he could be manipulated into using that as an excuse as to how his body wasn’t in what should have been its natural base state.

He doesn’t know that you are guilty for being the reason why he was taken in the first place.

And, despite how you feel, despite wishing that it had never happened to him, you don’t enlighten him.

His Recollection

Izuku recounted his ordeal to (Name), but only because he knew that if she didn’t know then she would imagine far worse. His mother, after she finally managed to stop crying again after getting him home at last, told him about how (Name) had slowly wasted away in his absence. When he heard that, he wanted to go see her right away, but it had been late when he was finally released into his mother’s care from the police station. He had wanted to come see her first thing in the morning, but his mother told him to wait so that (Name)’s mom could make (Name) wash up.

“She wouldn’t want you to see her like that, Izu, not after the shock of your return wears off. Let her clean herself so that she doesn’t have to send you away, okay?”

(Names) did smell nice right now…

He told her about how he was grabbed off the street on his way home, how a bag had been put over his head, effectively rendering his paralytic spit useless while also blinding him to the faces of his kidnappers. He had been knocked out, but don’t worry! He only hurt a little bit when he woke up later in a small room with a high ceiling.

That room had been where he had been held. Three times a day, another door would slide open to a small toilet, but there hadn’t been a shower. He’d been given a bucket of hot water once a week to clean himself, but that was okay! He could totally handle going a week with only washing himself once, really. Naturally he would wash more now that he was free, but that had been sufficient for his time in that room.

Nothing bad really happened to him. Really.

…He crumbled under her stare and told her more.

Every day, a gas would seep into his room. No matter how long he held his breath, even with all the changes she made to him, he had had to breathe it in eventually. It knocked him out and… he doesn’t know what happened to him during those times he was unconscious. He always woke up with bandages though, but his medical examination had come back clean!
He paused and let his eyes drift shut as (Name) cupped the side of his face in her hand. After a minute or so, she reluctantly agreed that he was clean of any foreign bodies or drugs. How did he escape?

There had been a fight of some kind, a battle between villains or gangs, and someone had set him and a few others free. They had escaped in the ensuing commotion, eventually fleeing an abandoned building that had burned down by the time heroes arrived. They had gone to the heroes and were handed off to paramedics and eventually to the police. His mom had arrived while he was in the hospital and stayed by his side since he was healthy enough to go to the police station to give an extended statement of what he had experienced. After that, he had been let go and come home.

He apologized for not coming as soon as he was back, but she waved that off, concerned as she stared at him. Suspecting what she was wondering, Izuku nervously fidgeted.

“They… examined you, didn’t they?”

He doesn’t know if his kidnappers did, though that seemed likely. Izuku had a feeling she wasn’t referring to them, though. Instead, she was probably referring to his stay in the hospital.

He lowered his head.

“They found almost everything you did to me. Mom says I have to go back for more testing this afternoon, and maybe tomorrow too.”

His stomach clenched as the sight of her curling up into herself. Desperately, he grabbed her shoulders and met her eyes. He didn’t shout, but he spoke with urgency.

“I didn’t tell them it was you.” He kept his gaze on hers and repeated himself. “I didn’t tell them it was you.”

He hung his head, ashamed of himself for lying to his doctor but better it was that than he broke his promise to keep her secret. And, given the reaction the doctors and police had had to what they now knew about his body, he could see that her parents were right to insist to secrecy, at least where (Name) was concerned because she hated the mere idea of attention due to her Quirk. Who knew what she would do if her Quirk was actually discovered.

(he couldn’t imagine that he would see her again, and no, he couldn’t risk that)

Her hand came up to his shoulder and he lifted his head. She wasn’t smiling, but there was pure relief in her eyes.

“Thank you, Izuku.”

He smiled a little, but then her eyes clouded and she looked away. Tears started falling from her eyes again.

“I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry.”

As her head came to a rest on his shoulder, Izuku tried to tell her again that she had nothing to be sorry about. She didn’t seem to think so, and it was quite a while before she stopped crying again.

Izuku felt bad for lying to the heroes, to the medical professionals, and to the police, but as he watched his damsel lay down to sleep, he found that he cared more about her happiness than his own honesty. It was wrong to lie to the people who wanted to help him, but she helped him first. She was the one who reached out her hand, the one who put herself on the line to help him reach his dream.
It… it wasn’t right to shelter her from the law, but he was culpable too. He was the one who asked her. He was the one who lied for her, hid her, covered for her.

If they were discovered someday—and they probably would be—then they would face the music together. She used her Quirk, but he was the one who never stopped her. He was the one who asked for help to each his dream, and she was the one who broke the law, but it had been for his sake. He wouldn’t tell anyone about her ability to change bodies, and neither would he directly admit that she had changed his, not unless someone’s life was on the line.

What would be would be.

And besides, it might not even come to that, right? People could keep secrets for years, or even their whole lives.

He just… he just wants to be a hero.

Is that so wrong?

If he can become a hero, then he’ll spend the rest of his life making up for the lies. He’ll save people, and won’t part of that be thanks to her anyway?

(his thoughts jumble and ramble, but not once does he seriously think of reporting her—no, not her, never her, not by him)

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**Hesitant Relief**

Izuku was back, but you were nervous during his whole testing period. It was nearly two weeks before he came and gave you the news that the police seemed to think that whoever kidnapped him was responsible for the changes to him. Strangely, they said that he wasn’t the only one, though he wasn’t sure how that could be. After all, you hadn’t used your Quirk to change anyone but him, right?

You reluctantly tell him that you modified your friends a bit, but they hadn’t been kidnapped. Shaking your head, you tell him that all your friends kept texting you while you were at home during his disappearance. They were accounted for, and, after Izuku described the other freed prisoners, you shook your head and said that didn’t sound like your friends.

(but at least one sounded like one of Daiki’s boys, and you just don’t want to think about those traitors at the moment, not even now that Izuku is back)

Not a single person was captured or arrested from the gang fight that freed Izuku and the other prisoners. Heroes in the area fought a few masked people but were unable to keep them long enough for backup to arrive. At least one hero was badly injured, though she would pull through. The incident was covered in the news for a few days, but as with all news, it was replaced by something newer and fresher.

Aside from a few trips to the hospital and to see a Quirk counsellor, Izuku wasn’t hounded for information about how his body modifications came into existence.

Shizu’s plan was working.

(aided by Experiment 13 who manipulated things for the greater chance of success—for his own amusement, but he didn’t tell anyone that)
Lapsed Judgement

The longer he spent healthy, the more time Yagi had to think about what happened to make him that way. He tried not to think about it at first, but eventually he couldn’t deny Naomasa’s words. Yagi had been completely reckless to let someone manipulate his body as she had done. For all he knew, she could have easily killed him by biologically manipulating his heart or any other vital internal organ. His risk paid off, but it could have just as easily backfired with terrible consequences for all.

He’d been avoiding revealing the means of his recovery to Nighteye, knowing full well that his former sidekick would scold him even more fiercely than Naomasa or even Recovery Girl after she had learned that he had let the miraculous healer slip through his fingers.

And he was right.

Sighing after he escaped the irate hero, All Might loosened his tie. He’d retreated back to his office, but he knew that this wasn’t the last time Nighteye would bring up that healer.

Sitting in a chair, All Might stared at a wall without seeing it. He thought back to that cold beach and the young woman who had sat on a container box and stared out at the grey ocean. She had waited there for him even though there had been no guarantee that he would come. She had waited, on the chance that he would accept her help, so that she would be there if he came looking.

And he wondered about her reasons why.

Delayed Decision

All Might wasn’t sure if he was glad that Nighteye wasn’t scolding him or giving him the stink eye at the moment. Nighteye wasn’t, simply because he was too busy telling him about the good points of a student called Mirio, a boy he put forward as a potential successor for One for All.

Listening to both Nighteye and Principal Nezu, All Might had to admit that this Mirio did sound suitable. However—

“I would like to meet more students before I make my decision.”

He stayed firm on that statement, even in the face of pressure from Nighteye. Eventually his former sidekick simply decided to take Mirio under his wing and train him. By the time All Might started teaching next year, Nighteye was certain that he would see that Mirio was the best choice. With Nighteye training the boy, All Might had no doubt that Mirio would turn out to be a fine hero, One for All or Not.

Principal Nezu was more pleasant to deal with. The intelligent animal didn’t pressure Yagi in the slightest. He even seemed pleased that Yagi would be taking his time in looking at the many students the school had to offer, and that included a new wave of first years which would accompany All Might’s first year of teaching.

Honestly speaking, Yagi thought he would be a terrible teacher, but that didn’t make him change his plans. He would find his successor at U.A.

He just knew it, felt it deep down in his no longer aching bones.

He could almost hardly bear to wait.
Icy Reunion

With Izuku back, you couldn’t hide away in your parents’ apartment forever. They had worried and fretted over you while you had wasted away in Izuku’s absence (from guilt, not that they knew that). Returning to your ‘normal’ routine would be the only thing that could set their minds at ease, so one day you finally went back to university.

Shizu and Kyoko immediately sat beside you in any class you shared with them. You didn’t greet them, but each of them told you that you had not fallen behind in the classwork. Each handed you essays that you had apparently ‘written’ and submitted for each assignment handed out by the various professors. You accepted them without a word and continued to ignore them for the rest of the day.

They knew better than to force you to talk to them, not when they knew what you could do with your Quirk. Instead, they slowly thawed your abrasive stance towards them until one day you sullenly agreed to go to karaoke with them. Daiki and the boys were there, but you didn’t talk to them that first evening.

Altogether, it took a little over three months before the atmosphere between you six was almost back to normal. You hadn’t let Izuku do his rescue simulations, though Daiki did say that he still went to the dojo on Thursdays. Before you could get angry at him, he quickly said that he wasn’t there when Izuku was, just that the dojo master reported to him every time Izuku was there.

By the end of four months after Izuku had been freed, his rescue simulations resumed, and his training increased. Your hero was always so thankful that your friends were willing to help him out. You couldn’t smile about it, so you would just nod.

No one of them, not a single one of your friends ever apologized for what they did.

They weren’t sorry, not when there was some benefit to you, even if you didn’t want it.

You trusted them a whole lot less, but you didn’t walk out of their lives.

Maybe someday, but not right then.

What If

It hit Nighteye out of the blue the middle of the night: what if the Kami no Kage never had multiple healers?

What if they had only ever had one?

Because that woman All Might told him about, she regrew his organs from some sort of biological material. If she could do that, then couldn’t she heal other injuries? Missing limbs, sicknesses, physical modifications—what if she could do it all?

What if All Might had met the core of the Kami no Kage?

At the very least, since there wasn’t a registered healer with a Quirk that regrew organs, that woman might have been one of the Doctors. She had to have gotten practice somewhere, so why not while in the employ of a gang?

Sharing this view with All Might made the other hero pale. Apparently he too had wondered where she could have gotten the experience to be able to easily regrow functioning organs. Since there
wasn’t a registered healer like that anywhere, not even abroad, then that left them with no alternative but to assume she was operating illegally.

It was their good luck that she seemed to have no clue that Yagi was All Might.

Otherwise, if she was indeed a villain, who knew what she might have done to the Number One Hero while she had had him in her grasp.

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**Fateful Day**

You waited on the stairs for Izuku to leave for the U.A. exam. Your hero was fifteen now, would be sixteen this year, and today was the day he’d been waiting for ever since he decided that he wanted to be a hero. His dream was to attend U.A., and you had done all you could to prepare him for this day.

Honestly speaking, you felt tingly with nerves and yet you weren’t even the one taking the exam.

Closing your eyes, you took deep, slow breaths in order to calm yourself.

“(Name)?”

You opened your eyes at the sound of Izuku’s voice. He was wearing his school uniform and you knew it wouldn’t be long before he never wore it again.

Managing a smile, you greeted him. “Good morning, Izuku. Today’s the day, huh?”

He grinned nervously. “Y-yeah.”

Not caring if someone saw, you leaned forward and gave him a hug. “I know you can do it.”

Leaning back, you saw that the tips of his ears had gone red. He stared at the ground and stammered. “I-I’ll do my best!”

He paused for a moment before lifting his gaze. You were surprised at the determination burning in his eyes.

“I’m going to give it my all.”

You nodded slowly.

He grinned more sincerely. “Well, I’m off!”

He was at the bottom of the staircase in front of you when you called his name. He turned to look up at you and you smiled down at him.

“Good luck, Izuku! And remember, act like the hero you want to be!”

He smiled back at you and then he was gone.

