A beacon in the dark

by Nohaljiachi

Summary

“My thanks.” He says, smiling back. “What is your name, boy?”

“I’m Izuku! Izuku Midoriya, sir!” The boy replies, excited, looking up at him. And Toshinori looks into the unmoving washed out green, into milky white pupils visible behind the mess curly hair, and realizes.

The boy is blind.

The boy that he distinctly saw dodge a series of fairly quick attacks, light on his feet and clearly used to some kind of training, the boy that had thrown him the bottle at the perfect height and perfect speed, the boy that has easily collected his spilled groceries and orderly put them back into the little plastic bag—

The boy. Is blind.
Lose a friend, find another.

Midoriya Izuku is only four years old when his entire view of the world gets thrown upside down.

Or, maybe he should say, gets casted in pitch black.

—

Two months prior Kacchan got his quirk.

Izuku turned when he heard the voice of his best friend, high pitched laughs of pure joy reaching high in the sky.

Cheeks red with excitement and sandy blond hair bobbing up and down in time with his jumps, Kacchan is keeping his hands held out, palms up, as golden sparks comes out of them, popping. They reminds Izuku of the little sparkly candles his mom prefers to lit during new years eve in place of actual fireworks.

Izuku laughs with him, jumps with him, just as excited as Kacchan is about the quirk manifesting.

“Kacchan! This is amazing! This is the best quirk ever!” Izuku yells, running circles around him.

“I’m going to be a hero!” Kacchan replies, cheeks-breaking smile on his face, turning to keep looking at a over-excited Izuku.

“YOU’RE GONNA BE A HERO!!” Izuku yells, jumping with his arm stretched up to the sky.

—

The change is so fast that Izuku feels like he just came down of a roller coaster, but all the time.

Kacchan changed. In the spawn of a couple of weeks, his best friend, the child he grew up with, that he loved so much, turned into a completely different person.
The adults praise this, chatting between themselves about how a quirk manifestation is always a time of great changes, and Izuku doesn’t like that. This new Kacchan is brash, and speaks too loudly, and picks on Izuku a bit too much.

But still, he keeps following, because Kacchan is his best friend, and Izuku loves him.

—

“Are you ok?” Izuku asks, holding out his hand.

Kacchan looks up at him, a smile frozen in place for long seconds, before his expression changes into rage and he splashes Izuku.

“I don’t need your help.” Kacchan growls, walking out the little streams, as Izuku looks at his back, confused and hurt, droplets of water falling from his constantly unkept mop of curly hair.

—

Midoriya Izuku is only four years old when he wakes up, and his room is all dark.

He’s sure it’s not nighttime still, because he heard mom’s alarm going off in the distance, and he heard her going to the bathroom to brush her teeth, and he can still hear her downstairs, preparing breakfast as she does every day.

Izuku slowly sits on his bed, his head spinning. He palms at the sheets, then up his face.

His eyes are open, right?

His question gets an answer when he accidentally pokes himself in the eye. Hissing, he squeezes his eyes, before slowly opening them.
Still pitch black.

Izuku blinks. He feels himself blinking.

Mom knocks gently on the door, before entering.

“Izuku- Oh you’re awake.” She says. Izuku can hear the smile in her voice. “Breakfast is almost ready, sweetheart- Izuku?”

Izuku feels his mom closing the short gap between his bed and the door, feels her weight on the bed, her gentle, thin fingers on his little wrist.

“Honey, is everything ok?” She asks, and Izuku can imagine perfectly right the little wrinkle between her eyes.

“Mom-“ Izuku whispers, his voice hitching in his throat. “I— I can’t see—“

For a while, Izuku doesn’t go to school.

He spends most of his days in the car, as a silent mom drives him around, between a doctor appointment, an exam, another doctor appointment.

No one can make sense of his sudden loss of sight. How can a healthy four year old boy go to sleep with his eyes perfectly working, and wake up blind?

He silently listens to mom talk with doctors, nurses, specialists. He gets asked if he can see the light pointed right into his eyes, if he can see the board with the symbols.

Izuku remembers the board from past check-up appointments, but he still can’t see it.
He hears mom trying to stifle a sob when the doctor shines the light right into his face - he can feel the faint warmth of it on his skin - but his eyes cannot perceive anything.

Doctors with special healing quirks come to visit Izuku at their house, but still, his world is pitch black.

Mom gently cards her hand through his hair after every appointment.

“It’s gonna be alright, sweetheart.” She says. “We will find a way.”

She sounds less and less convinced every time she says it.

—

He has to go back to school. He heard mom talking on the phone, about arrangements and teachers, and Izuku sits on the stairs in silence as mom hangs up and little sobs come out of her mouth.

—

“Hello, Izuku.” A gentle female voice says. A warm hand closes around his little one. “I’m Kyoko, I will be your teacher from now on.” She says.

Kyoko comes every morning, picks him up from their house.

“Say bye to mom!”

Izuku turns around, not sure if he pointing in the right direction, and waves his hand.

“Have a good day, honey.” Mom says, her voice always sounds kind of watery.

Kyoko teaches him a lot. How to orientate himself and walk with a cane, how to read with fingers,
how to label things so he can know what he needs without having to ask anyone.

During the break he gets to go in the garden with other kids. His classmates. Kacchan.

Most of the other kids gives him a wide berth, whispering between themselves behind his back. But not Kacchan.

“Deku, catch!”

The ball hits him straight in the face and he ends up on his ass, but he doesn’t cry. This time.

“Ugh, you’re so useless.” Kacchan voice is closer now. There’s a long stretch of silence. “Your eyes are so weird.”

“What do you mean?” Izuku asks, his mostly unused voice cracking a bit in his throat.

“They are like— All washed out and pale.” Kacchan says, and Izuku feels the air moving in front of his face, and he knows that Kacchan is waving his hand right in front of him. “You really can’t see, huh?”

Izuku doesn’t answer, getting back up and brushing the dust away from his pants.

“C’mon, catch this time!” Kacchan says, running away and kicking the ball at him.

Izuku doesn’t catch.

—

“Mom.”

Inko turns around, startled. Izuku is sitting at the kitchen table, his little legs kicking at nothing, his
fingers still on the braille book he was slowly reading. Izuku doesn’t talk that much anymore.

“Are my eyes weird?”

Inko feels something caught in her throat. The need to kneel and bawl. Instead she forces a smile her son can’t see anymore on her face.

“They are beautiful as always, dear.”

—

Two weeks later, Izuku refuses to go get his usual haircut.

“But honey-“ Inko tries to reason. “You hair is all in front of your face-“

“It’s ok.” Izuku whispers. “They cover my eyes, right?”

She didn’t think it was possible, but her heart broke all over again.

—

“I wonder what kind of quirk I will get.” Izuku says, following the sounds of Kacchan kicking his soccer ball as he walks, swinging the cane as Kyoko taught him. “I hope its a strong one, like yours.”

He’s always following Kacchan.

“Ah-“ Kacchan laughs. “Nothing will ever be as strong as my quirk. And even if you get a good one, you’d still be useless with those eyes of yours.”

Izuku is always following Kacchan, even if Kacchan is brash and loud and picks on Izuku a little too much.
At least Kacchan is not treating him like he’s a broken glass kept together by tape.

—

Midoriya Izuku is only four years old, bordering on five, when he and mom come out of the last doctor appointment.

Izuku sits in the car, silently. He listens to gentle sounds of the engine, picking at the velvety cover of the seat with nervous fingers.

Izuku has dreamt so much. About his quirk, about how he’d learn to use it, about how he’d become strong and be a hero, even if his world is all black.

All until the doctor said that word.

Quirkless.

—

Kacchan hasn’t stopped laughing for a while.

“I can’t believe this-“ He said once he finally calmed down. “You’re like, the most useless being on this planet. You can’t see, and you don’t even have a quirk!”

Izuku keeps following. Fateful, hopeful, that his friend it’s still there, somewhere.

—

It’s summer break, and Izuku has been searching for a while. Kacchan wasn’t at the usual place.
He keeps searching, until he realizes he doesn’t know where he is anymore.

Fear seizes his throat as a sheen of tears covers his unseeing eyes. Izuku searches, smacks right into a tree –the bark under his hand is cool and slightly humid- and sits under it, collecting his knees against his chest, as sobs shakes him.

He’s lost, he’s lost, he will never find the way home, mom will be sad, he’s lost-

“Deku?”

Izuku raises his head, tears rolling down his cheeks. “K-kacchan?”

A long-suffering sigh “Why are you crying, now?”

“I-“ Hiccup. “I got lost-“

Kacchan sighs again. His rough hand closes around Izuku’s wrist, jerking him up on his feet. Izuku stumbles, but Kacchan doesn’t stop, dragging him away.

“Honestly, you can’t do anything alone.” Kacchan grumbles. “Like, why do you even exist.”

Izuku doesn’t answer, head down.

They walk in silence for a while, until Kacchan jerks him around again. Izuku hits his shoulder on something that feels like cement.

“Here, you’re home now.” Kacchan says, sounding annoyed. “Stop getting lost. Stop following me. You’re constantly giving me work. You’re such a dead weight. How am I supposed to become a hero if you’re constantly holding me down?”

Izuku doesn’t answer, leaning on the familiar walls surrounding his house. He feels his throat clog
up, cold sweat beading on his forehead under the messy hair covering his eyes.

“Find someone like you to pester, I’m done with you.” Kacchan says, and his voice doesn’t sound cold or cruel. Just… Uninterested.

Like Izuku is nothing. A pebble on the side of the road.

Izuku nods, and makes his way back into his house. Mom welcomes him like she always does, like nothing is wrong.

Izuku stops following Kacchan.

—

“Izuku— What are you doing?”

Mom’s voice sounds weird, from the door. Izuku stops, his little fingers tight around the plastic figurine.

He can feel the curves of it under his fingers, the vaguely pointed tuft of plastic hair.

He hasn’t done much in his room since his loss of sight, besides labelling. He remembered all his posters, all the All Might toys sitting on the shelves, and even if he couldn’t see them anymore, it gave him comfort to know they were there. Like he could hear All Might’s voice, booming and happy, telling him to be strong and that he could do it.

He could answer mom, he could try to articulate how that sense of comfort has slowly changed, how he can’t hear All Might’s voice anymore. How he only hears the whisperings of pity about the poor, blind, quirkless boy. His peers whining they don’t want him in their team because it means they will lose, Kacchan—

Kacchan.
He shrugs instead, and keeps putting all the toys and posters into a cardboard box.

Mom keeps watching him, silent, until his room is barren and his shelves empty, and the box goes into the back of the closet, collecting dust.

Middle school is completely different, and yet all the same.

He doesn’t have a special teacher anymore. Kyoko-san has taught him everything she possibly could. Mom bought him a phone, and together they went over all the disabilities options necessary.

Izuku likes his phone. He likes to keep an earbud in during his commute to school, listening to the voice-over reading articles about the latest hero news.

He was still interested in heroes, so what. Bite him.

School is not much. He’s expected to keep up with his peers, doesn’t get any special treatment. It’s hard, but honestly Izuku prefers it to being treated with kid gloves. And he likes to study, so it’s not that big of a deal.

His mom beams when he brings home his grades. He can hear it in her voice.

“My handsome, young man.” She says, ruffling his hair. “So brilliant.”

“Mooooommm-“ He whines.

He keeps studying. He keeps writing his notes about heroes and quirks.

Even if he doesn’t write -for the future- in the title anymore.
He doesn’t have friends, but Izuku is fine with it.

By some cruel joke of destiny, he ended up being in the same class as Kacchan. But Kacchan mostly ignores him. Izuku has tried to speak to him every now and then, but Kacchan only grunts back.

Izuku can’t see body language, but he doesn’t need it to get the hint. He soon stops trying to talk to him.

At first other teens asks Kacchan about him. Aren’t you childhood friends with the blind boy? What he’s really like? Why is he so weird?

Kacchan reacts with a scoff and silence at best, with explosive -literally- rage at worst. The questions soon stops.

Izuku doesn’t have any friends. He tells himself he’s fine with it.

His peers ignores him, for the most part. Some of them are cruel, and play tricks on him. They hide his phone and tell him to get it, it’s right there, in front of his eyes, while laughing. They bump into him, and then sneer “Sorry, didn’t see you there.”.

At first someone tries to weakly protest, but no ones wants to be next, so that soon stops as well.

Kacchan doesn’t say anything. Izuku is sure he heard him chuckle at some of the so called jokes.

Izuku doesn’t have any friends. He doesn’t need them. He doesn’t need bullies that pick on the blind, quirkless boy, nor cowards that refuse to stand up for the blind, quirkless boy.

He doesn’t need anyone, really.

—

He doesn’t tell mom any of this, but he knows that she knows.
She always knows.

—

“How do you see?”

Izuku stops, rice from his bento mid-way to his mouth.

He’s on the roof, alone, as usual. Until he hears steps and then a female voice asks that question.

“You have, like, your hair all in front of your eyes.” She elaborates at his silence. “And you have a lot of hair.” She adds for emphasis.

“I don’t see.” Izuku deadpans.

The girl comes closer, and Izuku feels fingers shift his hair away from his face. A gentle gasp follows.

Izuku doesn’t know how his eyes look like. They were a brilliant emerald, once, but now according to Kacchan they looked more like a pale, sickly green. Like fake alien vomit.

His mom said that his eyes looked like the sea water on the shore, clear and sparkly, when the first light of morning comes up in the sky.

It’s wondrous how two people can describe so differently the same thing, isn’t it?

There’s silence, and Izuku expect the usual round of I’m so sorry I didn’t know I didn’t want to offend.

“You are cute, though.” The female voice says instead. “You shouldn’t hide your face like this.”
Her name is Miki Kobayakawa.

“Call me Miki.” She immediately said after they exchanged proper pleasantries. “If you don’t, I’ll punch you.”

That gets a startled laugh out of Izuku.

Miki is brash and loud and full of energy. She reminds Izuku of Kacchan, sometimes. But her brashness is more focused.

Kacchan is like a rabid dog, biting and snarling at anything that comes in his field of vision

Miki is more of a wolf, in Izuku’s mind. She’s aggressive, but only if someone puts foot in her territory.

Apparently, Izuku is considered part of the territory, now.

“Get the fuck out of here!” Miki yells as Izuku gets up from the floor, brushing his pants. Izuku hears frantic steps and male voices hurling insults getting farther.

“Yeah, some big men you are!” Miki yells one last time, before turning towards Izuku, muttering. “Fucking assholes. They are all so good at picking on a single person in five. Are you ok, Izuku?”

Izuku was on his way home when he accidentally stumbled into someone. He apologized, but the little group wasn’t happy with just that, apparently.

“I’m fine.” He answers. “Where did you came from?” He asks.
“Oh, I wanted to go to the bookshop down the street and I saw you getting dragged away.” She answers, matter of factly, and sniffs. “You need to learn how to throw a punch, Izuku.”

Izuku shrugs, palming in his backpack to make sure nothing fell out during the scuffle. “Even if I knew how to do that, I won’t know where to aim.”

“Still, even swinging blindly -no pun intended, dude- can be effective if your opponent doesn’t expect it.” She replies without missing a beat. “If your enemy thinks you are completely defenseless, they will be full of openings. You could take advantage of that.”

Izuku puts his backpack back on his shoulders, silent.

“Say what.” Miki adds. “You know my mom teaches self-defense at her gym. Why don’t you apply? I’ll make puppy eyes at her so she’ll let you in for free.”

—

The first time Miki visited, mom literally squealed with delight at her son bringing home a friend, doting on both of them to an almost embarrassing degree, and Izuku thought that Miki would never come by again.

“Your mom is cool.” Miki said, instead.

She visited very often after that. Her and mom went together as perfectly as a house on fire. Izuku’s life started to be more than just home-school-home.

They went to the zoo, and Miki had taken delight in describing the animals to him.

“Miki, I remember what an elephant looks like.” Izuku protested. “They are not purple!”

Miki started laughing, and Izuku followed. They spent the rest of the day describing the animals as outrageously inaccurately as possible. Mom laughed to tears when they couldn’t stop with the flying monkeys spitting fire and growing rainbow-colored scales.
They went to the movies, and Miki would narrate to him what was happening. She was atrocious, at first, but increasingly became better both in descriptiveness and how quickly she’d manage to narrate.

People would try to shush them or call them out, sometimes. Izuku would fake sob, as Miki replied very loudly “My friend is blind, you asshole!” and then whisper-describe to him the look of horror and embarrassment of the unfortunate movie-goer that happened to be in the same place as them, making Izuku giggle-snort soda out of his nose.

The first time he visited Miki’s home, he found it startlingly similar to his own family situation.

A father out of the picture, a hard-working mother. The difference was that as much as Izuku has taken after his mom’s timid and meek nature, Miki has taken after her mom, loud and brash and honest, that was never scared of laughing out loud.

Kobayakawa Ichiko welcomed him like an old friend of her daughter from the very start, sharing with him embarrassing stories from Miki’s childhood, never shying away from him or treating him like a delicate flower. She was very fond of Izuku’s deadpan sense of humor, laughing from her belly and punching him on the shoulder.

“I wanted to be a hero, when I was your age.” Ichiko said once, when she noticed him listening intently to the news, seeing right through him. “In the end, growing up, I realized I preferred teaching, so here I am.”

Izuku nodded his understanding, silently.

“Do you want to be a hero, young man?” She asked.

Izuku didn’t say anything for a long while. He couldn’t hear the scratch of Miki’s pen on her math homework anymore, and he knew they were both staring at him.

He opened and closed his mouth a couple of times, nothing coming out of him.

“It has always been my dream ever since I was a kid.” He admitted in a low voice, in the end, incapable of giving a resounding yes.
Neither Miki nor Ichiko laughed, or said it was impossible, or offered him alternative career paths.

“Well, you’ve got to work hard for it, then.” Ichiko said in the end.

“And learn how to throw a punch.” Miki added, gently kicking him under the table.

Izuku expects his mom to say no. It’s too dangerous. You could get hurt. You don’t need to know how to fight.

“Yes.” Mom says, her voice strong and unwavering. “I will be happy to come by this weekend and speak with your mother about it, Miki-chan. Thank you so much for offering.”

Mom knows. Mom always knows.

Izuku and Miki sat in the living room of Miki’s home, pretending not to hear their mothers going back and forth just a room away.

“I insist-“ Inko said. “Ichiko-san, I assisted to your lessons, you are an amazing teacher, there’s no way I’ll let you teach Izuku without paying-“

“Nonsense.” Ichiko replied. “Izuku is like a son to me, now. I could never accept money, I’ll be happy to teach him anything he needs for as long as he needs to be taught.”

Inko started to reply, again, and Miki asked in an unamused voice “Do you think they will keep this up all day?”
Izuku groaned, dragging his hands on his face.

—

At the end of the first week under Ichiko’s regime of workout, Izuku was absolutely destroyed. Everything ached, even places he didn’t know could possibly ache. He let the hot water wash over him, relax his sore muscles.

“Izukuuuu-!” Mom called, her voice far away and muffled by the sound of the shower. “Dinner’s almost ready!”

Izuku closed the water with a soft sigh, palmed the little side table to find the clean towel he prepared, and dried himself before putting on his pajamas.

At every step he took to get downstairs he couldn’t help but let out a little moan of pain.

Mom chuckled.

“Very funny.” He replied once he was finally in the kitchen, sinking down in the seat and flashing his tongue at mom.

“I can already see some results, you know?” Mom said, putting his bowl in front of him. Izuku scoffed.

“Yeah, right.”

“No, really!” She insisted, a smile in her voice. “Maybe I’ll join you. I need to lose some weight…”

“Mom, you’ll die.”

Inko laughed, ruffling his hair. “How dramatic.”

Everything hurt. Izuku was sure even his hair hurt.
He grinned. He never been so happy in his entire life.

—

The days passed fast, the months going by. The end of his first year of middle school got closer and closer, and Izuku has set into a routine.

He would wake up early, go for a jog around the block, a familiar path were he knew exactly each step he could take without his cane, then shower and school. The afternoon was dedicated to homework and then, depending on the day, either cardio or training with Ichiko.

Three times a week he would train, with the saturday free for him and Miki to just relax and enjoy being teenagers, and sundays completely dedicated to training.

Sunday was his favorite day, by far. He loved the training. Ichiko was not only helping him becoming stronger physically, but also taught him with infinite patience every fighting technique she thought he could need and then some.

Sometimes Miki would join them, sometimes she just watched and cheered him from the sideline.

Izuku poured everything he had into it, and the long sundays, where it was just the four of them in Ichiko’s gym, were the best part of his week, no matter what.

Mom has, in fact, joined him, although just with some light cardio. Ichiko-san had been delighted to help the both of them, to study a proper diet with them, and she would constantly compliment mom on her hard work, even possibly more than she complimented Izuku.

Not that he minded, mom deserved all the compliments in the world.

The end of his first year of middle school was ending, and Izuku felt so very different from the person he was just a few months prior.
Miki was holding the boxing sack for him as he went through the routine. She started to do this a while ago, as Izuku’s punches started being strong enough that the sack would swing too wildly for him to go through the exercises alone.

Miki called the change of pace for him. Right hook, left hook, uppercut, faster, slower… Sweats rolled down his face generously, shirt sticking on his back, his breath fast but controlled as Ichiko-san taught him.

“Aaaaand… Stop!” Miki called, and Izuku slumped a bit, hands on his knees, catching his breath.

“You went through the entire routine without having to stop once.” Miki said, satisfaction in her voice. He heard her scribbling down the results on his exercise board. “Good job, Izuku.”

Izuku grinned, standing back up straight and stretching. He could hear Ichiko-san and mom talking from the corner with the tapis-roulant.

“Miki.”

“Mh?”

“Why don’t we spar?”

Miki did not say anything.

“C’mon-“ He insisted, jumping a bit, light on his feet. “I know you are much better than me at this, but if I don’t start to stretch my wings a bit with a real fight how am I supposed to learn?”

“I don’t know, Izuku.” Miki replied, her voice strangely measured. “I think it’s better discuss this with mom, first-“

“Oh c’mon, you party pooper.” Izuku pressed, laughing. “It doesn’t have to be, like, super serious. Besides, my mom and yours seems rather busy over there for now.”
“I- No.” Miki said, curtly.

Izuku stopped his light jumps. Silence stretched over them.

“Is it because I’m blind?”

The resentment bubbled up his throat, the words leaving his mouth, even surprising him.

Miki sighed. “You know I don’t care about that.”

“Then why not?”

“I just don’t want to, ok?”

He could feel that Miki turned her back on him. Something grabbed at Izuku’s stomach.

Izuku, the blind quirkless boy, always so meek and timid and useless. Always in the shadow, nothing of importance, really. No one to spare a single look at.

He could accept this from strangers. He did accept this from Kacchan.

But Miki was his best friend. His only friend. He could not accept this. Not from her.

He knew Miki was good at fighting. He knew he wouldn’t hit her. There was nothing to worry about.

If she didn’t want to fight, if she insisted in underestimating him, then he’ll force her to look at him, to consider him.

Izuku charged. He had a good estimation in his mind of how far Miki had to be, now.
He felt the air moving as Miki turned back to face him with a startled rasp.

Her hand closed around Izuku’s wrist.

His world became pain.

—

Everything was pain, every single nerve of his body was burning, hot and searing, he was breaking, he was turning into ashes, someone was screaming raw in the distance.

Oh.

It was him.

—

When Izuku woke up, he felt like his entire body has been run over by a train about one thousand times.

A wet sob near him “Izuku?”

-Mom- he tried to say, but coughed instead, his throat burning and raw. His breath itched in his lungs, as mom urged at his side, helping him sitting a bit straighter and putting a glass on his lips.

“It’s ok, sweetheart, it’s ok, breath- Here, drink this, slowly-“ She whispered, frantic.

Izuku was shivering so hard some of the water splashed down as mom helped him drink. He started to sweat, his body protesting loudly at every each movement.
The seconds stretched long as he finished the glass of water and mom helped him back down on the pillow. Izuku was speechless, his mind a scrambled mess, unable to make sense of anything.

“I’m going to call the doctor, ok?” Mom said, her voice trembling. “I’ll be right back, honey, don’t worry.”

He didn’t dare move a single finger, the pain lingering like a vulture on his shoulders. Mom came back after what felt like an eternity, and a male voice presented himself as doctor something-something.

He could barely understand, really.

The man visited him, or so he thought anyway. It was hard to perceive anything over the fog of constant pain stabbing his brain at every minuscule movement.

“The pain is going to persist for a couple of days at least— Bed rest—“

That was all Izuku could hear before he fell back into the sweet, salvific embrace of sleep.

—

When he woke up again, he knew he was home. There was something in his room, that atmosphere of -this is my place- that always permeated it, that made it easy for him to know even if his entire world was always dark.

Tentatively, he sat. The pain was still there, but it wasn’t nearly as strong as it was the first time he woke.

He wondered distantly for how long he slept.

Slowly he got out of bed, shuffled outside his room, down the corridor.

When he lingered in the doorway, he heard mom gasp softly and then ask sleepily “Izuku?”
“Mom.” He said. His voice was gravel. He wondered how hard and for how long he screamed to make his throat so swollen and hurt. “What happened?”

—

Mom put down a cup of hot tea in front of him, and Izuku closed his shivering fingers around the warmth, grateful.

He heard her sitting in front of him, he could feel her eyes digging into him.

“I don’t even know where to begin.” She finally said, her voice both soft and steely, somehow. “Izuku I… I’m very disappointed.”

Izuku flinched, his fingers tighter around the cup.

“You shouldn’t have done what… What you did.” She added in a whisper. “Did you know of Miki-chan’s quirk?”

He shook his head.

“I… Asked her, once.” He said in a tiny voice after the silence stretched. “She t-told me she didn’t want to talk about it, s-so I never insisted.”

“You’ve hurt her.” Mom said, and Izuku couldn’t hold the tears anymore at the sad tone in her voice. “You’ve hurt her so much, Izuku.”

—

“I don’t want to talk to you, right now. I’m too mad.” The impersonal, robotic voice-over read the text to him.
“Ok.” He texted back.

—

Ichiko-san sighed deeply as he bowed to her after his apology.

“It’s better if we stop for a while.” She said, and the disappointment in her voice, so similar to mom’s, hurt more than any punch possibly could. “You are a smart young man, Izuku. Think about what happened and why, about why you acted the way you did. When you have accepted your actions and feel ready to start again, I’ll be happy to take you in once more.”

Izuku nodded. “Thank you.” He added, his voice so, so small.

—

He knew, why he did what he did. He let his negative feelings, all the rage and frustrations, all the pent-up resentment. Every word and actions that he passively took through his life, from all the people around him that saw him as nothing more that a dead-weight on society, and has turned them against the only person in the whole world that had loved him unconditionally from the very first day the’ve met.

His shelves were still barren, but Izuku thought that if he opened the box sitting in the back of his closet right now, he would hear All Might’s voice reprimanding him for his action. He would be so disappointed.

Some hero I’d make, Izuku thought bitterly, as traitorous tears spilled from his eyes yet again.

—

“Hey, Deku. Hey. HEY!”

Kacchan’s hand closed on his shoulder like a clamp, turning him around.
He compared Miki to Kacchan, once. But he couldn’t have been more wrong. They couldn’t have been more different.

“Don’t ignore me, you prick.” Kacchan growled. “What the hell are you going around with that long face for? You look like death warmed over. Cheer up a bit, you’re making everyone around you miserable.”

Izuku gritted his teeth so hard he felt them screech in his jaw.

“Is that all that I am?” He asked, voice low. “A thing that has no right to be? Is what I make other people feel all that I am?”

“Huh?!” Kacchan replied, loud. “The fuck are you talking about, shithead?”

“Let me go.” Izuku said, steel in his voice.

“Or what?” Kacchan sneered.

—

“Oh, Izuku.” Mom has sighed when he entered in the principal office.

She looked over at Katsuki. The boy that was used to come to their house almost every day. That was a lifetime ago, Inko realized, and Katsuki was no longer that tiny little boy that would thank her for the drinks or sweets she’d bring them outside, the tiny little boy that would say bye with a huge smile on his face at the end of each day.

That boy didn’t exist anymore. Instead in front of her there was a young man, all nervous energy and pent up rage.

She always wondered what went wrong between him and Izuku.

Katsuki was barely seating, visually trembling in an effort not to jump up and attack. There was a
copious amount of blood on his lips and chin, staining the front of his shirt, and a bruise was rapidly getting more and more swollen, closing his right eye. Katsuki’s nose was crooked, clearly broken.

On the opposite chair, Izuku was sitting perfectly still, not a single sign on him if not for the single scorch mark on his shoulder. There was blood on his knuckles.

“Ms. Midoriya, thank you for coming so fast.” The principal said, getting up from his seat.

“Katsuki-“ She said, unable to resist the use of the name that was once so familiar on her lips. “Are you-“

“I’m FINE.” Katsuki all but yelled.

“We have already called an ambulance.” The principal said to her unasked question. “They should be here any minute now. In the meantime, I would like to discuss what happened—“

“There’s nothing to discuss!” Katsuki interrupted, his voice slightly nasal. “Let me just take this shithole outside and then we can have a fair fight, none of this sucker-punch bullshit, you shitty little coward—“

“Shut up.” Izuku interrupted, his voice venom and steel.

Inko flinched, looking at her son, her sweet, brilliant, gentle son.

What she found in those unseeing eyes, barely visible under the messy curls, scared her.

Katsuki bolted from his seat, and so did she and the principal, tackling him before his hand could reach over to Izuku.

“Let me GO!!!” Katsuki yelled, trashing around. He was strong enough that despite the two adults holding him he dragged them forward, his face inching closer to Izuku’s “Let me have at this shitty little crap! I’ll teach him a lesson—!”

Izuku spat in Katsuki’s face.
“IZUKU!” Inko yelled, outraged.

Izuku got up, the chair he was sitting on crashing on the floor, and run out of the door.

—

The sound of the ambulance was far away, he couldn’t hear it anymore. Izuku didn’t move, curled up in a ball on the roof, in his usual secluded spot.

He didn’t want to move, he didn’t want to think.

A small part of him wondered if he should just get up, climb over and the fence and *jump*—

“I heard you punched a bitch today.”

His entire body flinched as he instinctively turned his head over the source of the sound.

“Good.”

Miki sat at his side.

“You look hungry.” She said, fiddling with something, and the smell of curry reached his nostrils. “I’ll share the bento. This time.”

Izuku was stupidly gaping, like a fish, and he knew it.

“So, you truly punched Bakugou?”

Izuku closed his mouth and nodded.
“Jerk had it coming.” She snorted.

“I shouldn’t have—“ Izuku finally found his voice, low and raw.

“You shouldn’t have let yourself get caught.” Miki said, her mouth full. “But the punch? Fuck it. As I said: Jerk got it coming.”

“Punches.” Izuku corrected her.

“Huh?”

“I broke his nose with a right hook, got his eye with a left.”

Miki let out a laugh, but it was mirthless.

“You look like shit.” She said.

“Yeah, that’s what Kacchan said too.”

“Ugh. Why do you call him Kacchan.”

Izuku shrugged. “Habit, I guess.”

“Well, shake it. He doesn’t deserve an affectionate nickname, not from you.”

“He’s—“ My friend, Izuku wanted to said. He shook his head. “We were friends, once.”

“And now you’re not, and he treats you like shit. Stop feeling bad. Play bitch games, win bitch prizes, and all that.”
That startled a small laugh out of Izuku. “You’re impossible. It’s not that bad—“

“Except it is.” She interrupted him, cold. “I have eyes, Midoriya, and mine works, unlike yours.”

That startled another laugh out of him, but Miki continued, her voice tense.

“I see how he treats you. How they all do. And it makes me mad. It’s not right, a-and you are a good person, and they are all trying their damn best to beat the goodness out of you, and that’s not right.”

Izuku has never wished so hard to be able to see, to be able to read the expression on his friend’s face, to understand what that note in her voice was.

“It makes me want to use it against them all.” Miki whispers. “What does that make me?”

Izuku doesn’t have an answer, more than a little lost in the conversation.

“You’re a much better person than me.” She continued. “And I hate what they are doing to you.”

“I’m not— Miki.” Izuku whispers, urgency in his voice, he kneels, reaching out with a tentative hand. “I— You’re the only person in this world that has ever treated me like an equal. And I attacked you. I’m not— I’m not a good person—“

“You think I don’t know why you did that? It hurt, at first.” She replied, taking his wrist gently with only three fingers. “To think you’d turn against me. I thought about it so much, Izuku. And it still hurts, the idea that you’ve let all that negativity get the best of you—“

Izuku lets his head hang down, ashamed.

“B-but— I’ve been dismissive. I fished those feelings out of you. I should’ve explained why I didn’t want to spar. I should have told you about my quirk, about why people avoid me—“
“The pain.” He whispers.

“The pain.” She nods. “It’s simple, isn’t it? Touch someone, cause pure, unadulterated pain. So simple, yet so effective. When my quirk fist presented I was holding my dad’s hand. He left not long after that.”

“Miki—“

“I know how it feels, to be cast away. To be avoided, to be laughed at, to get insulted. I know how painful it feels, and I admired you so much for the way you kept fighting despite everything. I still do.”

Izuku felt his throat clog up, his eyes wet.

“And I hate that the world seems to always do whatever it can to take what’s good inside people and twist it until it’s not good anymore, and you didn’t deserve any of this.” Miki added, her voice wavering, sniffing a little. “Izuku. I don’t want to be mad anymore, can we be friends again?”

And Izuku sobs, angrily wiping at his eyes with his sleeves, and the sheer ridiculousness of it all punches him. To talk of the darkness of the world in such terms and then realize that at the end of the day all they are just this: children, lost in a place that always feels so unwelcome and scary.

“I didn’t want to cry.” He sobs out, angry. “I didn’t want to cry in front of you and make you worry anymore.”

“Oh please, you crybaby.” She says, but Izuku hears the tears in her voice, too.

“I’m sorry Miki.” He says, lower lip wobbling, turning towards her. “I’m sorry I attacked you. I-I would love to be friends again.”

Gentle arms close around him, Miki’s face pressing against his hair.

“You’re forgiven.” She murmurs.
Izuku let out another sob, his face against her shoulder.

They kept hanging on one another for long minutes, in silence, and Izuku finally feels that knot in his chest loosen for the first time in days.

“Do you want to know something?” Izuku says, voice low but not watery anymore. “I shouldn’t be proud of this… But—“

“What?” Miki says, relaxing her grip a bit to look down at him.

“I spit in Kacchan’s face.”

Miki let out a sort of spit-take before laughing heartily from her belly. Just like her mom.
Suspended for four days.

It was kind of inevitable, really. He did send Kacchan to the hospital, and pretty much the entire school knew about it already.

He probably got it light, all things considered. Maybe the principal took pity on him. An upside, he guesses.

The car ride is silent, and Izuku could feel the anger radiating from his mom. He knows he should apologise for everything he put her through, but he can’t find it in him, at the moment. The confrontation with Miki has left him utterly devoid of energy, and as happy as he is to have his friend back, he’s a complete emotional mess.

“I should probably get back to the principal office—“ He sighed, getting up. “The more I wait, the worse things will get.”

Miki nudged him a bit. “I’ll text you later, ok?”

He smiled at her before getting into the building and walking back to the office, where a seething mom and a positively desperate principal were waiting.

“We are going over at Katsuki’s house, later, and you will apologize.” Mom’s voice cut through his musing like steel, rudely jerking him back to reality.

“Yes.” He replies, voice low.

“And I mean, really apologize.” Mom adds. “What you did today— I don’t even know what’s with you—“ She sighs. “Izuku, we really need to talk.”
“I know.” He says. “I know. Just… I’m not ready for it, now.”

He can hear mom’s fingers tighten on the steering wheel.

“I really am sorry.” Izuku adds, voice lowering. “I know what I did is wrong. And I know there’s a lot we need to talk about. Just… Not today.”

Silence.

“Please.”

Inko’s shoulders slumps forward.

“Ok.” She whispers. “Ok.”

—

The visit over at the Bakugous’ goes as well as expected.

“GET IN HERE, I’LL FUCKING DESTROY YOU!”

Mitsuki Bakugou circles her son’s neck with her arm, and he immediately falls silent, despite his enraged expression.

Izuku steps forward, not lowering his head. It’s not all bad being blind sometimes, he thinks, knowing he’d never be able to maintain eye contact with the woman that for a time had been like a second mom to him, otherwise.

“Bakugou-san, Kacchan.” He says, voice measured. “I’m sorry. What I did today was wrong, and it will not happen again.” He bowed, formal. “I apologize.”
“YOU LITTLE—“

“That is enough, Katsuki.” Mitsuki says, not letting her son go. Her voice does not betray any emotion. “Izuku, get up.”

He does.

“I don’t know what Katsuki did to make you snap like that, but I know this is not a one sided issue. Katsuki owes you an apology as well.”

“I’M NOT APOLOGIZING, WOMAN!”

She sighs, shaking her head. “What did I do wrong with you?” She wonders aloud, and Kacchan grumbles a bit.

“I’m really mortified—“ Inko interjects, but Mitsuki holds her hand up.

“You are both young, and will feel like doing brash things at times.” Mitsuki says, clearly addressing Izuku. “But you are also both smart, and I trust this will be the end of it and you will act civilly toward each other from now on. Am I clear?”

“Yes, m’am.” Izuku replies.

“Katsuki.” She pushes as the silence stretches.

“Alright, FINE.” Kacchan finally says. “I’ll leave this little shit alone from now on.”

Mitsuki groans. “Honey, your next words should’ve been ‘I’m sorry’.”

Izuku chuckles, surprising even himself. He knows they all turned to stare.
“It’s ok.” He says, his voice a little sad. “I think this will be as good as it gets.”

The image of his old friend, smiling at him, blurred and distorted, comes up to mind. But Kacchan is not four anymore. Izuku, for the first time in years, wonders how he looks like, now.

Izuku also wonders if this is how grief feels like.

—

Mom blessedly leaves him be for the rest of the day, bringing some onigiri upstairs and putting the plate on his desk, not forcing him to come down to the kitchen.

He munches on them distractedly, listening to the last episode of All Mightiest Podcast. But, to be honest, he’s only catching a word out of five.

There’s so much to mull over. He made peace with Miki, he apologized to Kacchan, but he still has to talk with mom.

The thought weights on him like a rock.

There’s so much, in this tangled mess that are his thoughts and feelings. So much even he cannot put his finger on. So much confusion. How do you untangle a ball of yarn if you can’t even find where it starts?

He’s startled out of his thoughts by the booming voice of All Might in his ear.

“It’s when you are at your lowest that you’ll have to smile even brighter! If you do that, if you never give up, light will be sure to come!”

“*Inspiring words as usual from our favourite hero—*” the excited voice of his favourite podcaster came back. “I swear I could listen to him talk for years. I don’t know how he does that!” Sincere laughs follow that exclamation.

Izuku pauses the podcast, and slowly takes the earbud out. He walks to his closet, kneeling down to
take a dusty box out. He fishes an All Might figurine out of it, tracing the features with his fingers.

All Might is smiling. All Might is always smiling.

“I will not let you down, this time.” He whispers.

—

“IZUKU. Wake up, we have to go somewhere.”

Izuku mumbles, palming at his nightstand with a hand until he finds his clock. He pushes the button, and the cheerful robotic voice announces that it’s five in the morning.

“Moooooom—“

She chuckles, gently swatting at him.

“C’mom, sleepyhead.”

Izuku drags himself to the bathroom, washes himself, and starts to put on his school uniform until he remembers.

Right. He’s suspended.

He puts on jeans and a shirt instead, shuffles his way downstair, mom pushing a backpack in his arms as soon as he emerges on the kitchen doors.

“Here, take this, you can eat something on the way.”

Izuku is too sleepy to asks where the hell are they going at that time in the morning, so he just dutifully climbs in the car, and off they go.
They drive goes for what feels like hours, and Izuku he’s sure he fell asleep at some point, but mom did not wake him up.

“Whatimeissit…?” He mumbles, rubbing the sleep off of his eyes when he jostled awake by an uneven road.

“Seven in the morning.” Mom answers, promptly. “We are almost there.”

“Seven?” He blinks, perplexed. “Where…?”

“It’s a surprise.” Mom says, a smile in her voice.

They fall silent after that, but it’s a comfortable silence, nothing like the tense one that they’ve experienced just a day prior in that same car.

Finally, the car slowly brakes to a stop, and Izuku unbuckles himself, jumping off. As soon as he’s out he smells it, the salt in the air, and he hears it, the gentle sound of waves. A kind wind laps at his hair, tickling his nose.

“C’mon!” Mom says, cheery, taking his wrist and guiding him. Izuku feels the softness of the sand under his shoes as soon as they set foot in it.

“Here, give me an hand, I’m putting down a table cloth.”

He silently obliges, then let himself being guided to sit down.

“…What are we doing?” He asks, after six waves.

“Having a picnic, obviously.” Mom replies, rummaging in her bag and putting down paper plates
and tupperwares of food.

“I can… See that.” Izuku hesitates on the word.

He hears mom stopping her movement at his side, and then she sighs.

“You loved going to this beach when you were little, remember?”

Izuku does. It was all before his eyes betrayed him, of course. He remembers the color of the sea like a far, unfocused watercolor piece, and he thinks he remembers how a seagull looks like.

Maybe.

“You’re not a kid anymore, of course.” Mom continues, thoughtful. “You’re not that kid anymore, but you’re still my son.”

Silence stretches between them, mom resumes her preparing the picnic, slower.

“I only wish for you to be healthy and happy.” Her voice is lower. “But there’s only so much I can do, only so much I can control. And you have to walk forward, and live your life. But Izuku… I want you to know I will always be there for you, no matter what. Whenever you will need me, I will be there. You can tell me everything, and I will listen. I am… I’m proud of you, Izuku. I’m proud of how brave and smart you are. I’m proud of how you took your life in your own hand and charged forward and I think… I think I should’ve told you this more.”

His eyes sting, as does his nose. “Mom—“

“No, listen. The person you were yesterday—I thought about it all night. For a while, I couldn’t accept that the person I saw yesterday was my son, but that was stupid of me. Who you were yesterday, and who you were when you tried to attack Miki-chan… That was still you.”

Izuku gulps down the knot in his throat.
“But I know, I know, you are not proud of that person, and I know you want to change, and I know that you will be able to, because there’s nothing you can’t do, Izuku. And I owe you an apology, for not recognizing your suffering, and for turning away, for not wanting to see how much you needed me in your darkest time.”

Fat tears roll down Izuku’s cheeks, a sob shaking his entire frame, as he shakes his head. “No, mom, you’ve always been the best mom I-I could ask for—” He hiccups. “Don’t s-say that—”

Inko smiles, sadly. “Could you forgive me, Izuku?”

Izuku is not four anymore, but as she holds him, his son, sobbing his heart out against her shoulder, Inko wish they could go back to the simplicity and lightheartedness of those days.

Then again, maybe not even those days have ever been so simple.

—

The sand is soft and chilly under his naked feet. It’s still a bit too early, maybe, but Izuku ignores the thought and jumps into the shallow water lapping at the shore, making a big splash.

“It’s cooooold!!!” He yells, jumping out, as mom laughs loudly from the table cloth on the sand.

He grins. Her laugh is the best sound in the world.

He runs up and down the shore, the wet sand making a squishing sound under his feet, chasing the sounds of the seagulls that indignantly squeaks and take flight if he gets too close.

“Sweetheart, don’t make them too angry or they’ll poop on you!”

“If they do, I’ll lead them to you!” He yells back, laughing.

He ends up tiring himself out after a while and stops, facing the sea that gently rumbles wave after wave. The sand is cold under his feet, and the gentle breeze encompasses him in a hug. He’s not
quite sure how far he is, but after a bit he feels the presence of mom, walking up to him, silent.

He must look a disaster, he thinks. He hasn’t even tried to tame his hair, that morning, and he still feels his nose sting after having cried so much.

But he really doesn’t care. He feels so, so light, like if he stretches his arms out he will soar like the seagulls.

Mom is a comforting presence near him. She always was, she always will be.

He’s so, so lucky.

“Mom.” He says, head turned up at the sky. “How do the seagulls look like?”

Izuku will never see the pain that flashes in his mother’s eyes, and maybe that’s for the best.

Inko’s voice is strong, not a sign of regret in it. She takes his hand, and tells him of the seagulls.

—

The rest of his days of suspension go by in a blur. They went out a lot, did things they never did before. They went to the library, picking up random books, mom reading to him in a whisper. They went to the mall, Izuku trying to guess how many people were wearing red shirts nearby, mom either booing or cheering him depending on how close he had been. They went to a cat cafe, Izuku laughing as he ended up covered by warm, soft, purry cats.

Instead of a punishment, the days felt more like a vacation.

“Wipe that satisfied, smug smile away from your face, mister.” Mom reprimands him. It’s almost as if she’d read his mind. “While I’m glad we had time to speak and reconnect, do not forget you did get suspended, alright?”

“Yes, mom.” He replies, chastised. But he knows she’s also smiling.
He’d be lying if he said that he wasn’t a bit afraid of getting back to school, that’s why when he steps outside and he hears mom softly gasping “Miki-chan?” he’s absolutely delighted.

“Good Morning, Midoriya-san!” Miki says, cheerful. “Hey, Mr. celebrity, ready to get back to school?”

Mr celebrity? “Y-yeah, I guess… Well, I’m off, mom, have a good day!”

“You… Too, sweetheart.” She says, and the relief in her voice is so clear she might as well be screaming from the rooftops “MY SON HAS A FRIEND AGAIN!”

Izuku chuckles at the thought, catching up to Miki, who is humming an off-key tune. Once they are far enough, he turns towards her.

“Mr. celebrity?” he vocalises, confused.

He can hear the grin in Miki’s voice. “Oh, you have no idea.”

___

Apparently, the entire, literally, school know about the fact he broke Kacchan’s nose.

It’s not surprising, in retrospect. Kacchan is pretty much a celebrity in their boringly normal middle school, literally everyone knows who he is and who he will one day become, so the fact that he got his ass handed to him by blind, quirkless Midoriya Izuku spread like wildfire.

“Oh God.” He whispers, after Miki caught him up with the gossip. “He’s so not gonna be happy with this.”
“Oh, he’s not.” She says, in a forcefully uninterested tone. “But it’s not like there’s much he can do. Both of you are in the spotlight now, everyone knows what a piece of shit he is, and if he dares turn a single hair on your head, everyone will turn against him. He’s cornered and there’s nothing he can do about it, and it’s delightful.”

Something dark squirms in his chest, something akin to vengeful pride, and a little voice whispers in his ear that he deserved it, really, Kacchan deserved it all.

But he made a promise. He promised he would not let All Might down again. He would strive to do better, always.

“Miki.” He says, and the serious tone stopped her in her tracks, her attention completely on him. “I… I understand why you feel that way about Kacchan, and I’m grateful for you wanting to look out for me but…”

He hesitates, unsure about how to put into words his feelings.

“… But what I did doesn’t make me any better than him. And I made a promise.” He continues, honest. “I promised I would do better. So, please, don’t say those things anymore. Because I think you are a good, kind person, Miki, and I have no doubt you can do better, too.”

She’s staring at him, he can feel it.

“… Ok.” She says after a while, and her voice sounds strangled, like she’s almost in tears. “I… Let’s do better. Together?”

Izuku beams.

“Together.”

“Midoriya, that was like, so cool—“
He’s not sure who the voice belongs to, but he hears Kacchan’s strangled indignant noise behind him. But no explosion comes.

“I… Appreciate the sentiment.” He replies, even. “But I don’t think I did a good thing, so please, don’t take example from it.”

The silence that follows tells him of exchanged looks between peers with working eyes, but he finds himself not being bothered by it. He walks to his desk, not adding anything anymore.

The silence behind him— He’s not sure what to make of it.

—

“What game do you think you are playing?”

Izuku has just come out of the bathroom when the voice cornered him.

“I… Don’t understand?” He replies, sincere. Kacchan’s breath is hot on his face, dangerously close.

“What? You sucker punch me like a coward and now play the part of the little blind angel that can do no wrong. Do you find this funny?”

“I apologized.” Izuku replies, frozen in place. “And I meant it. I’m sorry I hit you, Kacchan. I don’t want to play any game—“

“Don’t—“ Kacchan interrupts him. “Stop calling me that. You’re so annoying.”

Izuku has nothing to reply with, so he doesn’t.

“Ok, here’s the deal.” Kacchan continues. “I will keep living as if you don’t exist, and go to UA once I’m out of this shithole, and I will leave you behind in the dust, where you belong to. And if
you even think of breathing in my general direction again, I will end you, are we clear?”

I just want to be friends with you again! Izuku yells in his mind, but instead he says “Crystal.”

Kacchan showes him against the wall, as if punctuating what he just said, before walking away.

Izuku takes a deep breath and tries not to cry. It’s like, one step forward, three thousand steps back, with Kacchan.

“Do better.” All Might says in his mind.

Do better, he repeats to himself. Do better. Do better.

—

As life is, he finds himself having to break the unspoken promise of not breathing in Kacchan’s direction when his childhood friend gets kidnapped by a pile of sludge and apparently no one but the blind boy seems up to the task of going helping him, but that’s a story that’s yet far in the future.

—

Ichiko-san makes a thoughtful hum after his proposition.

He started to study under her again, and one day he stopped after a particularly brutal series of push-ups, an idea forming in his mind.

“Ichiko-san?” He said, as the woman was just about to ask why he stopped. “I was thinking… Could we possibly add a form of meditation to my training?”

“Meditation?” She repeated.
Izuku got back up on his feet, dabbing the sweat from his forehead away with his wrist. “Yes I… Find myself troubled, sometimes. Like I’m a rubber band stretched too far, about to snap.” He explains, thoughtful.

*Like when I attacked Miki. And Bakugou.* The words hang in the air, unspoken.

“So I thought… Maybe something to help me stay focused could be useful.”

And Ichiko-san hummed.

“That’s a good idea, actually.” She says after a while. “I’m afraid it is out of my area of expertise, though.”

Izuku deflates a bit. “Ah.”

“Don’t make that face, kiddo.” She says, ruffling his hair. “I’ll look into it and see what I can do. I have a lot of friends, I’m sure some of them will push us in the right direction.”

——

Turns out, meditation is exactly what Izuku had unknowingly needed to discover a whole new world that was just out of his reach.

It started so slowly. Ichiko-san consulted with a friend, spoke to them about Izuku’s situation, and together they studied something for him.

Ichiko-san met him at the gym, and put something in his hands. “Try put these on.”

Curious, Izuku palmed at the object. They felt like headphones, big and bulky, the type that completely covered his ears. Izuku didn’t like those models at all, as they made it too hard for him to hear the outside world.

“C’mon.” Ichiko-san nudged him, and Izuku unwillingly complied.
As soon as the headphones slipped over his ears the entire world stopped existing. He could only hear the insistent thumping of his heart in his temples, his breath whooshing down towards his lungs. He scrambled to get them off, not even realising he fell on his ass until the object fell down with a thud.

“Wha—“

“Noise-cancelling headphones.” Ichiko-san said. “The really good kind.”

Izuku blinked, slowly noticing his own short breathing.

“I know you’re scared.” Ichiko-san continued. “That’s why I asked Miki to don’t attend with us, today. I’m sure you wouldn’t have liked to have her see you like this.”

Izuku gulped, slowly rising back up to his feet. His knees felt like jelly.

“I know you rely only on sound to orientate yourself.” She put a gentle hand on his shoulder. “I… I can’t imagine how it must feel, for you. But I honestly think these will help you find yourself.”

Izuku turned his head up, wondering how Ichiko-san looked like in that moment.

“Go deep, and find yourself, Izuku.” She whispered, and those words were enough for Izuku to know this woman deeply, unwavering believed in him.

Slowly, he nodded.

—

It was so, so hard, at first, and so slow.

The headphones scared him. They left him open, and vulnerable. Someone could sneak up to him
and plant a knife in his back and he’d be none the wiser until the blade would’ve sunk deeply into his body.

Sometimes the silence, the absolute lack of anything, made him feel so little, and so lost, and he’d have to scramble to get the headphones off, tears stinging in his eyes.

Ichiko-san wouldn’t comment, guiding him through a series of breathing exercises instead.

Izuku managed to put the headphones on without completely panic a little longer every time. And then he started to take them home. And then he started to put them on on the subway while going to and from school. The first time he tried that he almost puked on a poor, unsuspecting woman that kindly asked him if he felt sick. It was so utterly terrifying to be isolated in that way, while surrounded from perfect strangers.

But he pushed on.

*Do better.*

The first time it happened, Izuku was so confused.

“Mom, I think something is wrong.” He said over breakfast.

He explained to her of the lights. He started to feel lights. Faint, like dying stars barely visible in a city-polluted night sky.

But they were there, nonetheless, tickling at his brain.

Izuku had a taste of a period of his life he’d long forgotten, as he got driven back and forth from doctor to doctor trying to understand what was wrong with him.

But nothing came up, just as nothing came up when he lost his sight at the age of four. His eyes were
still not working. Unseeing. They even scanned his brain, in fear of something bad growing in there, but he came out of it perfectly clear.

They were left only with a whole lot of nothing, in the end.

“But these lights…” Mom asked. “Do you think they are, I don’t know, lamp lights? Something like that?”

Izuku shook his head. He was not getting his sight back. This was something else.

It was hard to explain.

“I don’t know.” He replied in the end. “I don’t know how to explain this. When I’ll find the right words, I will tell you.”

“Ok, honey.” Mom whispered, a gentle hand covering his.

—

It didn’t take it long for him to finally click the pieces into place, once he was finally given a rest from all this doctor-visiting.

It was the headphones.

—

Of course it was not the headphones, per se, but something shifted in him from the moment he’d started using them to meditate.

Something that maybe had always been there, and he just hadn’t know until the chance was given to him.
He could not rely on hearing anymore, when he wore them. So something had to change, something was forced to change, and grow stronger.

Izuku had a theory, and he was going to test it as much as possible.

Inko smiled as she watched her son almost vibrate with excitement. She told her he had a surprise to show all of them when they’d next meet at Ichiko-san’s gym on a sunday, and once they arrived the same kind of smile opened on Ichiko and Miki’s faces when they witnessed Izuku’s plain happiness.

“Ok.” Izuku took in a deep breath. “Ok. Ok, so there’s something I want to try, so hear me out.”

They were sitting with their back against the wall, the four of them. Izuku fished his noise-cancelling headphones from his shoulder sack, and walked into the center of the room.

“I’m going to put these on.” He explained. “The three of you— I need you to walk around me, choose a random spot in the gym, and stand there. I’ll give you fifteen seconds, ok?”

They exchanged puzzled looks, but they complied once Izuku slipped the headphones on, and started to count.

At the end of the fifteen seconds, Inko expected to see him take off the headphones, but that didn’t happen. Instead, Izuku slowly turned around himself, then he walked toward Miki, which was the closest to him.

He put the point of his fingers on her shoulders. “Miki.” He said.

Inko jumped, her eyes going wide.

Izuku made his careful way toward Ichiko-san, put his fingers on her arm. “Ichiko-san.”

He was smiling.
Then he turned, and walked towards her, not a step out of place, making a beeline for her. The walk seemed endless.

His hand was hot on her cheek.

“Mom.” He said, softly. “I can see you.”

—

Chaos ensued.

Izuku slipped off the headphones and Inko started bawling, hugging him so tight Izuku made a noise not unlike a squeaky toy. Ichiko-san was speechless, her mouth open in a perfect O, as did Miki’s, before she yelled and started jumping up and down, laughing.

“Izuku that was sick!” She exclaimed. “How did you do that?!”

“Mom- I can’t breathe— Mom— Mom.” Izuku was palming at her forearm, and she finally let him go. He took a big, gulping breath, before smiling timidly. “I… I take in the experiment was successful.” He added, a little blush rising to his freckled cheeks.

“Successful?! That was super insane, dude, how!!!” Miki yelled, jumping on him, too excited to stand still.

Inko dabbed the tears out of her eyes, adding with a trembling voice. “I… I think we will all love to hear how.”

Izuku beamed.
He told them of the lights. Of his experiments. He told them how he’d made his way to school and back for an entire week, ditching his cane, wearing the headphones.

Inko thought she might have an heart attack right there and then.

He told them of the lights.

“It’s… It’s hard to explain.” He said gesturing wildly. “It’s like. Everything has a light. Everything. And if I concentrate I can feel it. And- And every person has a light, too, and every each one is different. Miki, do you remember when I sneaked up to you, the other day, and you thought your classmates helped me prank you? It wasn’t like that! I just focused and I could feel your light, your very own light, in the middle of the cafeteria, and I knew it was you, even if we were surrounded by hundreds of other students.”

“You little shit.” Miki replied, but there was no venom in her voice. Only happiness, deep and truly.

“I wanted to make sure, today—“ Izuku scratched at the back of his head. “I mean, I’m not that good at it yet. I still need a lot of concentration, It took me so long to pinpoint you in the cafeteria without the headphones but— But I think that’s it. This is it.”

“It… What, sweetheart?” Inko asked, breathless.

“This is my quirk.”

Inko wondered what kind of cruel God would take her son’s ability to see away, just to give him back a different kind.

But seeing Izuku’s unadulterated joy at his discovery, seeing him trying and failing to explain what he could now see (it’s like, feeling colors that I don’t remember existing, mom, I wish I could show you—) with a huge smile on his face, she couldn’t find it in herself to be mad.

Izuku wasn’t quirkless anymore. And, in his own, personal way, he wasn’t blind anymore.
What could a mother possibly ask for?

—

Ichiko-san took the news in great stride and with gusto.

“We are gonna take these lights, and we are gonna make them so strong people will envy your ability to see.” She said. “By God, Izuku, I will make you the hero with the best eyesight in the world if it’s the last thing I do.”

“YEAH!” Izuku yelled, pumping his fist into the air.

—

Miki sometimes felt like Izuku was walking too fast for her. Hell, he wasn’t walking, he was sprinting in full force. He was so far, already, somewhere were she couldn’t reach anymore, and sometimes the thought made her sad.

But, most of the time, she was just happy.

“You know, I don’t think the call of the hero it’s for me.” She said to him, once. “But I like your idea. Being useful and helping others— I like that. I think I could do something like that.”

“Whatever you will decide to do, you will be great at it.” Izuku replied, dead serious. “You already saved me, after all.”

—

Days went by so fast, it’s as if they flied. Izuku thrown himself body and mind in his training, he and Ichiko-san studied together so many ways to refine his newfound ability. Izuku spent a considerable amount of time strategising, testing and stretching the limits of his quirk, throwing all kind of ideas at the wall and see what stuck.
He still had limits. He still couldn’t read a street sign, or a text without the voice-over. He still couldn’t order from a menu without having someone read it to him. He still couldn’t see the new All Might merchandise he’s sure he’d love.

But he could feel so, so much more.

He could feel Miki from three blocks away, her light faint in the distance and yet unmistakable. He could feel Kacchan’s nervous, jittering energy, and avoid him accordingly (what can you do). He could find his way through a crowd, easily, he could put a name into his mind to every little road and shop around his school by the way the lights of those walking the streets reflected on them.

He could feel if someone was angry, or sad, or happy, or— all sorts of feelings, really. He could easily sidestep those that still thought it was funny to try bump into him on purpose.

He could recognize a friendly cat and pet it, and stay away from an angry dog defending its territory.

He could feel the water, full of life even if it was only puddles left after the rain, and jump over it.

There was so much to feel, and Izuku filled his eyes with it until he felt his brain could explode.

—

As life likes to do, more surprises awaits him.

He ends up meeting his number one hero in an underpass as he makes his way back home, happily humming to himself. He perceives something amiss in his radar—as he started to call his quirk—, a light behind him that seemed to suddenly come from below, and he dodges just in time the attack of something smelly and sounding quite unpleasant.

“Damn, kid.” The thing says. “You’re fast.”

“Maybe you’re just slow?” He asks instead, and the thing growls, trying to attack again.
Izuku dodges attack after attack, thinking. He has his backpack, but not much of use in there, except for his folded cane. He doesn’t really use it anymore and he just brings it with him out of habit, so it might as well make for a decent weapon—

“Do not worry, for I am here!”

The booming, familiar voice freezes him in place, and he takes a muddy smack to the face.

“Ew. Gross.” He mutters to himself, shaking the offending semi-liquid away.

When he focuses back after the hit, there’s no way he could possibly mistake who is in front of him even had he not recognized the voice.

All Might’s light is all-encompassing.

—

“Are you ok, boy?”

“All-yes.” He stammers. God, his favorite person in the whole world — besides mom. And Miki. And Ichiko-san— is right in front of him, he thinks he’s allowed a bit of over-emotion.

“Good! Please, step back while I take care of this villain.”

“Yes, sir!” Like he’s going to argue with All Might!

He’s not quite sure what is going on as All Might struggles with the villain, so Izuku forces himself to focus. He could use this opportunity, trying to concentrate and see in his own way, trying to distinguish between the movements.

All Might is almost easy to feel. His sheer power is elegant, his punches perfect. Old memories of a
time when he still could see that amazing smile and the blond hair comes back to him, and he’s four years old all over again.

The other, not so easy. Izuku imagines he must be some sort of shape-shifter, seeing the unpredictable way his light moves. He’s hard to make out, at first, but Izuku focuses and focuses until he can finally really feel.

The mud. Of course. The guy’s body must be made completely out of mud.

Something rolls and gently stops right at Izuku’s feet. He palms down, realizing All Might must’ve dropped whatever he was carrying in order to help him.

When Izuku feels the neck of a bottle under his fingers, an idea forms in his mind.

“Please, do not waste my time.” All Might says. He’s not taunting, his voice is open and honest. “We both know there’s no way you could win this fight, so I think it’s better if you come with me willingly.”

“Fuck you!” The villain yells, and All Might sighs.

“All Might, sir! Catch!” Izuku yells, and throws.

He trusts in his aim. He has practiced his aim until his arms felt like they were about to fall off, and his stomach tried to rebel to him. Over and over and over.

All Might catches.

“Imprison him!” Izuku yells.

He cannot be sure, but it feels like All Might is smiling at him, now. “Good thinking, boy.”

Oh god, the praise, Izuku is dying.
The fight doesn’t last long after that, and the villain ends up humiliatingly imprisoned in a soda bottle.

Toshinori slips it in his pant pocket, as the young boy collected his few groceries and is now handling them to him with a smile that could light up a room.

“My thanks.” He says, smiling back. “What is your name, boy?”

“I’m Izuku! Izuku Midoriya, sir!” The boy replies, excited, looking up at him. And Toshinori looks into the unmoving washed out green, into milky white pupils visible behind the mess curly hair, and realizes.

The boy is blind.

The boy that he distinctly saw dodge a series of fairly quick attacks, light on his feet and clearly used to some kind of training, the boy that had thrown him the bottle at the perfect height and perfect speed, the boy that has easily collected his spilled groceries and orderly put them back into the little plastic bag—

The boy. Is blind.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry I haven't answered to any of your comments, I kind of got blown away by how well y'all welcomed this fic.

Also still writing (currently over 90k, WHAT IS MY LIFE.)

Also made you a sketch of Izuku and Miki enjoy
One step forward, another step forward.

The boy is still looking at him—he can’t, actually, don’t be stupid, he’s probably just doing so to be polite—as if waiting for something. Toshinori coughs, forcing himself out of his stupor.

“You did good, young Midoriya.” He says, and he means it. “You seem… Rather apt at this.”

The young Midoriya let out a little chuckle, his cheeks reddening. “I work out.” He says. An understatement in Toshinori’s eyes. “Sir, um— I’m sure you get this a lot but you’re, like, my favorite hero.”

“I do.” Toshinori admits, softly. “And every time it’s pleasing to hear just as the first.”

The boy chuckles again, almost vibrating with excitement.

“And— And I know you also probably get this a lot as well.” He continues. “But… You’re a great inspiration to me, and every time I’m down and think I can’t go on, I can hear your voice cheering me on and then I can get back up, a-and you’ve inspired me to do better, every day. So, thank you.”

Toshinori blinks, and the silence stretches for a second too long.

“I’m sorry—” The boy stammers, pale green eyes finally breaking contact. “That was maybe a little — I—”

“No, I—” Toshinori says, softly. “I don’t get that as much as you think. It was very moving. Thank you, young Midoriya, I’m honoured you think of me that way.”

Oh god, the young Midoriya looks like he’s about to pass out from excitement. That is never not adorable, but somehow seems even more so coming from this boy.

A sting of pain lets itself know. He should leave. His time is almost up, and he should definitely
leave. But he cannot help it, Toshinori has to know one last thing before bidding farewell to his young fan.

“There’s something I wish to ask you, young Midoriya, hoping I’m not prying.”

“Anything, sir!”

“Are you…” He cannot really think of a way to put it tactfully, so he opts for honesty. “Are you blind?”

Midoriya jumps a bit, his eyes going wide. The sole of his shoes scratches at the asphalt in an almost childish gesture.

“I… I am, sir.”

Oh. Oh, Toshinori is so screwed.

—

The boy seriously looked like he was about to faint when Toshinori asked him if he’d so kind as of walking him to the nearest police station.

“I’m not experienced with the neighborhood, it would be extremely helpful if you could accompany me.”

There really is no need, he could’ve just asked for a general direction and that would’ve been enough, but Toshinori wants to know more about this brilliant young man that destiny has put in front of him, and this seems like the perfect occasion.

“OF COURSE!!!” Midoriya yells, before putting his hands over his mouth. “I’m sorry. Of c-course, although I should call my mom first, if that is ok with you, sir?”

Toshinori nods, before remembering the boy is blind and mentally smacking himself. “Of course, I
wouldn’t want your mother to worry.”

“It’ll only be a m-minute!” Midoriya stammers, fishing his phone out of his pocket and murmuring “Call mom.” Into it.

“Hi, mom— No, I’m fine. I will be a bit late, I’ll explain later— No, no—“

Toshinori is wracked by a coughing fit. Goddammit. His time just goes by so fast.

He looks at the boy, his back turned toward Toshinori, concentrated on his call.

Well. He can’t really see him, right?

Toshinori let himself shift.

—

Izuku closes the call with one last hasty “love you mom bye!” before turning toward All Might, heart beating in his throat.

His favourite hero has complimented him, and thanked him, and now wants him to walk with him ohmygodIzukuisgoingtodie-

Something is different when he turns.

All Might it’s still there, of course. His light it’s still the same but— Less blinding.

Like it’s about to go out.

“All done, young Midoriya?” All Might asks, and then coughs. “Please do not mind my voice, I caught a bit of a sore throat that’s been plaguing me, lately.”
Izuku feels it. He’s lying.

All Might is *lying*.

But… About what?

—

When the boy turned, he froze almost as if he could actually see Toshinori.

But… That wasn’t the case. The way the boy’s eyes looked— It was obvious, really.

What was that made him go silent and wide-eyed, then? Maybe it was just the prospect to walk with him, but…

“All done, young Midoriya?” He asked, and coughed. Shit, his voice. “Please do not mind my voice, I caught a bit of a sore throat that’s been plaguing me, lately.”

Young Midoriya blinked, and relaxed.

“Of course.” He replied, strangely serious. “I… Ok, this way, sir.”

—

They walked.

All Might seemed oddly interested in him. And as much as that made his heart swell and his chest feel light, Izuku was unsure. Was he always this expansive with all his fans? Izuku couldn’t imagine it— The man was the most beloved hero in the world, there was no way he’d have the time to get so interested in every each one of his fans.
He wondered what made All Might so curious about him.

*Ok, get that ego and squash it, now, Midoriya. If you allow this to go to your head, you’re soon gonna become Kacchan 2.0.*

“Sir, can I ask you something a bit rude?” He says, in a moment of silence.

All Might chuckles. “Well, I did ask a rather personal question to you, earlier. I guess it’s only fair.”

“Why, um—“ Izuku hesitates, unsure about how to put this without offending his idol. “I’m sure you’re a very kind person, but I cannot imagine you spending so much time getting to know all your fans. That’s like, physically impossible. So… Why me?”

*And perceptive too,* Toshinori thought.

The boy has turned toward him, his eyebrows a little creased. An hand was going up and down his sleeve, in a probably unconscious nervous gesture.

“That is indeed true.” Toshinori weighs his words. “As much as I would love the be able to spend time with all my fans, that is simply not feasible. Today, you’ve happened to cross my path, and you’ve done something I simply could not think was possible for a boy in your… Situation.”

Toshinori hadn’t thought much of the boy’s ability he’d witnessed, at first. It was pleasing, sure, to see a young man such as Midoriya simply not relying on his quirk and actually being physically trained, but not so rare.

That was until he realized that Midoriya was blind.

“I’m… Not sure I’m following.” Midoriya replies, perplexed.

“Young Midoriya, I saw you going toe to toe with a villain, you got hit only when I accidentally distracted you. Which I should apologize for, actually.”

The boy scratches the back of his head, embarrassed. “I-it was nothing, really—“
“And—“ Toshinori continues. “Under pressure, you thought of a solution with what you had available on your hands, and precisely thrown the bottle at me so I could catch it without having to get both my hands off the villain. I mean no offense when I say this, but I think you understand me when I say this is quite the feat for any boy your age, let alone someone that cannot see.”

Midoriya was so red that the greenish hue of his hair made him look like a little, adorable tomato.

“I— No offense taken, sir.” He mutters, looking positively like someone that took the exact contrary of offense from his sentence.

“You understand my interest, now?” Midoriya nods, wordlessly. “Tell me, could it possibly be that you’re aiming to become a hero?”

Midoriya basically jumps in his skin, turning his head towards him, eyes as big as plates. “I—It has been my dream since I was a kid.” He whispers, as if he’s afraid the words might break once out of his mouth.

Toshinori nods, satisfied. “I’m glad.” He says, then. “I’m sure you have a brilliant path in front of you. I hope to be able to see you grow into a fine hero, one day.”

—

This is it. Izuku has died and is now in heaven. There’s no way this is real.

There’s so much he wants to say— But the words stop in his throat and gets all garbled and messy and Izuku knows that if he tries to talk now all that would come out would be something akin to that weird key mashing Miki replies to him with whenever he sends her some funny text.

So he shuts his mouth, and nods.

They walk in companionable silence for a bit. All Might feels lost in his thoughts, and as curious as Izuku is to know what he’s thinking about he’s really not about to pry, not when he’s not even able to string a single, coherent sentence together.
Izuku perceives a light suddenly coming from his right, and tenses. Whoever it is, stumbles into All Might with a oof before running away as if he hadn’t just crashed into the symbol of peace.

“Hey!” Izuku exclaims, outraged.

“Walk less slowly next time, assholes!” The guy replied, clearly already far.

Izuku can’t believe his ears.

“Man, some people—“ He mutters “I don’t know what that guy’s deal was, but if he didn’t notice who he just crashed into he must be more blind than me.”

All Might let out a little choked sound and then starts laughing, heartily.

Izuku feels himself blushing, satisfied. That laugh is different from the one All Might usually uses, it feels more— Personal.

Izuku always heard the phrase “Don’t meet your heroes”, and while he can understand the meaning of it, he cannot find himself agreeing with it at the moment.

All Might is just as wonderful as Izuku has always imagined him to be.

—

They reach the police station a little too early for Izuku’s tastes.

“Oh, thank you so much, young Midoriya.” All Might says, putting an hand on his shoulder. “You’ve been of utmost help, today.”

Izuku cannot help it. As selfish as it is, he doesn’t want to separate from his idol yet. With what he know must only be described as a pout, he wordlessly nods.
Silence stretches as All Might probably stares at him.

“Could you please wait for me outside?” All Might says, his words almost calculating. “I’ll make sure the villain is properly cared for, and then walk you home. For safety, you see.”

Izuku’s heart jumps in his throat, and then he beams. “Of course. For safety!”

He can just feel the smile All Might gives him before entering the police station, and as he does so, Izuku watches his light go bright and golden and blinding again. Huh. Weird.

—

After explaining the situation to the starstruck police officer, Toshinori slips the bottle out of his… Pocket…

The bottle is not there.

He frantically thinks. The guy in a hurry accidentally crashing into him— That’s when it must’ve fallen out.

He had been too smitten with Midoriya’s surprising sense of humor to notice.

Stupid stupid stupid stupid—

“You’re such a fucking idiot.” A voice in his head that sounds suspiciously like Gran Torino reprimands him.

Toshinori really cannot argue with that.

—
Izuku sits outside on a pot, the bush leaves tickling his neck, as he swings his legs back and forth.

He knows it’s kind of a childish, but he can’t help it, he’s just too excited to sit still—

He jumps when he hears yelling in the distance. He focuses, just in time to perceive a familiar light rapidly sliding toward the center of the city— No, wait.

Two familiar lights.

Oh. Oh no.

Toshinori crashes into the boy just as he steps out the police station, sending him tumbling on the sidewalk.

“Young Midoriya! Are you—” Before he can even finish the sentence, the boy is back on his feet, frantic, grabbing at his shirt.

“All Might— That mud guy— Kacchan— He took him! He took Kacchan!”

Toshinori doesn’t know what the boy is talking about. He puts his hands on Midoriya’s shoulder.

“My boy, I’m afraid I will not be able to walk you home, today.” Toshinori says, regretfully. “You are not responsible for my mistakes, but nonetheless, I need to remedy to them. Where did the villain go?”

Izuku points in the direction of the city centre, wordlessly. His hands let All Might’s shirt go as he flexes down—

“All Might, wait—“
— And he’s off.

Izuku watches the blinding light soar away, a sting of sadness in his chest.

And Kacchan…

*Kacchan.*

Well… All Might technically didn’t tell Izuku not to follow, right?

—

Toshinori unwillingly shifts back just as he’s about to hit the floor.

Shitshitshitshit—

Luckily for him, he manages to stick a semi-decent landing. His body does not agree with his score of *semi-decent* and lets itself know, shaking him with coughs as blood drips from his chin.

He made such a mess. God, he’s the *worst*—

A giant foot comes in his field of vision. There’s a large crowd, but they are all turned away from him, thankfully.

“Please, everyone, stand back!” A female voice booming over the chaos. Little columns of smoke are starting to raise into the sky. “Make sure you and everyone around you is out of danger! Let us take care of this!”

Mount lady, that’s her name, Toshinori is sure. A rather new entry into the hero world.
The are others, he can see them, and he let out a little sigh of relief.

God, he is the worst. Makes a mess of things, disappoints a young, eager fan, and then is relieved when others are behind him, cleaning up his shit. What would sensei think of him?

He wobbles to the other side of the road, trying to see over the crowd. At least his considerable height comes in handy, for once.

It is the mud-guy, indeed. Strangely enough, there are explosions coming out of him. That was what must’ve lit all the fires, but Toshinori is perplexed— Why did the villain not use those explosions against him in the first place?

His heart almost skips a beat when he realizes— There’s a boy trapped in the mud, cannot be older than young Midoriya—

His heart definitely skips a beat when he sees Midoriya pop out the front of the crowd, charging against the villain.

—

Kacchan’s light is so distressed.

Izuku didn’t really had the time to be afraid, during his encounter with the mud villain. He focused into how to fight back, at first, and then All Might arrived, and how could Izuku possibly be afraid after that?

But— Of course he should’ve been. Of course Kacchan is afraid. For all his brashness and big words, Kacchan it’s still just a boy, like him.

And— Where’s All Might? He should pop up in the crowd, with his golden light, but Izuku can’t feel it, despite the advantage All Might had over him—

Izuku scans the crowd. It’s hard to focus, when everyone’s lights are so frantic, and there are other heroes too, he can hear them trying to find a breach into the villain’s defenses—
Finally he finds it. All Might’s light is… Is weak again.

*What is going on?*

Kacchan screams something unintelligible over the general noise, and his light it’s so, _so scared_—

And suddenly, nothing really matters anymore. No matter how much Kacchan has hurt him, of many tears Izuku spilled because of his old friend.

Kacchan was scared.

Izuku charges before he has the time to even realize his feet are moving.

—

It all happens in a matter of seconds—

_He thinks he hears All Might scream “Midoriya, no!” but it’s hard to tell over the cacophony, more probably it’s a trick of his imagination—_

Izuku feels the warmth of living fire in the reflection of Kacchan’s light.

He grabs at it without slowing his dash— It’s a piece of something— Maybe wood, burning lively at the tip, the warmth it’s almost unbearable—

It’s perfect.

_He thinks he hears Kacchan go “Izuku…?” but it’s hard to tell over the cacophony. That is surely a trick of his imagination, Kacchan hasn’t called him with his given name in years—_
The mud guy is more still, now. Trying to contain the uncontainable force that is Katsuki Bakugou, less shifty and liquid-y. Izuku focus, focus until it’s just the two of them in his dark world, until he feels like he’s not even looking at mud-guy’s light, but directly into his soul, down to his most vulnerable parts— And jumps.

The burning stick sinks directly into mud-guy’s eye.

—

The pro-heroes take him and Kacchan away as soon as Mud-guy releases Kacchan, screaming in pain.

“What do you think you were doing—“ “That was dangerous—“ “Are you crazy—?!“

There are voice reprimanding him, but Izuku pays them no mind. He’s too busy trying to open back the scope of his radar, like a camera lens un-focusing away from a single object. His heart roars in his veins and his breathing is short and ragged—

Kacchan’s light at his side is still, unnaturally so. As if he’s concentrating his entire being on something—

Him.

Izuku gulps, all the noises washing over him, as if he just snapped out of a dream.

He doesn’t have time to think about Kacchan’s sudden focus on him, though. All Might’s light is back, right in front of him. He must’ve jumped into the fight not long after Izuku and Kacchan had been dragged away. But something is different, a different feeling to it like… Like shame.

Izuku is far too accustomed to that particular feel.

All Might is ashamed.
“What was that?”

Things have quieted down. Police forces and firefighters and ambulances have arrived. Izuku and Kacchan got dragged over to a couple of paramedics that checked them and ordered them not to move. Kacchan was unharmed, for the most part, and Izuku was definitely unharmed except for a small scrape on his palm that he got when he fell down after sinking the burning stick into the mud-guy’s eye.

After the paramedics were satisfied with their condition and left them with a bottle of water each sitting inside one of the ambulances, Kacchan asked that question.

Izuku wasn’t even sure what he was referring to. So many things have happened that pinpointing exactly what Kacchan meant with that seemed an impossible task.

Then again, knowing Kacchan, he probably meant the whole thing from the very first moment Izuku has emerged from the crowd.

Izuku is turned toward Kacchan, not sure if he’s actually looking at him. There’s so much he could say—

“You looked like you needed help.” Are the words that find their way out of Izuku’s throat, weakly.

“You…” Kacchan hesitates. “You can’t see, dipshit.” but his words lack the usual bite.

Izuku smiles sadly. “No.” He says. “I guess not.”

Despite Kacchan’s -loud, vehement- protests, they are not allowed to leave until their parents come
pick them up. Kacchan’s mother is the first to arrive, crushing Kacchan in what Izuku can only imagine is a bear-hug, going by his muffled protests.

“Izuku—” She’s breathless after finally putting Kacchan down. “I— They told me something of what has happened on the phone, did you really—“

Before she could finish the sentence, mom arrives.

“IZUKU!” Now it’s his turn to get crushed into a bear hug. “Izuku, Oh my god, I was so scared, don’t you ever scare me like that again—“

“Mom, mom I’m fine—“ He tries to say. “I really am, look, I’m fine. I’m fine.”

Mom let out a watery sigh, her hands on his cheek, caressing him frantically. He let her hug him again without a protest. She deserves as much after the scare he must’ve given her.

The her light turns from worried to absolutely enraged.

Uh-oh—

“Young man.” She says, steel in her voice, hands like bricks on Izuku’s shoulder. “I got told on the phone you charged against a villain. You did not charge against villain, right?”

“Um—"

Izuku was screwed.

—

Toshinori made his way over the ambulance where the two boys were sitting.
He had no juice left him, wobbling in his skeletal —*his normal*— form over there. He did not like the idea of approaching them in his current body, but he trusted young Midoriya would recognize him, at least.

It was clear that the boy had much more to him that his plain-looking exterior let on.

It was also clear that the boy had no self-preservation whatsoever, and as hypocritical as it was of Toshinori, he was not gonna let this slide. The boy better cram in that curly head of his that getting himself killed before reaching the adult age was *not* the way to become a hero.

Two women where standing in front of the ambulance, bot of them with their arms around their respective sons.

It was pretty clear at first sight who they were.

Then the woman that could only be Midoriya’s mother going by the glaring similarity between them put her hands on Midoriya’s shoulder. Her gaze would have scared Toshinori had it been pointed at him. He once knew someone that would point that kind of gaze at him.

“Young man. I got told on the phone you charged against a villain. You did not charge against villain, *right*?”

Toshinori sighs. The boy deserved a scolding, but not getting the blame that he was overdue on his shoulders would be unfair and cruel toward young Midoriya.

“Ma’am, a word, if you please.” He says, the woman turning toward him like an eagle.

She *really* reminds him of a certain someone.

Midoriya blinks and then his shoulders relax. “Al—” But he immediately shut his mouth, just as Toshinori was about to internally lose his shit at the prospect of the boy letting *those two* words out.

Young Midoriya looks at him —he had the distinct feeling he was literally *looking at him*, as impossible as that was—, frowned, and then said nothing else, a knowing look on his face.
The jig was up. And Midoriya Izuku was such a puzzling mystery in his mind, now.

—

Izuku bit down his tongue to stop himself from blurting out All Might’s name. His light was dim again, and he felt the panic in it as soon as Izuku has opened his mouth.

All Might… He must’ve looked something different than usual. It was the only conclusion he could possibly come to. The guy that bumped them in the streets, the non-reaction from his mom— She was as much of an All Might fan as Izuku was, there’s was no way she wouldn’t have freaked out at seeing him approach them, no matter how angry at Izuku she was.

Yes. It all made sense. Izuku had no idea how or why, but that was the only sensible, logical conclusion

So he shut his mouth, hoping his face was conveying his silent understanding to All Might.

All Might’s secret would be safe with him. He’d go to the grave not telling anyone, if necessary.

—

“Do… We know each other?” Inko asked, perplexed.

Before the sickly looking, tall blond man could answer, a police officer approached them, looking for Katsuki.

“we need to ask him some questions. Of course as his mother, you can come with us.” The officer says, addressing Mitsuki. “It’ll only take a few minutes.”