(he wasn’t strong enough to destroy anything more than damaged robots, but then her words came back to him and he looked at the mock battlefield more closely

*in the monitor room, Yagi noted a green-haired boy who seemed more invested in helping his fellow exam takers than in the scramble for battle points itself—not an earth-shaking thing to take notice of, but one that stuck in the back of his head)*
Izuku passed. His excited texts told you of his exam result and of his future call in the Hero Department at U.A. He received 3 Villain Points and 59 Rescue Points, most of which came from rescuing a girl in the last moments of the exam. He would be in Class 1-B.

Daiki, as the second most invested person in Izuku’s training results, decided to throw a part instead of another training session on Thursday. Izuku showed up at the dojo only to be dragged out and put on the back of a motorcycle and taken to your apartment where there was cake, food, soda and juice.

He cried a little when he saw the message on the cake: ‘Congrats Future Hero!!’

*(he saw her smiling at him with bright eyes and he swore to himself to continue doing his best someday he would be a hero and on that day he hoped that she could finally believe in them again)*
Sometimes you have to do something ugly so that something beautiful can grow.

~Cedric Nye, Jango's Anthem

They hit trouble while still in Musutafu.

Digital Jack, some scruffy man Shizu picked up from somewhere, was with Daiki and his convoy, while Katsu, who had gotten instructions from Digital Jack, was with Shizu and her convoy. Both Digital Jack and Katsu were using high-flying, long-range drones to supplement the GPS maps that were leading each convoy through the city. The temporary ‘lookouts’ or ‘scouts’ were basically in charge of scouting the best way out of the city while the drivers in the individual lead vehicles follow their instructions, but they still couldn’t avoid or account for everything.

“Shit,” Daiki cursed from the back seat as the vehicle slowed to a stop. The bus, a safe car distance away, did the same. He glared from the back seat and around the driver’s seat. In front of them was an intersection, but the most direct route—straight—had the largest crowd of zombies they had seen yet. It wasn’t a horde or even a real crowd, but there were definitely at least twenty or more scattered along the street, and, alerted by the sound of the arrival of the vehicles, were stumbling towards them.

“We can make it,” Digital Jack murmured in a gravelly voice, eyes locked on the drone’s controller screen. “It’s pretty much the same story on the other streets parallel to this one, so even if we don’t go through here, we’d end up going through a crowd of them anyway. I don’t think we can completely avoid these things.”

Daiki cursed under his breath and gave the order to proceed. Kai, sitting next to him, radioed his sister, who was riding in the bus behind them and acting as the bus driver’s assistant. The car slowly crept forward, and, despite expecting it, Daiki still flinched as the undead abominations began crowding around the vehicle and thumping against it with their fists, stumps, or even their own heads.

Well, at least the bus seats were elevated, so as long as she didn’t look out the windows, his boss needn’t subject herself to seeing these things up close.

“I wouldn’t recommend looking out the window for a while.”

Blinking, you turned your head towards Sora from your aisle seat. “Huh?”

*thump thump thump*

You jumped from the sound, and you weren’t the only one. Quickly, the bus filled with screams and crying, and parents were covering the eyes of what few children there were.

“What the fuck are those?!!”

“Katsuki!”

Well, most of the parents, anyway. Which, happily, included Inko for Izuku, who continued doing so despite her son’s inquiries.
The blond boy was rudely leaning across one-and-a-half people to get a look out the window. His mother was now standing in the aisle and trying to pull him by the back of his shirt, but his eyes were locked on the things outside. You, however, kept your eyes firmly away from the windows with dubious success.

*(oh god, they're on both sides, oh my god, oh my god, oh my god—)*

As you slid your hands over your face, you heard Katsuki screeching, “Are those—are those fucking zombies?!”

Your whole body shuddered, and you didn’t complain about the arm that went around your shoulders. Instead, you just leaned into Sora and prayed the bus door would continue holding the monsters away.

You thought of the gun you knew was on Sora, of the firearms distributed among your boys and the rest of the gang. Lowly, so that only he would hear, you pleaded.

“Don’t let them get me alive.”

The hand on your shoulder squeezed.

You’d take that as a promise.

Shizu warily eyed the back of the ambulance as the thumping and groaning sounds continued. The medical vehicle could only move as fast as the bus in front of it, and even that could only go as fast as the first vehicle in the convoy. The going was steady, but slow, though Shizu wanted nothing more than to speed up and get away from the creatures making the noise around them.

She startled slightly as a hand covered one of hers, both of them curled tightly over her knees. Looking up at the owner of the hand, she saw her father trying to smile reassuringly at her.

“We’ll be okay. They can’t get in.”

They probably could, from the front, but she wouldn’t point that out. Instead, she’d try to take the comfort for what it was. She gave him a small, tight smile in return, nodded, and turned her eyes back to her mother.

The woman lay still on the gurney, as gaunt and sallow as ever. If she died, would she stay dead, or would she rise as one of them? Shizu shivered in horror at the thought of her mother suddenly dying and reanimating while they were trapped in the ambulance. She doubted either she or her father would be able to defend themselves, not against her (*the heart of their family)*.

Biting her lip, Shizu realized that that could be a potential problem. If an outbreak occurred in their safe house, would people be able to defend themselves? Would Kai be able to shoot his sister? Would (Name) be able to strike Izuku or her parents? Doubtful. So, measures should probably be implemented…

Getting lost in her thoughts, Shizu didn’t notice as the tension slowly seeped out of her as her brain gnawed on a new puzzle, successfully distracting her from her current situation. Her father was not so lucky, and he remained plagued by doubts and fears as he slowly wrung his hands.

*(how had she arranged all this? wasn’t his daughter supposed to be just a normal high school girl?)*
Kyoko sat in a window seat next to her mother and her father sat next to a stranger across the narrow aisle from her. Kyoko tried to keep her eyes away from the window and the chaos that was slowly but surely starting to spread across the city. She focused on the feel of her mother’s hand as the bus crawled through yet another group of—ugh—**zombies**. Her mother’s hand twitched and squeezed in fear every time a zombie tried to assault the bus, but Kyoko didn’t blame her. Hell, Kyoko was holding on to her mom’s hand because *she* was scared, and she already knew about the protections that gang had put in place for this escape from the city. Still, knowing didn’t do much to assuage her worries, although she will admit that it did help. Slightly.

Sighing, Kyoko took one last look up the aisle, towards where one of Daiki’s boys was sitting, one of three she knew was on the bus with a gun and ammunition. These three, plus the three on the other convoy, weren’t amateurs with their weapons, so things should be fine even if something happened. Also, the gang’s Quirks were somewhat divided equally. Okay, yes, (Name)’s convoy got most of the useful Quirks, but the second convoy Kyoko was in wasn’t exactly defenseless either.

Things would be fine.

*thump—*

She bit back a shriek at the sudden thumping along the side of the bus. At first she thought it was more zombies, but no, this was worse.

It was the living.

Hands hammered against the bus and windows as the people outside yelled for help, to be allowed on, to just take their *kids*. Kyoko stifled a sob and averted her eyes. Part of her wanted to put on her headphones and drown out the sounds but the pragmatic part of her told her not to potentially block out any sudden orders or changes in her immediate surroundings. Besides, what if her parents said something to her? She needed to be able to hear them, at least.

The mood inside the bus was grim as the driver ignored the pleading people outside. A scream from inside the bus made Kyoko twitch and open her eyes to look. She wished she hadn’t as people on the opposite side of the bus began yelling about zombies coming for the living. The bus suddenly jolted forwarded and then kept up a faster pace, leaving the people outside behind.

As others looked out the back windows and relayed the grisly scene they were leaving, Kyoko wished they would just shut the hell up.

She didn’t need to know that a couple of moms were running with their kids!

*(they can’t save everyone, they can’t save everyone, they can’t—)*

Daiki had given the orders to run down anything that got in the way. The drivers for the front vehicles were boys their age who did anything Daiki told them to do. As another heavy thump jolted the vehicle, Katsu winced down at the screen between his hands. He could only hope that they weren’t running over living people, but really, given that his own sister was in the bus behind them, Katsu could live with that if it happened, as long as she got to safety.

Father, mother, and elder brother would just have to get over it that he drugged them and abducted them from home. Really, he had no time to waste trying to convince them that the danger was real and that they needed to leave right away. It was quicker and easier to go that way than risk getting both himself and his little sister getting caught by the increasing numbers of zombies. Hell, he’d seen one on their street seconds after getting his sister on the bus. Then again, he and his family had been
one of the last to get picked up after Shizu’s bug out text had been sent.

Narrowing his eyes, Katsu noticed that the next street they were supposed to turn into was mostly clear. From the email that followed Shizu’s text, Katsu understood that there were multiple outbreaks going on and spreading out, like when you tossed multiple rocks into the water and the ripples overlapped. They’d been lucky to be on the outskirts of one and not right in the center, but right now those ripples were still growing, meaning that there were more undead by the minute.

Their hastily prepared fortress was out in the countryside so they weren’t out of the woods yet and wouldn’t be for a few hours. Or never, really, if this zombie outbreak wasn’t dealt with soon. What were the police and heroes even doing? They were racing around like, what was the saying, chickens with their heads cut off? At least they weren’t bothering the convoys.

Which is a little odd, since the one time he did glance up, Katsu is fairly certain they ran into a living person not far from a hero.

Then again, the hero was preoccupied with what looked like a zombie clamped onto his back and neck while two more were quickly shambling over.

Holding back a sigh, Katsu supposed they should thank their luck. These zombies were not exactly ‘walkers’, but neither were they hopped up runners, and they didn’t seem to be coming in variants like exploders or whatnot. These were basic zombies with some speed and increased strength, and furthermore, none had displayed the ability to use whatever Quirk they had had in life.

‘Look on the bright side,’ Katsu reminded himself without humor.

You did not look out the windows again, preferring instead to don the sleeping mask Daiki had—at the time, inexplicably—given you before boarding the bus. With this on, even if you were tempted to open your eyes, you wouldn’t be able to see anything at first, and then you would have time to consider if you actually wanted to take it off. Right now, you didn’t want to take it off, not for anything.

“I can’t stop shaking,” you whimpered quietly, gripping your fingers into the cloth of your shirt.

Sora’s arm settled around your shoulder, pulling you over so you could lean on him. He murmured into your ear, low and quiet, trying to reassure you.

“You’ll be fine, boss. I’m here. We’re here. We won’t let anything get you.”

You want to believe that. You want to believe in their Quirks.

But didn’t those zombies outside used to have Quirks too? Why hadn’t they been able to protect their families? Their friends?

Themselves?

You don’t have an offensive Quirk, not really, not when you need to touch something living. That’s probably what’s bugging you the most.

Zombies aren’t alive, so your Quirk is worthless against them. If they get you, you’re dead.

Why?

Why did it have to be zombies?
Shizu is brought out of her thoughts by a call from the front of the ambulance.

“Miss Sasaki, we have arrived.”

She let out a breath. “Finally.”

The journey from the hospital had taken longer than predicted. At one point they had to completely abandon the idea of crossing a bridge due to a blockade on it which had added more than three hours to their travel time, not to mention that the convoy had been forced to stop twice to clear the roadways enough for them to pass. She had begun to worry they wouldn’t make it before the power source powering her mother’s life support depleted. As it was, they were cutting it close.

It took another eight to ten minutes before the backdoors of the ambulance opened and the orderlies she had lured away from the hospital unloaded her mother and rolled her indoors to where a small makeshift hospital had been set up—more of a clinic, really, and even with their preparations, the medicine and medical supplies would only go so far. (Name) really would have her work cut out for her, but at least with her around, medicine wouldn’t be an important issue.

Sighing, she tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and let herself be led to the processing station for the sake of maintaining appearances for now. If this apocalypse kept going, then she and the others were probably going to have to reveal themselves as more than just refugees.

After waiting in line with the others from the convoy, they were split into male and female lines and then visually examined from head to toe for bite marks or injuries. Then came the quarantine procedures, although since space was limited, people were split into two large open rooms that had cat walks on either end. Young men stood on the cat walks in the room Shizu and her father were herded into, one on each, and a glance at them confirmed that they were who Shizu was expecting. Their Quirks would allow them to quickly bind anyone showing zombie tendencies or plain aggression.

Sighing, she sat down on her assigned cot across from her father. They talked quietly, much like the others around them, and her father wondered where they had taken mom. She said they could ask, so they did. Even if they didn’t directly acknowledge her, the guards knew who she was and one guard led them through the halls to the clinic where mom was already set up.

Dr. Word, Dr. Cutter, and Night Nurse were there. Dr. Word spoke to her father and explained mom’s set up while Shizu casually wandered back to the guard. She leaned against the wall, eyes on her mom, and quietly asked him a question.

“Has the other convoy arrived yet?”

The silence to her question made her glance at him. She frowned when she saw him grimacing. She resisted the urge to elbow him.

“Well?”

“Second, about that… First radioed in about an hour ago.” He glanced back at her with a grim look in his eyes.