“Of course.” She says, and Katsuki, bless his little grumpy soul, does not protest this time, dutifully following the officer despite the deep frown on his face. “I’ll… See you later, Inko.” She says, sounding just as stress and tired as Inko does.
They watch the couple leave, the three of them, before Inko turns back towards the blond man.

“I am… Responsible for young Midoriya’s actions.” He says, continuing as if there had been no interruptions. He seems to look slightly relieved, despite the bomb he just dropped on her.

“Excuse me?!”

“No, mom, don’t get mad—“ Izuku says, frantically. “Al— I mean, um— Sir?” He adds, sounding more confused than anything.

“I understand your anger, and I will not shy away from it.” The blond man continues. His voice is vaguely scratchy, and the stain on his shirt looks definitely like blood.

He sounds like someone that walked to hell. And then a bit further. And then came back, before walking into hell again.

“But, if you let me, I would like to explain the matter in a… More private setting.” He coughs.

Inko squints menacingly, both hands firm on her son.

“Mom.”

Izuku voice is low, and serious, and she turns towards him. His face is turned up to her, his unseeing eyes trying to convey a feeling that doesn’t quite manage to get through.


—

It’s late, very late, later than Izuku is usually allowed to stay up. He should go to school tomorrow.
Inko knows he’s not going to school tomorrow.

She sighs, watching her son trying to dig a hole in their living room as he mutters to himself God only knows what. She has only caught some words there and then, something about a different form, she really can’t make much out of it.

Izuku is a constant source of surprises. Just as she thinks she has figured him out, at least a bit, there he goes with some new crazy antics.

What did she do wrong, and yet so, so right to get a son like him?

A knock on the door, Izuku jumps, all jittery, nervous energy.

“Stay there.” She says, trying to muster some resemblance of anger in her voice. “Sit down. You’re walking a fine line here, mister.”

Izuku instantly obeys, sitting down on his favorite armchair straight as a plank.

When she opens the door, the sickly blond man is there, with a clean set of clothes, still looking like death warmed over.

“Sorry for the lateness—“ He says. He sounds breathless. “I tried to get things done as fast as possible, but there was a lot of talking with the police forces, and I had to get out of those clothes—You know—“ He nervously scratches at his head.

“Yes, I know.” Inko squints. There had been blood on his shirt, that afternoon. “Now, I do not know who you are, and I do not care why my son seems to think you are deserving of trust, I’m giving you a chance on his behalf, but you better have a really good explanation of all this, before I call the police on you.”

Izuku gasps in a way that would suggest she just walked up to a deity and spit in their face.

“MOM!!!” He screams. “RUDE!”
Surprisingly enough, the blond man chuckles.

“Young Midoriya, your mother has a fiery spirit. I can see from who you took after.” He says. His tone is… Fond? “You are very lucky.”

“I am but like, rude!” Izuku sounds frantic, his face flushed. “Sir, I’m really sorry—“

“You do not decide who I should be sorry for.” Inko interrupts, pointing at her son. “And you.” She says, turning back toward the man. “Get your ass on my couch and start talking.”

Izuku groans, hiding his face in his hands.

—

The blond man sits on her couch, his long legs looks cramped in the space between it and the coffee table that for her and Izuku is usually more than enough.

He holds his hand out.

“My name is Toshinori Yagi.” He says. “But you might know me as All Might.”

Inko almost faints.

—

Once she’s done hyperventilating, with the blond man -All Might- fussing over her with a guilty expression, she turns slowly over her son.

“Do not look at me like that!” Izuku protests. “I tried to tell you to stop being rude!”

All Might-Toshinori-Whatever doesn’t seem to react to Izuku’s words with other than a blink of
very slight amusement.

“Do not be so hard on your mother, young Midoriya.” He says. “I deserve a bit of rudeness, seeing how irresponsible I have been today.”

“That’s not true—” Izuku pouts, childlike.

Inko wants to apologize, every single part of her being it’s screaming at her to apologize to this man that both her and her son have idolised for as long as Izuku has been able to pronounce words.

She doesn’t.

“I…” She catches her breath some more. “I don’t think there’s any need to say that I truly admire you and respect the work you’ve done in all these years, but I hope you will understand that I still want a solid explanation as of why you, of all people, have put my son in danger today.”

Strangely enough, Izuku does not protest at her words in the slightest, this time.

All Might nods, a deep frown casted on his emaciated features. “I’d expect nothing less from you, Miss Midoriya.” His voice is both gentle and full of regrets. “I’m afraid this might turn to be a long story, sorry for keeping you both up for this long.”

—

“I hope you will both forgive me for the fact I cannot give you the full story. What I can say to you is that my powers are not infinite— Following an incident around five years ago, I’ve found myself being able to rely on them less and less, that is why I now look like the way I do, at least for you, Miss Midoriya. Although I think young Midoriya here has already figured it out, somehow.”

“I suspected something of the sort.” Izuku says in a quiet voice.

“Hopefully you will be able to tell me how, later?”
Izuku nods.

“Thank you.” All Might resumes. “I trust in you both that you will not let this information outside this living room. It is imperative that my current status stays hidden as long as it’s possible.”

He continues, explaining to Inko how he just so happened to see Izuku deal with the mud villain after having followed him through the sewers, how impressed he had been with Izuku’s agility and his quick thinking (Izuku hid his red face into a pillow at that point, making both of them smile silently), how he asked Izuku to walk him in order to find out more about this young, talented boy, how he let himself get distracted and make a stupid mistake.

“Oh!” Izuku exclaims at that point. “It must’ve been when that guy run into you, isn’t it?”

“That’s also what I figured.” All Might nods. “I should’ve secured the bottle better. Anyway, my mistake costed us a whole lot of grief today, and I’m partially, if not completely, responsible for your actions that followed.”

Izuku squirms, uncomfortable “You can’t blame yourself for that—“

“But I do.” All Might interrupts him, and for the first time during that night, his voice turns into steel, serious. “Young Midoriya, you are smart, and talented, undoubtedly. But what you’ve done today was stupid, irresponsible, and not something like I thought a boy as brilliant as you would act.”

Izuku has the decency to look properly ashamed, at least, Inko thinks to herself with a little sigh.

“I sure hope our little chat didn’t go to your head, otherwise I’d be possibly even more disappointed in you.” All Might adds, and his words might’ve been a whip, seeing at how hard Izuku flinched.

“No!” He says, almost getting out of his seat, before composing himself back again “No- That’s not it. I swear. I knew you’d be angry if I followed, but I did it anyway. That is my responsibility, and mine alone.”

Izuku’s voice turned into a whisper during the sentence, and All Might’s voice softened once more.
“why did you do it, then?”

“Kacchan—“ Izuku’s voice itches in his throat. “The villain took Kacchan. How could I turn my back and walk home, just like that? I knew Kacchan would be scared, that he would need help. I couldn’t— I couldn’t leave just like that. Not when I knew that someone, out there, needed help.”

—

Toshinori closes his eyes, a deep sigh passing through him after hearing those words.

He shouldn’t. There were so, so many reasons why he shouldn’t.

_I couldn’t leave just like that. Not when I knew that someone, out there, needed help._

But in his heart, his stupid, damaged, still beating heart, he knows that the decision is already half made.

—

“I see.” All Might says thoughtfully after long seconds of silence filled only by the ticking of the clock arms going by.

“I’m sorry.” Izuku says, fists tight in his lap. “I know I did a stupid thing, and I know I’m super grounded, mom.” He flashes her a weak smile. “But I just… I just could not try to help. Please, try to understand.”

Inko sighed again, demurely dabbing at her wet eyes, but her voice does not waver. “You are in trouble for sure.” She says, before reaching out and putting an hand on her son’s. “And I understand that your heart is too big for your own good, Izuku. Sometimes, I wish you’d be a little more selfish.”

Izuku squirms a bit, muttering something unintelligible, as All Might chuckles again.

“My sensei once told me something like that, a long time ago.” He says, fondly. “You remind me of
her very much, Miss Midoriya.”

“Oh, my—“ Inko stutters, her hands flying to her rapidly reddening cheeks. “That is a bit much, sir —“

All Might laughs again. It’s a nice laugh.

“I believe that destiny has put me in a good place today, despite everything that has happened.” He says, long, thin fingers crossing in his lap. “You are both good people, and if I had to reveal my secret to someone, I’m very glad it happened to be the two of you.”

The way mother and son blushed was very similar, Toshinori noted. They both started from the ears.

“Miss Midoriya, I have very many questions about your son, but I must start with this one” Toshinori says, after leaving them both a few instants to calm down. “Would you allow me to see after his studies?”

Inko really faints, this time.

Chapter End Notes

I’m currently at a point in this story in which ALL THE SHIT IS HAPPENING and posting this chapter that is so much tamer in comparison gave me a whiplash lmao
“Oh, that was embarrassing—“ She says, once she’s finally back on her feet. “I’m so sorry— I’ll go make us all some hot tea, you two can— Um, talk. I’ll be right back.”

She hurries out, and Izuku sinks back into his armchair.

“Oh my god.” He says. “Oh my god. You can’t just drop things like that! Hadn’t mom fainted, I think I’d have died of an heart attack myself!”

The words are out before his brain really catches up about who he’s talking to, and Izuku slaps both hands on his mouth. But All Might’s light feels amused, even possibly fond.

“I think we will both be less nervous if we start addressing each other a bit less formally, young Midoriya.” He says.

“Does that mean you’ll call me Izuku? Because I’d die. I’d literally die.” Izuku says, his traitorous mouth moving on its own again.

He should just stop talking. His brain-to-mouth filter is clearly fried.

“Let’s avoid premature deaths.” All Might says, a laugh in his voice. “So, young Midoriya, why don’t you tell me about yourself?”

“I tend to over-talk a bit, so I’ll try my best to give you the abridged version—“ Midoriya started, vaguely flustered.

So he spoke. Of how he’d always admired heroes and has dreamt of becoming one ever since he’d
been able to walk, how he waited and waited for a quirk that he thought never came.

How he’d lost his sight at only four, and lived his life in the dark ever since.

“In retrospect, that obviously was my quirk manifesting.” Izuku said, pulling at his lower lip thoughtfully. “I just didn’t know yet. I didn’t find out until, like, a month and a half ago.”

Toshinori blinked, perplexed. “Please enlighten me?”

And he did, explaining of how his meditation led to him to the blossoming of his ability, these “lights” that allowed him to see so much.

“That’s how I realized that you didn’t look… Well, like you— All the time. Your light shifts with you, and people obviously reacted to you differently, so putting two and two together I could only come to that conclusion.”

“I see.” Toshinori replies, thoughtfully. While they spoke, Inko came back with freshly brewed tea and a plate of cookies she very unsubtly pushed in his direction.

There it goes, another person in the constantly growing collection of “people that tries to feed Toshinori please for the love of God eat something”. He dutifully grabs a cookie, if only to avoid her pointed look.

“Could you tell me more about your quirk? For what I gather, these lights you see, are unique to every living being. Can you see not-biological matter as well?”

“In a sense.” Midoriya replies. “I don’t think not biological matter actually emits a signal I can perceive, but I can still feel it thanks to the living things surrounding it. It’s like their lights reflect on surfaces, that way I’m able to feel them and move accordingly, if that makes sense.”

“It does.” Toshinori replies, taking a sip of his tea. “You said you saw that villain take away your friend, by recognising their lights. How far were they from you?”

“At the moment the most I’m able to perceive without focusing too much it’s about, I’d say, a radius
of two-three hundred meters, give or take? I’ve reached around six hundred by focusing really hard, but that made me feel very sick. It’s—Hard, to perceive the sheer number of things alive around me.” Midoriya finished his tea in record time and was now distractedly rolling the empty cup in his hands. “I managed to stretch the radius very far since I first discovered my quirk, but at times the input gets overwhelming and I need to turn it off for a bit.”

Toshinori took his second cookie, distractedly. “That is quite impressive, I have to say.” He says after taking a bite. “Both the scope of your quirk, and how much you’ve been able to refine it after having discovered it only a short time ago.”

The young Midoriya smiles, red dusting his cheek.

“I cannot even count the amount of times an ability like yours would’ve made my work so much easier, and saved so many more lives.” Toshinori adds, almost too distracted by his own racing thoughts to realize he said that aloud. “Impressive. Very impressive.”

Inko Midoriya let out a little hiccup, that shakes him out of his stupor. When he turns to her, her eyes are wet.

“I’m sorry—” She says, her voice trembling. “I— Izuku is a good son— A fantastic one, actually.”

“Mom—”

“But— he has lived a hard life, and has managed to get over so many obstacles only counting on his own strength, and yet, no one but a very selected few around him has ever saw his efforts and recognized his merits. To have someone— No, to have you, between all, to see them— I— Thank you.”

A moment of silence follows the trembly and yet emphatic sentence, before the young Midoriya gets out of his armchair to kneel near his mother, surrounding her in a hug. His unseeing eyes are wet, but he does not cry.

Toshinori is just assured yet again that his trust is not wasted with this family.

“I do not only recognise young Midoriya’s merits.” He says gently, putting an hand on her shoulder. “But yours as well. You’ve done a fantastic job raising your son, Miss Midoriya. You should be
“proud.”

Her sobs somehow sounds like music, in Toshinori’s ears.

—

He bids his farewell at almost three in the morning after Inko Midoriya has calmed down enough.

“There’s much to discuss still, but I think we all need to rest, for now.” He said, taking into young Midoriya’s sleepy expression. “I will visit in the evening to speak some more, later today, if that is ok with you two?”

“Would you like to come for dinner?” Young Midoriya blurted, his mom turning towards him with a frown.

“Izuku—!”

“Oh, please, like you wouldn’t love that.” He replied, shrugging.

“I would like to come for dinner, as long as Miss Midoriya promises me not to overdo herself.” Toshinori replied with a little laugh.

The woman blushed a bit. “Well, I guess dinner it is, then.”

He turned one last time as mother and son waved at him and wished him a good night, slowly making his way back to his new, and still mostly empty, apartment.

The night air is chilly, and the few visible stars he can see up in the sky seems to shine brighter than usual, that night.

He wonders if sensei would approve of his decision.
But first, for the time being, he needs to make some calls, and hope his living friends will agree with the conclusion he has come to.

—

“So, would you like to go to UA, young Midoriya?”

This is already the third time All Might has come for dinner. The first two were mostly spent speaking some more of Izuku’s life, telling All Might about Miki and Ichiko and the training he has been going through for the past year and some.

“I see, you already have a solid basic knowledge of combat, that is really good.” All Might said. “I would like to speak with your sensei.”

So that was a point of discussion too, making arrangements. They’ve been thinking about how to introduce All Might without giving his identity away (“I’m sorry, I do not wish to force you to lie to your friends, of course, but I am afraid this is a necessity I cannot negotiate over.”) when All Might blurted that question out.

Izuku almost drops his chopsticks.

“I—“

Yes. Of course I would like that. His mind screams at him. But can he?

Yes, he discovered his quirk and, yes, thanks to it he was now more independent than ever.

But he was still blind. He still had enormous limits. And his strength was only equivalent to the limits of his own body.

Could someone like him really make it into UA’s hero course?

“Young Midoriya, I like to think my judgment counts for something.” All Might nudges him, gently,
like a lion-dad nipping at his pups to poke at their egos. “So, I’m going to ask again. Would you like to go to UA?”

Izuku closes his fist. “Yes.” He says. “Yes. I want to go UA.”

——

“I’m Toshi Shimura, a talent-scout from UA.” The thin, tall, sickly-looking blond man in a too-big suit offers his hand. “Miss Kobayakwa, young Midoriya has told me much about you, and as I’ve taken interest in his talents I would like to speak to you about his training, if possible?”

Ichiko is left speechless for a moment. Izuku looks nervous near them, playing with his fingers, his head going back and forth between her and the man he introduced to her.

“A talent-scout from UA—“ She breathes out. “Izuku, you scored big this time.” She grins, grabbing the man’s hand in solid grip. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Shimura. I would love to speak to you about Izuku’s future.”

Izuku relaxes so plainly he looks as if he’s about to melt.

——

The talent-scout that has taken interest in Izuku is kind of an odd guy, but by the way he talks, Miki realized, he probably was a huge dork, just like Izuku.

He has been coming to their training sessions on and off. Sometimes offering suggestions, mostly just watching. It was clear he deeply respected mom’s training ability, as he nods and hums and writes something down in a little block notes.

Sometimes he talks to her, too. He’s very kind.

“Young Kobayakawa, I wonder if you also might be interested in a career in hero-ing, like your friend is?” He asked, once.
Miki laughed. “No, no, that stuff ain’t for me.” She replied. “I like training with Izuku and mom, and I know I’m pretty good at self defense, but if I have to be honest, I don’t want to unleash my quirk onto a living thing every again. I haven’t decided yet what I want to do, but that’s ok. I’ll find my road, like Izuku did.”

The man hummed thoughtfully. “I see. You seem very driven, I’m sure you will soon find what you really excel into.”

“For now, the one thing I excel into is making Izuku work harder.” She replied, grinning, and jumped up. “MOVE YOUR ASS, MIDORIYA, THAT FOOTING IS SLOPPY AS HELL!”

“YES, M’AM!” Izuku replied, grinning, with a little salute. The blond man laughed, clearly satisfied by only God knew what.

One time he wasn’t alone. He came with a man with long, dark, messy hair and bags under his eyes so big they must be paying rent, by now.

Izuku had been too focused sparring with mom to notice, at first, and when he spared a single perplexed look in their direction that won him an ass-to-the-grass moment when mom flipped him over.

“Focus, Izuku!”

“Yes, sorry!” Came the immediate reply, as Izuku did not waste a single second getting back up on his feet.

The two men did not intervene all lesson, whispering between themselves for a while, and when the dark-haired man left, Mr. Shimura had a smile on his face that Miki could only describe as smug.

—I—

“I have no doubt that with the amount of time we still have and with your excellent teaching, Miss Kobayakwa, young Midoriya will be more than prepared for the entrance exam at UA. But we have a problem.”
They were sitting around a small plastic table in the garden behind Ichiko’s gym, tea cups and a tray of sweets from the bakery down the road between them. The table was too small for five people, and All Might was hunched over, his knees touching the plastic edges. Downsides of being a giant, Inko guessed with a little internal laugh.

“What kind of problem?” Izuku piped up, a worried frown creasing his eyebrows behind the messy hair.

“It is no obstacle I do not trust you will be perfectly able to surpass, my boy, but we must prepare.” All Might said, in a gentle voice. “You see, the physical exam usually consist in a point-based system where the contestants must take down as many robots as possible, three models of which gives points from one to three depending on the model you manage to take down, and one model which is usually recommended to avoid, as it does not give any point. It is a flawed system.” All Might sighed. “If I have to be honest, I do not approve of it too much. It gives an unfair advantage to those who posses very physically strong quirks, while undervaluing those that, like you, possess different, more subtle kind of talents.”

“Of course—“ Izuku muttered, pulling at his lower lip. “There’s only so much I can do, when I’m simply not strong enough. I doubt I could possibly be able to take down a robot bare-handed.”

“But I have an idea.” All Might continue, fishing something from a battered leather bag he brought with him.

“A… Hair drier?” Miki asked, tilting one of her eyebrows.

“It’s just a hunch I have.” All Might said, leaning over the table to put the object in Izuku’s hand. “But young Midoriya, tell me: If you focus on this hair drier, can you make out the inside components of it?”

Izuku has never tried something like that. He usually did not pay too much attention to not living things, just as much as he needed to be able to move freely.

He blinked, closing his fingers around the plastic shell of the object, and focused.

He could feel, a bit. It was kind of a mess, all those cables and little parts and things Izuku really did not have any knowledge of.
“I… I think I can?” He said after a good couple of minutes, after everyone around the table had silently, patiently waited for him.

“Good.” All Might said. “We have a plan, then.”

—

His home turned into a laboratory, pretty much.

There were old, broken appliances everywhere. From washing machines to old phones. Opened and dismantled, as Izuku studied them in and out. Inko has sort of given up to the controlled chaos.

“Where are you two even getting all this stuff from?” She asked a little worried as he and All Might transported in a mini fridge.

“Oh, you know that beach that no one goes to anymore because of all the garbage?” Izuku replied.

“Ugh— Fine, just make sure you don’t bring bugs or rats in, please.” She sighed. “And I want this stuff out as soon as you’re done with your exam!” She added, severe.

All Might seemed kind of embarrassed as he apologized.

Izuku had never imagined he’d end up having to learn the intricacies of technologies, one day, but it certainly gave him a new perspective.

“There’s so much I’ve always taken for granted.” He said one day, as he rummaged inside one of those super old, bulky tvs. “I’ve never thought about how complicated all these every-day objects we use really are.”

“Mmmh.” All Might hummed. “That is true. But it’s a good realization. Makes you appreciate even more what you have, doesn’t it?”
Izuku grinned, his cheek smudged with oil, but then the smile slid off his face.

“All Might?”

“Yes?”

“Do you—“ A gulp. “Do you really think this will work?”

Toshinori let a couple of seconds pass, weighing his words on his tongue.

“I know for a fact that the robots are designed to have weak points. To present young boys and girls like you with state of the art technology would be an unfair and borderline cruel challenge. So, yes, I believe that if you refine your ability, you will be able to see those weak points, and exploit them.” He says.

Young Midoriya hums, wrinkling his nose in distaste.

“Is something the matter?” Toshinori asks, surprised by the expression.

“It’s just… You’re not giving me an unfair advantage over the others by telling me this, right?”

The question comes as a surprise, and at the same time, not a surprise at all.

“You are honest to a fault, my boy.” Toshinori chuckles. “Do not worry about that. The exam has been the same for years. All your peers will be able to look into it and prepare accordingly, if they so desire.”

Young Midoriya is watching him so intently that Toshinori just knows he’s probing his 'light', making sure he’s not lying, as he once mentioned in passing that he would notice if someone was lying to him.

“Don’t do that.” He reprimands him, good-naturedly. “It’s kind of rude, my boy.”
The young Midoriya he first met would probably have stammered an apology, blushing to the roots of his hair. This one, instead, flashes his tongue to him, playfully.

_How fast they grow._

---

Izuku’s eyes snap open five minutes before the alarm he set the day before.

It’s the big day.

In a bit of daze, he shuffles out of bed.

His clothes for the day are ready. His phone is charged. Mom is already tinkering downstairs, trying to stifle her nervousness as she makes breakfast.

After brushing his teeth, Izuku splashes ice cold water on his face. He expected to wake up a nervous mess, but in truth, he feels calm.

“I won’t be able to see you tomorrow, as I have to assist to the exams myself.” All Might said the day prior, before leaving. “So, I’m going to give you my pep-talk now.”

A thin hand on his shoulder, long. boney fingers squeezing gently.

_“Win.”_  

“I will.” Izuku whispers, closing his hands into fists. “I won’t let you down.”

---
He makes his way into the packed conference room with only a couple of minutes to spare.

For all his sureness, he ended up getting a bad case of jelly knees just as they approached UA’s gates. Mom, Miki and Ichiko-san hugged him tight for what felt like forever.

“We are channelling our strength into you!” Ichiko-san said, half-joking.

That was enough to make him feel immensely better.

He turned one last time from the door, flashing a victory sign toward the now far familiar lights, and then stepped in, taking a deep breath.

The problem now was that the room was so packed Izuku couldn’t make out a single free space where he could sit. Surely there must be some free seat still, but in the chaos of lights it was incredibly hard to distinguish.

“Psst, hey, you, with the curly hair!” A female voice, and then a hand tugging at his sleeve. “Over here, there’s a seat!”

“O-oh, thank you!” He stammers, as he slides down into the seat by her side. The girl must’ve recognised his confusion.

“Pretty packed, huh?” She says. Her voice is gentle, if a bit nervous. “I mean, I guess that’s to be expected by UA’s hero course exams. I’m Uraraka Ochako, by the way!”

“M-Midoriya Izuku.” He replies, and Uraraka takes his hand with only four fingers in the cramped space between them, shaking it.

“Nice to meet you!” She says, and Izuku can imagine the brilliant smile on her face.

When they got divided into groups, Izuku is relieved to see he’s not in the same one as Kacchan.
No one at his middle school had any idea he was here. As selfish as it was, this was his secret, that he wanted to keep until the very last second possible, a treasure close to his heart.

That, and he didn’t want to humiliate himself further in the -very possible- case he didn’t make it through the exam.

Uraraka is in his group, instead, which makes Izuku feel better. They are rival right now, yes, but knowing that at least one friendly presence was near him made him feel a little more brave.

He wants to approach her, and wish her good luck, when a big hand on his shoulder stops him in his tracks.

“What do you think you are doing?” A severe voice. Izuku recognises it, it’s the same boy that has asked questions during the exam briefing, his voice strong and sure, just as his light is. “She is obviously concentrating, are you trying to obstruct your peers?”

“N-No, I just—“

“Whatever you want to do, don’t.” The boy replied, and Izuku shut his mouth.

Izuku’s hands hurt.

He managed to take down a couple of robots by going for their weak spots, and with immense effort.

Actually, his entire body hurt, clothes sticking to him thanks to how much he was sweating.

All Might’s plan did work, but…

It was a laughable result, if confronted with how well everyone else around him was doing.
What was all that work for?! He asks himself, furious, as he desperately runs, and as more and more robots are taken down by the others, making his chances to score enough points slimmer and slimmer.

His eyes sting, and he angrily wipes the tears away. He can’t just give up now, not like this—

Izuku is shaken out of his stormy thoughts when the earth trembles. He turns, just in time to see something gigantic, he can’t make out how tall the thing is, as the lights of living things dims out going upwards to the sky.

“It’s that zero points thing.” He hears someone comment nearby. “Better run!”

Lights shoots by him as the other exam goers put distance between them and the giant, but useless, robot.

Every light, but one.

“Uraraka?!” He calls out, confused.

Uraraka’s light is clearly distressed. There’s something blocking her, preventing her from running away. A boulder? Pieces of rubble?

“Midoriya?” She asks, her voice tight. “What are you doing? Run!”

That thing could easily squash her with a single step.

To hell with the exam, Izuku thinks, as his feet already started moving on their own.

—

Ochako could only watch, her eyes wide, as Midoriya charges towards her instead of running away
like everyone else did.

What a strange boy he is, just barely taller than her, scrawny in his too big gym clothes, with that mop of curly, messy hair covering half his face. He doesn’t look particularly strong, and for what little Ochako had seen of him during the exam, he doesn’t seem to have any particularly flashy quirk either.

And he’s charging full speed towards the giant robot about one thousand times his size.

She wants to scream at him to get away, it’s too dangerous, but another wave of nausea hit her.

She overdid it, and now she can’t even get herself free from the rubble that’s blocking her ankle.

Midoriya shoots past before she can even say anything, grabbing a piece of broken pipe from the floor and then starts to climb with a rather remarkable agility up the robot’s leg.

The robot is still walking forward, apparently not reacting to the little boy that’s now near one of it’s junctures.

Midoriya is hanging by one of the thick cables with one hand, his feet firmly placed against the steel, and he’s trying to sink the piece of pipe in a very precise spot with all his strength.

Ochako has no idea what he’s doing, Midoriya must be desperate and out of his mind, there’s no why he’d act like this if he was lucid and realize that he was trying to fight with a robot the size of a skyscraper that would merit him a whole lot of zero points.

That is until the robot makes a creaky noise, it’s step falters when the leg Midoriya is hitting refuses to work properly, and the thing starts to lose balance, falling on a side.

The robot is so heavy that Midoriya is dislodged and launched up in the air by the recoil of the fall.

That’s when Ochako realizes.
He was saving her.

—

Izuku is falling. he’s going to splat down on the asphalt like a mature tomato, bye bye UA, bye bye Mom, bye bye All Might—

A light embraces him, and his free fall is suddenly slowed down to a gentle glide, as if Izuku suddenly turned into a feather.

Uraraka Ochako doesn’t let him go until they are both firmly on the ground, alive, and definitely not splattered.

“W… Why did you do that…?” She asks, strained.

Izuku slowly stands, his knees weak. The giant robot is not moving anymore, Uraraka is ok—

Urararaka is ok.

“You were in trouble.” He replies with a relieved sigh. “Someone had to do something.”

“Your hand—“ She gasps, and Izuku can feel the warmth of blood on his palm. Old sores opened and started to bleed when he held so tight to that pipe, hitting and hitting again, regardless of the pain.

“’S nothing—“ He says, and then a horn sounds in the distance, Present Mic’s voice announcing the end of the exam.

Oh.

“Ahah—“ He laughs, nervous, not a sign of mirth in it. His nose stings. “I— I guess t-this is it for me, then—“
Uraraka has stood up as well. She places a gentle hand on his arm, her light speaking of sadness for him—

Then she pukes all over him.

---

Principal Nedzu pats Toshinori on the knee a couple of times.

“I see what you meant, about that boy.” He says. “He’s certainly a very interesting one.”

---

When he enters into the Midoriya’s household, the boy is sitting on the couch in the living room with a blank, lost expression.

“He’s been like this since we came back from the exam the other day.” Inko sighs in a low voice after welcoming him in.

“Mmh. I’m sorry for having kept him waiting.” He replies, scratching the back of his head. “I had a lot of things to take care of. The official results will not be announced for a few days yet, but I figured he’d be down after the exam. Even if it’s a bit of cheating, I’d rather just tell him now and take the weight off his shoulders.”

Inko smiles at him, patting gently his shoulder before disappearing in the kitchen, giving him and the boy some privacy.

“Young Midoriya.”

The boy jumps, turning around with a surprised expression, before turning away from him in haste.
“O-oh, hello.” He says, voice low.

Toshinori sits down, by his side, observing. Midoriya is hanging his head low, hands between his knees nervously tightening into fists over and over again.

“So.” He starts, casually. “How do you think you did?”

“I’m sorry I disappointed you.” Midoriya whispers back.

Toshinori takes a deep breath. So much work to build up the boy’s confidence, and yet it takes so little to tear it down.

“I’m not disappointed in the slightest, my boy.” Toshinori says. “You did excellently, exactly as I thought you would.”

“Don’t—“ Midoriya gulps, his throat moving. “Don’t make fun of me— Please—“

“I’m not. Do you think I really would do that?”

Slowly, the boys turns his face up to him.

“It is true that your score was very low, the lowest among your group.” Toshinori says, ignoring the flinch that followed those words. “But that was not all there was to the exam, and you did exactly what I expected you to do.”

The boy blinks, confused, and Toshinori cannot help the temptation to ruffle his hair.

“You showed them all what a hero really is.”
“The young Urararaka came to us, you know? She realized you’ve ignored your own exam in order to help her, and asked us to share her points with you.”

“She… She did?”

“Seems like you’ve already got a new friend, my boy.” Toshinori adds in a gentle voice, before continuing. “But, in the end, there wasn’t the need to do that. The fighting score wasn’t all that there was to it, and by showing your willingness to act for the good of others, even to the detriment of yourself, you ended up receiving the highest score in the rescue points, making it into the rankings.”

“Wait—“ Izuku is breathless, his heart beating right in his throat, this cannot be real. “You mean—“

“Congratulations, young Midoriya. You are now a student of UA’s hero course.”

The very last few days of middle school trickled by, Izuku lived them in a dream-like state.

He was going to UA. He was going to UA. *He was going to UA.*

the official results would come out any day now. Kacchan didn’t know yet, and had no doubt himself passed with flying colors, as he liked to brag loudly and with gusto.

Izuku had no doubt about that, too. What Kacchan lacked in compassion, he made up with sheer power. No doubt the highest fighting score would belong to him.

He had no idea how Kacchan would react to seeing Izuku’s name in the rankings. Hopefully, the first impact of his explosive rage would come when he was home, far, *far* away from Izuku.

“Silence, please.” Their homeroom teacher called. “We are starting to receive the first results of your exams…”

He called out some names, congratulating various student for successfully getting in their high school
of choice.

“And then, Bakugou and—“ A beat of silence. “…Midoriya?”

Izuku could feel the silence that fell in the classroom in his mouth, thick as tofu.

The teacher let out a little embarrassed cough after his own hesitation.

“Congratulations, I hope your future in UA’s hero course will be bright.”

The chaos that exploded -literally- required five minutes of their teacher yelling at them to calm down, before it could be contained.

Some of his classmates shot up from their seats as Kacchan’s desk exploded into two neat pieces as soon as the teacher finished his sentence.

“Midoriya?” “No way!” “What?!”

Soon, Izuku was surrounded.

“Midoriya?! When did that happen?!”

“I— Uhm—“ Izuku stammered.

“Dude, congratulations!” Someone else exclaimed, their voice sincere.

Before he could try to say anything else, hands were on him, friendly patting his shoulders, voices congratulating him from all sides.
He expected Kacchan to be on his throat at any second, now, but he never came.

—

“IZUKUUUUUUUUUUUUU!!!”

Miki’s voice came from far away, growing louder in a few seconds, and she crashed into him, grabbing him with her arms under his armpit and lifting him up, twisting him around.

“You made IT!!!” She yelled, laughing madly.

Izuku couldn’t stop laughing, although he felt a bit guilty. All Might made him promise not to tell anyone until the official results were out. It had been so hard not to yell with Miki about it for all those days.

Still, she apparently already knew despite the fact that their teachers shared the news with them just a couple of hours before.

“How do you know?” He asked, laughing.

“Everyone is chain-texting like mad, dude!” She replied, finally putting him back down on the floor, but not letting him go. “Everyone is so excited for you, it’s incredible. Oh, Izuku, I’m so happy!” She closed her gloved hand in a fist, rubbing her knuckles on his head madly.

“Miki n-no!” He tried to protest between laughs, trying and failing to free himself up from the Miki-clamp-hug-of-death.

Everyone is so excited for you. She said.

Well, that was a new feeling for sure.
For a while Ichiko’s gym has turned into party central.

They simply couldn’t stop, every time they got together, at the end of a training session, they just had to celebrate Izuku’s successful exam. The boy would react with embarrassed delight every single time, laughing and smiling and dancing with Miki.

“I will end putting up weight-“ Inko whined, with a smile, as she brought some more cooked goodies.

“Well, means you’ll still have to visit me when Izuku will start with high school, right?” Ichiko replied, making her laugh.

“I don’t need an excuse for that, Ichiko-san.”

Izuku was living his life on a cloud. Whenever he went in school, he’d get stopped by people congratulating him, wishing him success, patting his shoulders. It was such an alien feeling, but he couldn’t deny to himself that it wasn’t an unwelcome one.

And every time he, Mom, Miki and Ichiko-san were in the same room they ended up celebrating in a way or another.

Middle school would end the next day, and then the break before the start of high school -of UA- would come. Ichiko-san and All Might already studied his training regime for it, and Izuku, eager to get better and better and better, couldn’t wait for it.

He was humming a tune to himself, walking through that same underpass that completely changed his life some months prior, when a familiar light in front of him stopped him dead in his tracks.

“I know you can see me.” Kacchan says. “You lying shit.”
The distance between them rapidly closed as Kacchan walked right up to his face.

“Was it funny?” He growls.

“Kacchan—“

“Was it nice to laugh behind everyone’s back as you lied to their faces?”

“Kacchan, I—“

“Well, guess what, dipshit, you didn’t fool *me*.”

“I don’t—“

“*SHUT UP!*”

Izuku’s back hits the wall painfully after Kacchan grabbed him by the collar, pushing him forcefully.

“For how long did you think you could keep up this recital, huh?” Kacchan hisses in his face. “What was even all of this? This long-con? Have you thought that by acting like a useless piece of shit it’d make it easier for you to get into UA? Well, I guess it worked, so, for once, you were right.”

Finally the piece clicks into place in Izuku’s mind.

“You…” He whispers. “You think I’m not blind.”

“Like, no fucking shit.” Kacchan spits out. “Do you think I didn’t notice? You were dead on in
hitting that stupid mud-guy months ago, and you don’t even pretend to go around with that dumb cane anymore, and now you miraculously made it into UA? Who did you think you could fool?“

Kacchan’s hands are still tight on his collar. Izuku’s fingers circles around Kacchan’s wrist.

“Do you really think I would lie about something like that?” He asks, voice low.

“I think you are a cowardly, lying sack of shit, so yes. I do.” Kacchan replied without missing a beat.

Izuku hates himself for it, for how easy tears come up to him. They roll down his cheeks freely, as he uses his other hand to drag the hair away from his eyes.

He feels Kacchan flinch.

“Look at me—“ He hiccups. “Look at my eyes and tell me, do you think I would lie?”

But he doesn’t give Kacchan the time to answer. “Do you think I wouldn’t sell my soul for just a minute of being able to see my mother’s face again? To see how the sky looks like, how my friends smile at me? Do you think I wouldn’t, that I never— Do you think I wouldn’t want to be able to look at you, to actually look at you, right now, and look into your eyes and try to see what words cannot tell me—“

Izuku coughs, sobs shaking him. Kacchan’s hands are less tight on his collar.

“Do you think I don’t wish with all my strength to be able to look at you and try understand why do you hate me so much—“ He finishes, in a broken voice, his fingers trembling around Kacchan’s wrist.

Kacchan let him go as if he’d got burned. Izuku slides on his knees on the asphalt, coughing, tears rolling down his cheeks.

The silence stretches long, infinitely so, even if it was just a handful of seconds in reality. Then Kacchan turns, and runs away.
When he enters home, he can hear mom and All Might laughing about something in the living room.

“Oh Izuku, there you are, there’s someone— Izuku?” His mom starts cheerfully as she comes to the door, before her voice turns worried.

Izuku knows he must look a mess. He hasn’t been able to stop crying as he made his way back, tears still rolling down the wet little tracks they formed on his cheeks.

Before she could add anything he walks past her, his shoes messily left behind him, making it in his room and closing the door with the key before sliding down with his back against it, collecting his knees against his chest, sobs shaking him.

—

“Oh, no, excuse me a minute—“ Inko stammers, before following her son upstairs.

“…Is he usually like this?” Aizawa asks, perplexed.

Toshinori frowns, a finger on his chin. “Well, young Midoriya can get a bit emotional at times, but I’ve never saw him quite this distressed before. Something serious must’ve happened.” He says, worried.

“Looks like I choose the wrong day to meet this wonder boy of yours.” Aizawa replies, unreadable as always.

Toshinori hums, as they wait downstairs, Inko’s voice muffled in the distance. She comes down a few minutes later, pale and frowning, a hand on her mouth.

“I’m very sorry, Mister Aizawa—“ She says. “He’s refusing to open the door— I have no idea what has gotten into him—“
“Can I…?” Toshnori asks, pointing upstairs, and Inko sidesteps, wordlessly.

A knock on the door, and then All Might’s voice.

“Young Midoriya?”

If there’s one person he absolutely does not want to see him in this state, that’s All Might, for sure.

“Do you want to open the door?” He asks, infinitely gentle.

Izuku cannot stop crying. It’s as if a dam has broken into his eyes—but then, they’ve always been broken, and they always will— and the tears keep coming, no matter how much he has already tried to will them away.

“No—” He manages to say after a beat of silence.

 “…Do you want to talk about what is troubling you?”

What is troubling him is this black hole that has opened in his chest, sucking everything in—Or maybe spitting everything out, Izuku is not sure—

“No.” He says, instead.

He can hear All Might sigh from the other side of the door.

“My boy, we are all very worried. If you do not feel like talking to us, I hope you will at least take in consideration the idea of talking to someone else.” All Might says. “I know that at your age sometimes you just do not feel like talking to an adult. But I can think of at least one person that will be sure to listen to you, without any of our adult baggage.”
Izuku listens as All Might stands up -He must’ve knelt down a bit- and goes downstairs. He sniffs a bit, angrily wiping the tears away from his cheek -useless. They immediately get replaced- and with trembling fingers he takes his phone out of his pocket.

“Miki?” He sobs, after she picks up at the third ring. “I— Do you have a minute? O-or twenty, probably—”

The morning after, Inko opens the door to a Miki in full casual clothing.

“Good morning, Miss Midoriya.” She says, smiling brightly. “Me and Izuku are skipping the last day of school. Sorry about that, but it’s important.”

Miki drags him into a part of town he has never really frequented at all, replying in a sing-song voice that it’s a surprise when Izuku asks where they are going.

“Here we are.” She says, her gloved hand still on his wrist as she opens a door. Izuku hear the tingling of chimes, and his nose is immediately attacked by the smell of some sort of chemical, making him sneeze.

“Sorry, you’ll get used to that— Shiori!” She says, finally letting his hand go to hug whoever approached him. “Izuku, this is Shiori, Shiori, my friend Izuku.”

Shiori takes his hand and shakes it. “I can see what you mean, Miki.” She says. “Potential, under the disaster.”

That finally gets a word out of him. “Excuse me?”

Miki laughs “Shiori is my hairdresser. She’s like, magic. Everyone is super envy of my dye job all
the time, and I don’t share her easily, so you better be damn grateful I brought you here, Midoriya.”

Izuku blinks. “…You dye your hair?”

The two girls laugh as he gets guided and pushed on a seat.

“Yes, I do, and you’d know have you ever bothered to ask. Now sit and let Shiori work her magic.”

“You never asked her how she looks?” Shiori asked curiously, her finger carding through Izuku’s hair as if she’s studying it.