“The Alpha Convoy had to abandon their vehicles. They’re on foot now.”

When ill luck begins, it does not come in sprinkles, but in showers.
~Mark Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson
Why, if it’s going to be all right, do we see it getting worse every day?

~Jeanne DuPrau, The City of Ember

Your mother asked you once, ‘Why Izuku?’

That’s all she said, but you heard at least half-a-dozen questions. Why are you willing to go so far for him? What is it about him that makes you push yourself so hard? What is so special about that boy? Why is it important to you that you are there to help him? Why would you risk yourself for his sake? Why can’t you just let him go? You don’t know what to say or how to express what you feel inside.

Why Izuku? Because he gets hurt. Because he was alone. Because no one else would help him.

(that boy with the twisted ankle trying to climb the stairs, dirty and still damp from his fall—he was pushed and abandoned, and no one stopped to help him simply because he was falsely identified as Quirkless)

No one would help him, so you would. You did. You found purpose and happiness in helping him, in healing his wounds and bringing back a smile to his face.

You answered her: ‘Because he is my friend.’

Even then that answer felt inadequate to you, like it wasn’t quite right, that it didn’t properly express what you meant. Something was missing but you weren’t sure what, so those were the words you let out. They didn’t seem satisfactory to mom, but she hadn’t pressed the issue.

But that was your answer before U.A. laid down the law and said you couldn’t heal Izuku if you didn’t have a license. What would you tell your mother now if she asked you that question again? Izuku is attending U.A. and has so little time to spend with you. The hero school used him as bait to pull you under their influence and he didn’t seem to mind much, if he even minded at all. He moved away into the dorms and now you see him even less. Under Recovery Girl’s tutelage you are learning to use your Quirk on increasingly different and severe injuries, the kind you might someday need to heal on Izuku. You train your Quirk to be useful to him someday… but why?

Why Izuku?

You can feel dark feelings of resentment beginning to fester inside you every time he texts you a negative to a request to see him. He’s sorry, but he’s busy. Maybe next time? He’ll try to come by to see you, but school is really packed! He’s learning from All Might and other pro heroes, and it’s just amazing! His texts alternate between apologetic and excitement, but little of that excitement is the result of things you do together. Perhaps father is right and six years is too much of a difference for you two to continue being friends.

And yet here you are, straining yourself because he is watching you, counting on you.

By this time, you’ve already asked for the male doctor to place a hand on your exposed arm so that you can ‘see’ his internal organs. He’s a different blood type than the hero under your hands but
that’s fine, you only need to have a look at the proper construction of functioning organs so that you can replicate them in the gaping hole left by a villain’s attack. That woman who fetched you from your home has already gotten you more fresh plants to turn into paste, though you don’t waste time questioning where she’s been getting all the fresh-cut flowers.

The spine was the easiest thing to fix in—what is his name, Sir Nighteye? It was damaged by something, but even though it is bone you have long since mended the cracked vertebrae and reconnected the crumpled nerves. His stomach was next, followed by the small and large intestines. What damage! You still had to reconstruct his other missing organs, repair his mangled flesh, reconnect his nerves and blood system, not to mention regrow the skin. If your Quirk was anything less this man would have died.

As it is, you have to admit that you can only do so much right now. Making sure he won’t die while you are off resting takes priority, so you ask the doctor what the most important things are that he will need to live through the night and possibly most of tomorrow. Relief floods your tired body when you hear his answer because those are things you have already healed.

It is a slow process disconnecting yourself from Sir Nighteye because part of you insists that he will die the moment you let go. He doesn’t, but your legs give out, prompting the doctor to catch you. There are voices behind you but you want use the last of your consciousness to tell the doctor something important, but it’s so hard to stay awake.

You want to explain that Sir Nighteye will feel hungry because his body will need to replace the energy you used in healing him, but you don’t even get the first word out before slumber claims you, laying so heavily over you that you don’t even stand a chance of resisting it. Many hours will pass before you wake again, time during which your parents will find you and will rail against the government employees for taking you and also against Recovery Girl for failing to prevent your current state. Not even Izuku will be safe from their anguish.

(“Why is it you? Do you know what she does for your sake, Midoriya?”)

As you fall asleep, you hear your mother’s voice again, repeating the question you can’t answer.

‘Why Izuku?’

Neither she nor her husband are pleased to learn just where their daughter has gone. They really don’t like that a government worker came to their door and spirited their daughter away. Their little girl wouldn’t have gone with that woman, but as her mother, she can guess just what kind of bait the government worker used. There’s only one thing that can make their stubborn daughter give in and allow herself to be used. It’s that boy from upstairs, Izuku Midoriya.

She doesn’t understand. Why is that boy so important to her daughter? He is a teenage in high school and a hero trainee. (Name) disdains both teenagers and heroes, so why is she so attached to Izuku? She said they were friends but that doesn’t seem true, not to her eyes. They trust him like a babysitter and they suspect he would use himself as a shield for her if circumstances called for it, but none of that changes the fact that he is a male teenager on the path to becoming a hero. Their little girl would be a footnote in his life if it wasn’t for her Quirk and for that reason they cannot bring themselves to fully accept him in her life.

Recently, there is a particular look that will cross her daughter’s face, and she can’t help but think that (Name) is beginning to resent Izuku. And why wouldn’t she? It is solely because of him that she was discovered and lured into becoming a hero’s apprentice. (Name) saw that he wouldn’t break the law or go behind his teachers’ backs to have her heal him, so she came out of hiding. Then the boy...
hardly spent time with her at all!

Six years and different goals in life, those two… perhaps their friendship will not survive.

Is it wrong that she hopes her daughter will someday soon cut ties with that boy?

Your mouth is dry when you wake up. You also really need to use the toilet.

Looking around, you find that you are in a hospital room. Briefly, you wonder why when you aren’t sick or injured, but you push it aside in favor of the convenient toilet room. After your bodily needs are met, you drink some water from a pitcher near the hospital bed. Then you take a seat and wonder if you should go looking for someone or if you should wait where you are.

You are awake for about ten minutes and are just starting to lean towards pressing the call nurse button when the door opens. You brighten at the sight of your mom before deflating as you remember leaving the apartment with a stranger. A so-called government worker, and yeah, she actually did seem to be telling the truth, but really, thinking about it, what if it had just been a kidnapping attempt? Where would you be then?

Mom is relieved to see you awake, but after a few questions about your health she starts to scold you for your reckless behavior. Not only did you leave the apartment with a virtual stranger, you overused your Quirk to the point where you collapsed. You owed that hero nothing, so why would you do that to yourself? You’re too ashamed to look her in the eye, but both of you know the answer to that question.

You did it because of Izuku.

*(he didn’t ask, you just did, because you are foolish that way)*

She is angry and you are too young to understand why.

*(she is your mother, she loves you, and she worries when you run off and hurt yourself, even with something relatively minor like exhaustion)*

You only know that your mom is angry at you. Okay, maybe it was stupid to leave with a stranger, but—no, it was stupid, plain and simple. You cringe and hunch your shoulders as you realize just how easy it is to lure you when Izuku is the bait. Before he started high school—no, before he started preparing for high school, for freaking U.A., you could understand why you would do things for Izuku, but since he started spending so much less time with you…

*(why Izuku?)*

You clench your hands.

Izuku is your friend! He’s not the helpless boy in the stairwell with the injured ankle anymore, he isn’t the downcast boy who tries so hard, but that’s okay! Isn’t it good that he walks with his head held high? Isn’t it good that he has more friends now? Even you have other friends than Izuku!

You don’t… you just want… it’s not…

You press your hands against your head and ruffle your hair, feeling… angry? Sad?

*(stressed and torn)*

Mom says your name and you pause. Taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly, you lower your
hands and reluctantly look over at her. Her face is pinched, and she looks both worried and like she’s about to scold you again.

Your stomach chooses that exact moment to let out a loud and rumbling growl. Your mom’s face relaxes as yours turns red. She laughs a little and stands, saying she’ll go ask the nurse to bring you some food.

She leaves and you look around for a clock or something to tell time. There is nothing, so you reach for the remote and turn on the television—fancy hospital rooms—and click through the channels until you find the time. It’s just after noon, so… whoa. You’ve been asleep for a long while. You bite your lip and feel bad all over again, because even you would worry if mom or dad slept for a long time. Sure, you could wake them up (probably), but if you couldn’t… yeah.

You were a little reckless yesterday.

“Did you ask her to help?”

Izuku stared down at his hands as (Name)’s mom’s question ran through his head again. Her tone at the time had been… accusing. Granted, she was worried because (Name) had exhausted herself to unconsciousness, so why wouldn’t she be a little hostile towards him when… Well, when it was his fault that (Name) was involved in all this in the first place.

(if he had expected her to come down those stairs so long ago then he would have pretended to be fine, at least until she’d passed, not because he knew about her Quirk, simply because he didn’t want to be embarrassed in front of a child, and then all of this could have been avoided and she would be…)

She was so young, only ten, not even eleven, and yet she had still…

He closed his eyes, remembering her dropping as her voice trailed off. The doctor caught her before he, All Might, or Mirio were even halfway across the room, and he remembers the panic clawing at his chest as he stared at her unconscious form. He knows he hadn’t asked with words but he’d been thinking it when he was looking at her, and (Name) had always seemed to read his thoughts in his eyes.

She helped Sir Nighteye because of him.

She was Recovery Girl’s apprentice because of him.

She was discovered by U.A. because of him.

Izuku buried his head in his hands.

Isn’t this his fault? All of it?

If something happens to her, if she gets hurt, then isn’t he the one to blame?

She overextended herself because he was there, because she saw his request in his eyes, in the desperate half-smile on his face at the sight of her there when Sir Nighteye was dying. She worked under Recovery Girl because it was the only way she’d get to use her Quirk on him again.

She hadn’t wanted to be a hero, but didn’t his friendship with her put on her the exact path she hadn’t wanted for herself?
(Name)… why him? Why would she do all that for his sake? Because they were friends? He hadn’t been acting like that recently if that was the case, and suddenly his excuse that he was busy with school seemed pathetically flimsy.

(her eyes were closed and she fell down)

**her eyes were closed and she fell down**

He had to make this right. He had to… what? Be a better friend? Make more time for her? He doesn’t mind, but that doesn’t feel right somehow.

What should he do?

(it **never** crosses his mind that he should leave her life because Izuku is not in the habit of abandoning his friends—not Kacchan at his worst, and not (Name) when he knows she’s done nothing wrong

not yet, anyway)

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There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature.

~Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey

Chapter End Notes

not beta'd, in a rush, gotta go, will fix later if need be
Though soulmates aren't looking for you, they will find you.

~Kevin Ansbro

Gems

The soulmate gem is a known phenomenon. It has been part of humanity for as long as history has been recorded. When soulmates meet, same-colored gems break through the skin on their ring fingers.

History is littered with these events, and writers since ancient times have written stories about these gems. Not all accounts are happy, nor is it every person who accepts their soulmate. Soulmates can be rejected. And, of course, it is not everyone who finds theirs.

In a world of billions, the soulmate gem is rare. People travel the world in attempts to find their soulmate, that one destined person who is perfect for them. They search, even though it may be in vain, even though they might be rejected or otherwise kept apart from their soulmate. Religions make much of the soulmate gems, but sometimes parents don’t want their children marrying foreigners, regardless if the soulmate gem is involved.

You know the chances of finding your own soulmate are slim, so you try to not hope or dream. Mom and dad aren’t soulmates, and they love each other anyway, so it’s not like you need a soulmate gem to be happy, to get married, to have children of your own. You can live without it.

(a part of you hopes, but a part of you fears what would happen if you did cross paths with your soulmate—would you love them, or they you?)

Compassion

You are twelve years old when you call out to Izuku Midoriya, the Quirkless kid from upstairs. You get him to finish the soda you’d been drinking and then you heal his skinned knees.

It is the start of what will become a friendship between you and him.

The fabled and coveted soulmate gem does not appear on the ring fingers of either of you, so that is not the reason the two of you interact with each other.

He gets hurt, and you not only heal him, trusting him with the secret of your Quirk, you are also patient with him, and, most importantly, you never look at him with pity or disdain. Izuku likes it, so he keeps coming back, even when there’s nothing on him that need healing. For you, he’s just a kid, sometimes with bruises, burns, or whatever, and you sometimes see how others treat him, so you resolve to never treat him as so many do.

You want someone to be kind to this child and if it has to be you then so be it.
Bait

People who have soulmate gems are rare, currently numbering less than ten-thousand recorded out of billions, and the Soulmate Gem Registry is updated every five years. It was updated almost five years ago, and since an update is due relatively soon, you find that it is a topic of discussion more so than usual. Though, you supposed, even then it’s not as though it was everywhere. Unless a famous person made it on the list, or, heaven forbid, a famous hero.