“I—“ He gulps. “I lost my sight when I was four, so my memories of what it actually means to see are very fuzzy. Most of the time asking that would be pointless, I have a hard time visualising descriptions, anyway.” He says, vaguely monotone.

“Mmh.” Shiori hums, distracted. “Ok, I know what to do with you, little disaster.”

“I don’t want my hair dyed.” Izuku replies. The mere idea of having to smell that chemical all the time makes his head spin.

“None of that, don’t worry. We’re just gonna go with a bit of restyling— Stay there, I gotta take some stuff in the back.”

Izuku turns toward Miki, sitting at his left, with a whine.

“You promised me, Midoriya.” She interrupted him before he could even start.

Izuku sighs.
Shiori works on him for a while, chatting with Miki of anything that comes to mind. Izuku relaxes, might as well do that since he has no choice but to be subjected to this.

It feels like ages before she’s finally done, putting the reclining chair back into an upright position and drying his hair, her fingers working methodically and clearly experienced.

“And voilà!” Shiori says, taking the sheet covering his shoulders away. “What do you think?”

He knows that both girls are staring at him as they hum.

“I knew it.” Miki hisses

“You have a natural cuteness to you, Midoriya, that mop of hair covering your face all the time wasn’t doing you any favour.” Shiori explains “I didn’t even need to do that much, really. I shortened it a bit, freeing your face. You have kind of round features so they go well with you natural curls. As long as you keep them at this length and take care of them properly, you will do just fine. I can suggest to you some shampoo and hair conditioner brands to keep your hair soft and easier to manage.”

Izuku is kind of overwhelmed by the information, palming at his now shorter hair.

It feels weird. He’s so used to have that constant weight, to feel the brush of his hair on the point of his nose, keeping his eyes hidden from everyone else.

“Izuku.” Miki says, when he doesn’t reply. “Do you know why I forced you to come here, today?”

Izuku shakes his head.

“This is the new you.” Miki declares, jumping down from her seat to stand in front of him. He can imagine her, standing proudly, hands on her hips. “This is the new you that is going to UA, and is going to become a hero, and is not going to get his entire soul crushed by the shitty words of someone that has never believed in him in the first place.”

Izuku realizes his mouth is hanging open. He closes it.
“This is the new you that has nothing to hide, that will face life openly and with a smile and proudly. From the moment you step outside this hair salon, you leave behind all the pain, and the fears, and the regrets, shed them just like the hair that covered your wonderful eyes.”

Miki’s gloved hands claps on his cheeks with a soft slap.

“You don’t have to hide anymore.” She says, her voice lower, serious. “So please, keep your head high, and never, ever think of hiding who you are ever again.”

—

They spent the rest of the day aimlessly walking around the city.

They ate ice cream for lunch and burgers for snacks. They went to a park and played on the equipment like kids, laughing. They drank one of those ridiculously expensive coffees, sitting outside and looking at the people going by, in their completely different ways.

“There are two girls sitting at a table to your right that are totally checking you out.” Miki leaned in and whispered at some point.

“No way—“ He tried to reply, before getting shushed.

“Nu-huh- New you. Turn around and smile, now.”

Izuku obeyed, his cheeks burning, knowing his smile was weak, and yet he heard happy giggles follow.

“See?” Miki said, smug, obnoxiously sipping the last of her coffee with her straw when he turned around to face her, shocked. “Told ya.”
When he came home, mom dropped the steel top of one of her pots on the floor.

“Um. Hello.” He says, smiling.

Mom walks closer, her gentle hand on his cheek.

She doesn’t say anything, caressing him sweetly before taking her hand away.

“Welcome home, dear.”

There’s so much crammed in that single sentence. But Izuku knows that one sentence, this time, is enough

Chapter End Notes

Oh man, this was hands down one of the most difficult early chapters of this story. I was not sure how to jostle Izuku and Bakugou's complicated relationship (them boy got issues yo) without it turning into a Bakugou-bashing fest. Hopefully I managed.

Mr King of explodokills will have his time to redeem himself, so be patient with him *wink wink
Izuku walks down the corridor, directed toward his new class, for the first time. The need to hang his head low, nervously, is almost overwhelming, but he resists.

He walks by class 1-B on his way, tentatively feeling the lights out, but Kacchan’s light is not there.

His usual luck. Letting out a little sigh, he stops in front of the door to his class. His hand lingers on the handle.

*New you*, he can hear Miki’s voice in his mind, *Do better*, says All Might.

Izuku opens the door.

—

As soon as he does, two familiar voices, that were previously bickering, fall silent.

“Midoriya, right?” One of them says, approaching him. It’s the severe boy from the exam. “I must apologise for my harsh words during the exam. You’ve clearly shown a deeper understanding of it than me. I’m Iida Tenya, it is a pleasure to share class with you.”

“Oh, it’s no problem—“ He replies, scratching the back of his head.

“Midoriya!” Another familiar voice, and he cannot contain his smile. Uraraka. “We are in the same class! I’m so happy!”

“Oy, four-eyes.” Kacchan’s harsh voice interjects. “Stop standing there with that stupid hand out. He’s not gonna shake it. He’s blind.”
There’s something in Kacchan’s voice that Izuku cannot quite pinpoint, his light completely unreadable. He expected sneer from him, but there’s none of that. He’s actually… Serious.

And as Iida apologises to him, formal to a fault, Izuku cannot help but smile a bit sadly to himself.

As usual, no one manages to make him yearn for sight as much as Katsuki Bakugou does. What would Izuku give, just to be able to meet Kacchan’s eyes, and understand what he’s thinking.

—

Ochako’s hand flew to her mouth.

When she first met Midoriya at the exam, she distantly wondered about the hair covering his face, but she had so many things to worry about that it seemed a minuscule, unimportant detail in the grand scheme of things. His hair was much shorter now, still messy and curly, but she could finally see the freckles dusting his round cheeks and his pale green eyes.

It was obvious, now that Bakugou said it. Midoriya’s pupils were milky white, clearly not reacting to the frantic movements of Iida in front of him.

*How did he—?*

Ochako mentally smacked herself. What right did she had, to doubt Midoriya? People wouldn’t believe that cute, soft, little Ochako could make it into UA, and yet she did.

So did Midoriya.

She resumed her walk toward him, with even more strength in her stride.

“Iida, I think that is quite enough.” She says gently, putting an hand on his shoulder, stopping his hands mid-way. “Midoriya.”

He turns to her “Uraraka. I’m glad we are in the same class, too.” He says, little lines appearing
around his eyes when he smiles.

“I—“ She hesitates, and she notices the lines of Midoriya’s shoulders tense a bit. “Oh, this is embarrassing, I’m so sorry I was sick all over you at the exams!” She blurts out.

Midoriya clearly relaxes. “Don’t worry about it. Downside of your quirk?”

“Yeeaaah—“ She moans, tilting her head on a side.

“I… They told me about what you did.” Midoriya adds, his voice lowering. “About the points. I wanted to thank you. And— Iida?”

Iida, that so far had been tense and silent at their side, snaps like a soldier, shoulders squared. “Yes!”

“It’s a pleasure to share class with you, too.” Midoriya says gently, holding his hand out. Iida takes it in a firm grip and shakes, smiling.

—

They don’t get much time to familiarise with one another, as the door opens behind them to reveal a man that could probably use about one thousand years of good sleep, a long sort-of-scarf covering the lower half of his face, clad in a dark coat.

“Get to your seats, y’all, this isn’t a picnic.” He says, his voice monotone. Izuku rapidly counts the desks, making a beeline for his.

He’s sitting right behind Kacchan. How lucky.

“I’m Aizawa Shouta.” The man yawns, sounding bored. “I’m your homeroom teacher. Now go change, we are going out to have a test.”

... *Huh.*
Aizawa drags a hand on his face, tired.

Goddamn Toshinori and his stupid hopeful smile.

The man approached him that morning, in his All Might form, putting a heavy hand on his shoulder.

“A word, my friend, if you please!” He boomed, making him groan.

“It’s too early for this, just say what you want to say.” He replied, voice still raw with sleep.

“I saw that young Midoriya has been assigned to your class—“

“Yes, your golden boy. Go on.”

“And I cannot help but worry. I do not mean to challenge your teaching methods, clearly, but I’m aware of your first day tests. For all his talents and training, for the time being Midoriya is just a normal teenage boy, physically. He will not show particularly brilliant results.”

“…Are you asking me to give him a special treatment?”

“I would never.” Aizawa finally turns, facing the blinding smile. “I’m only asking you to give him a chance to prove himself.”

He could not resist that smile.

He wanted a chance for the boy? Fine. He was going to get one.
Golden kid better work his ass off, and _prove_ he deserved that chance.

---

As the tests went on, the threat of expulsion weighted more and more on Izuku’s shoulders, making him spiral into a silent panic.

All his classmates could count on their quirks to give them an edge, one way or the other. But Izuku was only stuck with his normal body, and for how fast he tried to run, for how high he tried to jump, he was still at the bottom of the chart.

Aizawa-Sensei finished scribbling something down, before addressing them in his monotone voice.

“Alright, one last test. Follow me.”

They dutifully followed. Izuku was hugging himself, head hanging low. He could feel Uraraka’s light approaching him, feeling that she wanted to put an hand on his shoulder and comfort him, but he didn’t want comfort. He didn’t want pity.

He was _done_ with pity.

He walked a bit faster.

“Strength and speed are not all.” Aizawa-sensei explained once he stopped them in front of another training ground. Izuku examined it, focusing his senses. It was not much different from the fake city they took the entrance exam in, but it was more packed, the place full of tight openings and all sorts of nooks and crannies.

“Your ability to examine the ground you’re working in and your senses are just as important. For this test, we will spend the next half-hour in here. I will be hiding, and your role will be to find me. The first person that finds me gets a point, all you need is to touch me. When that happen, you’ll give me ten seconds of vantage to find a different spot to hide. I will keep hiding in different places for the full time.”
A little pause, as if sensei is making sure everyone is listening.

“Some of you might not ever see me during that time. Some of you might manage to hoard all the points for themselves. But, more probably, at the end of the thirty minutes, you will all be at zero.”

A collective gulp passed through the group, but Izuku is not believing is ears, a blossom of hope back in his chest.

This is it. This is made for him. This is perfect.

“I will take ten minutes to hide. Wait at the entrance, when you hear the horn, the time starts.”

—

Izuku has to refrain himself from sprinting like a thunderbolt when the horn blares over them.

He knows already where Aizawa-sensei is, of course. But in order to don’t raise too much suspicion between his classmates, he waits for them to sprint ahead, before making his way toward their teacher.

If everything goes according to plan, they will soon catch up to what is going on and will probably start to try follow him.

Izuku has to hoard as many points as possible before that happens.

—

Katsuki has been searching, grunting, irritated by this stupid test, when the horn blew again, and a robotic voice announced “Midoriya Izuku: one point.”

His head snaps up at the clock, showing that a mere two minutes have gone by.
He has to admit it, the boy is giving him a run for his money.

Aizawa’s specialty has always been stealth. Being able to hide, to move unseen, is what he does. This is a test he usually reserves for older, more experienced classes.

But the boy, he’s keeping up. Oh, is he keeping up.

Aizawa slides under a pipe, silent as a cat. His ears are strained, waiting for Midoriya to betray his position.

At five points, Todoroki Shouto has started to follow Midoriya, giving the boy another obstacle to surpass, forcing him to don’t just make a beeline for Aizawa, but to also hide and move unseen himself. At seven points, Yaoyorozu Momo imitated Todoroki, at eight, Tokoyami Fumikage had the same idea as well.

The boy is not half-bad, Aizawa has to admit. He managed to shake them off his tail more than once, thanks to his quick thinking and his ability to move in dark spaces were others would be completely lost, while simultaneously trying his damn best to creep closer to Aizawa as silent as possible.

At nine points, Aizawa activated his quirk against Midoriya.

The boy scrambled, panicked, at first, hitting directly with his face a brick wall in his way. Then he jumped out of Aizawa’s line of sight. And he started to make a damn good job of keeping it so, popping out from the most unexpected places to claim his points.

His thirteenth points, Aizawa didn’t had the chance to even try to lay his eyes on Midoriya, before a small hand slapped his back, and the robotic voice announced “Midoriya Izuku: Thirteen points.”

Oh, this was fun.
This might’ve been the most brutal game of hide and seek Izuku had ever taken part in.

Everyone caught up. Literally his entire class was trying to follow him, obstruct him, steal those points from him.

Even Kacchan.

“I’m sorry, Uraraka.” He whispered, breathless, as the girl was hopefully tailing him from a bit far, her light’s movements suggesting she was trying to stay hidden from him.

There was a pipe on his right, between some small ones. Large enough for him to pass through. He jumped in the dark space offered by the buildings surrounding them and slid in, silent. Bidding his time.

Uraraka stopped right in front of him, looking around herself madly and then making a noise of frustration.

“Where did he goooo?!”

Her frustration felt less brash than Kacchan’s, more directed to herself rather than Izuku. It made Izuku feel bad.

But he couldn’t afford the luxury of worrying about others, for now. This was his one chance to don’t get kicked out of UA on the first day.

Aizawa-Sensei was on the move, and fast, climbing somewhere. Izuku slid outside the pipe on the other side, studying his chances.

Sensei stopped, and was currently perched between two buildings, the space just enough for one person to fit in. So far he had preferred the ground for the most part, where the shadows were darker
and being unseen was easier. To perch so high, it was a bold move, considering how many of his classmates had high maneuverability and would probably spot him from the sky.

Then Izuku realized.

It was a challenge.

Aizawa-sensei was trying to force Izuku to take a route that would put him in an easy spottable place. His classmates had fully given up the idea of finding Aizawa themselves, and were instead concentrating their efforts on Izuku.

If Izuku tried to climb after him from the ground, sensei would surely use his quirk on him. But if he approached from above, he was sure to be seen, especially from Todoroki, which had been following him like an eagle for a while, now.

Izuku took a deep breath, wiping the fat droplets of sweat rolling from his forehead with a wrist.

He focused, harder, taking every single detail of what was around Aizawa-sensei, even if his head felt like splitting in half— And then he saw his way.

_Bingo._

—

The clock was ticking, and Aizawa wondered if the boy had given up, or was just too exhausted to take that one last point.

Not that it would matter much. Midoriya had definitely proven himself, but still, he could not imagine such a driven boy ever giving up, not fighting until the last second possible.

As he muses, the last minute approaches.

“Sixty seconds remaining.”
And then everything happened very fast.

—

Ochako had been running in circles, frustrated.

She managed to catch that single glimpse of Midoriya before he disappeared apparently out of thin air, and she hadn’t caught a single glimpse of Aizawa-sensei, not even the tip of his scarf.

Todoroki was chasing through the sky with his ice bridges, as he had been most of the time. His movements in more than one occasion suggested he almost managed to catch Midoriya, but he would usually come back up after a bit, obviously frustrated.

Everyone was out for blood, at that point, desperate for even a single point to try stand over the others. But Midoriya wasn’t going to give a single inch if he could help it, clearly.

Suddenly, she sees Todoroki plunge down, rising his arm ready to attack, before the ice bridge stopped forming under his feet and the ice around his right arm never quite made it out. He fell on the rooftop of the building right under him.

“Midoriya Izuku: fourteen points.” The voice announced, and then— “Time’s up!”

—

“I see.” Aizawa was muttering to himself.

The boy cooked up quite the bold plan. He led Todoroki on a wild goose chase towards Aizawa, and had used him as a distraction, while simultaneously luring Aizawa in a trap.

Aizawa looked up at the noise, ready to throw Midoriya in for a loop with his quirk, and instead found himself staring at Todoroki, interrupting the attack he was about to unleash and sending him
tumbling down as the ice bridge stopped forming under his feet.

Midoriya came an instant later, a meteor from the sky, one of his arms frozen over, sweaty and desperate, slapping just barely Aizawa’s arm on his way down.

“Midoriya Izuku: fourteen points.”

Kid was lucky Aizawa didn’t had any intention to explain to Toshinori why his golden boy ended up flattening his face on concrete. His scarf tightened around Midoriya’s wrist after the slap, stopping his fall, and he lowered both himself and the boy back on the ground, gently.

Once there, Midoriya hadn’t moved, panting heavily, arms and legs stretched out in a semi-frozen, sweaty imitation of a sea-star.

“Am I—“ He panted. “Am I expelled?”

Aizawa gave him grin. “You’re a lucky one, Midoriya Izuku.”

—

They regrouped at the entrance, animatedly discussing.

“That was super insane!” The boy that has introduced himself as Kirishima that morning said, excitedly pumping his fists in front of him. “Sucks I didn’t see any of it, it must’ve been quite the show! I’m so curious to know how Midoriya did it!”

Ochako couldn’t do anything but agree with the sentiment. Listening to Midoriya rack up point after point after point had been both exhilarating and frustrating.

Not everyone shared the enthusiasm, she noted, when Bakugou passed by, positively fuming. Iida, instead, was muttering to himself. “Maybe some kind of perception quirk? Still, doesn’t explain how he moved so comfortably in an unknown ground, I must ask Midoriya for pointers—“
Aizawa-sensei, Todoroki and Midoriya himself were the last ones out. Todoroki had his left hand on Midoriya’s right shoulder, melting down the ice that encased his entire arm with a neutral expression. Midoriya looked positively destroyed, his clothes sticking to him, drenched in sweat, walking with a bit of a limp, but showing a small, prideful smile.

They all -well, almost all- run to meet them half-way, speaking over one another.

“Midoriya that was so cool!” “How did you do that?” “What is your quirk?” “Midoriya, you must teach me!”

“Calm down, now, all of you.” Aizawa-sensei said, raising his hand. “You all did terribly at this test, except for Midoriya, as you already know.”

The enthusiasm died quite fast after that.

“But anyway, no one is getting expelled.” He continued, grinning madly. “It was a logical ruse, I wanted to force the best out of all of you.”

The perfectly synchronized chorus of “EEEEEEEEH!!” was definitely “plus-ultra”.

—

“Midoriya, wait!”

Izuku turned around, two already extremely familiar lights catching up to him.

“I must say, Aizawa sensei really got to me, today.” Iida said from his right once he and Uraraka took a side of him each, matching his steps. “I had no doubt that an institute as prestigious as UA would only let the best of the best to keep learning between its walls. I see how deception can be motivating, now.”

“It was the same for me—“ Uraraka replied at his left, embarrassed. “Did you also fell for it, Midoriya? You really gave it all in that last test!”
Izuku cannot help but let a little laugh out. “I swallowed it hook, line and sinker— I was really crapping myself.” He admitted. “After all that work, to get kicked out on the first day? No way!”

Come to think of it, Izuku hadn’t detected any lie in Aizawa-Sensei’s light as he explained who showed poor results would be expelled. Weird.

“What the fuck are you laughing about, Deku?!”

“Aaaand here we go—” Izuku mutters to himself, deadpan. Kacchan ran up to him, rage pouring out of him in waves. He puts a finger on his chest.

“Listen here, don’t you dare think you’re so much better than me—“

“I don’t.”

“I’m going to crush you at the first occasion—“

“Yeah, I know.”

“So don’t go around with that smug face, you useless Deku!”

And as fast as he came, off he went.

“…Is he always this pleasant?” Iida asks, the sarcasm out of place in his serious, composed tone.

“He was almost friendly, this time.” Izuku sighs.

“…Is your name Deku? I thought it was Izuku—“ Uraraka asked, sounding confused.
“It is— I mean, no, my name is not Deku, that’s just what Kacchan calls me as an insult—“

“Oh, sorry then—“ Uraraka says, shifting her weight from foot to foot. “But you know, I kinda like the name Deku. It makes me think of someone that never gives up!”

Izuku blinks, and for the first time in his life, the word “Deku” doesn’t sound bad anymore.

—

When Aizawa enters in the teacher lounge, there’s a little neat pile of boxes of cat food with a note stuck to it sitting on the table.

The note just says thank you, with a crude scribble of All Might’s signature hair tufts.

Aizawa snorts, amused “Ridiculous.”

—

Inko is trying her best not to pace back and forth as she waits for Izuku.

She kind of overdid it, in her nervousness, and their dinner is already on the table.

Finally the door cracks open, Izuku’s voice saying “I’m home!”, and when she pops her head out of the kitchen, she sees him. His hair a bit messier, a small bruise on his cheek, tired.

Smiling.

“Welcome home, dear!” Her arms are already around him, her face on his shoulder. When did he get this tall? “You have to tell me everything.”

Izuku grins.
As she approaches Izuku’s room to wish him good night, as she usually do, he can hear his voice.

“—Yes, I told you! It was crazy!” He’s still smiling, lying belly down on his bed, phone against his ear, legs swinging in the air. “And that girl I met at the exam, remember— She’s in my class! We walked together to the station, with another classmate, Iida— I think they like me—“

A fond smile finds its way on her lips, as she turn around to go to her room.

She doesn’t need to wish him a good night, for today. She knows he’s going to sleep just fine.

Izuku is almost vibrating in his seat, as All Might’s light, shining and bright, approaches their classroom.

“It’s me!” The booming voice starts just outside the room. “— Through the door, like a normal person!”

An excited ripple goes through all the lights of his classmates as they whisper between themselves, happily, and even Izuku cannot contain the emotions. It doesn’t really matter that All Might had already become pretty much a constant presence in his life well before his start at UA, now their relationships puts them in a different position.

All Might is finally going to teach him, directly, for the first time!

“Foundational hero studies!” All Might exclaims, taking place at the teacher’s desk.

Izuku is so ready.
Izuku is not ready.

He changed with his excited classmates, happy to put on the costume his mother made for him. He still remembers her excited voice as she described it to him.

As usual, he could not really visualize it in his mind, but it did not matter, he let her talk about it, basking in her happiness. He knew the costume was perfect. She hesitated, at first, wondering aloud if maybe Izuku would prefer something more professionally made, maybe with some support accessories…

But Izuku couldn’t really think of any accessory that might support his quirk. It wasn’t something physical that could be enhanced by external gadgetry, it was all in his head. Not much you can add to that. He’d much rather put on the costume his mother worked so hard on.

All Might guided them to yet another training ground, explaining to them what today’s exercise would consist into. They fished letters from the box, and his heart did a little happy skip as he ended up paired with Uraraka.

“It’s like, destiny.” She laughed, before adding cheerfully. “Happy to work with you!”

Izuku had been super happy to work with her, too, until his happiness got squashed by what All Might said next.

“Our first hero pair: Uraraka and Midoriya!” He announced after fishing the letters himself. “Versus our first villain pair: Bakugou and Iida!”

Izuku’s heart fell on the floor.

“I’m so glad All Might is as nice as he is on TV.” Ochako let out a little sigh while she and Midoriya took position. “I was scared they might try to do that whole expulsion thing again.”
When she turned around, Midoriya was pale as a ghost, his shoulders drooping.

“Uhm— You don’t look very relieved—“

“I’m sorry— Just— Tense.” He replied, stiffly.

“…Bakugou is not very nice to you, is he?” She asked softly.

Midoriya took a deep breath, before squaring himself. “Uraraka, listen. Kacchan is surely going to come for me, so— I think I might have a plan.”

Ochako shifted closer to him. “Tell me.”

“We only have five minutes, so listen closely. Here’s what we do—“

—

Tenya tried to speak with his partner, but after a couple of sentences it was clear Bakugou had no interested in planning with him.

“Are you even listening?!” He asked, exasperated, but as soon as the robotic voice announced the start of the test, Bakugou sprinted away, leaving Tenya alone with the fake nuke.

Curses.

—

Kacchan’s light was just behind the corner, waiting for him.
Izuku was almost disappointed by that. Did Kacchan really expect him to fall for that?

He and Uraraka separated as soon as they made their way into the building, as planned. Silently, he fished one of the rocks he collected outside and put in his pocket, launching it towards the corridor Kacchan was in—

“DEKUUU—!” He screamed, jumping out at the noise.

Izuku’s hand was already on his face. He felt the features under his palm, Kacchan’s vaguely crooked nose —his fault— eyebrows twisted in anger.

With all his strength, he pushed down. Kacchan made a little choking sound when his back hit the floor, but rapidly turned and jumped back on his feet.

“YOU SHITTY—“

As predicted, Kacchan’s usual right hook came. Izuku dodged, grabbing Kacchan’s forearm in the way Ichiko-san taught him, and flipped him over, sending him on the floor again.

He did not waste a second, running away from him as Kacchan spluttered and, even more enraged, called after him.

—

“Whoa, did you see that flip?! He looked like a professional karateka!” Young Ashido exclaimed, excited, her fist swinging in front of her.”Midoriya is super going toe to toe with Bakugou!”

Toshinori had to channel all his strength to try remain neutral and don’t join in her excitement.

“An ambush, though! That was so unmanly!” Young Kirishima said, gritting his teeth.

“An ambush is a valid tactic! This is a battle, after all!” He exclaimed, his eyes fixed on the screen.
He could not wait to see what young Midoriya has come up with with that brilliant little head of his.

—

Katsuki was fuming.

The little shit managed to knock him down not once, but twice, before running away like the coward he is.

He went in hot pursuit. He was so tired of Deku and his little mind tricks.

Was he blind? Was he quirkless? Katsuki did not fucking care anymore. All he wanted was a fair fight, face to face, no tricks or traps or other bullshit—

“COME HERE! DEKU!!!”

The little shit was quick, he has to give that. He kept slipping out from his line of sight, dodging his attacks like an annoying little eel, leading him around like a stupid dog on a leash.

He kept making those sounds. Clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

“STOP THAT—“ He blurted, irritated. “COME HERE AND FACE ME!”

Somehow, it seemed that the prick was finally listening. He stopped in the middle of an empty room, turned to face him, and charged.

Katsuki felt a mad grin breaking on his face. Finally.

Deku jumped, as if trying to dive over his head. Did he really think he could do something so dumb?
Katsuki readied his fist, an explosion on his palm, and punched.

His fist connected directly with Deku’s stomach.

—

Izuku expected the impact, he knew what he was in for, but his body definitely wasn’t all too happy about it.

The content of his stomach came out of his mouth as the strength of Kacchan’s punch pressed him against the ceiling that crumbled like it was made of sand, and Izuku was shot up, in the room just above their heads, with all the debris.

He turned around, the lights in his head swimming, and felt Iida making a dash for him.

Away from the bomb.

“Uraraka— Now—“ He coughed, bile burning in his throat.

His plan worked.

—

Midoriya stopped the signals, so Ochako stayed still around the corner, preparing mentally. It had to be a matter of seconds, now.

When she heard the explosion and then his voice -strangled, barely there- she dashed. As Midoriya predicted, she had an hole in the ceiling, a perfect passage. She jumped up, the bomb to her right, as Midoriya signaled.

She didn’t waste a single second, giving herself another push on the edges of the hole, and she soared to the fake nuke, hugging the tip of it.
As the voice announced “Hero team: wins!” she turned with a huge smile toward Midoriya, just in time to see Bakugou’s punch connect with his face, sending him tumbling and skidding on the floor, Iida screaming “Bakugou, no!”

—

Tenya is not happy.

He is not happy with himself, his performance -or lack thereof- a glaring issue in front of everyone’s eyes, and he is not happy with his partner for the day, that ignored him, went alone on some kind of personal revenge quest, and to top it all, hit a classmate so hard to make him pass out after the exercise already stopped.

Midoriya had to be transported to the infirmary on a stretcher, unconscious, a mix of blood and bile trickling down his chin.

Tenya heard an ominous cracking sound when Bakugou punched Midoriya in the face, like breaking bones.

He really hoped Midoriya wasn’t too badly hurt.

Uraraka didn’t look very happy as well, he noted. Despite their brilliant win, her expression turned into horror as she ran toward Midoriya with a worried, strangled noise. She was looking at the floor, now, nervously playing with her fingers.

“Congratulations for your win.” All Might said, the entire class -sans Midoriya- grouped around him. “Do not worry too much, young Uraraka. Young Midoriya will be fine in a heartbeat, thanks to Recovery Girl’s talents. Now, I would like to review the performance with you all. Tell me, young Uraraka, it was clear you both had a plan. Can you explain to us what happened?”

“Um—“ She hesitated, before taking a deep breath and finally looking up. “It… It was all Midoriya’s idea. He knew that B-Bakugou would try to attack him, so in the five minutes we had to prepare, we studied a code.”
“—A code?” All Might asked, surprise in his voice.

“Yes, he— This way we could communicate without giving away our plan or position. His plan was to lead Bakugou to the room right under where the nuke was and open a path for me, and he also guided me, making sure Bakugou wouldn’t notice as I trailed close to them. It was a simple code, but effective. He clicked his tongue, like this—— And she made the sound herself. “One time for right, two times for left, a louder one to let me know when he individuated the position of the bomb relative to me——”

Tenya blinked, throughly impressed. At his side, Bakugou was literally trembling.

“Once he opened the path for me and told me in which direction the bomb was, all I had to do was to use my quirk to jump to it before Iida could catch me.” Uraraka said, before adding a final whisper. “We only won thanks to Midoriya.”

Tenya wasn’t sure, but he had the distinct impression All Might was literally gleaming with pride.

—

Izuku came to with a gasp.

“Oh, you are awake.”

The voice made him think of an old lady, as a rather small light made its way toward him.

“Let me see—“ She says.

Small hands guides him up in a sitting position, fingers on his cheeks. He hisses when a sting of pain comes from the left side of his face.

“It’s gonna stay bruised for a couple of days, but the damage has been repaired with no issue. Go to bed early today, you need to rest.”
“Um—“ Izuku says, dumbly. “…Who are you?”

There’s a moment of silence, and he has the distinct impression the old lady is studying him. “I’m Recovery Girl, I’m responsible for the infirmary.” Then she sighs. “You are one of those.”

Izuku doesn’t have the time to get offended at the word, before she continues. “I’m sure I will see you here often. Here, take a candy.” She slaps something in his hand. “Don’t make that face. Young man, you came in with internal bleeding and a broken jaw and cheek bone on the second day of school. If I had a fidelity card, you’d be one of those that fills it in a week.”

Izuku dutifully gulps down his candy, not daring to speak. The pain on the left side of his face makes much more sense, now.

“You are good to go, I’m sure you can catch the rest of your lesson if you hurry.” She says, jumping down the bed he’s sitting on. “And tell All Might on my behalf to please be more careful with his lesson, next time.”

Something in her tone makes him shudder.

“Um— Thanks— I will—“ He stammers, giving a little grateful bow before closing the infirmary door behind him and sprinting in a jog back toward the training grounds, confused.

—

He meets the class half-way, just as they came back from the training ground.

“Oh, I missed it—“ He pouts, Uraraka’s light sprinting towards him.

“Midoriya, are you ok?” She asks, worry clear in her voice. She hisses through her teeth. “That bruise looks bad—“

“It’s nothing, Recovery Girl patched my face up just fine.” He replies with a little smile. He decides to skip about the internal bleeding, she really doesn’t need to know about that. “How did the others do? I really wanted to assist—“
“Young Midoriya, a word, please.”

Both he and Uraraka flinch, and she whispers a little “Good luck.” before slipping in their class with the others.

All Might’s hand is heavy on his shoulder.

“My boy, you’ve done good, technically speaking.” He says, in a low voice. “Your plan was quite effective and you’ve worked well with young Uraraka, taking advantage of her quirk. It was a success, but—“

Izuku turns his head up, toward his idol, silent.

“Please try to tone down the self-sacrificing? As much of a good move that was, in a real combat situation taking so much damage would put you out of commission, turning you into a liability for your partner. In order to be able to help others, you must also be able to help yourself, first.”

Izuku blinks, mulling on the words. It’s true that he planned to take the hit in the first place, and it’s also true that hadn’t this been just a training exercise, a hit like that would surely turn him into a useless dead-weight for whoever he might be working with.

“…I’m sorry.” He says, voice low. “I’ll try to keep that in mind.”

“Good. Now go, I’m sure your classmates have a lot to say to you.” The hand on Izuku’s shoulder squeezes, gently, All Might’s voice lowering. “Unofficially speaking: I’m very proud of you. Good job.”

Izuku is sure his chest might explode with the praise, and he gives himself a couple of seconds to calm down as All Might walks away from him.

“Oh! All Might, sir?” He calls out, remembering.
“Yes?”

“Yes— Recovery Girl told me to tell you to be more careful next time.” Izuku says, embarrassed. “Please.”

…”Understood. Thank you, young Midoriya.”

Izuku cannot be sure, but he has the distinct impression All Might shuddered, too.

—

As soon as he opens the door, he’s assaulted.

“I don’t know how you came up with that, but that was like, so manly!” Kirishima -that’s his name, Izuku is pretty sure- sounds excited.

“I liked your moves! Did you study hand-to-hand combat?” A female voice intervenes. “I’m Ashido Mina! The way you dodge is great!”

“I’m Asui Tsuyu, but call me Tsuyu. I liked your fight.”

“Hey, hey! I’m Rikido Sato!”

Izuku let’s out a little nervous laugh. “Thanks— Um— Everyone. It’s nice to meet you!”

He spends some minutes chatting with his classmates, finally having the chance to properly introduce himself, until he notices the absence of a certain, very familiar light.

“Maybe you guys can tell me something—“
“KACCHAN!”

His heart is beating in his throat. He’s not sure why he’s doing this, but there’s something, something that makes him feel like he can’t just leave things at that.

Kacchan has stopped, barely turning to him.

“I— Um—“ He takes a deep breath. “Today, I tried with everything I had to win.”

Kacchan doesn’t answer.

“A-and still— I made it out completely destroyed. No matter what, you are stronger than me in every way. But—“

There’s a beat of silence. Izuku looks directly at Kacchan, his mouth in a thin line.

“But I will surpass you, one day, with my own strength. Just wait.”

“What the fuck are you even talking about, shithead—“ Kacchan replies in a low voice, through gritted teeth. “You— You won. You beat me.”

Kacchan breath shudders in his chest as he completely turns around. “You won! And— And did you even— Even that goddamn round-face totally tricked me— And that stupid ice guy it’s so— They are all—“

Kacchan’s light is jittering with nervous energy, and when he speaks next, Izuku hears the tears in his voice.

“Hear me out, Deku! From this moment on, I— I’m going to become the number one! And you will never beat me again, are we clear?!”
Izuku feels All Might approaching from behind, fast as a thunderbolt, before he can even think of how to reply.

“My boy!” All Might says, standing near Kacchan’s light. “Self confidence is very important!”

He doesn’t need to hear this. Izuku turns around, leaving All Might at it. Those words are not for him. those words are for Kacchan, now.

The distance between him and Kacchan, that Izuku always felt was an a mountain range, high in the sky, impossible to surpass, transformed.

He could finally see Kacchan’s back.

——

Aizawa sighed, thinking about at the evaluations Toshinori has given to him the evening prior.

Most students seemed to act in line with what he’d expected of them, except for those glaring three outliers.

Iida has strangely been very passive during the exercise, not something he’d expect from someone as serious and dutiful as him. When he told him so, in class, the boy nodded, looking contrite.

“I’m aware of my shortcomings.” He replied. “It won’t happen again, sir.”

Aizawa nodded, seeing no need to add anything else. He then turned to those other two.

“Bakugou.”

Aizawa noticed the boy’s nervous, competitive to a fault, attitude. But he’d be lying if he said he did not get surprised reading his evaluation. The way he acted seemed really extreme.
“You are better than this.” Aizawa reprimanded, patting his hand on the pile of sheets. “Stop acting like a child. You are wasting your talent.”

“…I know.” The boy replied, voice low and serious.

As for the last one…

Midoriya Izuku surely seemed to have a bad habit. While it had won him a place into the rankings, the way he acted during the exam could be considered almost suicidal. During the hide and seek test, when he’d claimed that last point, hadn’t Aizawa been there Midoriya would’ve fallen directly into concrete, and there is no saying whenever he would survive that fall or not.

And yesterday, he actually planned to take a direct hit from Bakugou in order to win.

This would not do.

“Midoriya. While your plan was cunning, you’ve openly decided to take a hit in order to win.” Aizawa says, watching the boy jump in surprise. “Let this be the last time you voluntarily jump in a situation where you know perfectly well you will get hurt, or possibly even die. Are we clear?”

Midoriya hand is running up and down his arm, a frown on his face. “…Yes, sir.”

“Ok, that is all. Now— I don’t like to tell you with so little notice—“

A strange atmosphere fills the room, all the students tensing.

“But we need to pick a class president.”

The mix of relieved sighs and exclamations of “That’s so normal!” It’s almost amusing.

—
“I GOT THREE VOTES?!”

Izuku stammers, shocked.

Who would even want to vote for him?!

“Who voted for Deku?!”

Yeah, right on point.

“Midoriya.” Yaoyorozu calls him, and he stumbles at her side in front of the class, his head light.

“Well, Midoriya as president, Yaoyorozu as vice-president. Glad you didn’t waste too much time on this.” Aizawa-sensei says, bored. “Now back to your desks, I have a lesson to go through.”

—

During lunch, sitting with Uraraka and Iida, Izuku sighs.

“I don’t think I will be up to the task, to be honest—“

“Nonsense.” Iida interrupts him. “You have heart and good judgment. I know you have what the class needs, that’s why I voted for you.”

Izuku is left speechless. Iida, that clearly sounded like he wanted very badly to be president himself, voted for him?

“I agree.” Uraraka adds. “With what Iida said, I mean— I um— I voted for you, too.” She clearly sounds embarrassed, hastily adding. “By the way, Iida, are you from an upper-class family? You always sound so proper!”
Izuku wants nothing but to be able to mull over what even is going on right now, when Iida reveals to them that he’s the younger brother of the hero Ingenium, and well, Izuku it’s still a fanboy to heart, at the end of the day.

---

Then pure chaos happens, and Izuku cannot do anything but let himself being dragged away by a panicked crowd, when Iida saves the day.

For how happy and confused he is by the trust put into him, Izuku knows what the right thing to do is, now.

---

“There’s a thing I want to say.” He’s facing the class, Yaoyorozu at his side. He smiles. “Iida has proven to be able to act properly in the time of need and, frankly, I think he’s the better man for this job. I think Iida should be class president, instead of me.”

Izuku is happy to hear that the idea is welcomed with enthusiasm by his classmates, and the badly hidden happiness in Iida’s voice as he steps up and formally accepts his new role is enough to cement in Izuku’s mind the idea he’s done the right thing.

Later, as he’s putting his shoes ready to go home, Iida approaches him.

“Midoriya. Thank you, for what you’ve done today.”

“No problem. I— What you told me at lunch—” Izuku replies, facing him. “It counts for me, too. I’m sure you will do an amazing job, class president.”

He offers his fist, and Iida seems almost unsure, as if he’s not used to this kind of camaraderie, before meeting it with his own, then sprinting home with an enthusiast bye.

Uraraka catches up to him a couple of minutes later, chirping. “Let’s walk together!”
“I was really surprised to hear you and Iida voted for me, today.” Izuku says after a while, filling the silence. His voice is unsure. “I don’t really think I deserve that kind of trust—“

He notices she stopped walking only a few seconds later.

“…Uraraka?”

“Midoriya.” Her voice is serious, in a way he never heard before. “You… You know everyone in class already looks up to you, right?”

Izuku is left speechless, stupidly blinking,

“In only three days of school you’ve shown us all that you’re capable, and smart, and k-kind.” She continues. “Everyone, me and Iida included, thinks very highly of you. Do not ever forget that.”

He doesn’t know how to reply to that.

Somehow, it feels as if Uraraka just saw right through him.

Chapter End Notes

I know I said last chapter that Bakugou will have his chance to reedem himself just...
Give him more time... *sweats*
UA is so unlike middle school it almost feels like that was a lifetime ago, despite the fact his last day of middle school had been just over a month prior.

Of course that is a given, considering the general subjects treated in the hero course, but even the more normal stuff feels new to him.

The teachers don’t pretend the impossible from him, nor they put him aside, completely ignoring him just because that’s easier. They work with him, instead.

“Midoriya, I usually have my students read in class, can you do that?” Cementoss-sensei asked him, earnest.

“I um— I could with my braille display, but it will be pretty slow compared to the others.”

The teacher hummed, thoughtful.

“Not that I would mind, of course, but if you’d prefer something else… Do you have in mind an activity that could come to you naturally? I’ll look into other options in the future, but for now…”

“Well— I could listen and provide a text-analysis at the end, maybe?”

“That seems like a nice solution for the time being.” A really heavy hand on his shoulder. “If you think of any other activity, later, do let me know!”

Present Mic seems to have taken a like to him after Izuku proposed to sustain a direct conversation in English with him instead of writing sentences on the blackboard as the others did, which would result in disaster.

“You’re a bit stiff, but you have a good basic grasp of the language!” The teacher had -loudly-
complimented him after. “Good job, let this be of example to your classmates!”

All the other subject went in similar fashion, with him working with their teachers in finding a work-around that would put him on even footing with his peers. It became clear that his academic results were nothing to scoff at, and soon enough some of his classmates started coming to him for help.

“Midoriyaaaaa can you explain this math problem to me? I didn’t get a thiiiiing—“ Kaminari would whine, melting on his desk, making Izuku laugh before he’d scoot over to leave him some space to sit at his side, patiently explaining what he could.

No one tried to play pranks on him, or made fun of him, or even showed the tiniest doubt Izuku couldn’t do something. If only, it was clear that what Uraraka has said to him at the end of their third day was true: his classmates deeply respected him.

It made him feel so… Normal.

And not only that. They were friendly. They liked Izuku. They would laugh with him, not at him. Pranks were a daily occurrence but they were always evenly distributed, and they never were malicious or made anyone feel bad. His classmates seemed delighted in trying to sneak up to him and fail every single time, making amazed and amused sounds every time Izuku would stop a hand ready to poke him without even turning, saying the name of whoever was trying with a smile in his voice.

“The blind guy is the only one that can see the invisible girl. Hilarious.” Kacchan commented one day in his usual brash tone, after Izuku caught apparently nothing mid-air over his shoulder, and then Hagakure, which had probably shed her entire uniform for the sole purpose of trying to be the one person finally taking him by surprise, whined “Hooooow—“

Izuku ignored him, laughing joyfully with her.

—

They were on the bus, on their way to their next training session, Izuku internally laughing at the banter happening between his classmates while they spoke of their respective quirks.

Kaminari calling Kacchan’s personality “A turd steaming in sewer water” had been both hilarious and on point. He and Kacchan had mostly ignored each other after that second-day disaster, and yet
everyone had come to an understanding of what kind of person Kacchan was.

Soon they came to a stop, being guided inside a giant dome. Izuku couldn’t even feel the tip of it, for how high it was. Inside, all sorts simulated grounds, from a city on fire to flooded areas.

Aizawa-sensei had given them a brief explanation of which kind of exercise they will be working at, today. He couldn’t wait to start, everything seemed so exciting!

They met with a light Izuku wasn’t familiar with, Uraraka at his side excitedly gasping “It’s Space Hero No. 13! One of my favorites!”

After all the due introductions, 13 started to explain what the place was and what they were all going to do, but Izuku’s attention was elsewhere.

There was something weird, at the center of the the dome. He could feel a large group of lights - thirty? Forty? - but they weren’t clear as usual. It was as if he was searching for them through a thick fog of some sort of energy. Not to mention they were all levitating a few meters off the ground.

“Um, sensei—“ He says, raising a hand. “I’m sorry to interrupt— It was my understanding that it was just us and you teachers here, today?”

“That’s what I said, yes.” Aizawa-sensei replies, perplexed.

“…Then why there are at least thirty people standing right in the center of the dome?”

Something weird happens. Aizawa-sensei’s light spikes up, as if he’s suddenly scared, and he yells “Group together and go back to the bus, NOW! 13, escort the students—“

“Now, kid—“ A unknown voice, right behind Izuku. He doesn’t have the time to turn around, as a new light engulfs him. “It’s not nice to give us away like that.”

Izuku’s world goes dark.
Aizawa can only watch, powerless, as a black mist appears behind Midoriya, engulfing him, and then the boy is gone.

He has to take the students away, right now, they are already starting to panic after seeing their classmate taken away. Logic dictates he should go with them, make sure the majority of them are safe—

Midoriya.

Goddamnit. “Everyone, don’t panic! 13 will escort you out, and alert the school!” He says, as 13 is trying to herd them back.

“Sir, Midoriya—!” Iida exclaims, his voice betraying a tremble despite his best effort to sound controlled.

“I’ll take care of him! Now go!”

“All Might is arriving, right?” Asui asks, over one of 13’s arm.

“He—“ Aizawa exchanges a knowing look with 13. “You have to go, and call the school, now. GO!”

He turns before anyone else had the time to ask something, jumping down the staircase leading to the center of the dome, where around thirty—just as Midoriya had said—unsavory-looking individuals were waiting.

He doesn’t hear the screams, already too far. Had he turned around, he could’ve seen the last particles of the black mist disappearing in the air, and with them, most of his students.
Izuku world of lights emerges back again as he unceremoniously roll on the ground, spit out by that weird force that had taken him in.

“…What is this, Kurogiri?”

Another voice unknown to Izuku, low and scratchy. He focuses, turning toward the source of the voice, and his heart skips a beat.

Not once he had ever felt a light like that. If he had to find a word to describe it, it would be “anti-light”. Nausea creeps in his stomach by just the feel of it.

Izuku doesn’t know who this person is, and what their intention are, but he knows something for sure.

This person is the embodiment of evil.

“Trouble, it’s what it is.” The voice that had taken Izuku away from his class -Kurogiri, he presumes- replies. “This kid rattled us out. Saw us long before I opened the portal, somehow.”

“Huuh?” The evil says.

“I almost didn’t manage to scatter the other kids around. Thankfully, instead of immediately obeying their teachers, they hesitated. Should’ve known better.” Kurogiri continues. “The plan almost blew up thanks to this one kid.”

“Really, now.”

Izuku scrambled back up on his feet, knees like jelly. He took a step back, as the evil came closer to him.

“Interesting— Say, little one— You don’t happen to know where All Might is, by any chance?”

Izuku’s head suddenly feels light with fear. “W… What do you want from him?” He manages to
rasp out.

Izuku can’t be sure, but he has the impression that the evil is *smiling*.

---

Aizawa finally sees him.

He’s dodging and attacking, as he frantically searches for Midoriya. Group fights had never been his forte, and he needs to *find Midoriya and get him out of here*—

Relief washes over him when he finally catches a glimpse of the boy. He seems unharmed, standing near what he can only imagine is the man responsible for the teleportating mist going by his appearance and another individual, tall and thin, a series of pale, weird hands hanging all over his body.

He starts to attack more furiously, now, downing the inexperienced thugs around him like flies, clearing himself a path toward Midoriya. If he can catch him he should be able to make it to safety with him, as long as he keeps his eyes pointed on the man with the teleportation quirk.

---

“We’ve got a visitor incoming.” Kurogiri says, before the evil could answer Izuku’s question.

“Oh, your teacher is coming for you, how touching.” The evil says. Izuku catches the familiar aura of Aizawa-sensei’s light at his left, rapidly closing in.

“Kurogiri.”

It happens really fast. Izuku feels Kurogiri’s light moving in a strange way -*It’s a portal, he called it a portal*- and the evil’s not-light goes darker on his fingers, as if his killing instincts are concentrating in those specific points, he raises his arm—
Izuku bolts, instinct kicking in.

“SENSEI!”

The portal opens near Aizawa-sensei’s head just as Izuku is crashing into him with all his strength. The evil’s hand comes out of it, and instead of closing around Aizawa-sensei’s head the five fingers graze Izuku’s cheek, under his right eye.

The pain is almost unbearable for a second.

—

Aizawa was so close to Midoriya, when the boy had suddenly turned and charged right at him with a shout. They crash, Midoriya’s entire body weight pushing him back as he screams in pain, and tumble down in a mess of limbs.

“Oh.” The man with the hands says, monotone. “I missed.”

When they stop, Aizawa’s back against a boulder, Midoriya is breathing heavily and uneven. Aizawa raises the boy’s face to his, a hand under his chin.

The skin on the boy’s right cheek seems to have fallen off clean, muscles visible and out in the open. Blood is already rolling down his jaw and neck, drops staining Aizawa’s scarf.

“Sensei—“ Midoriya pants, his right eye twitching in pain. “Don’t— Don’t let him touch you—“

—

“Midoriya, what did I tell you about jumping in situations were you know you will get hurt?“

Izuku manages to let out a little, weak laugh. “I didn’t really know what he could do— I just had the feeling it wasn’t anything good—“ He pants, slowly standing with Aizawa-sensei’s hands steadying him. “Besides, if I hadn’t jumped, sensei would be dead.”
Aizawa-sensei doesn’t seem to have anything to say to that. His hands on Izuku’s arms squeeze him a little.

“Midoriya.”

His voice is dead serious. Izuku snaps to attention, keeping a metaphorical eye out to Kurogiri and the evil, that seems to don’t particularly care about closing the distance between them, for the moment.

“I don’t want to say this—“ Sensei continues. “But if we want to make it alive out of here, I will need your help. Can you tell me something useful about these people?”

“I—“ Izuku coughs. “The one with the portals. There’s a delay, I think— a couple of seconds, more or less, between the moment his portal moves into position, and the moment it actually opens.”

“That will have to do.” Aizawa-sensei whispers. “Can you see where he moves his portals?”

“Yes.”

Aizawa-sensei’s fingers are like a vice when he takes one of Izuku’s hand in his. “Get ready.”

—

It seemed they almost could make it, for a few instants.

Aizawa and the boy had sprinted, Midoriya pulling him away from the portals that tried to open under their feet three times before the two villains caught up with what was going on.

“Something is coming in front of us—!” Midoriya had tried to warm him, as a vaguely humanoid, towering figure came out from another portal, to no avail.
The thing was on them in a second, his fist connecting directly with Aizawa’s face.

—

Izuku is pulled back by the force of the hit, as Aizawa-sensei’s hand around his slips away. He hits the ground painfully, belly up, turning his head upside down as he takes in what had managed to attack them so fast.

He finds himself shocked, again.

Whatever that thing is, it’s not human. The light… No, the lights, are all wrong, as if someone has managed to cram a group of people in a jar.

Aizawa-sensei makes a choked sound of pain, stumbling to get back on his feet.

“That was a good effort, not going to lie.” The evil says, leisurely walking towards them. “But the big guy is here, now, so you two will not make it far. Is All Might coming at some point, or…?”

“What do you want from him?” Aizawa-sensei asks, his voice slightly nasal.

“To kill him, obviously.”

Izuku’s heart shot up to his throat.

“As if.” Aizawa-sensei replies, sarcastic. He spits, presumably blood. “I’m more than enough for a group of cowards like you.”

That seems to strike a chord, as the evil’s voice, that had been mostly impassible with a touch of amusement at times, so far, turns angry. “Cowards?”

“What do you call someone that attacks in group a bunch of kids? I have other words, if you want them. Wimps. Weaklings. Take your pick.” Aizawa-sensei kept taunting, strangely out of character for him. “I don’t even need the boy’s help, I can take you on by myself. C’mon, you big cowards.”
That’s a cue, Izuku realizes. Aizawa-sensei is telling him to run.

*How does he expect Izuku to run away and leave him alone with these horrible people?!!*

“Well, now you’ve gone and pissed me off—“ The evil grunts, a strange scratching sound follows. “Noumu, take care of him. I’m going to turn the kid to dust right in front his eyes while you beat him to a pulp.”

A shiver of fear goes down Izuku’s spine at those words. It’s like the evil’s not-light is injecting murdering intentions directly into his soul.

The not human thing moves, almost hitting Aizawa-sensei, that rolls away with a grunt just in time.

“What are you waiting for, Midoriya?! RUN!”

He can’t. His legs are locked, his breath is getting shorter, it’s like the evil’s not-light is poisoning his entire being—

“Don’t worry, kid. It’s only going to hurt until you die.”

—

Whatever this monstrosity is, Aizawa cannot keep fighting it for long. He already took considerable damage, he’s sure most bones in his face are broken, all he can taste in the back of his throat is the iron of blood.

For how hulking it is, the creature it’s frighteningly fast. The man with the hands is almost on Midoriya now, the boy is completely paralyzed by fear, trembling on his legs. The man is stretching his arm, fingers ready to grab Midoriya’s face—

Aizawa has no choice. He activates his quirk just an instant before the fingertips make contact with Midoriya, taking a full hit that literally sinks him three centimeters into the concrete.
The contact finally snaps Izuku out of his stupor. He jumps back, away from the hand on his face, his skin miraculously still in place.

“That was really cool, really cool indeed, Eraserhead—“ The evil is mumbling.

Izuku’s mind suddenly clears. As he’d been standing there like an idiot, Aizawa-sensei saved his life and he’s now on the ground, having taken a hit of the frightening not human thing.

It’s all my fault, he frantically thinks, a hiccup itching in his throat, should’ve listened to sensei in the first place, stupid stupid stupid—

The evil’s face makes a crunching noise under his fist, when the punch connects directly with his cheek.

Kurogiri’s eyes widen when the boy with the curly hair lands a hit on Shigaraki, that was too distracted looking at Eraserhead to notice the kid had charged to attack.

Shigaraki tumbles on the floor not making a sound. Damn, he’s gonna be insufferable once they finally go back home—

He has to intervene, before Shigaraki goes full batshit, but the boy somehow dodges his portals with a roll. Again.

“You are an annoying little fly, aren’t you?” He asks, warping himself closer to the kid.

“Kurogiri—“ Shigaraki voice snaps, enraged. “Don’t try to intervene. This annoying brat is mine.”
“As you wish, Shigaraki Tomura.” He replies, knowing the sarcasm will be lost on him. Well, master cannot admonish him if he had at least tried to reign Shigaraki in a bit.

—

Kurogiri steps back dutifully after the evil -Shigaraki- has ordered him to, while getting back on his feet.

The not-light it’s still suffocating, but Izuku is not going to let it freeze him again, not this time. He steels himself, ready for combat.

This man, Shigaraki— Has a frightening powerful quirk. And he seems prone to let himself getting easily provoked.

He might be just the kind of person that doesn’t bother learning any hand-to-hand combat, too sure in the strength of his quirk.

Maybe Izuku has a chance. Maybe Izuku can buy enough time, until All Might is finally here.

Aizawa-sensei, please, hang on—!

—

Aizawa is doing his best not to pass out.

The creature- The Noumu is keeping him down, blocking him with his weight after giving him quite a beating. He must have some internal damage, Aizawa considers with a distant thought, pain flaring from his insides. His right arm is in pieces after the Noumu had crushed it between it’s fingers, and it is obviously considering of doing the same with his left.

Aizawa can’t allow himself to pass out. He needs to— He needs to keep his eyes on the kid—

Midoriya is going toe to toe with the man with the hands. His movements are quick and efficient as
he dodges and hits whenever he can, making the man with the hands growing more and more impatient and twitchy as their one-sided fight keeps going.

But, despite his clear superiority in hand-to-hand, the boy had too many close calls already. Too many times the fingers had almost touched his body, Aizawa has— He has to make sure to stop him if it happens—

The man with the hands goes down with a grunt when Midoriya ducks away from his stretched hand and places a rolling kick on the man’s ankles.

“You goddamn brat—“

“It’s this all that you have?!” Midoriya growls, breathless. He’s painting heavily, sweat rolling down his face, mixing with the blood on his cheek. “And you think you can kill All Might?!”

The man with the hands slowly climbs back on his feet, scratching at his neck obsessively. “I don’t like this brat— I don’t like this brat— I don’t like this brat— NOUMU!”

No— Aizawa thinks, his vision blurring. He has the time to feel the weight raise from him, and see a dark blur, hear the sickening crunch of Midoriya’s left arm breaking as the boy let out a choked yell of pain, before his world goes dark.

Izuku’s breath wheezes painfully through his chest after he’s finally done skidding on the floor.

His left arm is a flaming point of pain. He felt the bones break when he took the noumu’s fist in full force, flying away with the recoil of the hit.

The open wound on his cheek pulses painfully, fresh blood starting to seep again after Izuku’s face had been grinding against the concrete.

He’s shivering, he realizes, his teeth chattering. He can feel tears sting at his eyes, as he painfully focus to try make sense of things again—
Aizawa-sensei passed out, his light a bit dimmer— Izuku feverishly scans his surrounding trying to find something, anything, to get the both of them out of this situation— All he can feel are the distant lights of his classmates, fighting for their lives themselves, and— And—

And then he feels it. A laugh escapes his lips, hysterical.

“You’ve lost.” He says, his voice almost unrecognizable to his own ears, turning what he knows must look like a lopsided, crazy grin toward Shigaraki and Kurogiri. “He’s here.”

—

Toshinori had been having a bad feeling all morning.

At some point he bolted away from Nedzu’s office, unable to keep the sensation at bay anymore. He’d been sprinting toward the training grounds, when young Iida met him half way, breathless, scared, desperate.

His students— his wonderful, young students were fighting for their lives while he had been sitting and drinking tea—

*Unforgivable.*

When he finally arrives, he cannot find it in himself to smile.

He sees 13, on the floor, badly wounded, young Uraraka and Ashido fussing, tears coming to their eyes when they saw him arrive.

He sees young Asui, holding an unconscious Mineta on her back, hiding as best as she could from the villains around her.

He sees Aizawa, face down in concrete, a pool of blood under it.
He sees—Young Midoriya.

The boy is attempting to stand, left arm hanging at a weird angle from his shoulder—broken—blood rolling down his face and neck, a big red stain already on his clothing—open wound—, his eyes glistening—tears—, his teeth bared, like a cornered animal.

He cannot smile.

Unforgivable.

—

Izuku had managed to finally get back on his feet, still shivering, as All Might stood at the top of the stair, a quiet, seething rage coming out in waves from his light.

All Might moves incredibly fast. In a second he’s on Aizawa-sensei, taking him in his arms and transporting him away from danger. The second after, he’s on Izuku, his big arms incredibly gentle around him despite the haste of his movements.

“Young Midoriya.” He says, his voice has a quiet, almost broken note Izuku had never heard before.

“All Might—” Izuku hiccups. “They want to kill you— Are you out of time—“

He hears a sound, it takes him a second to realize it’s the sound of All Might grinding his teeth.

“Do not worry.” All Might arms slowly release him, as he stands. “Everything will be alright.”

A knot that was in Izuku’s chest slowly releases, as those familiar words brings him incredible comfort.

“Wait—” He forces himself to say, his hand, so small, closes around All Might’s big one. “That thing. The noumu. It’s… It’s not human. It’s like… It’s like it has a lot of people in a single body.”
All Might stops for a moment, taking his words in.

“Please, be careful.” Izuku whispers.

All Might gives his hand a gentle squeeze, before jumping into battle. But soon enough, it’s obviously things are not going well. The noumu is fast, and takes hits like All Might is barely swatting at him. Kurogiri had opened a portal when All Might had almost managed to flip the noumu on its back, trapping the both of them. He hears the monstrous fingers sink into flesh.

Izuku never, ever, *ever* wants to hear All Might choking in pain, ever again.

*Kurogiri, that cowardly bastard—*

Izuku’s feet had started to move already. He knows All Might will be mad at him, but he just cannot stand there and do *nothing*—

He’s not the only one, he realizes, familiar lights coming into All Might’s aid.

Todoroki’s ice zaps past him, freezing the noumu half stuck into the portal, Kacchan’s explosion makes his ears ring as he hits Kurogiri, and Shigaraki only barely manages to avoid Kirishima with a backstep and a grunt.

“Shit! I almost had him!” Kirishima exclaims, frustrated.

“Don’t you move, you shitty ass shadow—“ Kacchan is growling.

“The symbol of peace will not go down so easily, you idiots.” Todoroki adds, glacial.

And standing there, between his classmates, despite his useless arm and his useless body, Izuku still feels hope blossoming in his chest.
Toshinori coughs, ignoring the pain pulsing through his body.

His magnificent students have yet again surpassed his every expectations, coming to his aid, stopping the villains quickly and efficiently. Young Bakugou had even individuated the weak point of one on them, keeping him in check.

The noumu, half frozen, snaps up on a single leg, leaving behind pieces of his body. Toshinori watches in horror as it rapidly regenerates the lost limbs, the man with the hands monologuing about the prowess of his creature like a child bragging about his new, favorite toy.

His heart almost skips a beat as the monster immediately springs for young Bakugou, fortunately he makes it in time, putting the boy out of danger, taking the hit for him.

His arm— The hit was incredibly strong, yet again. Young Midoriya had told him, *like it has a lot of people in a single body.*

Certainly explained the creature’s apparently endless talents.

“Do you not have any mercy?” He spits out, enraged.

“We had to save our ally, didn’t we?” The man with the hands replies. “Just before you arrived, one of your kids— The plain looking one— He’d been trying to give me such a beating, quite skillfully — From whom he learnt, and for who do you think he’d been lashing out with such violence? Eh, *hero*?”

Toshinori grits his teeth as the man goes on and on, rambling about society and violence and *whatever.*

“Stop trying to lead me around.” He interrupts. “You just want to have some fun, don’t you?”
“You saw through me so quickly.” The man replies, voice lower, his eyes glinting madly behind the hand covering most of his face.

Nearby, his students are discussing between themselves a plan of attack. He cannot possibly allow them to put themselves in danger yet again.

“No! You must escape!” He orders.

“If I hadn’t supported you, things would’ve turned out bad.” Young Todoroki replies, matter-of-factly.

“All Might… Your time— Ah—“ Young Midoriya starts, before hesitating, his right hand on his mouth.

“You are indeed right, young Todoroki, and I owe you one!” He replies, flashing a thumbs up. “But now, do not worry! I will show you how it’s done!”

It’s true that he’s out of time. He needs to finish this, now.

He charges for the noumu, the man with the hands attempting to belittle him yet again.

If the thing can absorb his 100%, then he will need to bring out more.

Izuku can only stand there, his mouth hanging open, as All Might’s light goes possibly even brighter than normal.

The air shift caused by the strength of his hits it’s almost suffocating, causing all of them to be unable to move a single step forward.
The noumu finally goes down. Or, more correctly, it goes up, launched into the sky by one last punch.

The not-light of Shigaraki shifts and moves, clearly distressed, as he mumbles to himself something about cheats or whatever.

“Now, how about we put an end to this.” All Might says.

And in that moment, Izuku knows he’s lying.

*He’s out. He’s completely out of time. He’s bluffing*—

Kirishima tugs at his unbroken arm, trying to convince him to fall back, his tone not worried in the slightest, clearly trusting in All Might.

*Izuku is the only one that knows*—

They are still exchanging words, All Might and Shigaraki. All Might’s light is shivering, almost about to go out—

Kurogiri moves, and with him Izuku.

—

Toshinori is frozen on the spot, he knows that if he dares to try move a single step, now, he will shift back.

The man with the black mist is charging forward. All he can do, now, is hope his precious kids have put enough distance between themselves and the villai—

A choked sound gets stuck in his throat as young Midoriya flies into his field of vision, his right arm stretched forward as if he’s trying to catch the black mist, his teeth bared in desperation.
The man with the hands has put his arm in the mist, reaching for the boy—

A bullet wheezes past, sinking into the pale hand.

Many more follows, and he knows his kids are finally safe, the other pros are here, the villains are forced to fall back as young Midoriya crashes down and roll in front of him with a painful, choked yell. He can feel himself start to shift, steam rising out of him, concealing him momentarily from prying eyes.

Cementoss come to his aid just in time, hiding him from young Kirishima that was running in their direction, calling out to young Midoriya, clearly worried for him.

“I’m a fan of you, too, you know.” Cementoss had replied, good-naturedly, after Toshinori had thanked him. “Better keep your true form hidden. You should head to the infirmary right away, and try not to overdo it so much next time, huh?”

Toshinori sighs in relief. He wants to sink to the ground, exhausted, but he limps towards young Midoriya, that has managed to kneel, holding his broken arm.

His eyes are full of tears when he lowers himself in front of him.

“I felt it—“ He sobs, looking up at him, pure desperation on his features. “Your light— It went out— It— A piece of it— It went out— Forever—“

Toshinori blinks, watching the young man wracked by desperate sobs, hanging his head low again, big tears hitting the floor.

He doesn’t need to ask what he means. He knows his time has shortened again, after this.

“I’m sorry you had to see that.” He whispers, putting a gentle arm around the boy’s head and guiding it against his chest. “But it’s ok, young Midoriya. Everything will be alright.”
The boy sobs, shaking his head, but he melts into the comforting embrace.

Chapter End Notes

btw I'm kind of playing as I damn well please with the timeline in this fic because the timeline in canon is kind of bonkers sometimes and I need these poor kids to have some time to settle before they get thrown into hell for the love of god

Also have one more art today, so you can see what Ichiko looks like
“I will see you in a bit, young Midoriya.” All Might says, patting his head one last time.

It almost felt like mom’s pats. Maybe she was rubbing some of her mannerism off on All Might, considering how much time the man has spent at their house in these months.

Not that he’d complain.

His eyes and nose stings for how much he cried. He tries not to think about what he felt, fresh tears threatening to come up at the mere thought.

It had been horrible, to feel All Might’s light shrink, and a piece of it detaching, wiggling and thrashing like an animal in pain for a few seconds, before dissolving into dust, to never come back again.

He doesn’t want to feel that happen ever again.

He sniffles, All Might’s light guided away by Cementoss-sensei a blurry point in the radius of his quirk, when something soft touches his thigh.

“Midoriya. It’s principal Nedzu.” The little voice says.

“Oh, hello, sir—” Izuku rasps out, his voice raw against his throat. He has the distinct impression that the small principal is scanning him to the depth of his soul.

“How hurt are you?” He asks.

“My arm’s broken and I have this… Thing on my cheek, but aside from that I’m ok.” He’s dead tired on his feet, too, but that’s beside the point.
“I see. You should go to the infirmary right away, then. We are rounding all the students up to make sure no one is missing, but of course medical attention comes first, I will count you in—“

Izuku doesn’t want anything more than to let Recovery Girl put the fire that’s burning in his arm out, but, he realizes, the roaring need to make sure that all his classmates are ok, to feel their lights near, vastly supersedes his need to be healed.

“No.” He replies. “No I— I can wait—I want to see the others, first—“

“…Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

The principal sighs in a way that suggest he already knew Izuku would say that. “This way, then.”

As they walk closer to the little cluster of lights, Izuku is immediately relieved to see that everyone it’s there, safe and sound, after a rapid head count. He knew that Kacchan, Todoroki and Kirishima were safe, of course, but the others—

“Midoriya! Are you ok?!” Kirishima exclaims, his voice a little ragged, running in his direction after having noticed him getting closer. “You gave me such a scare, man, I thought you were done for—“

“Midoriya.” Asui had joined him, too, speaking before he could answer. “I saw you fighting that man. You were very brave.”

“It was nothing—“ He stammers, feeling his cheek redden in embarrassment.

“MIDORIYA!” Uraraka pretty much made a dash for them as soon as she heard his name. She sounds like she’d been crying. “Oh my god, are you—” An hiccup. “Tsuuyu told us what happened — You got dragged right in the middle of that— I don’t know how do you do any of this—“ She’s rambling, probably gesticulating going by the movements of her light.

“Do what?” Izuku replies, perplexed.
“This!” She answers, exasperated, pointing at his entire being. “If I had been in your place I don’t think I would’ve been capable of moving a single step! I was frozen with fear up here, and you fought the boss of the villains?!”

Oh.

“I—“

“I think that is quite enough.” Principal Nedzu intervenes. He almost sounds amused. “I understand you are all happy to see your classmate, but we need to count you up and then send Midoriya to the infirmary.”

“O-of course, sir—“ Uraraka stammers. As they make their way to the rest of the class, she puts a hand on his shoulder, gently. “I’m so glad you are ok, Izuku—“ She whispers.

He doesn’t comment on the fact she used his name, too shocked to blurt out a single word, the rest of the class welcoming him with similar, relieved calls.

As he’s surrounded by his classmates… No, by his friends, all equally happy to see him in one piece, the heavy knot in his chest that had taken place there from the very moment he got warped away from his class finally releases.

Maybe things will be ok.

—

Recovery Girl grumbles a bit as she patches him up with a wet kiss, but doesn’t add much more.

“Considering the situation, I won’t scold you two. This time.”

All Might had already been there when Izuku arrived, lying on one of the cots.
“What held you?” He asked upon Izuku entering, curious.

Izuku tried to shrug, before remembering he had a broken arm and hiss in pain. “I just wanted to make sure the others were ok.” He said, not elaborating much more.

All Might had made a knowing hum, murmuring “I’m very glad your classmates are all fine, then.” as Recovery Girl guided Izuku to one of the cots and had started to work on him.

She’s putting his arm in a light cast, now, hanging it from his neck. “You had multiple fractures. The bones are repaired, but I recommend to keep the cast at least a couple of days to give your arm time to rest. How does your cheek feel?”

Izuku carefully palmed at his face with his free hand. The skin was back there, it felt tender and new. As his fingertips passed on his cheek, he notices a little irregularity, something slightly bumpy, right under his eye.

“It doesn’t hurt.” He says, poking curiously at himself.

“It scarred a little.” Recovery Girl replied, noticing his gesture. “Nothing big, but that’s what you have to live with when you are a stubborn, reckless boy like you.”

“Didn’t you say you wouldn’t scold us, this time?” All Might intervened, a smile in his voice.

“Just saying the truth.”

That gets a laugh out of Izuku, that finally relaxes against the pillow. His arm feels delicate, throbbing as if it’s threatening to break all over again, but it’s much of an improvement over the constant pain of broken bones.

“Oh—“ He says after some seconds of silence, feeling horrible. The thought had shaken him out of his relaxed, sleepy state. *How could he forget that?! “Aizawa-sensei! Is he ok?!”*

“He had more broken bones than you.” Recovery Girl replies, her voice low. “His orbital socket was pretty much turned to dust. We won’t know if that will affect his eyesight until he wakes up, but he is
out of danger and will make a full recovery in due time.”

Izuku should be happy that sensei is at least still alive. But he knows his face is betraying his feelings when he feels All Might eyes pointedly boring into him.

“It’s my fault.” He murmurs, before All Might could even ask. “I dragged him right to that thing, and I couldn’t help him in any way—“

“Young Midoriya, you cannot possibly blame yourself for this.” All Might voice is steel, but there’s a note of kindness into it. “Aizawa is a pro hero, before being your teacher. And he knows what he does, and he did what he thought was right. I also think he did the right thing. I would’ve done the same, in his place.”

In front of Izuku’s silence, he continues. “What do you think he should’ve done, leave you there all alone? My boy, you are his student, Aizawa would gladly give his life away if it meant protecting you. So would I.”

Izuku flinches as if All Might had hit him with one of his 300% punches. “I don’t—“ a cough “I don’t want anyone to give their life away for me—“

All Might is silent for a few second. “So you would die for others, gladly, but you don’t want others to do the same for you? That’s very selfish, my boy.” He then says in low, quiet voice. His tone is betraying a sad smile on his face.

Izuku doesn’t reply, angrily wiping the tears away with his right wrist.

A pregnant silence falls on them for a good minute, before there’s a knock on the door.

“Oh, right on time.” All Might sounds a bit rough, the sheets crinkling on him as he drags himself in a sitting position. “Young Midoriya, this is Tsukauchi Naomasa, a dear friend of mine, and a police officer. He knows my secret.” He says, answering to Izuku’s unasked question.

“Oh, so this is the boy you told me about!” The man, Tsukauchi, says in a cheery tone. He approaches Izuku’s cot. “It’s nice to meet you, Midoriya.”
“Oh, um, same—“Izuku replies, offering his hand, and as he imagined he would, Tsukauchi takes it in a little shake.

“Sadly, I’m not here just for a visit. I will need both your statements regarding this incident, it’s regrettable that I must interrupt your rest—“

“That’s alright.” Izuku replies, crossing his legs on the cot and sitting a bit straighter. Surely beats feeling terrible about himself and Aizawa-sensei.

“I think you should begin with young Midoriya, he’d been there from the start. I’m also curious to know the whole story myself, if I have to be honest.” All Might says as Tsukauchi sits in front of Izuku, on All Might’s cot, fishing something out of his coat to presumably write down Izuku’s statement.

“Oh, ok—“ Izuku says, taking a moment to collect his thoughts. “Well, we were right at the entrance of the U.S.J., 13 was explaining to us something, I— Was a bit distracted. I noticed, um—“

“Tsukauchi knows the way your quirk works, my boy, go on.” All Might says, rightly interpreting his hesitation.

“Oh, perfect— Well, I wasn’t really listening because there was something weird. Aizawa-sensei had told us it would be just us of class 1-A and the teachers at the training grounds, but I felt that inside the U.S.J. there were more people. I estimated around thirty or forty.”

“Were they just sitting there?” Tsukauchi asked, sounding perplexed.

“I don’t think they were visible to— You know, normal eyes?” Izuku scratches at his cheek, unsure. “In retrospect, I think they were hiding in a portal. The way I felt them, it was like there was a deep fog making their lights very blurry—”

“A portal?”

“Yes, one of them could open portals all over the place, but I’ll get to that in a minute— I mean, sorry—“
There’s a smile in Tsukauchi’s voice. “No problem, tell us in your own words.”

“Ok, um— Well, I told Aizawa-sensei about what I felt, and he immediately realized the danger, telling us to go back to the bus and alert the school, but the man with the portals, I think his name was Kurogiri, he was listening in, because he immediately teleported me away from the class after I told them about the lights.”

All Might’s light spiked up in fear, before calming down, quiet rage seeping through.

“I don’t know what happened to the class next, I can only imagine Kurogiri had also teleported them away at some point, since I noticed they were scattered all over, later. Anyhow, Kurogiri had teleported me nearby the boss of the villains.”

“The man with the hands—“ All Might murmured to himself.

“Hands?” Izuku blinked, perplexed. “Well, I heard his name, too. It was Shigaraki Tomura.”

At that, Tsukauchi made a little gasp of surprise, immediately scribbling in a frantic manner. “This is incredibly useful information, Midoriya, you’re helping us immensely. Please, go on.”

And Izuku did, describing all he could remember down to every single detail. How Shigaraki asked after All Might, how Aizawa-sensei came to his aid, of the not-light of Shigaraki and his quirk, the way he managed to push Aizawa-sensei away from Shigaraki’s hand, getting that wound on his cheek. How he noticed the delay in Kurogiri’s portals and the failed attempt to run away with sensei after the noumu stopped them. He told of the noumu strange cluster of lights, and of how sensei tried to give him a chance to run and -swallowing his pride- admitting how he froze in fear. How Aizawa-sensei saved his life, taking a hit, and that had finally pushed Izuku to fight Shigaraki.

“You fought him?!” At that point All Might interrupted, his voice strangled.

“I didn’t know what to do—“ Izuku replies, nervously playing with the sheet covering his cot. “He told you, too, remember?”

“When he said— Oh. He was talking about you.” All Might let out, surprised. “the plain looking one my ass—“ He added, grumbling.
That dragged a surprised little laugh out of Izuku, that shook his head a bit with a smile. “Anyhow, I was just buying time. Shigaraki— He was really angry after I punched him, I knew he’d come for me either way, he had even ordered Kurogiri not to intervene, that he wanted to kill me himself— And I didn’t had it in me to leave Aizawa-sensei behind— I know it was stupid, it’s not like I could’ve fought the three of them all on my own, so I just bid my time, trying to keep Shigaraki busy so he wouldn’t order the noumu to land the killing blow on sensei.”

“What were you waiting for?” Tsukauchi asked, his hand hovering on the notes he was writing.

“All Might, of course.” Izuku ignored the little surprised jump of his idol. “I knew he was coming, so I kept fighting. Shigaraki, he— He acted like an immature kid, growing more and more angry as he failed to get me. I kicked him to the floor, at some point, and that made him snap. He ordered the noumu to get me.”

All Might made tiny, breathless, painful whine at that.

“That’s how I broke my arm, it— Uuh— Punched me. Really hard. I don’t even know how far I flew after that hit—” Izuku squirms on his cot, uncomfortable. “If I have to be honest, I was almost glad. At least that thing was away from Aizawa-sensei—”

“Young Midoriya.”

Izuku flinches. “I'm sorry— Anyhow, well— You arrived right after—“ He takes a deep breath, noticing how tense his shoulders were, and forcing himself to relax. “You arrived. That’s when I knew we had a chance.” He whispers.

—

A deep silence covers them all after young Midoriya’s last whisper.

Toshinori doesn’t even know what to do with this boy anymore. The expression he had seen on young Midoriya’s face upon his arrival, that mix of anger and desperation, baring his teeth like an animal ready to fight, made much more sense now.
He cannot believe the boy fought against that man, Shigaraki. His first reaction of freezing in fear had been more than understandable, but young Midoriya found it in himself to shake out of that and fight right back.

Toshinori it’s starting to think his late sensei had somehow created a miracle from beyond the grave, putting this boy in his path. He cannot find any other explanation for the sheer stroke of luck of happening to meet young Midoriya in that underpass, that faithful day of many months ago.

Had he been even just a minute more late in running to the U.S.J.— Toshinori doesn’t even want to think about it, his stomach churning at the mental image of a young Midoriya, battered and lifeless, the monstrous noumu looming over him—

He was still here, in front of him, alive and well. That’s what mattered.

“I think I can take it from here.” He finally says, as the boy seems to be either unwilling of incapable of going on. “If you think you can add more useful details, young Midoriya, feel free to interject.”

The boy nodded, silent, and Tsukauchi turned to him, as he started to add his side of the story. Young Midoriya doesn’t intervene, only answering a couple of questions Tsukauchi asks himself directly to clarify, mostly just listening and nervously playing with his cot.

Tsukauchi asked the boy for his contact, if he was willing, once he was done writing everything down. Young Midoriya had quietly given his phone number, then handing his phone to Tsukauchi to let him add his own contact to the address book.

“Thank you both for your time and patience, I’ll leave you to rest now.” Tsukauchi finally said, putting his hat on. “Midoriya. I’m sure your teachers will appropriately scold you, but for what its worth, I think you did very good.”

“Don’t give him ideas.” Toshinori grunted, and that finally put a small smile on the boy’s face.

Tsukauchi chuckles. “Thank you again, all this information will be of great help. Hopefully, next time we will meet, it will be in less strained circumstances.”

“I hope so, too.” Midoriya answers, his voice a bit tired but less tense. “It’s been nice to meet you, Mr. Tsukauchi.”
With one last smile and a wish of getting better soon, Tsukauchi leaves. Recovery Girl is nowhere to be seen, probably had left to give them some measure of privacy as they gave their statements.

He watches the boy releasing a big sigh, sinking back in his pillow, eyes closed.

“… Are you mad at me?” He asks after a while, quietly.

“I have very many feelings.” Toshinori answers, taking a few seconds. “And maybe I’m a bit angry, yes, but definitely not at you.”

The boy just barely cracks his eyelids open, the dying light of the setting sun out the window creating a sheen of colors not unlike a nacre on a beach, on his unseeing eyes. Toshinori finds himself holding his breath.

“Mom will totally be mad.” The boy says, closing his eyes again.

That snaps him out of the little stupor he had fallen in “I— mh.” He sniffs. “I do not wish to lie to your mother, of course, but I think it’d be better if we give her a… Edulcorated version of the facts, for her peace of mind. Your call, my boy.”

Young Midoriya seems to take a few instants to think, before sighing tiredly. “I agree.”

They don’t speak, after that. Soon enough Toshinori hears the boy’s breath going steady, as he falls asleep.

He takes a last, long look at him, before closing his eyes himself.

—

Izuku is too tired to even activate his quirk, at the moment. His world is dark, and he’s pretty sure he’s flying, his body feels weightless, voices muffled around him.
With a hum, he pushes his face against something soft and comforting, feeling a gentle hand on his head, as he falls back asleep again.

When he wakes up, he’s in his room. He can hear the birds chirping outside and, confused, his quirk still turned off, he palms at his nightstand, hitting the clock.

“It’s 12:34!” The clock cheerfully announces. That definitely shakes him out of his sleepy daze, as he turns on his quirk.

A splitting pain in his head urges him to turn it off again. He does so, accidentally tumbling off his bed.

“Izuku?!”

The noise must’ve warned mom, her voice coming closer. He sits on the floor, sheets tangled around his legs.

“Honey, what are you doing?”

“My heaaaad—” He whines, pain pulsing in his temples. He does not dare to turn his quirk on again. “Mom, why didn’t you wake me up?! I’m super late for school!”

She chuckles. “Oh, honey, don’t worry. After what happened yesterday the direction decided to close the school for today. Take it easy, ok?”

Izuku breathes a sigh of relief. He slowly makes his way up on his feet. It’s good he can keep his quirk turned off for a bit, it’s clear that the strain of the day prior had been enough for a while. He clearly needs to rest.

“I was just putting lunch on the table, you must be hungry.” She says. “We’ll be downstairs, ok?”

Izuku nods, stifling a yawn. He hears mom walking down as he palms at himself. He recognizes the shirt he has on, one of his most comfortable ones that he always uses to sleep. Mom must’ve put it on him when they had gotten him home, at some point. He’s in his boxers, thought, so he finds his
pajama pants propped on the chair at his desk and puts them on, with a little difficulty considering his left arm it’s still in Recovery Girl’s cast. He makes his way downstairs. It’s kind of weird, after getting used to use his quirk continuously, to be plunged in a world of total darkness again, but it’s not like he didn’t spend his entire life in this home. He really doesn’t need it to move around.

When he enters the kitchen, yawning again, a definitely not-mom’s surprised chuckle welcomes him.

He jumps, taken aback, before his mind connects the noise to a voice he’s very familiar with. Then he remembers the shirt he uses to sleep is an old, faded All Might shirt, and blushes rapidly.

“Very cute.” All Might says, amused. “I’m sorry I scared you. Do you have your quirk turned off?”

“Y-yes.” Izuku replies, palming to find his chair and sit down, trying to will away the blush he feels burning on his cheeks.

“That’s interesting.” All Might says, Izuku he’s sure he’s staring at him.

“What is?” He asks, grateful for the distraction taking attention away from his embarrassing choice of clothing.

“Your eyes. They look different.” All Might hums thoughtfully. “I’ve never noticed.”

“…Do they?” Izuku asks, surprised.

“Yes the— Thank you, Miss Midoriya— The green. Is a different shade, when you have your quirk on. It’s brighter.”

“…Huh.”