If All Might ever gets a soulmate gem… geez. You don’t even want to think about the press coverage or how it would probably be everywhere.

(it’s not a good thing when heroes get soulmate gems, because then their enemies know that there is someone out there that they can hurt in order to get back at the hero in question—there have been at least four of these incidents since the advent of Quirks, heroes, and villains—what madness would there be if All Might got a soulmate gem?)

You hope that if you ever do get a soulmate gem that your soulmate is neither a hero or a villain. You don’t particularly fancy the idea of being the damsel in distress in a high stakes hostage situation or anything.

Corruption

Your little gang in the making slowly grows before your horrified eyes, but you are also to blame in its continued existence in that you don’t do anything to stop the train wreck that is Daiki and Shizu joining forces. Instead of putting your foot down, you shrug and let them do what they want. Your main stipulation is that you can’t get hurt otherwise you’ll bail, and they do a good job of making sure that doesn’t happen.

Middle school passes, and then you are in second year of high school in what seems like almost no time at all. You have money and friends to karaoke with, so you have no big complaints. You use your Quirk a lot, but you don’t because—you like the rush that comes with it, the feeling of power, of supremacy. Anything alive and in your grasp is within your total power to control, to twist, to change.

It scared you once, but you’ve long since gotten over that fear.

(except when it comes to one person—you don’t think you’ll ever stop being scared of accidentally ruining Izuku Midoriya)

Belief

Izuku isn’t even eleven years old when he learns the reason why (Name) doesn’t like heroes. All his life he’s believed in heroes, in that when the time came, they would save the day. From the way she talked, (Name) used to believe in that too—until the moment came when she needed them and they didn’t come.

He can’t imagine the how scared she must have been when that evil man was hurting her mother in that alleyway. He can’t imagine how let down she must have felt when no heroes appeared to save them.

Heroes didn’t save her, so she didn’t believe in heroes any more.

(“You can be my hero, Izuku.”)
She says she is not good, or kind, or brave. She’s sorry that she’s not worth looking up to.

But she’s wrong.

He cries for her. For the night she was let down, for the moment she lost faith, for the fact that she sounds as though she honestly believes what she is saying.

He tries to tell her. He knows she is those things (good, kind, brave, worth looking up to).

The look in her eyes says she doesn’t believe him.

He swears to himself to give her every reason to believe.

(because she’s the only one who’s ever believed in him)

Meeting

The years keep moving. You graduate from high school with your friends and move on to post-secondary education. The gang is thriving, and so far Izuku has no idea that you are a criminal (a villain). Shizu bought a pharmaceutical company and brought you and Kyoko to see it, but you skip out to go to the beach instead.

While searching for seashells, you absentmindedly wander the beach, and suddenly—

Suddenly a gem breaks through your skin in a flash of warmth that startles you.

You spend a half-moment freaking out, thinking something bit you, and you’re flailing your arm while swiping at one hand with the other, but then your eyes catch a glint on your finger. Freezing, you stare dumbfounded, not believing. Your soulmate gem is round and white, gleaming with colors within.

Soulmates gems do not come into being without a match, and remembering this you snap your head up to look around and less than ten feet away with a man staring down at his hand with his own incredulous look. Sensing your gaze, he looks away from his and meets your eyes.

You briefly register a few key facts—blond, tall, looks ill, blue eyes—and then you are flying back down the beach with your heart pounding in your chest.

You do not hear him call out to you, but you doubt you would have stopped if you did.

(you can’t—you just can’t)

Wasted

Shizu and Kyoko are just heading towards the beach when you find them. You know Kyoko would make you go back if she found out, so you hide your hand from her gaze, and Shizu’s too, just in case. It’s only on the train ride home that you make a mistake and Kyoko sees. She shrieks and makes a big deal of it, demanding to know who and when, and she is aghast when you admit that you don’t know his name because you ran away. Kyoko wants you to go back but you put your foot down and tell her that you aren’t, that you don’t care, that you don’t need to know that man.

(you want, but you are afraid, and now you are beginning to despair because he didn’t run after you, he didn’t call out to you—what if he actually didn’t care?)
Kyoko keeps whining and waxing poetic the whole way back. Shizu won’t let her take a picture of your gem, neither do you want her to, so she just huffs and immediately announces the development when she arrives at the club where Daiki, Katsu, and Sora are hanging out and playing cards. Daiki gets a thunderstruck look on his face, Katsu’s mouth drops open, and Sora just blinks. Kyoko then points at you accusingly and says you ran away from your soulmate.

Shizu notes Daiki’s relieved look while you’re too busy bickering with Kyoko to just drop it.

The boys don’t know how to feel about it, so it’s just mainly Kyoko raising a ruckus about the whole thing.

It doesn’t occur to you to wonder why.

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**Apprehension**

Toshinori goes home in a daze. He sits on a couch for hours, just staring down at the soulmate gem on his left hand. He met his soulmate today.

And she literally ran away from him.

He… isn’t sure how to feel about this. For starters, she looked so young. He’s not… he’s not young anymore. For all his hair is as blond as ever, Toshinori knows full well just how old he is. Even without knowing her age, he’ll will to bet that he’s at least two decades older than her, so maybe it’s best that she ran away. Besides which, he is All Might, the Symbol of Peace. People can’t know—

He suddenly bolted up to his feet, eyes wide as his heart started pounding in his chest.

*No one can know.*

Suddenly paranoid, Toshinori got out a roll of gauze to conceal the (*beautiful*) gem on his hand. He was the Number One Hero. There were villains out there who would be more than happy to track down and kill the soulmate of All Might, or use her for leverage. She might not know who he was, but villains wouldn’t care.

*(they didn’t find One for All’s body, and while he hopes, until he can be absolutely sure, Toshinori can’t let down his guard)*

Sinking back down onto the couch, he buried his head in his hands, burying his fingers into his hair.

Who was she? What was her name?

Should he look for her? Yes, if only to warn her, to keep an eye on her just in case the worst came to pass. If she doesn’t want to know him—no, he can’t let her know who he is, that he is All Might. But can he keep it from her? He’ll have to add something to his costume, so will she be suspicious? For All Might to suddenly conceal his ring finger when he hasn’t before, just when she herself got her own soulmate gem… Sir Nighteye was right. Even if it were only a ruse, he should have done it years ago, if only to mislead people, but because he didn’t he has to do it now. People will pay more attention to anyone who reveals a soulmate gem now. People could put two and two together, and that meant that she could be in danger…

Toshinori gritted his teeth and closed his eyes.

His—her—only hope was that she didn’t register in the Soulmate Gem Registry. After all, it wasn’t mandatory (*anymore, not after that second hero lost his soulmate*).
But who would pass up the chance to show off the fact that they were one of the rare few who found their soulmate?

*(he would, for their sake, but would they feel the same, or slighted and rejected?)*

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**Disguise**

Your soulmate gem looks like a white fire opal. At least, that’s what Shizu says it looks like. She takes measurements and a few days later gives you a platinum ring set with two diamonds but—it looks like it’s missing the center gem. It’s only when she slides it onto your finger that you realize, oh, it’s to help you disguise your soulmate gem. Now it only looks as though you have a fancy ring.

Kyoko starts laughing, saying that it looks like Shizu just silently proposed to you.

Feeling hot embarrassment bloom across your face, you cleverly tell Kyoko to shut up because it’s not like that. Shizu just sighs long-sufferingly.

*(with this, she hopes you will be safe)*

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**Crush**

Izuku is only thirteen. For all they’ve agreed that he is her hero, he knows that ultimately, he’s just a kid to *(Name)*. She’s nineteen and in post-secondary education too. She’s almost a grown up. He can’t… offer her anything, not really.

So even though she makes his stomach flutter with butterflies, Izuku tries hard not to think about her that way. He doesn’t want to make things weird or ruin what they have, so he never says anything about the way she makes him feel. Even though his heart beats a little too fast when she touches him to heal him or modify some part of him, she never points it out. He wonders why and glumly guesses that she’s not saying anything to spare his feelings.

*(in truth, she is just oblivious and makes up excuses for why his heart is beating quicker than usual and fools herself into believing that’s just how growing boys are)*

*(Name)* is important to him; so, *so* important. She let him be her hero. She didn’t tell him ‘no’ when everyone else did, including his own mom. She changed him in order to help him, and even got her friends to help him too. If anyone were ever special to Izuku, *(Name)* was the one.

But he can’t tell her. Not now, maybe not ever.

So he resolves to content himself with what he has. He tries to tell himself that this is enough, that he doesn’t need anymore.

And yet, it still hurts when he sees the beautiful engagement ring on her hand.

“Th-that’s a beautiful engagement ring, *(Name).*”

“Oh… thank you, Izuku.”

*(he was too heartbroken to realize the look on her face wasn’t happiness)*

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**Don't be afraid of your fears. They're not there to scare you. They're there to let you know**
I wanted to scream when I realized I forgot my flashdrive at home. I wanted to see if I could finish chapter 35 for Supreme, but alas. So, you got another soulmate AU because I don't feel like writing about zombies today.

You may have noticed that this follows the story line for The Greatest Healer in the World, and yeah, it does, but it will derail more soon.

I know I still have AU suggestions waiting for me in the comment section, but let's have some more. You can even repeat your old requests if you feel strongly about it. Also toss in a comment on which AU in progress so far that you are most interested in. Otherwise I'll just keep meandering along.
Confession

You don’t think anything of it when Izuku shows up at your door to ask if you want to go for a walk. Spring has come and the cherry blossom trees are nearly in bloom, so you agree and end up on another of your many walks with him. He seems more nervous than usual, but you chalk that up to the fact that he will be starting at U.A. in couple of days. More than half the walk is done is silence, but that’s normal, and eventually the two of you end up sitting on the riverbank.

Staring at the river, you recall that just as Izuku is a couple days from high school, so are you. Shizu, Kyoko and Katsu all made it in which was no surprise to you, but admittedly Daiki and Sora’s acceptance into the same school did come as a bit of a surprise. You know you shouldn’t judge a book by its cover, but it’s hard not to when you’ve heard both boys complain about failing scores more than once in a school year. Still, Daiki is stubborn enough to study like crazy to make it in, and where Daiki goes, so does Sora. Plus, they had Katsu to tutor them, and thus they made it in by the skin of their teeth.

“I don’t want to be just friends.”

Startled from your thoughts and half-believing you misheard him, you look away from the river to the boy sitting beside you. The two of you have known each other since you moved into the same apartment building back when you were four. His status as a Quirkless person had been loudly pointed out to you on your first day at preschool by Katsuki Bakugo—whom you loathe to this day—but by that time you were informed that you two lived in the same building. You had (and still have) a disposition of being more positively inclined towards your immediate neighbors in the same building than those in the general neighborhood, so you had impulsively declared that you didn’t care if he was Quirkless. Since then, the two of you have been friends. You’ve never really thought of Izuku in any romantic inclination, so you have a hard time processing his words.

Eloquently, you replied, “Um… what?”

His face was flushed and you could see that the tip of his ear was also red. His hands were clenched against the grass as he turned his head towards you. This boy you’ve known since childhood suddenly looks like a stranger, the kind that make you uncomfortable. He says your name in a tone you’ve heard him use once or twice before, before he squeaks at your inquiry if something is wrong, but this time he isn’t waving it off.

“I like you. I like you a lot!”

The last time a boy said that to you, Daiki and the boys went looking for him with scowls on their faces and you didn’t stop your friends. The next time you saw that boy, his arm was in a cast. But you can’t imagine letting Daiki, Sora and Katsu beat up Izuku for confessing his feelings. After all, Izuku is your friend too.

Izuku keeps going, telling you that he’s liked you since grade school, but you don’t feel any of the ‘normal’ responses that you’ve seen and read about on television and in manga. Your face isn’t flushing nor is your hearting beating fast. You’ve never thought about Izuku like that, ever. To you, Izuku is your friend and neighbor from upstairs, but you can’t really trust him because of his hero
obsession.

And, you know, the fact that you are a teenage villain and he’s an aspiring hero.

Try

When Izuku finally falls silent, head bowed as he waited for your reaction to his confession, you found yourself thinking back on your childhood together. Honestly speaking, Izuku is a good person, but his tendency to let Bakugo walk all over him really pisses you off. No matter how many times you tell him that Bakugo isn’t good for him, Izuku never fails to go crawling back to his ‘best friend’. It’s like watching an abusive relationship with you as the friend who keeps trying to make their friend see sense only for you to see your friend go back to same bad situation over and over again. It’s exhausting watching Izuku put himself through that, and it’s tiresome to have to keep healing your friend for the same injuries that could be avoided by avoiding Bakugo.