Mom doesn’t say anything, putting the plate in front of him and then taking place at the table herself. She wishes them to enjoy their meal, before casually starting. “So, Izuku, Mr All Might told me what happened yesterday.”
Izuku’s mouthful of rice almost makes it out of his mouth. He’s proud he manages to gulp it down.

“I’m very glad you made it out with mostly minor injuries, but I can’t deny I’m very worried about something like this happening again.”

He has no idea what kind of version All Might might’ve given her, so he doesn’t comment. That last part of the sentence, any way, seems more aimed at All Might himself rather than him.

All Might sighs. “It is a very worrying prospect for all of us. Today, with the help of the police forces, the school is being searched throughly. I’ve been excused, seeing as I have to recover my strength myself, but I’m sure a highly accurate job is being done of it. I do not exclude the possibility the school will open again directly tomorrow.”

They eat in silence, for a while. A weird atmosphere has fallen on them, and while Izuku is definitely famished, he ends up pushing his rice around.

“All Might.” He finally says after a while. “You have something to tell me, don’t you.”

He hears the man stop, and put down his chopsticks. Maybe crossing his fingers on the table.


Izuku obeys.

—

After lunch, Miss Midoriya shushes them in the living room, citing the plates that needs to be washed as an excuse to leave them alone.

Toshinori told her everything, already, while young Midoriya was still sleeping. He wanted her to be ready, and the woman had, understandably, reacted with fear and tears. It took her a while to steel herself, taking deep breaths.
“I would be lying if I said the prospect doesn’t terrify me.” She said. “But… It’s Izuku’s decision. Whatever he will do, I will support him.”

Toshinori nodded, not daring to put a comforting hand on her shoulder as he wished to do. He did not deserve that, after unloading so much on her.

“Thank you for telling me.” She whispered after a long silence.

He watched young Midoriya expertly making his way towards his usual armchair, not a sign of hesitation, sitting with his legs crossed. He looked so much younger than usual, hair mussed with sleep, in his giant faded shirt. Toshinori’s own face, smiling brightly, greeted him through the folds.

There’s nothing Toshinori wished more than to let this boy live his life, happy and carefree.

But life had other plans, apparently.

“I have something to tell you about my powers.” Toshinori finally started, the sounds of plates being washed in the distance. “It’s going to be a long story…”

—Izuku listened intently.

All Might told him so much Izuku had never imagined could be real. He told him of One For All, and of All For One. He told him a story that went ages back, long, long before Izuku had even been born. He explained how his incredible strength work, and why he was so much weaker, now.

How he received that power from someone else.

Izuku took it all in, wonder plain on his face. Once All Might finished narrating, a silence fell on them.

“This is… A lot.” Izuku finally says, his right hand on his chin. “Certainly explains quite a lot of
things but… Why are you telling me this?”

All Might takes a long, deep breath, before answering.

“I wish for you to be the next wielder of One For All.”

—

Toshinori watches as shock takes place on the boy’s face, his mouth hanging open, his eyes wide.

“Me?” He asks, breathless. “But— I—“

His right hand makes some random movements as he searches for words.

“Why me?” He finally asks, sounding as if he’s about to faint.

“Why is the sky blue?” Toshinori replies, sad humor in his voice. “My boy, this is a thought I’ve been harbouring ever since we’ve first met.”

Young Midoriya closes his mouth, frowning, confused.

“You have heart, and you firmly believe in what I also believe.” Toshinori continues. “That a hero is supposed to help, and protect, no matter what. You’ve shown exceptional abilities and bravery, even a bit too much of that.” He chuckles. “You’ve shown how hard working you are, and how smart you are, and how much you care. You’ve shown me all the qualities I could possibly ask for.”

He expect to see the boy blush, but instead, his face goes dead serious, his hand slowly lowering and grabbing at his pants.

“My only regret is that I have to unload this request on you so soon.” Toshinori says. “I wished to let you live a bit longer in peace, to give you the chance to grow and learn at your own pace. My intention was to ask this of you at your third year, or even after graduation. But what happened yesterday showed me we cannot afford this luxury.”
Young Midoriya’s right hand goes back up to his face, as he nervously pulls at his lower lip. His eyes are moving, he’s clearly deep in thought. Toshinori gives him time, before adding softly. “I’ve already told your mother what I was going to ask you, this morning. She said that it’s your decision, and she will support you, no matter what. I want you to think about this, and I want you to know that if you decide to refuse, I will not hold it against you. I will still follow your growth, and I will still be proud of the person you are. Do not forget that.”

Inko enters in the living room just as Izuku is making his way out, his face an unreadable mask. She sidesteps, watching him go up the stairs, before entering in the room with a little worried frown.

All Might is sitting on the couch, his eyes closed. He looks like he just ran a marathon.

“Is… Everything ok?” She asks, unsure.

“He told me he needs some time to think” All Might replies, opening his eyes. “It’s the least I can give him.”

She sighs, softly sitting by his side.

“How do you think he took it?”

“It’s hard to say.” All Might sits a bit straighter, pulling at one of his long tufts of blond hair. “Young Midoriya’s heart is usually right on his sleeve. This is the first time I could not tell what he was thinking.”

She doesn’t know how to reply, and then All Might chuckles. “That probably means he’s growing up. It both makes me happy and sad— It’s a weird feeling.”

Inko feels a sad smile rising on her lips. “That’s how a parent feels. I can tell you from experience.”
She watches him flinch, turning a shocked expression to her, and then he relaxes.

“I guess that makes sense.” He whispers.

After a beat of silence, Inko gets up, rummaging in the furniture right under her tv. She takes one of their photo albums out, going back on the couch. She opens the album between them, and starts showing him pictures.

“This is Izuku, just after he was born. He was a loud crier.” She laughs, showing him the picture of the baby clearly mid-scream, red in the face.

All Might takes the picture with a smile. He listens, and looks, picture after picture, nodding at her anecdotes, laughing at the particularly funny ones.

Grateful.

—

It’s a little over an hour before Izuku comes back down the stairs, something under his arm.

They watch him in silence, the open album still between them, pictures scattered all over the place. He moves with a little difficulty, putting the box on the coffee table just with his right arm and a huff.

He opens a lid, leaving behind a hand-print in the dust, fishing one of his old All Might toys from the box.

“All this stuff.” He says. “From before my quirk— When I was a kid, I dreamt of being as strong as you.”

The toy is a bit faded by time, but the brilliant colors are still there.

“A childish dream.” Izuku laughs, mirthless. “What could someone as damaged as me could possibly do? There was no hope.”
All Might opens his mouth, as if to say something, but Inko puts an hand on his shoulder. He falls silent.

“But— But everything changed.” Izuku whispers. “I had no friends, and then I met Miki. I had no quirk, but then Ichiko-san found a way for me— I had no hope, but I met you.”

He takes a deep breath.

“I understand.” He says. “I think— I think I really understand, now. What it means to be a hero, what it means to be you. And— And it’s scary. But... But all these wonderful people that have changed my life for the better, I want to protect them. I want to protect them with all my strength.”

Slowly, Izuku puts the toy down on the box. His eyes are casted low, but then he looks up. He offers his right hand, palms up.

“I accept.”

When All Might shots up from his seat, covering the distance between he and Izuku in two strides, and squeezes Izuku in a tight hug, Inko can’t hold her tears anymore.

“Thank you.” He whispers, his voice broken. “Thank you so much—“

Izuku is lying in bed, belly up, his mind heavy and fuzzy, plagued by so many thoughts, when he feels as if a jolt of electricity passed through his spine.

One For All is part of him, now.

Chapter End Notes
I will probably not answer to your comments this chapter because I had a really, really, 
*really* fucking shitty day today and I'm just. Not in the mood for anything.

Hope you have all enjoyed the chapter, see you in a couple of days.
“Aizawa, you can’t be serious.”

“What, mister I-cough-blood, you scared I might take away your trophy as the most irresponsible teacher of the school?” He replies, turning around.

Toshinori deadpans at him. “Very funny. You should be resting, I’m sure principal Nedzu will find a substitute for you—“

“Nonsense, I’m ok.”

“You look like a mummy.”

“And you look like a strong wind might knock you over. As I said, I’m ok.” He ignores Toshinori’s sigh. “How are the students holding up?”

“As far as I can tell, hearing from their parents, far better than we thought. Class 1-A is very though.”

“Mh—“ Aizawa sniffs. “They told me what your golden boy did. Stubborn brat, that one. Refusing to leave me behind.” He shakes his head with a sigh. “It’s a miracle he made it out alive. You better cram some common sense in that rock-hard head of his, Toshinori, or he’s gonna get himself killed before you can pass down to him One For All.”

Toshinori coughs. “Yeah, about that…”

Hadn’t Aizawa’s face been covered in bandages, the squint would probably have been more effective. “What?”

“Well…”
Izuku immediately realized something had changed deeply in him, upon arriving at UA.

I mean, beside the obvious—it was still hard to believe All Might asked him, of all people, to inherit his powers, but the energy he felt running through his veins assured him it was not a dream, that morning—he noticed immediately than he felt All Might’s presence stronger than anyone else’s. If he had to find a way to explain the feel, it was as if they were two chimes, responding to one another with vibrations.

It felt as if All Might was near him, walking with him. And the man was literally on the other side of the school, at the moment.

Izuku sighed, carding a hand through his hair. This was something that he needed to discuss with him at the first occasion, for sure.

“Midoriya!”

Iida’s voice jolted him out of his thoughts and he stopped, letting his classmate catch up to him.

“Good morning.” He smiled when Iida’s light was just at his side.

“I’m glad to see you well!” Iida says, sincere passion in his voice. “How’s your arm?”

“Oh, this—“ He says, tugging at the cast. “I was just about to go to Recovery Girl to take it off.”

“Oh, that’s why you arrived so early, this morning.” Iida says, before humming. “Do you want me to walk you there?”

“Sure!” Izuku replies, eager to spend some time with his friend.

They walk toward the infirmary, chatting. Izuku is surprised to notice how much he missed Iida despite the fact they had not seen each other for just a day.
But then again, that is not surprising at all. Iida, and Uraraka, and all their classmates—They were deeply dear to his heart, now.

He’d protect them. He’d protect them all.

—

They were still chatting animatedly about the hero news of the morning, Izuku leaning on Iida’s desk with both his arms finally free, when the door opened.

“Oh—“ Uraraka says, hesitating on the doorway. Izuku blinks, noticing her light shift in embarrassment. “G-Good morning!”

“Good morning, Uraraka.” Iida replies in his usual serious tone. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine!” She says, surpassing them to put her bag down at her desk, right behind Iida’s, before turning to them. “You both ok? At the U.S.J.— It was quite something, huh?”

“Call it something—“ Izuku chuckled out, scratching the back of his head. “But I’m fine! Recovery Girl patched me up great, see?” He adds, rotating his left arm while pointing at it with his right hand.

Uraraka shifted closer to him, her fingers ghosting on his cheek. “You have a scar under your eye.” She says, quietly.

Suddenly, Izuku is painfully, rudely reminded of the fact that she called him “Izuku” at the U.S.J., and blushes furiously.

“It’s n-nothing—“ He stammers, just as Uraraka also tenses, probably remembering the same thing.

Thankfully, Iida’s obliviousness comes to the save. “I’m truly glad to see you are both healthy. That was quite the worrying ordeal.” He sniffs. “…I was really scared I couldn’t make it in time.”
The both turn to Iida, assuring him he did a marvellous job at saving the day, and that they were fine and dandy. Soon, the rest of the class started to trickle in, exchanging greetings, patting Izuku on the shoulder with some “Hey, Midoriya!” and “I’m glad you’re ok!”, and all the embarrassment got shuffled away in the back of his mind.

—

Aizawa eyed the boy from behind his bandages.

He didn’t seem different at all. Very focused, always taking notes typing away at his braille keyboard, as he usually did.

He definitely had something to show for the fight that happened at the U.S.J., though, going by the little scar under his right eye, not much different from the one Aizawa himself gained.

Aizawa definitely needed to have a serious chat with him regarding the whole incident, on top of Toshinori going ahead with his own decisions and unleashing One For All on him. For now, though, he had another pressing matter that regarded the entire class.

“Don’t worry about me, now.” He replies, when Uraraka expressed concern for his state. “You have other things to think about. After all, the sport festival is approaching.”

—

After all the explanations necessary regarding the festival, Aizawa made his way out, stopping on the doorway.

“Midoriya, come with me.”

The boy snapped out of his seat like a spring, a tense expression on his face. He meekly followed, taking place at his side as they crossed Present Mic on the way out.

“Yamada, I need to borrow the boy for a minute.”
“No problem, my dude! Don’t take too long, though, ok?”

They walked in silence, not far from the class.

“Midoriya, are we alone?”

The boy blinked, taking a moment to focus. “Yes.”

“Ok, let me know right away if someone is approaching.” A sigh. “Listen—“

“Sensei, if this is about the U.S.J. I— I’m sorry, I know I should’ve ran when you told me to, but I —“

He fell silent when Aizawa held his hand up. “Yes, about the U.S.J… Let’s make something clear. If I give you a order, I expect you to follow it, from now on. Understood?”

A contrite expression on his face, Midoriya nods.

“Another thing.” Aizawa continues. “I have to say, your quirk could have really helped us avoid all of that, and we came really close to. We were unlucky that that man, Kurogiri, was listening. If it hadn’t been for that, we might have evacuated all of you in time.”

Midoriya blinks “What do you mean, sir?”

“I mean that, from now on, we will adopt precautions.” Aizawa replies, a hand on his chin. “I don’t expect from you to be able to count everyone in this school on the top of your head, but I want you to come to me right away if you think something is not right. Or, to the closest teacher available, if I’m not there. I will speak to them about this.”

“Of course…” Midoriya replies, thoughtful. “I hadn’t thought of that. It might be helpful to also let me know how many people are expected to be there, in future similar situations. That way, I should be able to spot any outlier as soon as possible.”
“Now we are thinking in the same way, you little squirt.” Aizawa replies, the boy smiling a bit.

“Ok, sensei, I got it! And— I’m sorry, still, for what happened—“

“Let’s put that aside, I think you’ve learnt your lesson.” Aizawa interrupts. “There was something else I wanted to speak to you about. Have you already tried to use One For All?”

The boy jumped in his skin so hard Aizawa wouldn’t be surprised had he reached the ceiling.

“Y… You know?” He asks, eyes wide.

“We teachers and principal Nedzu are all informed regarding Toshinori’s situation, and the decision he has come to.”

The boy sighs, relieved, a hand on his chest. “Sensei, please, next time maybe start with that. I think I’m having a heart attack.” He says, voice trembling. He coughs, composing himself back. “I— Um, I haven’t tried yet. I only got it yesterday evening, after all—“

Aizawa sighs. It’s only a couple of weeks before the sport festival would start, and this poor boy has to deal with a whole new power on top of it all. Goddamn Toshinori and his goddamn spontaneous decisions.

“I think you will need to practice as much as you can, Midoriya. I will speak with that blond disgrace you call teacher about it. For now, you are dismissed. Go back to class, before Yamada comes out and destroys my eardrums.”

That got a surprised giggle-snort out of Midoriya. “Alright, um— sensei— see you later!”

He watched the boy trot back to class, putting his hand in his pockets.

There was a lot of work to do.
Back at his desk, Izuku melted on it with a sigh.

Aizawa-sensei certainly gave him a lot to think about. He hadn’t really thought much about what his quirk could mean in situations like the U.S.J., at the moment it had been natural for him to point out the weirdness, but that only happened because Aizawa-sensei already told them how many people were supposed to be there in the first place.

If Aizawa-sensei hadn’t done that… Izuku didn’t even want to think about how things could’ve gone.

But he was right. His quirk could be extremely helpful in spotting dangers before they had the chance to become so, he absolutely needed to keep that in mind, and to keep his attention up.

Also, it was consoling to discover the teachers were all aware of his new situation, but Aizawa-sensei was right about that too: He needed to practice.

“Midoriya.” Came Mineta’s whisper from behind him. “Are you ok?”

“I’m fine.” He whispered back, turning around with a little smile. “Did I miss something important?

“I don’t think so, but I’ll give you my notes later, if you want them!”

He nodded, grateful, before forcing himself to pay attention to the lesson.

So many things to do.

—

“Ok but like, real talk.” Kirishima said right as their break started, sitting on Izuku’s desk. “Midoriya, you gotta tell me how your quirk works.”
“Huh?” Izuku replied, very intelligently.

“Dude, that whole bit at the U.S.J.? That was insanely cool!” Kirishima explained, pumping his fist the way he did when he was excited. “When you said you saw all that people, and Aizawa-sensei yelled at us to get back? I got a chill running down my spine, man, that was crazy!”

At that, Kacchan turned around. Izuku was sure he was trying to dig an hole in him with his eyes.

He wasn’t the only one interested, Yaoyorozu approaching him from behind.

“I also would like to know, if you don’t mind, Midoriya.” She says, collected. “It was unfortunate that one of them was listening, that could’ve saved us all a lot of grief. I feel like your quirk could have a lot of very useful uses.”

“And also, the way you kept finding Aizawa-sensei over and over again, during that test on the first day? You can’t blame us for being curious, dude!” Kaminari interjects, and soon enough pretty much the entire class collected around him, waiting.

“Ah, well—“ He hesitates, embarrassed. “It’s a bit hard to explain… But, ok, imagine every living thing has a ‘light’. And every light is unique to the individual that posses it. I can sense these lights, at all times, no matter what kind of physical obstacle there’s between me and other people. It’s like a radar, basically.”

A chorus of understanding “Ooooooh…” followed. Yaoyorozu hums, before asking. “Can you also sense inanimate objects? How far can you go?”

“I can feel not biological matter, in a way. It’s like it reflects the light emitted by the living beings around it, so I have a general idea of where everything is. And for the moment I’m capable of sensing for what I think is about a three hundred meters radius, although if I really focus I can expand it. My head doesn’t agree with that very much, though.”

“That definitely explains a lot.” Ojiro interjects, in a pensive voice. “Can you also see videos, and other things like that?”
Izuku shakes his head. “Video registrations don’t mean anything to me, all I see is the outline of the monitor, and nothing else. I need actual living things around me to make sense of stuff. I also still can’t read, or actually see how you all look like, or do anything that requires sight. By all means, I’m still blind. I just perceive things… Differently.”

The atmosphere rapidly changes, turning a bit heavier after that.

“Deku.” Izuku jumps at Kacchan’s quiet voice. “For long have you been able to do that?”

“… Ten months, give or take.” He replies, cautious.

Kacchan only grunts, his voice and his light unreadable as usual.

“Wait, you’ve only discovered your quirk ten months ago?” Uraraka asks, surprised.

“Yeah, ahahah, funny that— It was a stroke of luck, really—“

“Wait a sec—“ Sero pipes up, sounding perplexed. “Does this mean you can feel every single person around you, for three hundred meters?”

“Yeah, that’s what I said—“

“How can you even think?!“

Izuku let out a surprised laugh at that, rapidly followed by the rest of the class, the atmosphere turning much lighter.

—

“So, this means you’ve lived pretty much all your life blind.” Iida says, not quite a question.
They are on their way to the cafeteria for lunch, the two of them and Uraraka. They were rapidly becoming inseparable.

“Iida!” Uraraka says, sounding worried. “That’s a bit blunt, isn’t it?”

“Well, it’s the truth.” Izuku replies before Iida can start apologizing. “I’m not offended, really.”

Iida let out a little relieved sigh, before saying pensively. “That makes a lot of sense, actually.”

“Huh?”

“People don’t become as driven and resourceful as you are by living a pampered life,” He continues. “You must have overcome a lot of hurdles.”

Izuku’s feet stops before he can realize they did.

“Was that… Not ok?” Iida asks, unsure, turning around to face him.

“No I… That was quite touching, actually.” Izuku replies, voice low, shuffling his foot nervously. “Thank you, Iida.”

A warm hand on his shoulder, gentle. Izuku shakes his head, chasing away the sting in his nose.

“Anyway, the sport festival, huh?” He says, cheering the atmosphere a bit. “Sounds exciting!”

Something weird happens when he says that. Uraraka light from fondness -she’s fond of him!- turns into a burning ball of ambitions.

“The sport festival!” She exclaims. “Let’s give it all, boys!”

Both he and Iida blinks, their mouth hanging open.
“Um, Uraraka?”

That’s how he discovers Uraraka’s reasons for wanting to become a hero.

“You must think that’s selfish—“ She says, embarrassed, as they wait in line out the cafeteria, but Izuku shakes his head.

“Not at all. I think it’s very nice of you, actually, to want to give back to your parents. You shouldn’t feel bad about that at all.”

“I agree with Midoriya. Wanting to give your family a more comfortable life it’s as good as a reason as any other.” Iida says, nodding. “I’m sure your parents must be proud of you.”

“You guys—“ She mutters, hiding her face into her hands. Izuku grins, happy, and then he feels the little ring of the chimes -as he’d already started to call this new feeling- grow stronger.

Unsurprisingly, All Might pops out from behind the corner, asking him to share lunch with him, making Uraraka giggle-snort something about him sounding like a school-girl.

He bids his farewell to his classmates, following behind All Might, just catching a last glimpse of Iida and Uraraka’s discussion.

“I wonder if All Might is gonna scold him— Since he jumped in during that fight…”

“Very likely, Aizawa-sensei probably did the same thing, this morning.”

“All Might seems very interested in Midoriya, don’t you think—“

Izuku has the distinct impression someone is staring at him, too, but it’s hard to say with all the
crowd.

He follows All Might.

—

After the boy sits down in front of him, he immediately asks.

“Do you feel it, too?”

Toshinori blinks, not quite sure how to interpret the question.

“…I don’t know what you mean?” He replies, honest. Young Midoriya sighs.

“That’s what I thought.” He says. “It might be a side effect of my original quirk.”

Toshinori starts to pour tea for the both of them, waiting for more.

“It’s like, since One For All activated— It’s like I can feel you all the time.”

Toshinori blinks.

“Imagine two chimes, going back and forth.” The boy explains, his hands waving in front of him. “That’s how it feels. This morning when I arrived, I could feel you as if you were standing right by me, even if you were barely in range of my radar. It only stopped once you got out of it, and started as soon as you were back. It’s— Very hard to explain—“ He was starting to mumble.

“I think your guess of this effect being caused by your quirk is about right.” Toshinori says, taking a sip. “Is it very distracting?”

“Not at all, actually. It feels very natural.” The boy frowns. “Also, it felt much stronger earlier, when
you approached with your All Might form. It was as if the energy of your One For All was trying to
wake the energy of mine. It’s very hard to put into words—“

“I think you’ve explained yourself quite well, all things considered. This is a curious side effect,
indeed.” Toshinori considers, surprise in his voice. “I’m at least glad that it’s not distracting for you,
that could’ve been a real problem. What a situation…”

“Well, let’s put this on the ever growing list of surprises in my life, I guess.” Young Midoriya
chuckles, picking up his part of the food. “Anyway, I guess you wanted to tell me something?”

Toshinori coughs. “Actually, yes. I spoke with Aizawa.”

There’s a sardonic smile on the boy’s face, as if he knows exactly the choice of words Aizawa had
for him. “And?”

“He has been so… Kind as to point out to me some glaring issues in our current situation.” Toshinori
elaborates, much more polite than Aizawa had been to him. “And I found myself agreeing with him.
So… I know I ask much of you, my boy, and I hope you will forgive me for this, but I was
wondering if you’d be up to stay after school for a few days, and let us help you try to gain at least a
bit of control over One For All before the sport festival.”

“You kidding?! Of course I’d like to stay!” The boy replies immediately, full of enthusiasm.

Ah, to be fifteen years old again…

“I’m glad to hear that. I will speak with your mother about it in the afternoon, hopefully she will give
us permission to start right away.”

—

Inko’s long sigh almost perforates Toshinori’s eardrum through the phone.

“You are a terrible, terrible man, mister.” She says, not a trace of venom in her voice. “I better get
my son back all in one piece after these extra sessions, you hear?!”
“Yes, m’am!” He dutifully replies, resisting the temptation to make a little salute.

Young Midoriya tried his damn best to try put Toshinori in trouble right away, when he tried to throw a punch with One For All activated and proceeded to break his arm in three different points.

Fortunately, Recovery Girl was able to patch him up right away, not without giving them a piece of her mind, loudly and at lengths.

“This will be the last time! The next, you will need to wait longer for your wounds to heal, young man.” She said, as she pushed them out of her infirmary “I can’t be putting this much stress on your body all the time, alright?”

She slammed the door behind them, young Midoriya scratching embarrassed at the back of his head.

“I’m sorry…” He muttered, before turning his face up to him. “…Are you thinking about something?”

“Yes.” Toshinori exhaled. “All the women I meet are very fearsome, and I’m scared for my life.”

That got a laugh out of young Midoriya, at least.

“Ok, clearly this isn’t working, so I’ll take it from here.” Aizawa said, once they’d returned to the training room with Midoriya’s arm in one piece again. “Clench your butt and scream from the bottom of your heart... I don’t even know from where you get this stuff from…” He added, in a desperate sigh, pinching the bridge of his nose.
“That’s… That’s how it works for me, though…” Toshinori replies, weakly.

“Midoriya, how it felt when you activated One For All?” Aizawa asks, ignoring him.

The boy puts an hand under his chin, frowning. “…Weird.” He finally says after a few seconds. “I could feel the energy in my arm, but it was very hard to control, like it didn’t belong to me…”

“Which is obvious, by the end result.” Aizawa finishes for him. “This is where we have to work at. Your original quirk, has it ever felt the same way? For my understanding you are also capable of turning it on and off at will, right?”

“No, it never felt like that.” Young Midoriya blinks, like he realized something. “I can control it just fine with very little effort, unless I need to focus to widen my radius, but even then it feels natural. Nothing like One For All.”

“Well, this is it, then.” Aizawa says, rolling a long plastic stick -one of those used to point something on a blackboard- in his hands. “We will need to make One For All feel natural for you, part of you. This way, you should be able to control it without breaking every single bone in your body.”

“But… How do we do that?” The boy replies, frowning. “I don’t even know where to start!”

“That’s where this air-head should step in and think of something.” Aizawa says, hitting Toshinori on the head with the stick. At least that answer his unasked question of what he needed the stick for. “Any suggestion, big guy?”

Toshinori sighs. “You’re a much better teacher than me, Aizawa.” He says, sounding regretful. “You immediately went for the root of the problem. Had this been up to me alone, I’d have no idea where to start myself.”

“That’s why I offered in the first place.” Twack twack goes the stick. “Now put that brain to good use and think. I’ll keep Midoriya busy with something that won’t destroy his body, in the meantime.”

Toshinori spent the rest of the time they were allowed sitting with his back against the wall, trying to think on how to help young Midoriya gain better control over One For All, as he observed he and Aizawa going through a routine of slow movements, the boy keeping One For All activated in his various limbs as much as possible.
At the end of the evening he didn’t have much to show, but at least the boy didn’t break any more bones.

—

As it has happened often already, it’s young Midoriya himself that finally comes to his aid.

Their second day hadn’t gone much better. Toshinori tried to give him some suggestions, but none seemed to work. They didn’t push it too much, trying to avoid more bone-shattering.

At the start of their third day of extra curricular activities, Midoriya entered the room with a pensive expression.

“I think I might have an idea.” He said. But upon he and Aizawa inviting him to go on, he hesitated.

“I… I might be wasting your time with this.” The boy says, frowning. “I mean, literally wasting your time.”

“What do you mean?” Toshinori blinks.

“Can you transform? Just for a bit— I need to confirm something—“

Toshinori had exchanged a look with Aizawa, who shrugged.

He complies with the boy’s suggestion, watching him close his eyes and take a deep breath.

The boy stayed like this, silent, for what felt like an eternity, before slowly opening his eyes.

“… I think this might be it.” He murmurs.
“Care to enlighten us?” Aizawa asks, tilting an eyebrow.

Rapidly, young Midoriya brought Aizawa up to speed with the little side affected that had presented itself once One For All had activated for him.

“You told me you felt it stronger when I was transformed.” Toshinori intervenes, the dots connecting in his mind. “You said that you felt as if my One For All was trying to activate yours.”

Midoriya nodded, a smile appearing on his face.

“I think— If I can concentrate on that feeling, on how natural it feels for you, maybe everything will click.” He says, clearly trying to reign in his enthusiasm. “I’m sorry for having to ask such a selfish thing, but this is the best shot I can give, I think—“

“Say no more, my boy. This seems like a good solution. Let’s do it.”

Aizawa was silent, looking at the both of them. Then his eyes set on Toshinori, squinting. “…And you didn’t think to use that in the first place?” A sigh. “What would you even do without us—“

“…Probably not much.” Toshinori admits, good-naturedly.

They go with that, in the end.

Toshinori’s time is very limited, but he pushes it a bit. Aizawa is keeping a close eye on the both of them. He doesn’t want Toshinori to go overboard, ready to activate his quirk on him would he notice something amiss. Wanting to give Midoriya a chance to figure things out is all fine and dandy, but it shouldn’t come to a detriment to his own health.

Also, Aizawa knows Midoriya would never forgive himself if he ended up the reason of Toshinori possibly losing even more time. The teenage angst would know no bound.
Speaking of which, Midoriya has spent a long time simply sitting in front of Toshinori, his eyes closed, clearly very focused. Neither of them dared speak a single word, not wanting to break the boy’s concentration.

He suddenly opens his eyes and jumps up, stretching his arms. “Ok.” He says, huffing. “I think I got it.”

And with that, a series of literal lightning seems to go through his body as the boy tightens his fists, gritting his teeth with a grunt.

“Oooh!” Toshinori says, smiling. “Yes, perfect! Just like that!”

The boy is shivering, sweat collecting in beads on his skin. His eyes twitch, before he releases, panting, the light that surrounded his body disappearing. He leans down a bit, putting his hands on his knees as he catches his breath.

“That’s… Very… Hard…” He pants.

Aizawa pats his back with a grin. “Step one, kiddo.” He says. “Now we know where to start.”

—

They hadn’t done very much progresses, in Izuku’s mind, but when he expressed the thought to All Might, the man admonished him.

“If you ask someone that has never jogged in their life to run a ten kilometres marathon, how do you think they are going to do?” He replied. “Don’t be so hard on yourself. You’ve done a lot already. It’s regrettable that we didn’t had more time to prepare before the festival, but you’ve already made a lot of progress, if you ask me. For how little you think it is, progress it’s still progress.”

Izuku accepted the compliments, silent.

They were standing in the backstage of the stadium where the sport festival would take place, All Might wanting to give some last words before he would join the rest of the class in the waiting room.
“Young Midoriya, I want you to go out there and tell the world that you have arrived.” All Might says, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“Tell… The world?”

“Yes. Show everyone what you are made of. Always go for to the highest point, never for second best. That’s what will make the difference between victory and defeat.” All Might added, before saying in a lower voice. “…Also please try not to overdo it with One For All, for now, ok?”

“That seems kind of countering the whole ‘show the world’ thing, don’t you think?” Izuku laughed, unable to help himself.

“I guess you are right.” All Might had conceded, amused. “But if you break something, your mother will skin me alive, and I kind of like my skin where it is.”

Izuku let out another long laugh, holding his belly.

Then once in the waiting room, Todoroki thrown him the gauntlet and well…

All Might told him to never go for second best, hadn’t he?

Chapter End Notes

The more wildly AU thing of this AU is that Mineta is actually just a normal kid. Pretty unbelievable, I know.

Anyhow next two chapters are, not gonna lie, maybe my least favorites of the 25 I’ve written so far. There wasn't much I felt I could change, but I still tried to give the sport festival a personal touch while putting down some ground-work for the future of the story so I hope you will all enjoy them anyway :D

Also sketch of the day: Toshinori's concept of "cute"
STAAAAAAAAREE...
THAT'S... CUTE???

How?
The festival started with a ceremony, the first placed at the exam for heroics invited to make a statement.

Of course Kacchan had to put all of them in the spotlight with that harsh, rude declaration, as if the other classes weren’t already pretty antagonised in their regards.

But as Kacchan passed near him, his light strangely still, not giving him a word, Izuku knew what Kacchan said was just a different way to put what All Might himself asked him to do.

*Never go for second best.*

He was going to give it all.

---

The start of their first trial, the obstacle race, is chaos.

Voices and lights all around him, tossing him around. He focuses on the position of the lights, finding himself an opening and sprinting through it. He sees Todoroki at the head, clearly using his ice to obstruct others.

Most of his classmates were keeping up, using their respective quirks, the race already turning in a competition between the sole members of class 1-A. They are quickly closing the gap, when Present Mic enthusiastic voice announces the very first obstacle.

The same robots from the exams.

Izuku sees them, towering, and as he’s quickly trying to think how to get past them without wasting
time, when he notices Todoroki acting, his ice quickly stopping the robots.

“He’s opened a path, we can go through!” Someone nearby exclaims.

But Izuku knows it’s not the case. The position the robots are frozen in, they are just about to go down and create more of an obstacle. Todoroki had thought about it all.

Izuku knows he only has one way. He activates One For All.

*I'm sorry, All Might!*

Shouto turns around just a bit, catching a glimpse of the race behind him.

As he predicted, the robots are now blocking the path. He accelerates, wanting to get as much of an advantage over the others as possible. He knows his classmates won’t let themselves be stopped by something as silly as a bunch of robots.

“*UHOOOO!*” Comes Present Mic’s voice, as he narrates the race. “*What a surprise! Midoriya of 1-A has made a super-jump, soaring above the robots! And he’s not the only one!*”

Shouto’s heart shots up in his throat, and he turns around frantically.

Present Mic wasn’t seeing things. Midoriya is flying over the robots, teeth clenched. He rapidly descends, rolling on the ground in a kind of ungraceful landing, *completely unscathed*, and doesn’t waste any time, right back on his feet in hot pursuit. Bakugou, yelling something he cannot quite hear, follows rapidly, Sero and Tokoyami right behind him as well.

*What?! How?!*
Toshinori cannot help but put a palm on his face in a sigh. The boy had easily jumped over those fifteen-something meters robots, even sticking a semi-decent landing by rolling without losing speed and resuming his run as soon as he balanced back on his feet, and Present Mic is doing a great job of pointing the spotlight right to that, the crowd already going insane.

So much for not overdoing it.

“Oh boy…”

—

Izuku’s breath is already getting pretty short.

Fatigue is his worst enemy, at the moment. He’s very glad he had achieved the jump, but controlling One For All, even in just short bursts, takes a ton of energy out of him. He could try for a dash, close the distance between him and Todoroki, but he’d rather save his strength, for now, not knowing which obstacle will come next.

Kacchan is right behind him, too, closing in. He heard him yell “WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK” when he jumped, which was pretty understandable and almost a under-reaction, considering his standards.

Then he sees it, in the distance— It looks like a giant pit, a series of rock formations connected by cables. An equilibrium test.

Todoroki hastily makes his way there, using his ice to slide easily from rope to rope. Izuku considers his options— He could -probably- try to cut his time by jumping from rock formation to rock formation… But will he have enough energy left to finish the race after that?

He cannot risk collapsing before the end. Choosing the safe option, he’s the second to the ropes that starts to make his way over, but he’s soon reached, and surpassed, by Kacchan, putting it all in his explosions to soar over the obstacle.

He’s a little over three quarters of the pit, when the rest of the group catches up. He has to keep his
third position, and then claim the first. Absolutely.

*If I finish my energies, then it means I’ll have to find more!* He thinks as he activates One For All again, and closes the final part of the pit with another big jump.

Todoroki and Kacchan are not too far from him. He can still do it.

“The three in the lead are almost to the last obstacle! The Mine Fiiiiielld!!” Present Mic yells.

*A mine field*?! Izuku can see the position of each mine perfectly, lucky him!

Todoroki is already there, carefully making his way through. Kacchan is flying again closing the distance between them. He can hear him yell something he cannot quite make out just as he’s entering the field himself.

“**OOOH! Midoriya is not slowing down a bit! Is this a suicidal tactic?!!**” Present Mic yells, excitement through the roof.

Todoroki and Kacchan, that were fighting between themselves, turn around, their lights turning surprised. He’s sprinting through the field, knowing exactly where to put his feet. The distance between himself and the two leads is shorter and shorter.

“**WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING, YOU SHITTY DEKU?!**”

“**WINNING.**” The word is out of his mouth before he even realizes, a roar, a declaration, scratching at his throat.

He feels as if he’s bleeding his energy, but he sees it, the last stretch, he can’t give up now—

He activates One For All one last time, and *dashes*—

“**Who could’ve imagined this when the trial began?!!**” Present Mic sounds almost insane. “**The very first man to make it through the finish line—**“
Izuku literally rolls through the gate, having lost his balance just an instant prior, the roar of the crowd deafening.

“MIDORIYAAAAA IZUKUUUUU!!!”

Shouto manages to cut second place by a millimetre, suspecting the only thing that distracted Bakugou from claiming it himself was the shock of seeing Midoriya shoot right in front of them like a lighting bolt.

Midoriya has climbed back on his feet as he and Bakugou arrived, positively drenched in sweat that he’s trying to dry away from his forehead with his wrist, his other hand on his knee for support. He’s panting heavily, drops of sweat rolling on his face, falling down from his chin.

Present Mic is going absolutely insane, as is the crowd, roaring all around them.

“What—“ Shouto turns to Bakugou. He’s literally trembling with rage. “What the fuck happened there—“

Midoriya doesn’t answer. He stands straight, turning his head to the sky, takes a deep breath.

When he turns to look at them, his entire expression conveys nothing other than a open, silent challenge.

Aizawa smiles to himself.

The kid has gone and finally bared his teeth. He was worried his gentle nature would play against him, make him afraid of fighting against his more competitive-spirited classmates.
But no. He fought, and claimed the victory, facing capable, confident individuals such as Bakugou and Todoroki, snarling right back at them.

He sure went and took a bite, that brat.

_Toshinori was probably having an heart attack, somewhere in the stadium._

—

Izuku is doing his best to relax, trying to channel some strength back into himself. He has no idea what the next challenge will be, nor for how long he will be able to catch his breath, raise some stamina up.

Todoroki and Kacchan were far, now, having turned away from him when he looked at them with a confidence he only half-felt.

But still, despite his frail nerves, he _did_ want to win.

“Midoriya…?”

He turns, blinking. “Uraraka—“

“That…” She starts, voice low, before continuing. “…Was… AMAZING!!! How did you do that?! I had no idea you could do something like that!”

Her enthusiasm is contagious as she jumps up and down, and he laughs, embarrassed, scratching at the back of his head.

“Now, now, no time to stand around!” Professor Midnight’s voice comes through the mic. “We have to move to the next challenge, which iiiisss…”
A moment of silence, before she declares “The human cavalry battle!”

She rapidly explain the rules and the point system. Izuku’s mind is already going at full speed, conjuring a plan that would assure him victory—

“—There’s an exception! The first place, whose head will be worth TEN MILLION POINTS!”

Midnight’s voice cuts right through his thought, rudely dragging him back to earth.

_Oh sh—_

_Toshinori pulls at his tie, nervous._

The boy did brilliantly during the first trial - _maybe even a bit too much, considering he told him to don’t overdo it with One For All…_ - and was now paying the consequences. It was hard to tell from so far away, but he could swear the boy paled upon hearing the words “ten million points”. An understandable reaction.

_How are you going to get yourself out of trouble, now, my boy?_

_Izu­ku’s mind was working feverishly, as he pulled at his lower lip._

_Only 15 minutes to conjure a plan. In truth, he already had a killer combo in mind, but it seemed everyone was giving him a wide berth. He couldn’t be sure they would actually accept to risk so much, considering the price on his head…_

_“Midoriya, let’s team up.”_
“Oh, thank god—” Izuku let out, the most relieved he had been in life, turning.

Uraraka chuckles. “I much rather team up with a friend. Besides, I’m sure you already have a plan in mind.”

“I do, and it included you in the first place.”

She chuckles again. “So, who’s next?”

—

Iida seemed impressed by his reasoning, that’s why it came the more as a surprise when he refused.

“You’re amazing, and a good friend, that’s more the reason for me to don’t accept.” He said, dead serious. “You keep going forward, and if I all I do is follow, I will never grow myself. Todoroki and Bakugou… They are not the only ones that want to beat you.”

It stung, but Izuku could understand and respect Iida’s decision. Still, his foolproof plan had already crumbled.

Thankfully, Hatsume Mei, from the department of support, approached them, giving him a new, fresh idea.

His lucky star must be shining bright, he decided, when Tokoyami accepted his proposition immediately.

They still had a chance.

—

The battle had been brutal.
They were managing, thankfully, a nice mix between Uraraka’s quirk, Hatsume’s gadgets, Tokoyami’s Dark Shadow and Izuku’s own ability to perceive the dangers from different angles.

At some point Kaminari attacked, putting a glaring flaw in their defense right under Izuku’s eyes.

Tokoyami briefly explained the limits of his Dark Shadow, Izuku’s mind trying to find a way to work around it. They were still hanging to the ten million points, but as the clock ticked by everyone was more and more out for blood.

They were facing Todoroki’s group, now, Iida at the helm. Izuku realized Todoroki wouldn’t use his fire side long ago. There was something strange about it, in the way he kept stifling half of himself, half of his light.

Izu had no idea what his reasons were, and at the moment he did not care. It was a weakness, and he was going to use it to his advantage. They managed to defend their points, the seconds going by fast.

Todoroki’s light grew jittery, he must’ve realized that Izuku knew.

At a minute from the end, something weird happened.

Iida’s light suddenly turned brighter, as if he was collecting all his strength—

The ten million points band was off his forehead before he could realize.

No—

“Let’s go after them!” He yelled.

“I can’t attack if Kaminari is with them— We should target someone else—“ Tokoyami protested.

“We don’t have time, this is our only chance!” Izuku replied. “I will take it back! I promise!”
“Go—!” Suddenly, Uraraka was pushing them forward. “I believe in you, Midoriya!”

He had to do it, this is were not just his points, but the points of the whole team as well.

He activated One For All.

“GO!”

Shouto was still surprised by Iida’s secret move when he turned around, breath itching in his throat.

Midoriya was already on him, his teeth bared, his arm stretched out. There was something strange to him, almost like a glow surrounding him.

Instincts kicked in and Shouto raised his arm, encased in ice, sure to be able to defend against Midoriya—

The strength that broke the surface level of the ice as Midoriya easily moved his arm out of the way came as a shock. And yet, it also felt somehow familiar—

Shouto raised his left arm, flames rising out of him, he hesitated—

*No, he would not use it*—

Midoriya grabbed the band.
They had the band. They had the band.

The seconds finished ticking, Midnight loudly counting down with the crowd. Izuku was panting after that last burst of One For All, clutching at the fabric in a tight fist. They put enough distance between Todoroki’s group, they should be safe, there was not enough time for them to catch up and try take it back—

“M… Midoriya…” Uraraka whispers. “That’s not… The ten million band…”

Izuku’s heart dropped to his stomach.

“… AND ZERO! Now, let’s see the four teams that will pass to the last trial! At first place, obviously, we have team Todoroki!”

No—

“Second place, team Bakugou! Third place team… Shinsou?”

No, he couldn’t have failed like this—

“And last, in fourth place, team Midoriya!”

— Huh?

Tokoyami approached him, his voice gentle. “I tried to take the ten million but well, I think we can settle with this one. Thanks to you, Todoroki’s guard was totally open, so I managed to snatch the band on his head.”

Izuku feels like he could cry. He’s pretty sure his eyes must be a little wet. “Tokoyami… I could kiss you right now.”

When Tokoyami chuckles, amused, there’s a note Izuku cannot quite pinpoint in his voice. “I think that would be rather difficult, but I appreciate the sentiment.”
When he approached him during the lunch break, Todoroki’s light was full of nervousness.

“Midoriya.” He said. “Come with me. There’s something I need to ask you.”

He guided him away, silent, his light suggesting he was stifling his nervousness. They stopped in an empty corridor exiting to the outside, a gentle breeze finding its way in.

Despite having told him that, Todoroki had yet to say anything as they watched each other from opposite sides.

“I felt something weird during that last fight.” Todoroki finally says, quietly. “You surprised me so much that I almost broke my promise. The strength you showed… The feel of that hit… It was almost like…”

Todoroki falls silent once more, before sighing. “…It doesn’t matter. Still, All Might is clearly very interested in you, isn’t he?”

Izuku couldn’t manage to hide a little flinch.

“I, well, I don’t know, that seems kind of a stretch—“ He replies, nervous. “He’s just a good teacher —“

“No.” Todoroki interrupts him, voice low but firm. “There’s something between you two, I can tell. I would honestly not care under different circumstances, but if you are connected to the number one hero, then I need to beat you.”

Izuku blinks, confused.

“You must know of my father, the number two hero. Endeavor. Did you knew that for years he has desperately tried to raise to the podium? But no matter what he did, he could never match up to a
legend like All Might. So, he concocted a plan.”

“Todoroki, I’m not sure why you are telling me all this—“

“Midoriya, you are aware of quirk marriages, right?”

The story that Todoroki told him after that, could only leave Izuku’s blood freezing in his veins in horror.

—

“You are not very good at listening, aren’t you?”

Of course the boy doesn’t jump, considering he has pretty much turned into an All Might human radar. Still, he laughs nervously as he turns around to him.

“I know you told me not to overdo it…” He says. “But well, you also told me to always shot for the highest point, sssooo…”

Toshinori sighs, amused. This boy will be the death of him. “Aizawa is right, your head really is hard as a rock.” He says, putting an hand to the boy’s head and shaking, mussing his hair. “You did good, my boy. I’m especially happy that you are looking out for me by not breaking anything. Please keep it that way.”

The boy chuckles, carding his hands through his hair to give it some resemblance of order back. Soon enough, though, a serious expression falls to his face.

“All Might.”

“Mh?”

“What would you do if you knew someone is in deep trouble, but you are also facing this person as your enemy? What is the right thing to do?”
Toshinori weighs the question in his mind. It’s clear the boy is coming from somewhere specific with this.

What that somewhere is, he has no idea.

“I think I would follow what my heart says in that moment.” He replies after a while, cautious.

The answer seems to satisfy him, when he nods with a confident expression.

“Now go.” Toshinori says, nudging young Midoriya gently. “I will be watching you.”

He watches the boy go, feeling tense. If he wins, chances are he will have to face Todoroki in the next turn, and after his little chat with Endeavor a few minutes prior, he has no idea what to expect from young Todoroki anymore.

Hopefully, everything would turn out for the best.

—

As life is, young Midoriya ends up finally breaking something.

Toshinori had been watching him, panicking, as the boy walked with a blank expression right towards the border of the ring. Then he suddenly stopped, something unreadable on his face, his eyes going wide.

And then he had gone tense, his back arching, a shot of energy going through him, a choked moan of pain escaping his lips, his left hand twitching, a sudden pressure rising a strong wind that invested the crowd—

His fingers were broken. And yet, that seemed to be exactly what he needed, shaking out of his stupor. His right hand shot at his mouth, sweat collecting on his pale face.
He turned, facing young Shinsou, that seemed very taken aback. And then young Midoriya charged, the two boys scuffled for a bit, but it soon became obvious that Midoriya hand-to-hand ability was superior, as he finally flipped young Shinsou out of the ring, claiming his victory.

Young Shinsou’s quirk certainly was impressive. That was a close call, and Recovery Girl won’t be happy, but at least the boy had taken one more step forward.

—

He watches the boy, his dead serious face, as Recovery Girl takes care of his fingers. He asked him what happened, how he managed to shake away the mind control, but young Midoriya had yet to answer.

“I saw something weird.” He finally says, thoughtfully, stretching his hand once the bones healed. “When I almost walked off the ring— I saw people. I think… I think they might’ve been—”

Toshinori blinks as the boy nervously hesitates, his mouth opening and closing mutely a couple of time.

“I… Like, actually saw people. Their faces, I mean—I think I know who they are— And—“ His voice is trembling. “I didn’t recognize any of them, but—“

Suddenly he jumps on his feet, coming closer to Toshinori. He stretches his hands up towards him with a little frown.

“Lean down a bit, please.”

“What?” Toshinori can’t help but ask.

“Lean down a bit. Please.” The boy repeats.

Confused by the deep seriousness of his voice, Toshinori silently obeys. Midoriya closes his eyes as
his hands gently close around Toshinori’s hollow cheeks. His fingers slowly explore Toshinori’s features. His index fingers follows the line of Toshinori’s eyebrows, his thumb on Toshinori’s nose. He takes a while, before finally taking them away.

Young Midoriya turns his face down towards his open palms. His hands close into fists, that he brings against his chest with a shuddering breath.

“I know how you look like, now.” He whispers, the brightest of smiles opening on his lips as he turns his face back up to him.

—

“He saw you, huh…“

Toshinori heart it’s still going a mile a minute. Young Midoriya bid them farewell cheerfully, telling them he was going to observe the other fights, leaving him alone with Recovery Girl.

“He seemed really happy about it, too.” She continues.

“Can you blame him?” Toshinori had never seen a smile like that on the boy’s face. He kind of wanted to print out the mental image, and frame it, if only had he the possibility to do that… “Considering his situation…”

“Mh.” She sniffs. “Take care of yourself. You don’t want to go and break that boy’s heart, now, do you.”

Toshinori closes his eyes with a long sigh.

Chapter End Notes

Today's extra sketch is totally unrelated to the chapter, I just had to draw Izuku in The Sweatshirt.
Also last chapter I got a comment saying "now imagine Todoroki asking him if All Might and Aizawa are his dads" and I answered with this lol
...ARE ALL MIGHT AND AIZAWA-SENSHI YOUR PARENTS?

...????
Izuku feels like he’s not walking as much as he’s skipping three meters above ground.

That vision he experienced had been so weird and scary at first. But understanding of what he was looking at had come to him right away, and for once it had been so refreshing to see faces, even if he would never know most of the people behind them. Real faces.

And being able to finally put one to All Might’s normal form— Izuku was so lucky.

“Midoriya!”

He slides on the seat by Uraraka and Iida, knowing he had a huge grin on his face.

“Wow, you look really happy!” She comments, a smile in her voice.

“You really gave us a scare down there, before, Midoriya.” Iida adds. “Is your hand fine?”

“Ahahah, yeah—“ He laughs, embarrassed. “Pretty stupid of me to fall for it, eh? Thankfully I managed to shake the control off just in time— My hand’s fine, Recovery Girl took care of it!” He pokes at his still bandaged hand. It feels a bit a tingly, but it doesn’t hurt. “Did I miss the battle?”

“No, Todoroki and Sero are just about to begin.” Uraraka says, her voice turning a bit serious. He hears the rustle of clothes as she sits a bit straighter. “I wonder if Sero has a plan.”

“Todoroki is quite the fearsome rival, but we of 1-A are pretty accustomed to his fighting style. I’m sure Sero must’ve thought of something to counter him.”

Izuku leans a bit over the railing, hands on the cool metal. Present Mic is just about to claim the start of the fight.
Todoroki’s lights have a nervous stillness to it. Like he’s trying his best not to shiver. Izuku can’t help but think about what Todoroki told him, and his good mood rapidly slides away from him.

As soon as the start is given, Sero shoots forward with a surprising speed, not losing a second with his attack. Iida makes a little surprised gasp by him, as Uraraka cheerfully exclaims “Way to go, Sero!”

Then Todoroki’s light *explodes.*

Izuku manages just in time to lean back and avoid the ice that would’ve definitely hit him right in the face had he not moved. Silence falls on the crowd. And then voices start to raise, kind, telling Sero to don’t mind too much, that he gave his best.

Izuku watches, as Todoroki’s light stops the nervous shivers, and then a deep-sedated sadness takes its place while Todoroki starts to melt down his own creation.

Izuku’s stomach gives a painful churn, finding in that sadness a familiar feeling he had not felt for a long while.

—

Ochako had been silently watching.

Iida left a bit ago since it was almost his turn and it was just her and Midoriya now.

He was giving her such a mood whiplash!

When he first joined them, Midoriya had the look of someone who just won the lottery. For whichever reason, she had no idea, but it was nice to see him so happy. But then, after the fight between Todoroki and Sero -if you could call it that-, Midoriya looked like someone killed a puppy right in front of him, pale as if he was about to be sick. And then he shook himself out of whatever funk he had fallen into, fishing his recorder from his pocket and started recording vocal notes in the usual muttering, during the fight between Kaminari and the girl from 1-B, Shiozaki.
Midoriya had been a constant source of surprises ever since they’d met at the exam, but today he surely was going overboard with it, between all this strange moodiness and the crazy way he ran in the obstacle race. *and seriously, how did he even do that. This guy, she swears.*

Ochako sighed, a small, lopsided smile on her face. *Of all the people she had to fall for…*

“You are already forming strategies, right?” She asks after Midoriya stops his recorder, taking a deep breath.

He seems embarrassed by that, a bit of red rising to his cheek. “You noticed, eh?” He says, his head leaning on a side. “Yeah I like to keep tabs on everything. I have notes about everyone—“

“Even me?” She asks with a little grin, and Midoriya blushes even more. He was fun to poke at.

“Actually yeah—“ He stammers. “I have a ton of notes about our entire class…”

Ochako closes her eyes, taking a deep breath. “You are really giving it all, today.” She says in a low voice. “You’re always working hard, but today… Sometimes I feel like I will never catch up to you.”

Midoriya’s face turns serious, his fingers tightening around the recorder. “You don’t have to catch up to me, I— I think you are perfect the way you are—“

Ochako’s heart does a little somersault. She mentally slaps herself. She’s here to become a hero, she better damn focus on her objective.

Still, a bit of fun doesn’t hurt, as she pokes with her index finger on Midoriya’s cheek. “So what, only the boys are allowed to be competitive?” She asks in a fake offended tone.

“NO! That’s not what I meant at all—!”

She cannot help but laugh at Midoriya’s frantic gestures, and after a couple of seconds he splutters,
before joining her.

—

Right after Iida’s -a bit embarrassing, poor Iida…- match, Uraraka gets up and leaves without a word.

Izuku follows her light with his head, worried. Soon enough will be her turn, and she will be matched against Kacchan.

He sighs. That’s the worse possible match. He distractedly observes the rest of the fights, thinking.

There must be something he could do to help…

—

When he enters the waiting room, both Uraraka and Iida are there.

“Oh, Midoriya.” Iida says as he enters. “I was just wondering… Surely Bakugou will be a little gentler against a female opponent—“

Izuku immediately replies with a decisive “Nope.”

Iida seems to deflate a bit, at that. Izuku gives him a little lopsided smile, before approaching the table where Uraraka was sitting.

“Listen, Uraraka…”

Her face is turned up to him, silent. He can feel her energy, a touch -a big touch- of fear, but also… A lot of resolution, a burning need to do better.
Izuku came here with the intention to speak with her, suggest her a plan he thought of during the previous matches, but now he finds himself faltering.

When Uraraka asked him if only the boys were allowed to be competitive she seemed to be mostly joking… And yet, he knew there was a touch of truth in that.

He’d been an idiot, and so unfair to her.

“Kacchan, he— He wants to climb on that number one podium.” He says, instead. “He will give it all, no matter who he has in front of him. Everyone is. And I— I believe you can do it, if you give it all, too.”

At that she lets out a little, surprised gasp.

“Uraraka, you are smart and talented.” Izuku continues with passion. “It’s true that Kacchan is super strong, but so what? You are strong too and I— I wanted you to know I firmly believe in you. I know you can beat him, if you put all of yourself into battle.”

Silence follows his declaration, and then Uraraka stands, in front of him.

“Midoriya, give me your fist.”

“Huh?”

She takes his right hand, closing the fingers into a fist, leaving his hand hovering in front of him. Then she bumps it with her own.

“I will see you in the final.” She says, not a touch of doubt in her voice.

Izuku grins.
“Oh, no—" Iida whispers near him.

The battle is brutal, his classmates muttering between themselves of how unbalanced the situation is.

As he predicted, Kacchan is not holding back. That seems to come as a surprise to most, but certainly not to Izuku. He has know him long enough.

But Uraraka… That plan seems more risky, but honestly, it’s probably much better than what Izuku himself thought of in the first place.

“Don’t look away, Iida.” Izuku says, quietly.

“You seem rather calm, Midoriya.” Iida replies, almost reproaching.

“Trust me. Don’t look away.” Izuku continues, his eyes firmly on the ring. “Uraraka has an ace up her sleeve you haven’t noticed yet.”

He can feel Iida’s confusion, and just a few instants after comes the voice of Aizawa-sensei through the mic, scolding the crowd like he does with his students.

“*He has recognised the strength of his opponent, that is way he will not let his guard down.*”

“Go, Uraraka.” Izuku whispers, fingers tight on the railing.

—

In the end, despite her best efforts, it’s all for naught.

Izuku sighs deeply. Everyone had been very impressed once they finally noticed what Uraraka was doing, but Kacchan… He simply was too strong.
Uraraka had done great, shown everyone what she is made of. But he knows that it is not enough for her, that she will be disappointed with herself.

He knows, because he’d feel the same way, too.

Silent he gets out of his seat, getting back down to the inside corridors of the stadium. He’s mumbling to himself, trying to think of something to say to cheer her up, when a familiar voice behind him stops him in his tracks.

“Hey, shithead.”

Izuku turns around just barely.

“I bet you put that crazy suicidal plan in her head, didn’t you?” Kacchan asks between his teeth. “Stop trying to throw wrenches in my way, you little—“

“I didn’t tell her anything.” Izuku replies, voice levelled. “If you felt an obstacle in your way… That was Uraraka’s doing.”

That seems to shut him up. Izuku keeps walking.

—

As he stands outside the waiting room once more, Izuku knows that there are no words that he can really say to her. Her light is so disappointed, so crushed, so humiliated—

Izuku wouldn’t want anyone to see him like this, would he be in her place.

He turns, walking down the corridor instead. He will tell her how proud he is once the time is right. And as destiny wills, he ends up walking into the person he had most recently learned how to despise, once he turns a corner.
Endeavor’s light is as hot as his quirk is, a burning core of resentment, ambition, and self-confidence. Izuku wondered who he could be for barely a second, before Endeavor spoke.

“Oh, it’s you.” He says, unimpressed.

Izuku turns his head up, frowning and silent.

“You made quite a show, in that first match.” Endeavor continues. “The pressure you exerted with a single finger, that raw power— Now, something like that seems wasted on someone like you.”

The contempt in his voice clamps like a vice around Izuku’s heart. How fast he got used to being considered an equal, rather than a dead-weight.

Not that it surprises him that someone that would abuse their own son in the way Todoroki described to him would also consider someone like Izuku as a second-class individual.

“My Shouto has a duty to fulfil, so you better have the decency of trying to give him a real match. I will be watching.”

Endeavor walks past him, as Izuku grits his teeth so hard he feels them like nails on a chalkboard in his mouth.

“I will make Todoroki show you.” He says, then, voice low. Endeavor, behind him, stops.

“What?”

Izuku turns, just barely, baring his teeth. “He will show that he’s not you. I will make sure of it. So, please, keep your eyes on the match.”

—

They are in front of one another, he and Todoroki.
Izuku feels a strange calmness. It’s as if the rage he felt talking with Endeavor had turned into a quiet, flat sea into his soul.

It’s probably because he knows what to do, now.

He can hear the roar of the crowd, muffled, as if he’s far, far away from them.

“You came.” Todoroki says, voice low. “Your expression…”

He doesn’t elaborate further, frowning. He shifts on his feet, getting ready.

So does Izuku, breathing slowly as he turns into a combat position.

“START!”

—

Shouto doesn’t know what to expect from Midoriya.

While he shown prowess in hand-to-hand combat in the past, Todoroki was fairly sure Midoriya’s strength was still pretty average.

But today… Today it had been clear Shouto’s estimation had been wrong.

That huge jump, that amazing speed, the sliver of oppressing strength he felt both during the human cavalry battle and during Midoriya’s match against Shinsou—

It was clear that Midoriya had far more in him that his gentle attitude let on.
He had to finish this, fast, and show the shitty old man that he didn’t need him—

When he and Midoriya stepped in front of one another on the ring, Midoriya’s expression had been puzzling. His face was a mask, not a single feeling passing through. Something he never seen him do before, as his classmate had always been very expressive, his feelings always open in the air.

But his eyes, his pale, unseeing eyes had a fire burning in them.

Shouto’s heart shot to his throat, realization overcoming him.

This match was going to end in blood.

—

“Midoriya?!”

Ochako’s eyes burned still. She cried so much on the phone, but now she felt better. She clearly needed that.

After closing the call with her parents she hurried upstairs, not wanting to miss the match between Midoriya and Todoroki.

“I hope Midoriya will be alright…” Iida murmured to himself, a nervous hand to his chin.

Ochako had no idea what would happen. Todoroki was so, so strong. He had always been, towering over the entire class, apparently untouchable.

But today… Midoriya won the race. And then he charged fearless against Todoroki during the cavalry battle, breaking his guard open.

An endless source of surprises.
As soon as the battle started, something incredible happened. Todoroki’s ice charged forward, fast as a lighting bolt.

Midoriya had been faster.

She couldn’t even follow his movements, he seemed to disappear for a second, before reappearing at Todoroki’s left side.

He landed a punch.

That’s when she shot on her feet, shouting his name in surprise.

Todoroki was fast, too, recovering from the hit right away. He did not waste a single second, his right arm shooting forward, his ice charging.

Midoriya disappears, again, appearing in front of Todoroki in mid-air, placing a rolling kick right on his face, sending Todoroki ungracefully tumbling on the already half frozen ring.

Iida was standing, too, she finally noticed. His hands on the railing, his mouth open in shock. The crowd had fallen into a suspended silence, as if everyone was simultaneously holding their breaths.

—Izuku felt his legs tremble.

He knew he was walking a fine line, he knew he went so close to losing control both times he dashed away from Todoroki’s attack. Even using One For All the way he was, in short bursts, was a huge risk. He knew that if his control was to slip for even a second, his legs would shatter, and that would be the end.

Todoroki was standing up again, his nose trickling blood. It was as if Izuku could smell the iron in the air. He felt the shock radiating from him, he could feel his other half, the one he kept caged,
trying to desperately wiggle free.

But stupid, stubborn Todoroki tried again. Izuku focused, his mind only perceiving his adversary, and charged. He felt the ice graze his feet, in an instant he was in front of Todoroki, hitting him with an uppercut that sent him flying back into the air.

Izuku’s ears buzzes, his heart beating madly in his temples as he pants heavily. The calm sea in his soul had turned into a storming, enraged one.

“ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?!”

The words are out of his mouth before he even realizes. Todoroki stood, his light shivering.

“Stop making fun of me—“ Izuku hisses through his teeth. “Stop making fun of everyone. You won’t beat me if you keep insisting on not using your full potential—”

Todoroki flinches. “That’s none of your business—“

“Like hell it isn’t!” Izuku interrupts him, furious. “Everyone is giving it all, and you are standing there only using half of what you have, and you think that is ok?!?”

“I made a promise—“

“Fuck it!”

Izuku dashes again, his legs loudly protesting, but he manages to keep control one more time. Todoroki tries to shield himself with his ice, but Izuku’s right hook shattered right through that, and connected.

That was his first slip of control.

Izuku felt the pain shot right up his arm as the bones in his hand broke, a choked yell dying in his throat. Todoroki rolls back again with the recoil of the hit, painfully hitting the ring. Izuku slips on
the ice, his radar going haywire for a second with the sting of pain in his hand, hitting his face on the cement. He pants heavily, his hand throbs in protest.

He forces himself to climb back up, tasting the blood in his mouth. “You are not your father—“ he pants, as Todoroki does the same. “You are you. This is your power. If you don’t fucking fight me for real, right now, I will lose all the respect I have for you—”

Todoroki is still hesitating, his light squirming. It feels as if his focus is somewhere else, far, far from the ongoing battle—

“I’m right in front of you!” Izuku insists, his left arm opening up in an exasperated gesture. “Stop looking at him and look at me!”

He can feel it. Todoroki is falling into total chaos, shook by Izuku’s words.

And yet he refuses.

*I will make Todoroki show you*

He dashes.

When Midoriya manages to land another kick after a frightfully fast dash, Todoroki flying backwards spitting blood, Yamada goes crazy.

“Who would’ve thought?! The big favorite for the first place on the podium seems incapable of attacking back!” He shouts into the mic. “Midoriya manages to land another hit! Will Todoroki be able to fight back after this?!”

The crowd is going absolutely insane. Todoroki’s previous show of strength against Sero put him immediately on the podium in everyone’s mind, but now Midoriya came, put his foot down, and was shaking off every preconceptions all the people watching could possibly have.
Aizawa cannot help the mad grin he feels pulling at his lips.

That boy got a beast inside him, and no one noticed until now.

Who is this person?

Shouto’s mind is a mess. Midoriya took all his convictions, shattered them, and threw them away in a matter of seconds.

Is this person really gentle, timid, meek Midoriya?

Shouto coughs, blood splattering on the ring. His jaw hurt, a stinging point of pain cutting right through his head.

Could this really be Midoriya?

The person standing in front of him certainly doesn’t look like Midoriya, at the moment. Midoriya that smiles gently at their classmates, Midoriya patiently helping others with their studies, Midoriya, worrying for his friends, pulling at his lower lip with that little frown—

Midoriya that’s looking down at him, blood on his face, his teeth bared, pure rage on his features.

“Your ice is getting weaker.” He says, voice even, despite the anger in his eyes. “If you don’t use your left side to counter-balance the cold, my next hit will be the last one.”

Shouto grits his teeth.

He’s right.
Midoriya is tired, too, though. He’s sweating a bucket, breath heavy. He can see that his right hand is broken. Shouto certainly felt the strength capable of shattering bones on his own face.

*I made a promise—*

“Why are you doing this?” Shouto asks, voice low.

Midoriya takes a second to answer, taking deep breaths. “Because you need it. Because helping is what a hero does.”

Shouto feels something *breaking* in his chest. A memory, of sweetest times. A voice, familiar, whispering into his ear “You can be a hero, if you want to—“

The flames laps at him, almost comforting, before he could even realize he finally let *that* half of himself free—

Midoriya *grins*.

“You are *crazy*—“ Shouto chokes, feeling the sting of tears in his eyes, a grin of his own involuntarily pulling at his mouth.

They charge at the same time.

—

Ochako hadn’t been capable to take her hands away from her mouth for the whole match.

Midoriya, he— There was no other way to put it, he dominated the fight so far. He’s standing over Todoroki, now, his shoulders’ movements betraying the shortness of his breath. They must be exchanging words it’s impossible for them to hear.
Todoroki slowly climbs to his feet, and suddenly the flames flare up from his arm and face, high to the sky. Surprise ripples all through the crowd.

It happens very fast.

Midnight and Cementoss shot up from their seats, a loud “NO!” out of their mouths, just as Todoroki and Midoriya meets in the middle. The explosion is blinding. A violent, hot wind washes over the stands, yells rising all around, forcing them to squeeze their eyes.

When they can finally see again, Todoroki is on his feet, in the ring, shivering.

Midoriya is out, his back against the wall, head turned up at the sky before he slowly slides down on the ground, falling on a side.

No one says a word, an unnatural silence covering the entire crowd of hundreds of people, as Midnight-sensei declares him out of the ring, giving the victory to Todoroki.

—

A single instant is what Shouto needed.

They charged toward one another, he and Midoriya. He saw him pull his right arm back, ready to punch despite his already broken hand.

The flames are finally warming him up, he can feel the strength of his right side back.

He puts his right arm up, a shield of thick ice, trying to defend from the incoming punch. His left hand is burning, heat collecting in his fist—

Something must’ve happened. The moment Midoriya’s fists collides with the ice, Shouto sees his eyes go wide, a choked cough escaping his lips. He hears the cracks, the strength of Midoriya’s punch not enough to break his defense.
Still enough to break even more Midoriya’s hand, and his adversary is frozen by pain.

A single instant, really.

The flaming punch connects with Midoriya’s cheek, sending him flying, the air exploding around them. When the dust finally settles, Shouto is still standing, despite how bruised and battered he feels after the beating Midoriya gave him.

Midoriya slides on the wall and falls down, outside the ring.

Shouto doesn’t even hear Midnight-sensei declaring his victory, the violent beats of his heart filling his head with white noise as he pants, the flames at his left side dying down and disappearing. He’s shook out of his stupor by a hand on his shoulder.

“Todoroki, do you need to go to the infirmary?” She asks, voice low, while the robots in his field of vision collects the unconscious form of Midoriya.

“…I think my jaw is broken.” He replies, the pain coming back in full force like a hot blade right through his skull.

“Then go.” She says, pushing him to follow after them.

—

“Stupid, stupid boys.”

Recovery girl is grumbling, as she fusses around young Todoroki. Toshinori headed with a sigh toward the infirmary right after the battle, but hadn’t expected to see young Todoroki, a bruise darkening on right cheek and another on his left jaw, coming in right after the stretcher with an unconscious Midoriya.

But, in retrospect, the boy landed some pretty heavy hits. For how though young Todoroki is, it’s not surprising that he took some serious damage.
Young Todoroki spared a confused glimpse in his direction, giving him a proper little bow, but saying nothing.

Recovery girl gives young Midoriya a fast check-up, grumbling to herself “Asleep. Must’ve used up all his energies, stupid boy—“ in a low voice, before turning away.

“I’ll think about you later.” She mutters at young Midoriya, despite the fact that that he was out like a light. She then turns to Todoroki. “You, sit down, Where does it hurt?”

“My jaw—“ Young Todoroki says, trying to don’t move his mouth too much, flinching a bit. “I think it’s broken.”

Toshinori thinks back to that mid-air kick that had connected directly to young Todoroki’s face. Yeah, that made sense.

“You’re covered in bruises, too.” Huffing, Recovery Girls climbs on her stool, placing a wet kiss on young Todoroki’s face. The boy blinks, confused, before his shoulders relax. His left hand goes up to his face, massaging.

“This will make you feel a little tired, but it can’t be helped.” She explains. “You can’t continue this farce with a broken jaw. Sit down, and try to rest a bit. The bruises, I’m afraid you will have to deal with them normally.”

At least young Todoroki is more prone to obeying when it’s proper to do so, seeing as he silently nods, not moving from his seat, unlike a certain someone else Toshinori knows.

Recovery Girl glares at him, as if she consider all this Toshinori’s fault (and maybe she’s not entirely wrong) before turning her attention to young Midoriya. She carefully examine his bruised, misshapen right hand.

“The bones are basically in pieces, I can’t just heal him like this.” She says after long minutes of silence, clinical. “I will need to operate, first. There’s a chance his hand might not be the same, after.”

Young Todoroki flinches at that, his mouth opening as if he wants to say something. But he closes it,
silent, collecting his own right hand against his chest with a contrite expression.

Toshinori wishes nothing more than to comfort him, but he is a stranger in the boy’s eyes, for now, and he clearly cannot just transform in front of him. As he’s trying to decide if it’s worth it to go out, transform, and then get back in with the risk young Todoroki might realize, the door opens.

“Midoriya!” Young Uraraka is the first one to enter, rapidly followed by young Iida, Asui and Mineta. She stops when she sees Todoroki. “Todoroki, you’re hurt, too.” She sounds worried.

The boy blinks, looking down, his hand back on his jaw. “… It broke. It’s fine, now.”

Young Uraraka hesitates, before stepping forward. She also gives Toshinori a perplexed greeting, before stepping near the cot young Midoriya is lying on.

“Is he…”

“Asleep.” Recovery Girl interrupts. “And all of you should go out, now. I need to operate.”

“O-operate?!” Young Iida exclaims, his arms gesticulating wildly.

“Yes, that’s what happens when you fight recklessly like this stubborn friend of yours. Now out, all of you. I have work to do.”

She shushes all of them out, closing the door behind them with a bang.

Once outside, a silence falls on the little group. The kids seems to have forgotten he’s even there, as young Todoroki asks in a quiet voice.

“Aren’t you angry at me?”

Young Iida and Uraraka exchange a look, before she speaks up.
“You’ve both fought with all your strength for victory. It’s what Midoriya wanted, why should we be angry?”

“…He broke his hand to fight me.” Todoroki replies, his eyes cast low. It seems the sentence is directed at himself rather than his classmates.

“And he broke your jaw, too, so I think you can call it fair?” Young Uraraka replies, more like a question. “Seriously, Todoroki, Midoriya only wanted for us all to give our best, and that is what you did. There’s no reason to be mad toward anyone.”

Finally, young Todoroki looks up. There’s something akin to wonder in his eyes. Young Iida steps forward.

“It was an impressive battle.” He says, serious. “And I hope to be able to match against you at full strength, just like Midoriya did.”

Young Todoroki nods, silent.

Toshinori watches them go in different directions, wondering when these kids went and grew up on him so fast.

—

When Izuku wakes, he is painfully, immediately aware of his wounds.

Recovery Girl seems to have just finished putting his arm in a cast, when she notices he’s awake. “Oh, finally. Well, young man, this is your price.”

She rapidly explains what she had to do to his hand, threatening him to don’t get the cast off for a couple days.

“You will feel that it is misshapen.” She says, severe. “Let this be a lesson. You cannot just use that power of yours wildly and hope for the best.”
“…I know.” Izuku replies, voice low.

“You can come back in, now.” Recovery Girl says. He doesn’t need to ask who she’s talking to, as he had felt the presence of All Might outside from the moment he woke.

All Might approaches his bed as Izuku is slowly sitting.

“I’m sorry.” He says after a few second of silence. “I couldn’t win, and show to the world that I have arrived.”

“But you did.” All Might replies in a quiet tone. “Despite your loss, you showed the world plenty.”

Izuku blinks, turning his face up to All Might.

“My boy, everyone in this stadium were thinking you couldn’t possibly win the moment you stepped up the ring against young Todoroki. In a matter of a few minutes, you’ve made them think there’s wasn’t a single chance you couldn’t win.”

“I really thought I could do it—“ Izuku replies, slowly, stretching his left hand. “But during that last hit, I lost focus. I let One For All overcome me. It happened already, once, during the battle.” A beat of silence. “It was stupid of me. I should’ve tried something else.”

He can feel All Might eyes boring into him, then he speaks, softly. “Can I ask you something?”

“Mh?”

“Why did you purposefully provoke young Todoroki into using his fire?”

Izuku weighs the words in his mouth, before answering. “It’s what my heart told me to do.”

All Might doesn’t answer, putting a hand on his head with a gentle sigh.
Shouto couldn’t shake this indescribable feeling off of himself.

The awards came and went. He silently accepted his second place, after the chaotic fight with Bakugou. He almost felt bad for him, for not giving it all, but at the moment he just had so many thoughts storming inside him—

All Might told him that his expression was different, now…

Shouto wondered what he meant.

He noticed the glaring lack of certain green head between his classmates. Was Midoriya so hurt he couldn’t even attend the closing ceremony? Guilt gnawed at his stomach, a sensation new, and yet so familiar.

When he he retreated back in the stadium to go change, after most people had already left, he was waiting.

“Honestly, Shouto, for how long will you keep this tantrum going?” He said, annoyed. “You could’ve easily beaten that explosive guy. Not to mention the pitiful fight against that boy.”

That had stopped Shouto in his track. *The sneer in those words.* Slowly, he asked. “What do you mean?”

“Between all the chances you had to use your full abilities, you had to choose him.” Father continued. “And not only that, you let him wipe the floor with you in front of everyone. What was that, an attempt to get back at me?”

The rage was bubbling back up his throat, again.

Was he implying that Midoriya wasn’t exactly as strong as he showed himself to be?
The thought of Midoriya brought up different, confusing feelings, that overcame the pure rage he always felt against his father.

*You are not your father,* Midoriya said. *This is your power.*

*Your power*— His words sounded so true, too. Like Midoriya firmly believed in them.

Uraraka said that all Midoriya wanted was for all of them to give their best.

Midoriya purposefully dragged him in the light, made him think about his choices. Midoriya forced him to give his best, because that is what he believed in. Midoriya openly decided to damage his own body, in order to push Shouto to do better.

Midoriya, *that wants to become a hero.*

“Well? Nothing to say?”

The rage dies in his throat, as he takes a deep breath.

“Don’t say that about him.” He whispers, then adds. “Go, don’t wait for me.”

He kept walking to the changing rooms, ignoring his father calling after him.

——

When he enters, the room is empty as most students have already left, except for one.

“Oh, Todoroki!” Midoriya says, lightly, as if they hadn’t tried to punch each other into a pulp about an hour prior. “I heard from Uraraka- It’s unfortunate you couldn’t beat Kacchan. I wish I could’ve seen the fight.”
He has a big bruise on his cheek, right where Shouto’s flaming fist connected, his right arm in a cast.

“…Are you ok? You aren’t hurt, right?” Midoriya asks with a little worried frown, when the silence stretches. “You should go to Recovery Girl if it’s the cas—“

Midoriya falls silent when Shouto covers the distance between them, getting right up to his face. He blinks, clearly confused, jumping a little when Shouto puts a hand on his chin, turning his face around a bit.

*He looks so different.* During that fight, he made Shouto think of a wild animal ready to strike. Now, he was back to his usual, gentle self, his round cheeks making him seem even younger than he already was.

“Uuuuuhhh—“

“You have a scar under your eye.” Shouto mutters to himself, softly. He never noticed it, before.

“Um— Yes…?“

Shouto had been inspecting him so closely their noses were almost touching. With a blink, realizing what he’s doing, Shouto releases him almost as if he got burned, taking a step back. Midoriya blinks at him, his mouth slightly open.

“Are you… Mad at me?” He then asks, clearly very confused, frowning.

“…No.” Shouto replies after a few beats. “Do you need help getting dressed?”

There’s half a shirt hanging from him. Midoriya tilts his head on a side with a little embarrassed laugh.

“Actually, I could use a hand, yes.”
Silently, he helps him out, Midoriya not commenting on his previous strange behaviour. Once done, Shouto watches him put his messenger bag over his shoulder, slipping his phone in a pocket. Before he could even realize what he’s saying, he blurts out “Would it be ok if we exchanged numbers?”

Midoriya blinks rapidly a couple of times, before giving him a brilliant smile as he hands his phone over.

—

A couple of days later, when he sends Midoriya a text -it took him a bit to make sense of the texting app, at first- telling him that he was going to go visit his mother, Shouto immediately feels like an idiot, wishing for a way to rewind time and stop himself from trying to seek some sort of validation from him—

Midoriya replies “You can do it! (۶•̀ᴗ•́)۶” After only a bunch of seconds. And then sends immediately after another text only containing what seems to look like a flexing arm.

“what does the arm mean?” Shouto replies.

“It means you’re super strong!”

As he finds a small smile pulling at his mouth, Shouto decides that maybe, after all, it hadn’t been so bad of an idea.

Chapter End Notes

Todoroki is confused! He hurts himself in his confusion!
“Miki, help me, put in one of those cute face thingies you youth use to convey emotion, something supportive.”

“You youth”—“ She laughs, taking the phone from his hand and typing something after the message he already dictated in. “Sorry, gramps, I didn’t realize it was time to get you back to the hospice—“

Izuku flashes her his tongue before adding, “Send it. Oh, also send, like, a flexing arm!”

“Aye aye, sir.” She dutifully replies, and Izuku hears the whooshing sounds that means the two texts were sent. After a bit, Miki reads. “Your friend is asking what the arm means.”

“Tell him it means that he’s super strong!”

She dutifully types in the text, before giving him the phone back. Izuku pockets it, his mood through the roof.

“You seem pretty cheery. What, do you have a crush on this guy?” Miki asks, elbowing him. “You know you can tell me.”

“It’s not that!” Izuku laughs, shaking his head. “Don’t be silly. I’m just happy Todoroki doesn’t hate my guts.”

“Seems like he does more than just not hating your guts, since he asked you for your number and sends you personal texts, now.” She says, her voice suggestive.

“Miki, is there a particular reason why you keep trying to pair me up with any classmate I happen to speak to you about…?”

“Yes. It’s because it’s very funny.”
“You are a cruel woman.”

Her laugh is like music in his ears.

They hadn’t had any chance to hang out, lately, with how busy Izuku had been. Miki had been pretty busy, too, since she decided to sign up for a first-aid course, on top of her normal studies.

“I think that might be something I could be interested in doing.” She said. “Mom is pretty happy about it, so I want to see how it goes. If I like it, I’ll probably go with medical studies in university.”

For now, they are sitting on a bench in a park, waiting, the laughs of kids playing in the distance. There’s a lull in the conversation, as they both just take into the sounds around them, and then Miki sighs.

“By the way, Izuku— What even was that fight with this Todoroki guy? Not to mention the obstacle race—“ She starts, careful. “That was… Something.”

Izuku knew that the question would come, but that didn’t make it any easier to take it with a poker face. He could tell that Miki had been dying to ask since they’ve met, only getting distracted by Todoroki’s sudden text.

Fortunately, Izuku thought about the possibility in advance. —Not that it made it any easier to lie right to Miki’s face. He definitely did not like to lie to her, or anyone else, really.—

“I’ve been practicing different ways to apply my quirk.” He replies with a shrug.

He’s pretty sure she’s tilting an eyebrow. “Your radar?”

“You know how I can kind of feel other people’s energy and stuff—“ Izuku replies, carefully schooling his voice into a nonchalant tone. “I’ve been using that.”

Miki sniffs. Her light doesn’t feel entirely convinced, Izuku could tell, but she doesn’t insist. After
all, it’s not as if she could even remotely imagine that the blond man she knew as a talent scout was actually All Might, and that All Might’s power was something that could get passed to others, let alone that the one on the receiving end had been Izuku. No one could possibly imagine that, Izuku himself still had a hard time accepting that it was actually a thing, that happened to him.

Anyone asking would probably take his giant lie at face-value -not really much of a choice, there-. Izuku seriously hoped he’ll never have to explain his suddenly enhanced physical abilities to a liar-detector such as himself, because that would suck.

In the end, Miki seems to have dropped the matter entirely. “Your friend is a little late—“ She comments after a long beat of silence, looking around.

“She’s coming, don’t worry.” Izuku replies. The familiar light already entered in his radar a bit ago, and was rapidly getting closer.

“You know you are creepy as hell when you do that, right?”

He grins at her just as the familiar voice calls out to him.

“Midoriya!”

He stands, Uraraka finally jogging up to them, her breath a little short.

“Sorry I’m late—I didn’t hear the alarm this morning—“ She pants.

“Don’t worry about that, you are not that late. Miki, this Uraraka. Uraraka, my friend from middle-school, Miki.”