“Hmm…”

You frown and drum your fingers against your thighs. Well, in this instance, since you don’t feel giddy over him and have never harbored a crush on him ever, isn’t it better to refuse his feelings rather than dither about it or lead him on? Deciding to reject him, you open your mouth a second too late.

“Am… Am I not enough for you?”

Izuku hasn’t heard your answer and he already resembles a kicked puppy. You barely have time to feel bad before he blindsides you again, moving so that he was facing you and that your closest hand was clasped between both of his. He said your name again.

“Please give me a chance.”

His eyes were bright and earnest, and if you had actually harbored any feelings towards him, this was the moment you would have been overjoyed to experience. As it was, you thought he was too close.

(you could ‘see’ his heart beating hard, ‘see’ the endorphins in his brain, every indication that he was experiencing a powerful emotion—and you recognized it from previous “patients” as the feeling of love)

Still, he wasn’t outright asking you to be his girlfriend or if you returned his feelings—he was just asking for a chance. A chance for what, you aren’t sure, but it wasn’t a commitment, right? You could back out at any time and tell him that he’d had his ‘chance’, so why not?

You refrained from outright shrugging, but you solemnly nodded at him.

“Alright. A chance, Izuku.”

He lights up with a wide, happy smile—and wow, you’re the one that did that.

Schedule

Your friends aren’t happy with you, mostly because they already know about Izuku and his intentions of becoming a hero. Daiki and Shizu are the ones most serious about it while Sora and Katsu are almost neutral about the development. Kyoko, though—she laughs. Apparently it’s
hysterical that a villain is dating a would-be hero and that they’re childhood friends living in the same apartment building.

“The only way it could be better is if you two were college roommates.”

After hitting her with a couch cushion, you ignore her comments on your new relationship while Shizu takes the opportunity to remind you that you must not tell Izuku about, well, nearly everything you do when you aren’t with him. Telling him that you and your other friends—namely, them—go to karaoke and do normal teenage stuff is fine, but things related to the gang are not. You tell her that you’re not stupid, but Shizu remains grim, saying that if you develop feelings for Izuku then things could get complicated. The last thing you want is for Izuku to turn you and your friends in for your illegal activities (to put it mildly), so of course you aren’t going to tell him about the nitty gritty details about what you do as a gang leader.

“I’m serious.” Shizu swiped her tablet screen before lifting it to show you a full calendar. “We can’t have a crisis – my schedule is already full.”

Kyoko, sitting on your other side, leaned over you to peer at Shizu’s schedule. “Why do you only have a half-day for ‘crushing the Copper Cobras’? Aren’t those the creeps who hang around the alleyways about four blocks from here?”

Shizu huffed. “Well, it’s not as though crushing them will be difficult. Right, Daiki?”

Daiki looked over from where he was talking to Sora and Katsu. “Nah. The hard part will be getting all of them. If we miss any, they’re gonna try to cause trouble.”

Shizu nodded and went on to explain why she picked that day, but you only half-listened since you weren’t going to be part of the assault. You’d be nearby to heal up the guys when they were done, but you didn’t need to know the reason why Shizu picked the date she did.

As for Izuku, you would see how things went, but really, you just couldn’t muster up any excitement about the date he set for next week.

**Mutual**

You cross paths with Bakugo as, unfortunately, you both need to go to the same station to get to school. Why Izuku isn’t already out here with you is a mystery, and you hate running into Bakugo when Izuku isn’t around because then Izuku isn’t there to act as a buffer between you and jerk you dislike.

Bakugo, upon lying eyes on you at the intersection, scowled darkly.

“Fuck off.”

Your reply is deliberately blasé as you refuse even glance at him.

“It’s always nice to feel wanted.”

Bakugo stomped ahead while you maintained your current pace. It was early, and there was time enough for Izuku to catch another train before school hours started, so you put him out of your mind. U.A. was in one direction and your school was in another, so at least you wouldn’t be boarding the same train as Bakugo.

Texting on your phone, Shizu is already waiting at the school gates with Katsu and Sora, while
Daiki is on his way and Kyoko is almost at the closest train stop there. You click your tongue in annoyance as this drives home the fact that despite you being the one to choose your preferred high school and thus decided for the rest of them, you are the one who lives furthest away.

Ah well. At least you like the uniform.

**Date**

The week passes with texts between you and Izuku, and eventually you agree on a time for the date. You aren’t expecting Izuku to show up at your door, though, which is what he does, all shy smiles and flustered motions. Of course, Mom bears witness to this and instantly knows something is different from all the other times he’s showed up at the door, and she pointedly calls out for you to enjoy your date before you can close the door. Her comment makes Izuku’s blush darker, and you roll your eyes, a reaction he misses because he’s looking away. He takes the lead and you allow him to.

In truth, the date seems a lot like any other time you’ve hung out with him, and the only difference is in his actions. He can’t meet your eyes as often anymore, and he insists on opening doors for you, and walking closest to the street so you don’t have to. Aside from the eye avoidance thing, you find that he’s still acting the same, as chivalrous as he’s ever been.

…Wait, does that mean he really has had a crush on you since grade school? And you just never noticed? After all, Daiki, Sora and Katsu do those things for you too, but they do it for Shizu and Kyoko as well. You thought that’s just how boys are, but thinking about it, Bakugo clearly isn’t anything like that, and neither are any male strangers you come across. You can’t picture dating Daiki or the others, any more than you can picture dating Izuku.

Dating means kissing and flirting and going out on more dates, right? Being girlfriend and boyfriend is different from being friends. A relationship instead of a friendship means romantic feelings, and you just can’t picture being that way with Izuku, or Daiki, or Sora, or Katsu.

Thus, at one point in the date, sitting across from Izuku at a fast food restaurant, you try to tell him that.

“I can’t promise you anything.”

You can’t promise that you will love him. Hell, because of your gang activities, you can’t even promise that you’ll be honest with him. You won’t even be good for him, especially if you get outed as what you are. You don’t like heroes, but that doesn’t mean you don’t want his dream to come true.

“I’m not good for you.” You shook your head. “I mean I won’t be good for you. Izuku, I—“

His hand came over the table to settle over one of yours, prompting you to lift your gaze. He wasn’t smiling or blushing, but he wasn’t angry. Solemnly, he leaned forward and cautiously asked you a question.

“I-is my chance over?”

You thought about it and the answer you came to was ‘no’. He hadn’t really done anything to warrant you saying that he blew it. He’d been nothing but polite and sweet and, well, just himself. Hell, he’s barely even mentioned Bakugo you, which is an improvement over mentioning him every other day despite knowing you don’t like the guy. If you were to judge him based on his actions
from the day of his confession to now, then Izuku hasn’t done anything to make you firmly decide you didn’t want this.

Sure, you don’t feel giddy or excited when you think about him, but isn’t the purpose of giving him a chance to see if you will? Less than two weeks isn’t enough to accurately decide that, at least, you don’t think it is.

You shake your head.

“No, it’s not.”

He smiles then, relieved, and you think to yourself that you’ll give this until New Year’s Eve. If you don’t feel anything at all by then, you’ll tell him that you don’t think you’ll ever be more than just friends. You should tell him that, and you do. He agrees.

**Until New Year’s Eve, the two of you are dating.**

---

There was a man who loved the moon, but whenever he tried to embrace her, she broke into a thousand pieces and left him drenched, with empty arms.

~Laini Taylor, Strange the Dreamer

Chapter End Notes

I forgot my USB again, so here’s a new AU.

Underlined word are from dialogue prompts I find on tumblr or other places on the internet.
Imperfect

Looking back on it, maybe giving you and Izuku a chance until New Year’s Eve was a little too much considering that it’s still just spring. Plus, there is the fact that you are both attending different schools, and also there is a stark difference in how you view heroes. You dislike them, he practically worships them—you don’t think this is going to work out. You’ve basically trapped yourself until the end of the year.

Well, it’s not as though Izuku is a bad person himself. On the other hand, if he were even slightly a bit of a bastard then you could take that as a pretext for breaking off and ending his ‘chance’. However, since Izuku is a nice person and you’ve already given your word, you will have to stick with the arrangement.

And it’s not as though this temporary relationship is difficult. He’s busy with hero school and mainly stays in contact via texting and the random phone call in the evenings, so it’s not as though you have to put much energy into it. Yeah, you’ll let him have this.

Besides, his affections are kind of flattering when they’re not making you uncomfortable. It’s a bit of an ego boost to make someone blush and smile the way he does when you two cross paths. He doesn’t make your heart flutter—though sometimes he’s in your dreams, but that’s not special since the others sometimes star in them too—but you’ve known for years that he’s a good person.

A bit of a doormat like his mom, but no one is perfect. You’re not, so you don’t demand it from anyone else.

…Okay, maybe you put Shizu on a bit of a pedestal, but occasionally she does prove to you that’s just as human as the rest of you.

Your phone rings just then, and you pick it up to see that it’s a call from Kyoko. You swipe to accept and bring the phone up to your ear to greet her, only to immediately regret doing so when she deafeningly shrieks. She isn’t even saying anything and you feel a mixture of anger and annoyance as your ear rings.

You snarl into the phone. “Why for the love of everything good and holy are you screaming like your ass is on fire?”

When she starts spouting about her favorite J-pop band performing in a nearby city, you find yourself dearly tempted to just hang up on her. In the name of friendship, though, you let her chatter on excitedly and end up agreeing to go to the concert with her and Shizu, whom she will be dragging along ‘come hell or high water’. After she hangs up to begin wearing down Shizu, you send Sora a text.

[zero: hope you like j-pop and crowds (✿◠‿◠)]

[four: s h i t]

Dread

The first instance you hear of the USJ incident at U.A. comes in the form of a news clip on a phone screen that Kyoko shoves in your face before you can even leave your classroom. Shizu and Katsu
are right behind her while Sora is behind you and Daiki is in front of you. Kyoko is literally leaning around Daiki in order to shove her phone in your face, loudly asking if you’ve seen the latest thing to happen at U.A.

As you don’t care about U.A. except in the capacity that it is the school your other friend attends, no, you haven’t seen it as you generally don’t subscribe to the news or most of the websites Kyoko does. However, seeing as she is clearly hopped up about something, you relent and look at the screen.

Villains attacked the hero school, more specifically, a class of first years in the hero course.

Your breath catches slightly as you remember Izuku and you grab the phone from Kyoko, eyes glued to the screen. You watch the news clip and shove Kyoko’s phone back at her to pull out your own. Frantically, you search for more news, or rather, the name of the student who was hurt, but you can’t find it.

You text Izuku but he doesn’t text back right away. Shizu herds you to the shoe lockers and someone makes you take off your indoor shoes and slips on one of your outdoor shoes before you snap out of your mind to do the other one yourself. It was Katsu who changed your shoe and you mumble thanks at him as you put your phone away.

You want to go home so Sora is assigned that duty. The journey home passes slowly as you wonder why Izuku isn’t texting you back. He’s your friend, he’s been your friend since almost forever, even longer than Daiki and the others, so naturally you are worried about him.

“I hope he will make you happy.”

Sora’s voice reaches your ears (finally—he’s been trying since before you boarded the train) and you look up at him, and he’s standing in front of you holding an overhead strap, shielding you from the press of the crowd. Vaguely, you register that you are sitting between two strangers, but that’s not unusual. Your thoughts feel like they’re moving through molasses, but you retain enough thinking power to realize that Sora looks uncomfortable. He speaks again.

“This Izuku guy you’re so worried about. I hope he stops worrying you and makes you happy instead.”

There’s a faint dusting of color on his cheeks, and he can’t meet your gaze. This delinquent is trying to comfort you, even without Daiki present to prod him.

You let out a weary huff and close your eyes.

“Well, I hope he stops worrying me, too.”

---

**Apology**

The first thing Izuku does when he gets a moment in the aftermath of the villain attack is to send a text to his, his girlfriend. Just the thought makes his face warm up, but he tells himself to keep calm and finish texting her. His mom is already on her way to escort him home, but he needs to let his childhood friend know that he’s okay. If she’s seen the news by now, then she might worry and he doesn’t want to leave her hanging. He winces when he sees her multiple texts asking if he’s alright. Clearly he’s too late to stop her from worrying, but he should quickly make the effort to soothe those worries.

She replies immediately, thankful that he’s still alive, and he winces again because yeah, she was definitely worried about him. He plays off his injuries as light—and really, with Recovery Girl’s
help, they kind of are—but adds that she shouldn’t worry. It only looks bad.

That is apparently the wrong thing to say since she stops replying to him and refuses to answer her phone when he attempts to call her later that day. In fact, she ignores him for the rest of the day and his mom won’t let him out to go downstairs to see her because she’s still fussing over him. Frustrated, Izuku gets up early the next day to catch her on the way to the station only to find her already waiting for him.

He gulps at the sight of her glare and once his feet on solidly on her floor, he snapped into an apologetic bow.

“*I’m so sorry.*”

He hates that he’s made her angry because that’s not what he wants. He suspects that being romantic partners with professional heroes is stressful, and he really hopes they make it that far, but he never meant to put her through that so soon.

“I should have tried to contact you sooner to let you know that I was okay. I’m sorry that I made you worry.”

A tense moment passes before he hears her sigh. His heart clenches because was yesterday enough to blow his chance? He’s fully prepared to beg her to reconsider!

*(she is the new girl, the new kid from downstairs, and she says she doesn’t care if he’s Quirkless)*

*(she is the one who stops to help him, who heals his wounds, the one who smooths the harsh edges of the world)*

*(she is the one who looked at him and saw Izuku, not Deku, not that Quirkless boy to be pitied or loathed)*

*(even if she didn’t know until the moment he confessed, she is the one in firm possession of his gladly given heart)*

“It’s okay, Izuku. I think… I guess I was a little harsh. I mean, look at you. You clearly got wrecked.”

He cringes at the mention of the bandages on his arm.

“*Why can’t you look at me?*”

His head jolts up at the hurt tone in her voice. He frantically apologizes but she laughs lightly and waves his apology off.

“Do you want me to heal you?”

He shook his head. “Recovery Girl is going to take another look at me this morning. But, maybe later, after school?”

She nodded. “Alright. I’ll come home after school, then.”

As they head down the stairs, her remark reminds him that she goes to a different school and that she has other friends.

Other friends who were the reason why he finally confessed after all that time of hiding his feelings. Izuku knows that some of her friends are guys, and sometimes she smiles when complaining about
the one called Daiki. She went to a different middle school because she can’t stand Kacchan, and that’s where she met her current friends. If he let her go off to a different high school, then wasn’t it possible she would find someone she would fall in love with? After spending weeks fighting himself about it, Izuku finally managed to muster up the courage to confess and—

She didn’t seem to return his feelings at all.

He’d been crushed, but she hadn’t laughed at him or quickly rejected him. He couldn’t let her slip away without trying, so he shamelessly pleaded for a chance. She’s given him one, and he wants to make the most of it.

After all, just because she doesn’t love him right now doesn’t mean she won’t later. He just has to give his best to make her see him in a new light.

He doesn’t want to blow it.

Punch

You arrive at the school gate and cross through, looking around for your friends who always get there before you do. Looking off the left, you see them hanging around near one of the trees and walk over in time to hear Sora and Katsu talking.

“I’m sorry for all the stuff I said.”

“And the punch to the jaw?”

“No, you definitely deserved that.”

Eyebrow raising, you note that Sora is rubbing his jaw and Kyoko’s laughter was just trailing off. Daiki and Shizu were standing slightly apart and staring down at a notebook in her hands. Kyoko spotted you first and waved eagerly, immediately launching into the tale of roasting you missed by just a couple minutes. Apparently Sora got on Katsu’s last nerve by waxing on about some girl and Katsu punched Sora for talking about the girl like she was an object and yelled names at him. Kyoko laughed again, saying Katsu literally beat her to the punch.

“Sorry, Sora,” you said drily after he whined for you to heal him. Your lips twitched as you tried not to smile. “But I’m with Katsu and Kyoko on this. Girls aren’t objects you can just play with.”

Sora looked like he wanted to argue but kept his mouth shut after seeing he was outnumbered. Heaving a sigh, he put his hands behind his head.

“Man, you lot are just buzz-killers, you know that? It’s not like I hurt her. She enjoyed it!”

You shrugged. “That’s fine. It’s your bragging about her being another notch on your bedpost that we don’t like.”

Sora grumbled as Shizu called for you all to head inside. “Yeah, yeah…”

Lap

In the end, you’re the one that goes to his apartment, simply because you were later in getting back to the apartment complex.
His school is closer than yours, and a small part of you wonders what it would have been like to try for U.A. and how things could have been if that had been your goal. Would your friends also be in U.A., or was the bar too high? Well, not that you were certain you would have gotten into any of the departments, but whatever. It’s just an idle thought, one you don’t need to dwell on.

Izuku is glad to see you, and in a show of trust, Inko lets him close his bedroom door. Your mom never lets you do that when Izuku drops by your place. Honestly, why would you risk doing that if she was in the apartment too? Not that you’re interested in that sort of thing. A little curious, sure, but not interested or obsessed to the degree that Sora and Kyoko are.

Recovery Girl did a fair job on Izuku and his injuries are mostly healed. You heal some minor fractures and soothe his muscles, making him sigh as tension he didn’t know he had seeped out of his body. It’s funny to watch him become a puddle of mush on the floor.

Seeing his eyes fluttering shut, you stand to leave, but you stop when his weak arm flops against your foot.

“Please, just stay a little longer.”

You huff, but it’s not an unreasonable request, so you sit back down. Minutes pass quietly as you browse through your phone, and after what seems like an hour, Izuku stammers a request.

“C-can I rest my head on your l-l-lap?”

When you look at him, his eyes are wrenched shut as his face practically radiates heat. He looks comical, so you laugh and acquiesce.

Patting your lap, you tell him, “Come here.”

He’s still feeling weak yet at the same time he’s clearly embarrassed. He all but face-plants on your lap after crawling over to you, and he ends up facing away after looking up at you proves too much for him. Amused, you pat his hair and grin at his red features, particularly his red ear.

He's adorable.

(but not someone who makes your heart jump)

A guy and a girl can be just friends, but at one point or another, they will fall for each other...Maybe temporarily, maybe at the wrong time, maybe too late, or maybe forever.

~Dave Matthews Band
Same Age, Unrequited Love AU (Part 3)

Clothing

It’s the weekend, and after going home to change out of your school uniform, you take another train to go meet up with your friends at one of three designated karaoke establishments. You are not the last one there, but you are the last girl to show up. Kyoko is halfway through a song when Sora shows up last, sheepishly rubbing the back of his neck.

Somewhere in the midst of having fun, you check your phone to see that you have messages from Izuku. One of them asks if you’ve seen his green hoodie, and your gaze immediately turns downwards to said green hoodie you donned in anticipation of a cool temperature that evening.

Stepping outside the room between songs, you called Izuku’s phone and waited for him to pick up. He said hello and you bluntly stated a fact.

“I took your hoodie and I’m not giving it back.”

You hang up on him before he can articulate a reply and proceed to ignore your phone for the rest of the time you and your friends occupy the karaoke room.

It’s only when you’re on the train home, Sora sitting next to you, that you check your messages. You smirk slightly at Izuku’s messages, at the way his flustered state somehow manages to come through, and he eventually concedes that you can keep his hoodie for as long as you want to. You message him back.

[zero: I’ll give it back when your smell fades ;)]

Later, the next time you see him, you slowly realize that he doesn’t understand that stealing hoodies is practically a time honored tradition. No, he just dances around the fact that you stole his hoodie because it smelled like him, and he’s trying to ask if you’re into that sort of thing while trying to not offend you.

Slowly dragging a hand over your face, you drily explain to him that you’re not a creep who likes the way he smells. You were just trying to be cute and do a girlfriend thing.

He splutters and turns red, and you wonder if he registered the first part of your explanation, or if that last part shoved everything else out of his head.

Regardless, you hang on to his hoodie.

After all, you already gave back Sora’s, and neither Daiki or Katsu have used hoodies at the moment.

Summoned

You are hanging out with Izuku, doing homework together—ignoring the fact that you go to different schools, Izuku is still better than you at math—when your phone rings. You startle slightly and apologize to Izuku as you check. It’s a call from Shizu, prompting you to accept it.

Before you can say anything, you find your brow furrowing in concern as you hear background noise over Shizu’s greeting.
“You stabbed me!”

Katsu’s voice is shrill, but if he really has been stabbed, you can’t blame him.

“I didn’t mean to stab you!”

Sora sounded panicky, unusual for him, but you could also believe he meant what he said. While Katsu had been a relatively new friend to the other two boys when you all first met, they had all grown thick as thieves since then. You can’t imagine Sora stabbing Katsu on purpose for no reason.

“Take the knife out!”

Kyoko sounded more panicked than Sora.

“Don’t take the knife out!”

Shizu yelled back at them before bringing the phone back to her face.

“Sorry, but could you come to the hangout quick? Daiki’s gone to the station to meet you there.”

“It was an accident!”

Poor Sora sounds frantic to get Katsu to believe him.

“This wasn’t an accident!”

Poor Katsu sounds enraged and in pain.

Shizu pleaded, “Hurry.”

“On my way,” you replied, snapping out of your stunned daze.

Ending the call, you looked at Izuku apologetically. “Sorry, Izuku. I gotta go. There’s kind of an emergency with my friends.”

Concern crossed his face. “Is everything alright?”

You shrugged as you quickly packed up your things. “I’m not sure, but it will be when I get there.”

He murmured, “Right, your Quirk…”

He lifted his gaze from the table and said your name with such a serious tone that you paused and turned back to him. He met your eyes and solemnly asked you something you sometimes wondered yourself.

“Are they using you just for your Quirk?”

You tried not to sound uncertain.

“They’re my friends, Izuku. I want to use my Quirk to help them. It’s not that different from you and me, you know.”

He bowed his head sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck. “A-ah. Right. Well, I hope no one’s badly injured.”

You nodded and turned to leave, only to stop again at the sound of his voice saying your name. This time, you didn’t look back.
“You can tell me anything. I’ll support you any way I can. And, if you need it, I can ask my teachers for advice on your situation.”

You clenched the strap of your backpack.

“No need, Izuku. There isn’t a ‘situation’. I’m fine.”

You took a half-step before looking back over your shoulder.

“I mean it, though. Don’t talk to others about my personal life.”

He nodded with a hint of uncertainty.

“G-got it.”

You left, feeling anxious in the pit of your stomach.

Blood

Before heading to see Katsu at the hangout—that is, the apartment that Shizu purchased under a false name as a place where all of you could meet up outside of karaoke places, school, and the gang’s new headquarters that was hidden behind the guise of a yakiniku eatery—you stopped to purchase freshly cut flowers to use to replace his lost blood. Walking quickly with Daiki, the two of you went up to the apartment in question to find a pale and sweating Katsu lying in a semi-dried pool of blood on hastily spread out plastic. Plastic which, honestly, was purchased for situations like this and was in a large spool that usually rested against the wall. Quickly walking over to him, the flowers were already melting into goo as Daiki threw away the tissue paper and cellophane that had come with it.

Katsu quickly sighed in relief as you touched his skin and used your Quirk to nullify his pain. Color returned to his face as his lost blood was replaced. At your vague gesture, Daiki carefully freed the familiar butterfly knife from Katsu’s stomach. When you finished, Katsu opened his eyes, glanced around the living room for Sora, and half-heartedly glared at him.

“Dude, you suck.”

Sora clapped his hands together. “I’m really, really sorry, man!”

Sighing, you turned wearily to Shizu. “What happened?”

Kyoko answered, cutting in with a snort now that Katsu wasn’t dying on everyone. “The idiot came in but activated his Quirk to try and scare us. Sora was showing off with a butterfly knife and threw it, aiming for the corkboard in the kitchen. Guess who was crossing the room in the direct path of the knife?”

Katsu’s face was slowly growing red as he avoided making eye contact with anyone. Sora was cleaning the red curved blade of his favorite butterfly knife, also avoiding eye contact with anyone in the room.

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You sighed and ran a hand over your face.

“Katsu, don’t use your Quirk to try scaring us. Sora, no throwing knives inside. Alright?”

They meekly called in affirmative as Kyoko slunk over next to Katsu to nudge him with her elbow.

Katsu ignored the smirk on his face and unhappily pulled at his clothing. “Damn, I got blood on my
shirt. My little sister picked it out for me. Now I gotta remove the bloodstain and sew it up. I hate sewing.”

Kyoko sounded surprised. “You can sew?”

Shizu asked, “You know how to remove bloodstains? Wait, why do you know how to get bloodstains out?”

Katsu shrugged as he pulled off his shirt. “I read it somewhere.” He stood up and headed for the bathroom. “Can someone go get me either some hydrogen peroxide or lemon juice?”

Sora volunteered. “I’ll go.”

As Daiki and Kyoko set about removing the plastic from the floor, you followed Shizu into the kitchen.

“Tell me why these idiots aren’t dead?”

She smirked slightly, hand on the fridge door.

“Because you won’t let them die.”

You scowled. “They’re not allowed to die.”

She laughed quietly. “Yes, yes…”

Incomprehension

You find Izuku waiting for you at the station in his U.A. uniform. As you step off the train and head towards him since he’s obviously waiting for you, you can’t help but have your eyes drawn to that godawful tie of his. It’s an embarrassment, an oversized and ill-tied clump of material that is a sad excuse for a tie. You’d manhandle him to correct it, but truthfully, you don’t know how to do a tie either.

Instead, you direct your gaze to his hair and notice something there. Stopping in front of him, you reach out.

“You have something in your hair - let me get it for you.”

His face colors slightly at the minute touch of your hand against his hair. It’s such an innocent reaction that you can’t help but grin just a bit as you show him the cherry blossom petal you removed.

“It’s a cherry blossom petal.”

He cleared his throat as you started walking and he fell in step next to you.

“R-right. Um, they’ll be gone soon, I bet.”

“True enough,” you agreed. “They stayed a little longer this year.”

A soft smile crossed his face. “Yeah.”

You don’t hold hands, and while you’ve often walked home together, you wonder if it means something more to him now. To you, walking home together isn’t unusual or special, but then,
you’re not in love with Izuku. He’s confessed feelings for you, so is this moment special to him?

You don’t know.

You wonder if you ever will, even if it isn’t with Izuku.

Reaffirmation

Sitting on a bench in the familiar park of your childhood, you listened as Izuku told you about the upcoming Sports Festival. It’s not as though you forgot, though it is a bit of a shock to realize that someone you personally know—and like, if only as a friend, because you’re not counting Bakugo—will be in that massively broadcasted competition. You honestly tell him that you’ll watch and cheer him on. You mean it in that way you would support any friend, but he flushes and takes it as a girlfriend’s support. Well, whatever, you two are still dating after all.

There is a silence as you watch children playing. Eventually, Izuku musters up the courage to suggest a walk, and you agree, ending up near the ravine that once seemed so large. There is a small creek of water at the bottom, and you idly remember having to heal Izuku of an impending cold after one of his falls into it.

“I’ve loved you since we were kids.”

Looking over at Izuku, you see that his face is red. His hands are fidgeting as he continues speaking, reaffirming his feelings and telling you more about why he feels that way.

Apparently your willingness to be his friend despite his Quirkless status already endeared you to him, but coupled with the fact that you used your Quirk to look after him made a huge impression on him. He thinks you are kind and caring and that you’ve been that way since you moved into the neighborhood. You can’t bring yourself to tell him that it wasn’t anything special because that was only your conscience moving you into action. Honestly speaking, it’s embarrassing to hear him talk as though you’re some kind of good person.

You can’t even count how many people would refute his statement if they could. You’ve stood by and watched your boys beat people bloody and or unconscious. You’ve remained silent as Shizu and Kyoko have verbally and emotionally torn down other girls. You’ve put your hands on teenagers and adults alike and non-consensually used your Quirk on them to cause them pain or otherwise change them. You’ve never said it yourself, but neither have you ever disagreed with Shizu’s dry comments on how you are all junior villains. You’re not the good person he thinks you are.

Izuku is in love with someone you’re not.

At that thought, just as the tendrils of anger being writhing to the surface so you can scorn your longtime friend, he takes your hand in his. The action stops your anger in its tracks for a split second, but before you can get angry enough to yell at him—and yet not angry enough to hurt him despite his current vulnerability in holding your hand—he squeezes your hand and meets your gaze with all the sincerity he can muster.

“I like this, being so close to you.”

He smiled warmly, eyes closed from just how wide it was, and he chuckled nervously.

“I, uh, just wanted you to know that.”

You want to get mad at him for looking at you through rose-colored glasses, but part of you wants
him to look at you like that for as long as possible. Someday, he might find out what you’ve been doing, who you’ve been consorting with, and should that happen, you know that he will never look at you like that again. Once the glasses crack and shatter to reveal your true colors, you know he won’t feel the same anymore.

Someday, even though you aren’t in love with him, you’re going to lose him as your friend. He’s going to have to distance himself, and you may even be forced to confront him. Being on different sides of the law, there’s little chance that your masquerade will last your whole lives. You’re going to lose him later, so why push him away now?

You give a small snort and shake your head, squeezing his hand back.

“You’re a sap, Izuku.”

A slightly melancholic smile crossed your face as he stuttered in embarrassment. You closed your eyes and tried to burn in the memory of the way he was now, clueless and absolutely confident that his other childhood friend was a good person. He wouldn’t be this way forever, and even if you knew it was in vain, you could still hope.

“Don’t change, okay?”

Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never ever the same.

~Flavia Weedn
Wearing

To silently poke fun at Izuku, you text him a request to walk you to a convenience store and then wear his ‘borrowed’ hoodie when you go downstairs to meet him. He’s already there, and he turns crimson at the sight of you in his clothing.

You laugh when he seems speechless and wave him to fall in step beside you as you begin descending the stairs. It’s only when you’re almost at the nearest convenience store that he finally pipes up, voice small as he stammers through a sentence in a near whisper as he his arms come up in an attempt to hide his face.

“I can’t believe you’re actually wearing my clothes…”

The poor boy actually turns redder than you thought was possible, so you nudge him with your shoulder to try to keep him from self-imploding with whatever he’s currently feeling.

“Yo, Izuku. Calm down,” you grin when he peeks at you through the space in his arms. “I won’t be able to carry you home if you pass out from all the blood rushing to your face.”

He waved his hands in a panic, reassuring you that he wasn’t going to pass out or anything. You waved a hand and said that you hoped he wouldn’t. After all, you really did mean it when you said you lacked the strength to get him back. Not that you’d try unless he failed to respond to your Quirk, since you could just call Daiki, Sora or Katsu to come help you.

As both thanks and unsaid apology, you bought him an ice cream.

Guidance

Three days before the Sports Festival, Kyoko came up to you and gave you a thumbs up. Her thumb was unnecessarily close to your face, so you raised your hand to push it aside.

“I got your back.”

You paused, eyes narrowing suspiciously at her.

“…What do you mean?”

Daiki called to you two as the rest of your friends were already in the school courtyard. Making way to them, Kyoko explained.

“You’ve never had a boyfriend before this Izuku, right?” She grinned at your nod. “Well! As an experienced dater—“

You thought that was a generous term for a girl who changed boyfriends almost weekly, but she’s your friend so you don’t judge her harshly for it. As a matter of fact, you’ve given the boys standing orders to punch in the face of anyone who says anything negative about Kyoko and especially to her face.
“—I’m going to lend you my wisdom. See, when it comes to dating, boys expect certain things during the course of the relationship. Gifts from the girlfriend is one subject I will be glad to enlighten you about.”

That just sounded like a roundabout way of getting information about your relationship with Izuku, but whatever. It’s not like you know how to be a girlfriend, and aside from the fact that Valentine’s Day, White’s Date, and Christmas are special dating events, you don’t really know what to do with a boyfriend. At the very least, you can take Kyoko’s words into consideration.

Thus, at Kyoko’s suggestion, you hand sew a good luck charm for Izuku. In order to put positive energy into it, you try very hard not to think about how much you hate sewing. It’s not something you’re good at, but Kyoko says it’s the effort put into it that counts. As long as it actually looks like what you’re trying to make, that should be enough.

She’s going to get you started on a hand-knitted scarf since it’s ‘expected’, but you don’t want to think about that upcoming nightmare, so focus on positive thinking it is!

And you just freaking stabbed yourself with the needle. You hope Izuku doesn’t mind blood on his kaiun omamori.

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**Gift**

The day before the Sports Festival, you wait for Izuku in the stairwell. To make sure you don’t miss him, you had already texted him to wait for you. You get there less than a minute before he exits his apartment, and even at this distance you can see him smile at the sight of you.

He bashfully says your name, as though he’s forgotten that you’ve met up in the stairwell even before dating. Resisting the urge to shake your head, you instead pull out the completed omamori charm and hold it out to him by its tassel. He seems surprised.

“Is this a gift for me?”

You push down your first reaction, which is to respond with sarcasm, and manage a smile instead. Thinking about it as a gift for a friend rather than your undesired boyfriend, your smile becomes sincerer.

“Yep. I made this for you. It’s a good luck charm for tomorrow. I know you probably won’t be able to carry it with you, but—“

Izuku’s hand came up to grasp it.

“I love it.”

He beamed at you, face slightly red.

“Thank you. I will treasure it.”

You let go and glance away. “R-right. I’m glad. W-well, we should go, or we’ll miss our trains.”

He nodded. “Mm!”

---

**Future**
As the U.A. Sports Festival begins with an obstacle course race, you find yourself sitting with your friends at the apartment hangout. There’s a table laden with snacks and cold drinks in the fridge. The boys are rowdy, and if it wasn’t for the subordinate living downstairs—a pale-haired woman whose Quirk was Sound Negation—you’d be worried about potential noise complaints and the trouble that comes with it. As it was, you and the girls endured the noise the boys made.

“Look at those cute wannabes!”

Or rather, you and Shizu endured the noise the boys and Kyoko made.

For most of the race, you didn’t say much. Near the end, as Izuku set off a pile of landmines, Shizu spoke.

“You don’t really like him, do you.”

It’s not a question. However, you feel the need to correct her.

“I like him, as a friend,” you said, trying to clear the air.

“You don’t trust him, though.”

Ah. She had you there. You’ve been keeping secrets from Izuku since middle school.

She turned her eyes away from the screen.

“Do you think about your future? What is it that you want?”

You hummed under your breath. You don’t really like thinking about the future, and you tend to avoid answering such questions outside of required worksheets for school, but this is Shizu. If life permits, she’s a person you want to have around you until you’re both old and wrinkled.

“I want to get married. I want to have kids.”

You stared at the screen that was showing a close up of Izuku.

“I just don’t know if it will be with him, you know?”

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**Emotions**

You weren’t very interested in the U.A. Sports Festival in general, but the others are invested for different reasons. Mostly it’s just for entertainment, but Shizu and Daiki are assessing the potential threats the future heroes could be. For that purpose, the apartment had three television sets, each showing the separate year stages for first years, second years, and third years. Daiki and Shizu are mostly focusing on the screen showing the third years, but you’re only invested in Izuku so your eyes flicker between that screen and your phone.

The festival continues on to a cavalry battle in which Izuku loses his ridiculous ten million-point headband but somehow manages to continue on to the next phase. Said phase turns out to be a basic fighting tournament, and Izuku’s first battle is against some purple-haired kid. At first, Izuku nearly walks out of the ring and only stops because he somehow manages to break out of it. Your ‘boyfriend’ then goes on to briefly struggle with the purple-haired boy, soon throwing him down and enough out of the ring that he’s declared the winner.

“Lackluster,” Kyoko booed.
You throw a piece of popcorn at her head.

Later, if you had known about just how strong he was, you would have gloated to Kyoko during Izuku’s fight with the Todoroki boy, but in truth you didn’t really know, so you end up as surprised as the rest of your friends as Izuku continues to shatter large chunks of ice.

Shizu put her face in her hands and muttered something about physics, the winds of Jupiter and the force required to shatter ice. You can only see the side of Kyoko’s face but her mouth is gaping. The boys look serious as Izuku launches himself over charging ice.

Briefly, you wonder what look is on your face.

The screen whites out for a moment as Izuku and Todoroki clash in bursts of power and fire, concrete walls thrown up between them at the last second. You wince at the bright light and concern finally trumps surprise. You might not think much of Izuku as either boyfriend or friend, but that doesn’t mean you want him hurt.

When the light fades and the smoke clears, Izuku is out of bounds and his arms are unhealthy shades of purple.

“I don’t believe it.”

The words leave your mouth before your teeth grit down in helpless frustration. What does that idiot think he’s playing at? Looking at him now as people rush to get him off the field and to Recovery Girl, you can’t help but feel glad that his Quirk didn’t come in when he was young—it would have torn him apart. And yet, at the same time, you feel impotent, because for all you can heal even the worst of his injuries, you are currently away from him, and even when you will get access to him, you’ll have to tone down your healing so that it doesn’t attract attention from his teachers and peers.

But also—that reckless idiot. How could he tear himself up like that for a sports festival?

Growling, you continue glaring at the screen even as Shizu puts a hand on your shoulder and speaks.

“I think that boy is going to be the greatest thorn in our side once he goes pro. He’s practically All Might Junior, really.”

She said your name and waited until you reluctantly shifted your gaze over to her, even if you didn’t fully turn your head.

“I think you should stay close to him for as long as you can. Build weak points into him as you have done to us. Consider making him desperately in love with you.”

You immediately refused.

“No. I’ll cut him down in his prime if I must, but I’m not going to mess with how he feels. I give you the same consideration, and I won’t manipulate the feelings of my friends like that.”

She removed her hand. “As you wish. Still, as you have said it was agreed, stay with him until at least New Year’s Eve. After all, as they say, ‘keep your friends close, and your enemies closer’.”

Kyoko cut in, undermining the seriousness of the situation by adding slyly, “Really close. Like, intimately close. Make out with the enemy. Make your friends, who are still close, super uncomfortable.”

You throw more popcorn at her as Shizu tells her to stop bringing up vintage Tumblr posts.
But even though you’re joking with your friends on the outside, internally, you can’t help but wonder if someday you will really have to strike down Izuku. You know you would, because five beats out one, but it still makes you sad to think that you might have to cut down one friend if he tries to fight you and your five.

You hope it never has to come to that, but somehow you doubt it can be avoided forever.

Life is partly what we make it, and partly what it is made by the friends we choose.

~Tehyi Hsieh

Chapter End Notes

Kyoko paraphrases a post from romangodfrey that I've seen around.

Also, in case you forgot (which I did for some reason, wondering why some of the words were underlined), underlined sentences are from prompts I've found on tumblr and/or the internet.
You are pissed at Izuku for tearing himself up so much. Why was a sports festival so important that he had to all but shatter three of four limbs? Purple limbs are not indicative of a healthy body! You can’t even imagine how badly the bones are broken. Would Recovery Girl be able to fix that level of damage? You don’t know, so you find yourself waiting impatiently in the stairwell for Izuku to return from school.

He finally does, school jacket draped over his shoulders and one arm still in a cast.

“How are you feeling?”

He startles and snaps his head up. “O-oh! I didn’t see you there.” He tried to smile. “I read your texts. Um… I guess you saw my fight with Todoroki, huh?”

You had stopped sending texts to his phone after seeing that fight, so yeah, you did. He wilted slightly under your glare and angry stance, but only for a moment. He briefly closed his eyes before taking a breath and slowly letting it out. He then opened his eyes and straightened his stance.

“I did it for a reason, and I don’t regret it.”

Ah, but he’s not explaining his ‘reason’, is he?

You’d get even angrier at him if you weren’t keeping your own secrets. Instead you huff and wave him closer.

“Let me see.”

He climbs closer, slightly wary for some reason, and he twitches when you reach out for his face. You scowl.

“I’m not Bakugo.”

A slightly embarrassed grin crossed his face. “Ah, sorry.”

This time when you reach out, he doesn’t flinch away.

Part of you wants to slap him when you see how much damage is left even after treatment from Recovery Girl. If he keeps doing this sort of damage to himself and you weren’t around then this reckless idiot would have been risking permanent damage to his arms.

You don’t slap him, but you do grit out your findings between clenched teeth, and glare at him, but this time he doesn’t meet your eyes.

This self-sacrificing fool! U.A. had damn well better teach him how to use his Quirk without busting himself up.

After finishing reversing the damage done to his bones and nerves, you let go and put a hand on your hip. Your stare is practically overflowing with disapproval, but you don’t want to keep harping on him. He’s big boy and he can make his own decisions, so whatever, right?

“You need to eat something, you’ve been through a lot today.”
You don’t know why he grins happily in response.

*(she cares)*

**Skipping**

Izuku has two days off before he has to go back to school and he asks you for another date. Unfortunately for him, you still have normal hours to attend, and when he asks for a date for the second evening you have to decline because Kyoko already booked you for that concert she wants to attend. You can’t tell how Izuku feels over text, but you automatically picture him with fallen expression.

You don’t tell him that in order to make the concert, you’d have to leave school after lunch, and that after some discussion, your whole group decided to skip the whole day altogether. Kyoko was the one who wanted to see her favorite J-pop band live, and she’d never relent on you until you agreed so you’d saved yourself days of annoyance and frustration which would have ultimately culminated in either your surrender or a momentarily dead Kyoko (not something you ever want to experience again, thank you very much), so you had acquiesced to go the first time she brought it up. Sora was going by default because you would be traveling and his Quirk would be the most useful in protecting you if the need arose. Kyoko had worn down Shizu, Daiki decided to go along since both you and Sora were going, and Katsu tossed his hands into the air and said he wasn’t being left behind, so yeah, your whole group was going to a concert that only one of you would probably wholeheartedly enjoy.

On the day in question, you head off to school as per usual, and you meet your friends in the courtyard, also as usual, though only two of them show up. Kyoko, Sora and Daiki aren’t there as the former is pretending to be sick right off the bat, and the latter two are outright skipping because their parents either don’t notice or don’t care what they do. You, Shizu, and Katsu show up to school, and you realize with a small start that you will be alone in class today. Sora and Daiki are in your class while the other three are in another class, and with Sora and Daiki not coming in, you will be alone.

You point this out, somewhat stunned by the belated realization, and Katsu offers to use his Quirk to sneak into your classroom but Shizu vetoes this and reassures you that it’s just school. There shouldn’t be any danger, and you’re going to be excusing yourself to the infirmary before long, same as them, so you’ll be fine.

She’s right, of course, and before morning classes are even half over, the three of you are meeting up just down the street and slipping into public bathrooms to change out of your school uniforms to emerge in regular clothing. The whole lot of you meet up at a station and wait around for the correct train.

As your friends chat about the day’s escapade so far, Sora complains about Kyoko’s whims. The girl is bubbly and cheerful in anticipation of the concert, so her tone is bright as she responds.

“I am nothing if not consistent.”

Daiki sums up your feelings as he grumbles.

“A consistent pain in my ass.”

Sighing as Kyoko swats at the tall boy, you exchange a long suffering look with Shizu.
You honestly think that of the six of you, only Kyoko is looking forward to the upcoming concert.

Protector

By the time you arrive in the designated city, there are still a few hours before the concert itself. Kyoko wants to immediately head to the club where the J-pop band will be performing, but Shizu points out that you all have VIP backstage tickets, meaning there is literally no way your group is getting in to see the concert even if you cut it close. She whines, but Shizu mercilessly points out that the regular and VIP ticket holders won’t even have the same line, so there’s no point in her going to go hang out with other fans only to rub in their faces that she was VIP the whole time, which she would when she eventually reached the front of the line and would have to go through a separate door. She sulks, but concedes the point.

As for what your group is going to do, by majority vote (two out of six) you all head to the city’s aquarium. It’s a popular place with parents and little kids, but your group sticks out as the only group of teenage kids. Shizu lies her face off and says you are all U.A. students on your last day off before returning to school. Oh, no, ma’am, we’re not hero course students, merely general education and business course. None of us stuck out, unfortunately, but the sports festival was a lot of fun!

Afterwards, you nudge her with your elbow, smirking.

As you all go further into the building, there is a large room filled with aquariums. It’s strangely lit and cool, and there are more people here than there had been in other rooms. With Shizu and Kyoko in the lead, you find yourself half-lost in thought as you stare at the exotic fish to your right. Then, suddenly and quietly from your left, you hear Daiki.

“It’s getting crowded. Here, hold my hand.”

His hand slips over yours and you take a brief ‘glance’ at him even as you use your eyes to look at him for a second, confirming that it’s really him and not someone with a voice-copy Quirk or something. Satisfied that it’s him, you let your mind wander again.

With Daiki holding your hand, you’re less likely to trip or get separated from everyone.

You’re safe with Daiki.

Joke

The concert.

You don’t even want to remember it (the noise, the screams, the crushing bodies).

Haggard, you lean against Daiki on the train with Shizu on your other side. Kyoko is next to her, and Katsu and Sora are across from you. Of all of you, only Kyoko remains chipper, bright-eyed and energetic despite the crush you only recently escaped. If not for Sora’s Quirk and the boys’ muscle, her highly prized autographs would have been torn from her hands by the band’s crazed fans. The bastards even used your group as bait to make their escape!

Bastards.

Exhausted, you know that you’re going to get lectured when you get home. You sent mom a text earlier saying you were going out with friends “after school”, but it was pretty late for a school night. The concert had started at six, ended at about half past nine, and after meeting the band it was after
ten, then of course there was that stupid encounter with the other fans outside… You’d barely made the last train.

Yawning, you answered another text from your aggravated mother and you frowned when she demanded a photo to prove it was you. Then again, she knew what your Quirk was, and it was probably not out of the realm of possibility that you had been kidnapped, so fine, you take a selfie and send it to her.

You roll your eyes when she demands to know who you are leaning against. Telling her that it’s only Daiki, you add that you’ll be home before one in the morning.

Hopefully.

This sets off another blasts of anxious texts from both parents, each promising that you are grounded, and you try to answer them despite your eyelids drooping.

Since it’s so late, all three of you girls are going to be escorted all the way home by one of the boys. Kyoko gets Katsu since they live in the same general direction, and Sora agrees to see Shizu home safely. Both he and Daiki live in the same neighborhood, but Daiki said he wanted to take you home, so the other boy had just shrugged and agreed to be Shizu’s escort.

Leaving the station, Daiki asks you, “Are you tired? Here, I’ll carry you the rest of the way.”

You are half-tempted to accept his offer to piggyback you home, but you manage to resist the temptation. Instead you hold his hand and toddle home in the dark, secure in the knowledge that if something happened that he would protect you. Nothing actually happens, and you arrive at your apartment door shortly before one.

“This is me,” you say sleepily, half-heartedly swinging his hand.

“So it is,” Daiki replies. He tugged your hand for attention and grinned when you looked up at him, teasing.

“So… do I get a goodnight kiss?”

(for a second, you seriously consider it)

You roll your eyes and let go of his hand.

“Goodnight, Daiki.”

Your slightly raised voice prompts a rushing from inside, and before you know it the door swings open to reveal a pair of stressed out parents.

You’re grounded for a month.

Punished

The next day, you are among the first to arrive, which is unusual as of your friends, you live the furthest away from your high school. Katsu was first, then you, and the two of you sleepily waited for the rest to arrive. Daiki and Sora showed up together, then Shizu, and lastly Kyoko. The girl grinned wryly as she arrived, waving.

“So, who’s all grounded for, like, ever?”
You, Shizu and Katsu all raised hands, giving her varying degrees of glares.

“My old man doesn’t care,” Daiki grumbled bitterly.

“My mom didn’t even notice I wasn’t home, I think,” Sora said, shrugging. “Everyone was asleep by the time I got back.”

“Well, I’m grounded, so that’s four out of six. The grounded have majority until our parents set us free.”

Shizu sighed and rubbed her fingers against her temple. “That’s… not how it works.”

It’s true that yesterday was a school night and that you were all out late, but you are teenagers. You are young and capable of handling that much, so while school makes you yawn more often, you still make it through the day okay. Daiki walks you to the station and rides with you to your stop before getting off and waiting for the next train back. You wave goodbye and head on home.

Izuku texts you later, saying he was home and asked if you wanted to go to the convenience store for a snack. You phoned him.

“I’m grounded.”

“What? Why?”

“I had a fit of teenage rebellion.”

“Um… what did you do?”

“Well, I didn’t murder a man.”

You laughed as he yelped your name.

“I’m serious. I just skipped school to go to a concert in another a city. I don’t even like the band that played. I went because it was easier than having my friend bug me about it forever.”

“You skipped school for a concert?”

“Yeah. Well, more like I skipped school for a friend. She was really excited about it and had a lot of fun. I guess it wasn’t so bad. We went to an aquarium and ate at a fast food place before the concert. We got back late and my parents grounded me.”

“H-how late?”

“After midnight.”

He yelled your name. “It’s dangerous to be out so late by yourself!”

You rolled your eyes. “Don’t jump to conclusions, Izuku. Daiki walked me home. I was perfectly safe.”

He mumbled. “What if a villain had attacked you?”

“Nothing happened,” you dismissed. “Anyway, yeah, I’m grounded until further notice, so I doubt I’ll be able to go out with you even to the store. I even have to come home right after school, so I can’t hang out with my friends.”
“Well, um, it kind of sounds like…”

“Don’t even start on my friends,” you cut him off. “Not after how I’ve put up with you and your fixation on Bakugo.”

He didn’t seem to have anything to say to that. Many was a time when you tried to convince him that he’d be better off without the explosive boy, but did he ever listen? No!

After a few moments of silence, Izuku spoke up.

“Have I ever met Daiki?”

“I don’t think so,” you replied.

You couldn’t be completely certain, but you’re mostly certain that he hadn’t. You don’t have pictures of your friends just laying around your room. Which is kind of strange, now that it crosses your mind.

“Well, I guess I won’t be seeing you much for a while, huh?”

“Just if we meet on or from the station, yeah,” you answered.

“You can call me anytime you want, even if you don’t really have a reason to.”

You blinked.

“Oh… really? That’s okay?”

His voice brightened. “Of course. You can call me anytime. I’ll do my best to answer, or get back to you when I can’t.”

“Alright,” you say, wondering if you would.

You talked for a while longer, then said you had chores to do. Izuku said his goodbye and you hung up the phone. You weren’t lying, and you groaned as you got up off your bed.

Time to clean the bathtub.

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Without friends, no one would want to live, even if he had all other goods.

~Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics

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