“It’s so nice to finally meet you!” Miki says, enthusiastic, and Izuku imagines they are shaking hands by the way their lights moves. “Izuku can’t stop talking about you! Uraraka this, Uraraka that— I thought I had to beg him to finally let me meet you!”

“MIKI!” He yells, embarrassed, and the two girls laugh.
“It’s nice to meet you, too.” Uraraka replies, sounding a bit overwhelmed. “Midoriya told us about you, of course. I’m happy to see he has such a good friend.”

“This airhead would be totally lost without someone holding his hand, so I was very relieved to hear that someone nice like you is taking care of him.” Miki replies.

“I’m like, right here, you know.” Izuku deadpans, unamused, making them laugh again.

“Let’s go, Uraraka, I have sooooo much to tell you about Izuku.”

Izuku drags his only free hand across his face with a deep sigh, following behind the two girls that are already knees-deep in a conversation. This might’ve been a huge mistake.

—

Miki is quite something else.

She has an energetic look to her that makes Ochako think of a female, much, much, much nicer Bakugou.

Her black hair is short, spiky, with a single longer tuft dyed a brilliant, electric blue on the right side of her face. Her clothing style yelled punk-rock, a little silver skull hanging from a piercing in her nose. She’s taller than Midoriya, too, but maybe it’s because of her boots.

All in all, by just a first look it’s not the kind of person she could see being friends with Midoriya, but going by what he told her and Iida, and the clear fondness in his voice when he spoke about her, it was clear that Midoriya deeply cared for her.

They called each other by name, too, with a simplicity that spoke of a long-standing, deep friendship.

When Ochako had tried to address her by her surname, she waved her away. “Don’t do that! Miki is fine!”
“W-well… I guess you should call me Ochako, then.” She replied, embarrassed. Miki grinned, before turning around toward Midoriya, saying “And you? Aren’t you going to call her Ochako?”

Midoriya blushed, mumbling something unintelligible, making the both of them laugh. That reminded Ochako of that one slip she had at the U.S.J., but Midoriya never mentioned that, so she was hopeful he either didn’t notice or just forgot.

They went to a cafe. Miki was a chatterbox, telling Ochako all sorts of embarrassing stories, Midoriya trying -and failing- to stop her multiple times. By the time they sat down, Ochako was almost in tears by how much she was laughing.

“This was the worst idea of my life.” Midoriya muttered, but there was no real venom in his voice.

“Your entire life was one terrible idea after the other, Izuku. Now, for once, employ a good idea and go fetch us some drinks.”

“…You are asking the blind guy with only one functioning arm to go get drinks.”

“That’s what I said, didn’t I? Now go, chop chop!”

“Miki, you are horrible.”

“That’s why you love me.” She says that last sentence with a wink and a kissy motion. Midoriya rolls his eyes like he knows what she’s doing, but smiles, getting up to go stand in line.

Ochako was unsure if she should just stare in shock, or laugh.

“That’s how you have to treat him, Ochako.” Miki says, turning to her. She pats a fist in her open palm, although it doesn’t makes a sound since she’s wearing gloves. “You lure him in with niceness and then bam! Iron fist!”

At that Ochako loses it, falling in another giggling fit.
“Ok, but real talk—“ Miki continues. “You like him, don’t you?”

That stops her giggling pretty fast, as she blushes furiously. Miki is looking at her pointedly, and she sighs.

“…Is it so obvious?”

“Not so much. But you have a way of looking at him— Anyway, if you want him to know, you will have to be blunt. That one doesn’t get hints even if they hit him right in the head with a hammer.” Miki replies, shrugging.

Ochako let out a little laugh, before shaking her head. “I actually don’t want him to know, to be honest.”

“Why not?” Miki blinks, surprised. “I mean, I know he’s pretty immature on that front, but still—“

“I don’t want to be a distraction for him, and I don’t want him to be a distraction for me.” Ochako explains, quietly, with a little smile. “I’m happy with just being friends. Me and Midoriya— We have a lot on the line, and we both are in UA for the same reason. I’d much rather have things as they are, instead of possibly creating tense situations between us that could become a problem for our studies.”

“Mmmh, I see.” Miki sniffs. “I understand. Still, it’s kind of a shame… I’m constantly afraid one of these days Izuku is gonna come and tell me he got married to All Might.”

At that, Ochako cannot help but imagine All Might in a wedding dress and splutters, laughing loudly with her forehead against the table.

“Miki, what did you tell her, now?” She hears Midoriya ask, exasperated, after her laughing fit infected Miki as well.
Miki ends up having to leave them just after lunch.

“I’m sorry I have to go so soon.” She said, pouting a bit. “But I really need to study. It has been great to finally meet you, Ochako, we should spend some more time together!”

Ochako wholeheartedly agreed, exchanging numbers with the girl. Despite the fact most of their time had been spent poking fun at Midoriya, he waves at her enthusiastically, a big smile on his face, clearly not offended at all. He seems satisfied as he and Ochako make their way to the subway station after separating from her.

“I’m glad you and Miki seems to be getting along, I know she can be a handful.” He elaborates to her unasked question.

“She’s like— What would Bakugou be if he was a girl. And not an asshole.”

That makes Midoriya laugh heartily. “You know, I thought something similar to that, the first time I met her.” He says, once the laugh subsided.

“Really?” Ochako says with a frown, trying to imagine that. “I mean, considering how Bakugou is with you, I hope your first meeting with her wasn’t quite as… Explosive.”

Midoriya snickers, before his face turns a bit melancholic. “I… Well, I didn’t had many friends in middle school. Actually, I didn’t had any friend.” He says, quietly. “Most people would either avoid me, or treat me like glass. I was alone most of the time, and one day she just came to me and told me that I shouldn’t hide my face, and that I was cute.” He laughs. “She has always been very blunt, from the very first day. Runs in the family.”

Ochako blinks, surprised. It was hard to imagine someone as nice and kind as Midoriya having no friends.

“Things were different back then—” Midoriya continues, as if he picked up on her unexpressed feelings. “I wasn’t in a good place. Mentally, I mean. Miki has done so much for me, I don’t think I will ever be able to repay her.”

She watches him turning his face up to the sky. He’s smiling. “Things are much better now. I have you, and Iida, and everyone in class. I might get hurt every now and then, but I much prefer the
occasional broken arm to the way I lived back in those days. God, it feels like a lifetime ago…”

He keeps walking with his face pointed at the sky, and Ochako notices the way the light hits Midoriya’s eyes, making them shine in a way she’d never seen before. She freezes on the spot, holding her breath. Midoriya stops after a few steps, turning around.

“Is something the matter?”

“Your eyes—” Ochako says, breathless. “They are amazing—“

Midoriya grins at her like she just shared an old inside joke of his.

—

“Here’s my champion!”

Katsuki grunts, sitting at the table, ignoring the hand that ruffles his hair. Mom is whistling an off key tune, grinning every time she passes by the library where his new, shiny, very unwanted medal is hanging from.

“Must you keep that thing there?” He asks with a squint, as she sits in front of him. It’s just him and her having lunch, since dad is at work.

“Oh, Katsuki—“ She sighs, serving herself some salad. “Can you not be satisfied with your results, for once?”

“I told you, I can’t!” He replies, irritated, putting the offending greens in his plate as if they just insulted his entire lineage. “How can you even call that a victory?!”

She sighs, long-suffering, as she usually does.

“That stupid half face didn’t even try—“ Katsuki grumbles between a mouthful of salad and the other. “To think he actually decided to turn the oven on for Deku, of all people—“ He turns to the
rice, glaring at it as if every grain is laughing at him.

“Oh, speaking of which—“ Mom says, her voice cheerful. “Izuku really gave quite the show, too, didn’t he?”

He doesn’t even dignify that with a response.

“That super jump during the race— Not to mention the way he fought with that Todoroki kid— I really thought he would win! I wonder when he turned so strong!”

Katsuki’s chopstick snaps in half.

“Again?” Mom sighs, tired. “You cost me more in cutlery than anything else, Katsuki.”

“That fucking Deku!” He exclaims, enraged. “He’s like one of those stupid magicians that grab bunnies out of a hat! But, apparently, his supply of bunnies is fucking infinite! He just keeps pulling out one after the other!”

“Language, dear. We agreed that we were supposed to try to use less curses, together.”

“I hate him!”

“Sure you do.” She deadpans, before massaging the bridge of her nose with a sigh.”Katsuki, honestly, can you not just put this grudge you have away, once and for all? That poor boy still cares about you, you know.”

“Yes, and I wish he would stop.”

She tilts an eyebrow. “Do you?”

The seriousness of her tone stops him in his tracks, as he looks up to her.
“I mean, dear, you only have two moods. Angry and angrier.” She continues, casual. “The only times I’ve ever seen you show some kind of different feeling, Izuku had been involved one way or the other.”

A memory surfaces, unwanted. Traitorous. A pair of unseeing eyes filled with tears, voice trembling with pure desperation.

_Do you think I wouldn’t sell my soul for just a minute of being able to see my mother’s face again?_

The shame he felt at the pit of his stomach.

He chases it away, shaking his head. He doesn’t do feelings, he certainly doesn’t do _shame_.

“So I hope you can forgive me if I highly doubt you really hate him, and that you really want him to stop caring.”

Katsuki doesn’t answer. He gets up, fishing a new pair of chopsticks from the drawer in the kitchen, and goes back at stabbing his food.

They finish eating in silence.

___

When Inko opens the door, she finds herself in front of a very familiar face, despite the fact they never met directly.

“You are Uraraka Ochako!” She says, her hands flying to her cheeks. “Oh my— I saw you at the festival, of course! You did so well, dear— I was absolutely _amazed_—“

“Mom, breathe!” Izuku laughs, putting his right hand on her shoulder. “Uraraka, this is my mom, as you can imagine.”

“It’s an honour to meet you, miss Midoriya!” The girl says with a sweet smile and a bow. She’s even
cuter in person.

“The honour is mine! Please come in, would you like a tea?”

She sidesteps, giving them space to enter. Uraraka is already looking around, curious, eyeing the pictures of her and Izuku at various stages of his growth on the walls as she takes off her shoes. She must notice Inko is watching her, red appearing on her cheeks.

“Sorry—“

“Don’t worry about it, dear, feel free to look! I’ll go put on the tea.” Inko says, getting back in the kitchen. “Would you two like some snacks?”

“I’m good, mom, thanks.” Izuku replies, a little strained. He must be struggling with his coat. He hears low voices and then some rustling, Izuku thanking his friend for the help. They appear in the kitchen right after, sans coats.

“Sorry for intruding without a warning—“ Uraraka says, accepting the chair Izuku is offering her and sitting down at the table.

“Oh, no intrusion.” Inko replies with a smile. “None at all. Did you had fun today?”

She puts down on the table a plate with a cake already cut in slices, and despite what Izuku said, he takes one, sinking his teeth into it with a little happy smile.

“Very much.” He says, after he’s done with the bite. “I think I needed a day off, with all the things that have happened lately.”

“Agreed—“ Uraraka seems to melt on the table, relaxed. “It was nice to just be normal for a day. I feel like ever since we started at UA I hadn’t a single minute to stop and catch my breath.”

“For what Izuku tells me, you all have quite the exciting lives.” Inko says with a smile, pouring the tea. “I bet you must’ve been tired after the festival.”
“Sure was.” Uraraka replies with a little strained smile, accepting the cup. “And to think I didn’t even get that far. Not as much as Midoriya did, at least.”

Izuku scoffs. “I only had one more match than you, it’s really not that big of a difference.”

“Yes, but you fought Todoroki.”

“—And got my ass kicked.”

Uraraka tilts an eyebrow, a mix of incredulity and some sort of tired acceptance on her face. “Are you, like, for real right now.”

“What?” Izuku replies with a blink, frowning.

“You are impossible—” Uraraka sighs, before poking a finger on Izuku’s forehead repeatedly. “You have no idea how it was from the outside! You were absolutely dominating, to us all it looked like Todoroki couldn’t even touch you— I still have no idea what happened during that explosion at the end!”

Izuku mutters something that sounds like “I was an idiot, that’s what happened.”

Rolling her eyes, Uraraka goes back to her tea, sipping. “You can play dumb all you want, Midoriya Izuku, but your fight with Todoroki had been absolutely impressive. Stop selling yourself short.”

“The full name, now, too?” Izuku sighs. “I knew I shouldn’t have let you meet Miki—“

Uraraka grins, before apparently remembering Inko was there as well and looking at her with eyes as big as plates, blushing.

“Um—“
Inko can’t help but laugh, amused. She takes place at the table, as well.

She’s so glad Izuku is making friends with all these amazing boys and girls, at school.

“Why don’t you tell me more about your quirk?” She asks, watching the girl relax. “It’s a shame you couldn’t make it against Katsuki, but that plan of yours was brilliant!”

“SoOOO frustrating!” Uraraka replies, closing her hands in two fists. “I kept thinking what Midoriya would do in my place and came up with that, but in the end it wasn’t enough—“ Then she puts her hands on her mouth, realizing what she said. “I mean—“

“Now it’s you that’s selling yourself short.” Izuku intervenes, levelled, tilting his head. “It was a really good plan. It’s just that Kacchan is… Too much.”

That seems to release the bit of tension in the air, as the three of them keep chatting about the festival and school. Soon enough it’s darkening outside. When Inko realizes she puts a hand to her mouth.

“Oh, my, it’s already getting so late—“ She looks at Uraraka, relaxed, happy, and turning to look outside the window with a little frown. “Would you like to stay for dinner, dear?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t want to disturb—“ She starts to say, Izuku speaking over her. “Yes, stay! Mom, did you know that Uraraka lives alone?”

She turns a pout on him at that, as Inko blinks. “Really? It must be lonely—“

“A bit, sometimes.” She let out a sigh. “But my parents work far, so it was the only solution.”

Inko smiles a bit, sadly. These kids, chasing their dreams, having to sacrifice so much—

She puts a gentle hand on the girl’s shoulder. “Feel free to come by anytime you need it, ok? My door will always be open for you.”

The smiles she gives her could light up a room.
After dinner Miss Midoriya shushed them away, refusing Ochako when she offered to wash the dishes as a thanks for the hospitality.

“Nonsense, there’s no need to pay me back.”

She even gave her a hug on the door, before sending them on their way, stressing again that Ochako was welcome to come by whenever. Midoriya was walking her to the subway station, now, the first stars appearing on the increasingly darkening sky. He looked relaxed, almost sleepy.

“Your mom is so nice.” Ochako says in the silence. “I see from where you took after, now.”

“I can only wish to be half as nice as she is.” He replies with a little grin. “If it wasn’t for the fact that she likes to levitate things in my way to annoy me, I’d think excessive niceness was her quirk.”

That surprises a laugh out of Ochako, before they fall into a comfortable silence again. Midoriya seems to get hit by a sudden thought, his eyebrows furrowing.

“Have you heard from Iida?” He asks, voice low.

She can only reply with a sad “No…” They sigh at the same time.

“Hopefully he’ll be at school, tomorrow.” Midoriya mutters. “I’m really worried about him. If I hadn’t been unconscious at the end of the festival, I could’ve at least told him something…”

“Oh, please. God, Miki is right, you are a martyr.” Ochako can’t help but let out, slightly exasperated. “You went through an operation on the spot. Cut yourself some slack.”

Midoriya pouts a bit with a sniff, but does not protest.
Izuku is lying on his bed, belly down, face sinking into the pillow.

He had such a nice day. A nice, *normal* day. It seemed almost unreal, being able to spend a day with friends, like a normal kid. It felt like it would never end, and like it ended too fast at the same time.

Uraraka sent him a text just a couple of minutes prior to let him know she made it back to her apartment safe and sound. It was still too early to go to sleep, but Izuku just didn’t feel like sitting at his desk to transcribe the rest of his vocal notes from the festival. So he was just lying there, being useless.

Struck by a thought he palms at his nightstand for his phone, dictating in a text. After having the voice-over read it back to him to make sure it was ok, he hit send.

“How did your visit go?”

It took Todoroki five minutes to reply.

“*Better than expected. No little faces, this time?*”

Izuku snickers.

“I had a friend type that in for me. It’s a bit hard to dictate little faces, so I rather not use them.”

“Right.”

“Thank you for your encouragement, by the way.”

“No problem. I’m glad you decided to visit your mom. If you want to talk about it I’m here ok?”
“Thanks.

“I'll see you tomorrow.”

“Good night, Midoriya.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about not answering comments in the last chapter, I had to urgently finish some merch designs the past couple of days so no time to spare 😞

Also no sketch today, but I do have a PSA: reminder that this fic is a wip (I currently have written 25 chapters in total, still going) and tags might change as the story goes on so please remember to look at them every now and then just to make sure what you are reading is still something that's in your tastes, kthanks.
His day starts with a perfect stranger on the train calling out to him.

“Midoriya from the heroics department!” The voice says. “I saw you at the festival. You put up quite a fight, good job, kid!”

More comments rapidly follow, people encouraging him, someone commenting on how small he actually is (he’s growing, ok), people telling him they will be rooting for him.

He steps on the platform, feeling a bit confused but also pleased. Maybe what Uraraka and All Might said, that his fight with Todoroki actually left an impression, was true and not something they said just to make him feel better. It was very hard for him to try imagine how it must’ve looked from an outside perspective, seeing how in his head he had been during the fight, with that single-minded drive to bring everything out of his adversary. He had been so focused on Todoroki that he even forgot they had an audience.

Also, thinking back on it, he can’t help but feel bad. He kind of went overboard with One For All and, for what he heard after from Recovery Girl, even broke Todoroki’s jaw. He really ought to apologize to him, later.

For now, though, he can feel a familiar light entering in his radar, and he breathes a sigh of relief.

Iida catches up to him soon, scolding him for his relaxed walk. To Izuku’s protests, he answers that being at least ten minutes early should be the norm.

He would seem like his usual, Iida-y self to an outsider, but Izuku could feel the tenseness in him. As they put away their shoes in their respective lockers, Izuku carefully asks “Are you ok?”

“I am perfectly fine, you don’t need to worry.”

Izuku let the lie slip, silent.
When Aizawa-sensei showed them the nominations they received, it hadn’t been surprising to hear that the overwhelming majority of them had focused on Kacchan and Todoroki.

Izuku himself received fifty-two. It was a minuscule result compared to the first two in list, but he honestly was ok with that. As All Might said, progress was progress, no matter how small.

When it came time to decide their hero name, he found himself at a loss.

When he was a kid and had the luxury of day-dreaming, all the hero names in his mind would have something to do with All Might. But now that he in fact had the power of All Might, he knew that it was not a game, but a serious responsibility. To choose a name parroting All Might’s would feel like a disservice to the power he’d been granted.

On the other hand, he doesn’t feel like basing the name only on his original quirk, either. “Radar” just sounded wrong, somehow.

As he plays around with the paper he was given, thinking, he hears Kacchan walking up to the teacher’s desk and, in his usual, totally relaxed tone, unironically say “King of explodokills.”

That had been shot down by Midnight-sensei, obviously, but just hearing Kacchan’s voice gave him the idea.

He turned around, voice low. “Mineta, can you write this down for me, please?”

When he went up to the desk and turned his paper around, he had felt both Kacchan’s light go still with a tinge of irritation, and Uraraka’s release happiness in waves. At Midnight-sensei question if he was sure, he nodded with a grin.
Deku would suit him just fine.

——

Standing in line at the cafeteria, Izuku was deep in thought. All in all the morning had been pretty uneventful after the excitement regarding their hero names, but Izuku was already tired of turning a blind eye—ah, *pun. He ought to use it at the first occasion*—to the situation.

During the name choosing, he felt such pain and indecisiveness coming from Iida, and his friend hadn’t stopped being tense for the entire day. It was clear the accident that happened to his brother affected him more than he let on. He should be doing something to help him, *but what…*

“Midoriya.”

He jumped. Lost so deep in his head he had tuned out the usual feel of the lights around him, relegated them in the back of his head, a distant foggy though, not noticing that Todoroki was behind him. He feels his perplexity, now, as Izuku turns.

“I didn’t think it was possible to take you by surprise.” Todoroki says.

“I was very lost in my head.” Izuku admits with a little embarrassed smile. “Sorry.”

“No need to apologize.”

Silence falls on them. Izuku should probably say something and, well, he did want to apologize, although for something else.

“Todoroki, actually, I wanted to say sorry for what happened at the festival. I kind of went overboard, I didn’t mean to break your jaw.” Izuku admits, tilting his head on a side. “So, sorry about that.”

He can feel Todoroki’s eyes drill into him. “Why are you saying sorry? It was a fight, wounds
happens.” He replies, matter-of-factly. Then adds. “A curious choice of words.”

Izuu blinks. “What do you mean?”

“You said that you went overboard. That sounds curious to me, is all.”

And in that moment Izuku is reminded that Todoroki, on top of being scarily strong, is actually pretty damn smart as well.

Izuku really should watch his big mouth, before he and All Might’s secret gets blown out in the open.

“I was— You know, just saying. I was kind of too much into the moment, you feel me?” Izuku tries to justify, sounding weak to his own ears. “Anyway, if you are cool with it, then I’m cool with it, too.”

“I’m cool with it.” Todoroki replies, easily. A beat of silence, and then. “… Was that a pun?”

Izuku splutters and laughs, taken aback by how earnest the other boy sounded. Maybe Todoroki had a dorky side to him, too.

—

If Iida and Uraraka wanted to say something when he joined them at their usual table, Todoroki in tow that slid to sit by Izuku’s side, they surely didn’t show it at all. Instead they fell into an easy chit-chat, talking about the nominations and which offices seemed more palatable for the kind of hero work each one of them wanted to concentrate on. Iida intervened, punctual and serious as usual, and Izuku had to force himself to turn his quirk off for the rest of the lunch.

Every time he talked felt more and more like a lie.

—
“Not bad.” All Might commented when he met Izuku after lessons, leading him to an empty room, so they could have some privacy to talk about the nominations. “Considering how unbalanced the nominations are this year, your little result is not bad at all. Still…”

A cough. Izuku waits patiently, sitting on a desk, his legs swinging.

“I guess… I should say to you that between the nominations you’ve received… There’s one I’d recommend…”

“Oh! That’s a good news!” Izuku replies. If it came with All Might’s recommendation, then it must’ve been a good one. Still, the indecisive tone in his mentor’s voice and the badly repressed panic in his light rapidly stifled Izuku's enthusiasm. “That’s… That’s a good news, right…?”

It feels as if All Might is cold sweating. Thanks to the strange connection between them, Izuku feels it like a ghost sensation on his own skin.

“In a sense…” A deep sigh. “His name is Gran Torino. He was my homeroom teacher when I was a student here, although for only a year. He also knows of One For All.”

“Oh! So there are other people out there that knows of it—“ Izuku replies, distracted, before noticing All Might is talking to himself in a way not much different to Izuku’s own brand of muttering.

“He must’ve sent the nominations recognising your use of One For All during the festival… I wonder if he felt he had to supplement to my teaching… Surely he must feel it is very lacking… To push him to even pick back up the hero mantle… But still, this is a good chance for you…”

In the end, with a very shaky, not sure at all voice All Might told him that the choice was up to Izuku.

But well… All Might recommended this Gran Torino, so it’s not like Izuku had much of a choice, really.
Izuku really wanted to speak with Iida, but he didn’t have the chance to catch him alone all day long. A good one presented himself just as the school day finished. Thanks to his little chat with All Might regarding the nominations he lagged behind, and when he passed by his class everyone had already left, except for a familiar presence.

Steeling himself, Izuku slides the class door open.

“Midoriya.” Iida welcomes him, voice flat. “Did you forget something at your desk?”

“No. I—“ A sigh. “Iida, are you sure you are ok? If there’s something troubling you—“

“I’m fine, Midoriya.”

“But, seriously, if you want to—“

“Midoriya.” Iida’s voice had never sounded quite so cold toward him, not even way back when they first met at the exam. “Drop it.”

Izuku stood there, taken aback and a little hurt as his friend exited the room without adding anything.

What was even the point of being a human signal dish for emotions if he couldn’t manage to do any good with it?

—

The words still burned into Izuku’s mind as they all met Aizawa-sensei at the train station, costumes under an arm, ready to leave for their week of work experience.

He could feel Uraraka’s hesitation, her need to do something for they clearly suffering friend.

But Izuku tried already, and was stonewalled. Obviously, Iida didn’t want help.
Or maybe, Izuku was just a lousy friend.

In the end, he let Uraraka take the lead, as she takes a step forward and tells Iida that if he needed anything he could talk with them, since they were friends, and Izuku limited himself to nodding. He has to bite down his tongue when Iida simply replies “Sure.”

Irritated, Izuku turns off his quirk until he’s sure Iida is far enough that he won’t perceive the ringing bells of lies anymore.

—

Trying to take his mind off things, he distractedly puts an earbud in and puts some music on during the train ride. He needs to focus, he’s about to meet a man that for better or worse -apparently worse, considering his reaction—clearly meant something for All Might. He needs to be ready, this is a good chance for learning.

He’s surprised when his phone dings and a voice in his ear let him know that he has received a series of texts from Todoroki, of all people.

Curious, Izuku puts the other earbud in, too, to better listen to the voice over.

“I was thinking about our fight.”

“At the festival.”

“You had quite the potty mouth on you.”

“Do you swear when you get angry, or is Bakugou rubbing off on you?”

That seems so out of left field Izuku can’t stop laughing, It takes him a bit to compose an answer.
“It’s a good thing Present Mic was so loud, my mother would’ve washed my mouth with soap as soon as I came home, otherwise. Your first guess is the right one, I do get a bit rude when I’m mad. Thanks for that, by the way, I needed a laugh. I hope you will have a nice work experience week, Todoroki.”

Todoroki immediately answers.

“I don’t think it’s going to be nice.”

“But I need to figure some things out.”

“So it will be good for me.”

“Hope you will have a nice week, too, Midoriya. See you soon.”

—

When he knocks on the door and receives no answer, Izuku is thoroughly confused.

He can feel a light inside. Not only that, but it feels like -presumably- Gran Torino is clearly waiting for him. He knocks again, and then tries to push at the handle, finding the door open.

“Um. Gran Torino, sir?” He asks, stepping inside. There’s a pungent smell of… Ketchup? Not to mention, on the floor there seems to be something that looks like sausages, going by the strokes of light reflecting on them. What even…? “It’s me. Midoriya Izuku.”

As the silence stretches, he decides to bend down. Could it be that the man was sick? Izuku couldn’t possibly know, but it didn’t feel that way at all. The light felt fine, even possibly… Amused?

“Sir, I don’t know what you are doing, but I have to warn you that I’m blind.”

“Dang.” Comes an old-sounding voice. “I had the hunch you might be, but I wasn’t sure. Ruined my
Izuku has no idea what is going on so he remains like this, perched on the tip of his feet, arms resting on his bended knees. He hears Gran Torino stand with a grunt, patting at his clothes.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he speaks again. “Who are you?”

_Ding ding ding._

“Sir—”

“Toshinori?”

_Ding ding ding._

_Ok, this is enough._ A voice in him says, irritated. “Sir, I know you are lying. That’s part of my quirk. If you’ve called me here just to make fun of me, please let me know, so I won’t waste my time.”

A beat of silence and then— “Finally.” Gran Torino’s voice sounds different. More serious. “When you got in with that sad, meek face, I thought I must have misheard your name during the festival. There was no way you could be the same kid I saw fighting tooth and nail.” A sniff. “Took you long enough to show me that bite.”

Izuku blinks, speechless.

“Put on your costume, kid. We’ve got work to do.”

Once the costume is on Izuku can only stand there, unsure.
“Well, what are you waiting for? Come at me!” Gran Torino says. “Turn on that power of yours and show me what you’ve got!”

For a second logic in his mind dictates that the man is trying to joke again. But nope, *human signal dish for emotions*. Gran Torino is one hundred percent serious.

*Well, it’s his house…*

Izuku activates One For All, sprinting toward the man in front of him— And suddenly he’s not there anymore.

Izuku hits the wall face-first.

“What the hell was that?! Have you forgotten how to use your power?”

Massaging his nose, Izuku realizes that the man is on the ceiling— *No, he’s on the wall— No, he—*

“How fast are you?!” He snaps, shocked.

Gran Torino laughs.

—

For such a small, old man, Gran Torino is *brutal*.

“C’mon kid, try to follow! Are you really this slow?!”

“What was that swing? Do you think hitting the air will help?”

“You’re losing control on your arms! C’mon, now!”
Izuku is taking hits from all sides. Gran Torino’s sheer speed is making his senses go haywire, his head spinning. One For All is sucking at his stamina, as it usually does, which does not help in the slightest. He ends up tumbling on the floor when the old man hits him from behind, and One For All turns off.

“Well, is that all?” Gran Torino asks, sounding disappointed, as Izuku pants on the floor, turned on a side. “I can’t believe Toshinori really choose you.”

That’s quite a hit in the pride. With a grunt, Izuku stands again.

“Now we talking. Yes, give me that fighting face, boy.” Gran Torino sounds like he’s grinning. “Show me what you’ve really got.”

Izuku’s limbs feels like breaking when he activates One For All again.

He charges.

—

At the end of what feels like an eternity, the living room is pretty much semi-destroyed. Izuku is on the floor again, drenched in sweat, trying to catch his breath.

“That was more decent.” Gran Torino comments, casually sitting on the turned upside down couch. “But you’ve still got a long way to go, boy. Your endurance sucks.”

The old man does not skimp on the heavy hitting words, just like he does not skimp on the heavy hitting hits. Forcing himself to at least sit, Izuku says. “It always happens when I activate One For All. It just sucks all my strength away—”

“Well, it’s clear you must be doing something wrong, then.” Gran Torino sighs. “What has Toshinori even been teaching you?”
Izuku finds himself recalling the depressed muttering, All Might’s fear that Gran Torino was probably thinking his teachings were lacking…

Yeah, he can see why he would think that, now.

“I’ve been mostly basing the way I use One For All on the way All Might does—“

“Your first mistake.” Izuku hears a whooshing sound, something poking at his nose right after. “I noticed watching you during the festival, too. You go full power right away, and then struggle to reign it in, wasting energy. Isn’t that so?”

Izuku blinks. He had never really thought much about it, he just based the way he used One For All on the way he felt inside All Might himself. But Gran Torino was spot on.

“And then when that control inevitably slips, you hurt yourself.” Gran Torino continues. “Why does that happen?”

“It’s too much for me—“ Izuku murmurs, pulling at his lower lip. “It’s like sitting on a thrashing horse without a saddle and hoping for the best. I’ve been activating it full power because that’s how it felt natural to him, but clearly it’s not what works for me, for now.”

“Toshinori had been a natural from the start, pretending you can follow in his exact footsteps is foolish. All in all, you have a decent control, and you’ve been able to use One For All in a smart way during the festival, but you can’t keep up like this.”

Izuku sighs, scratching at his head. He feels dead tired, but he has the impression the old man is just about to ask him to start again.

“Now, there’s another thing I noticed, during the festival.” Another poke on the nose. “Can you tell me what it is?”

“Uuuuh—“

“Guess not.” Gran Torino jumps down the couch, not really giving him time to think. “I’m hungry,
so I’m going to get something to eat. But I want to give you another word of advice to think on, kid.”

Izuku rises on his feet, feeling sore all over. He blinks, waiting.

“You admiration for him is a weight that’s pulling you down. Stop thinking about One For All as a magical gift, and start thinking about it as a tool.”

And with that, he goes out.

—

“You look quite enlightened.”

Izuku didn’t turn. He spent most of the time Gran Torino had been out thinking over what he said, turning the words around in his head, examining what he did with One For All during the festival like a slow, mental play-by-play, pacing back and forth.

“So?”

“I think I understand what you mean when you say I should think of it as a tool—“ Izuku says, pensive. “What I need to do is learn how to use this tool step by step. I hadn’t thought of it, but I should be able to turn One For All on just a bit. Go with gradients, instead of full power right away.”

“Mh.” Gran Torino sniffs, apparently having nothing to say against that. “And?”

“And maybe… What you’ve noticed, is that I tend to have better control on my legs, rather than my arms.”

“Bingo.” Something hard patting at his calves. “At least you’re not stupid, kid. That, I can work with.”

In hindsight, it was obvious. When he jumped over the robots and the pit, when he dashed to surpass Todoroki and Kacchan. When he charged and sprinted against Todoroki, even his kicks— Despite
his legs feeling like they might give up, he always managed to keep control. On the other hand, of the four punches he landed on Todoroki, two of them broke his hand.

“Ok then, let’s start again, mh?”

Izuku takes a deep breath, focusing. All Might gave him much, helping him understanding how to fully activate One For All, but now he has to forget that, and walk his own path.

*Gradients.*

The power it’s still almost overwhelming, but it feels sweeter, running through his veins. The horse has calmed down a bit.

“How does it feel, kid?”

“Like I will not completely run out of stamina in three minutes flat.” Izuku replies, voice low, energy flowing through him. “Shall we?”

It doesn’t immediately go as well as Izuku hoped.

He feels like his brain might overheat. He has to keep One For All in check, keep the energy output low, and at the same time trying to keep up with Gran Torino’s speed.

The old man is a zip-zapping blur of movements in his radar, the input is overwhelming. When he gets another kick in the back, Izuku goes down, his head spinning.

“What’s the problem, kid?” Gran Torino asks, blessedly stopping his constant jumps. “This is has nothing to do with One For All, right? It’s your other quirk.”

Izuku is almost angered by how perceptive this guys is. Slowly, he tries to get up. “You’re so fast, my brain feels like a computer crashing over and over. There’s just so much input.” He admits,
surprising himself with how irritated he sounds.

Gran Torino doesn’t comment as Izuku kneels, examining his own feelings as he distractedly pulls at his lower lip.

To be honest, he’s angry towards himself. The limits of his unseeing eyes seem to always kick him in the rear end whenever he expects it the less. His quirk is useful and he totally wouldn’t be there if it wasn’t for it, of course, but sometimes it was just so much—

Izuku blinks, his eyes widening in realization.

“Thinking about something?”

“Yes—“ Izuku replies, distracted. “I think I know what I’m doing wrong.”

He blurted the line about the crashing computer without thinking, but now he realizes that thinking about it like a computer makes sense. When his quirk is activated, his radar is always on, but most of the time Izuku is capable of tuning out all the unnecessary stuff, keeping it in the back of his mind. Still, it’s there, background info in his feed, using precious processing power.

But, he realizes, there had been a couple of times he unconsciously managed to stop that process, and only focus on what was strictly necessary. Many months ago, when he charged against the mud-villain that took Kacchan, when he focused so hard, to make sure he would hit the right spot— And not as long ago, in the fight with Todoroki. He forgotten the crowd, forgotten even Midnight and Cementoss-sensei right nearby. He only focused on Todoroki. His ice was extremely fast -maybe not as fast as Gran Torino, but still, pretty damn fast-, and yet back then Izuku managed perfectly well to feel it coming, and move accordingly.

But now, he was keeping the scope of his radar too wide. Too many things to think about. He had been so single-mindedly focused onto the idea that being able to perceive for a longer distance, from the very first days of discovering his quirk, was the right thing to do, that he never really thought he should be able to do the opposite, if it was necessary.

So, he does that. Focuses, tones it down, until it’s just him, and Gran Torino, and a circle around himself to perceive the physical obstacles in his way.
“Looks like you worked it out on your own.” Gran Torino says, sounding satisfied. “Ready to start again?”

And, for the first time since he entered in that living room, Izuku finds himself smiling.

—

When Toshinori’s phone dings deep into the night, his heart shoots up to his throat.

He wasn’t sleeping, just lying in his bed, staring at the ceiling, thinking thinking thinking— But still, a message this late? It never means good.

With a grunt he sits, taking the phone on his nightstand. And when he sees the name displaying on the screen, his heart gives another painful churn.

He wills his finger to stop trembling, as he opens the text from Gran Torino.

It’s a picture of Midoriya. Asleep, mouth open, sprawled on the floor with his limbs in four different directions. Toshinori flinches when he sees the scraps and bruises all over his arms and legs, and he can only imagine it’s the same under the clothes he’s wearing.

He feels so guilty— He respected Gran Torino enough to know he would drag the best out of the boy, but he also knew that the man would not hold back, no matter how young or inexperienced Midoriya was.

Another text follows.

“Your boy is a bit of a rough diamond, but I’m polishing him good. When you’ll get him back by the end of the week, he will be ready for real field-work.”

Toshinori looks back up at the picture. Midoriya’s open mouth seems to curve upwards, like the boy is satisfyingly smiling to himself in his sleep.
A deep sigh releases the knot in his chest. He should stop fussing over young Midoriya so much. The boy really has in him all he needs to keep walking forward, and then some.

A last text follows some seconds later.

“Your teaching sucks, by the way.”

Well. Some things never change.

—

After catching the taxi, they hadn’t spoken much. Gran Torino seemed satisfied when Izuku picked right up the reason they were going to Hosu, after three gruelling days of sparring.

Izuku felt much more comfortable with One For All already. Sure, his damage output was much, much lower now, but his control over the power grew considerably, not to mention his much improved endurance. All in all, not a bad trade.

And they were finally going to have some real work experience on the field. By all means, he should be excited, but he could not shake this bad feeling off of himself.

Iida was in Hosu, too. Thinking about his friend, that he parted ways with so coldly, left a sore taste in his mouth, and a bad sensation from the pit of his stomach. Sighing, he forces himself to relax against the train’s seat. He just hoped Iida was ok.

He spent quite a while like this, relaxed, his eyes closed, the now familiar presence of Gran Torino at his side, that when something familiar and yet not familiar at all blips on his radar, he immediately tenses on his seat like a plank, hands gripping at the armrests.

“Kid?” Gran Torino asks, perplexed. “Don’t tell me you get motion-sickness—“

“No, sir, something is really wrong—“ Izuku says hastily, shooting out of his seat. The thing it’s coming closer, and fast. “Why—“
“Kid, what’s going on?” Gran Torino asks, jumping after him and grabbing his arm.

Izuku doesn’t have the time to answer. Instead he yells “GET DOWN!”, pushing his weight on Gran Torino in an instinctual protective motion, and then the side of the carriage explodes, debris flying right over Izuku’s head.

The noumu is here.

“What the hell is that thing—“ Gran Torino asks, wiggling free from under Izuku. “Stay here, kid, don’t move!”

“Sir, those things are strong, please be careful—“

But Gran Torino is already off, and with him, the noumu.

He hears frantic voices around him, someone ordering everyone to keep calm and stay put, but Izuku’s mind is elsewhere, feverishly working.

Why was a noumu here? What the hell is going on? And—

Iida—

This is bad, this is really, really bad—

Forcing himself to take in deep breaths, calm his racing heart, Izuku closes his eyes and focuses. He focuses as hard as he can, expanding his radar— He ignores the splitting pain in his head, protesting at the exertion, and the feeling of something warm running down on his lips and chin. Hundreds and hundreds of lights— There are more noumus and— A familiar blip.

Iida is going down a road, alone, and not far from him Izuku feels something yet again familiar, and new.
A not-light, so similar to Shigaraki’s and yet giving much of a different feeling. More focused, more driven, more—

It finally clicks. What Iida was hiding—

No. No no no no no—

Tenya is an idiot. A furious, furious idiot.

He finally tracked down the hero killer, he finally had a chance to avenge his brother—

And he wasted it.

Blinded by the raging anger in his gut, that indescribable feeling from the pit of his stomach, he charged against the monster, but there was nothing he could do. Frozen on the floor by the oppressing power of Stain, now, all he can do is try to reply, to justify himself, as Stain goes on and on about how egoistical and un-hero like he had been.

Tenya wants nothing more than to take that little voice in him telling him that Stain is right and squash it.

“Well, it can’t be helped.” Stain finally said, closing the distance between them. “I’ll take you out before you can properly grow to become yet another selfish hero. Good bye, Ingenium’s brother.”

And then, a miracle happens.

A bright green blur passes into Tenya’s field of vision and he strains his eyes up, trying to see what is going on.

Stain flies back, hitting the floor, when Midoriya lands a kick on him.
“Midoriya?!”

“Wha—“

“Iida!” Midoriya exclaims, turning around. He’s pale, blood slowly drying under his nostrils, on his chin. His eyes seem brighter than they usually are. “Are you ok? Can you move?”

“I can’t—“ Tenya replies, voice strained. “It’s his quirk, he cut me and now I can’t move—“

He watches Midoriya grit his teeth, his unseeing eyes moving in that way that suggests he’s deep in thought. A bit away, Stain curiously asks “Another kid?”

The image of Midoriya, standing in the doorway of the empty class, asking him if he really feels ok with that worried expression of his, his pale eyes boring into Tenya as if he somehow knows exactly what he was really thinking, resurfaces in his mind. Anger and shame boil in him, a confusing soup of emotion that threatens to overcome him—

“Midoriya, go away!” He snaps. “This is my business—“

“SHUT UP!” Midoriya roars, surprising him. His eyes are glistening with tears. “I came here to save you, you stubborn ass! Instead of sitting there trying to chase me away, move!”

“This has nothing to do with you—“ Tenya tries to protest, sounding weak to his own ears.

“Well, you are lucky that All Might taught me that a hero’s job is to butt nose in business that has nothing to do with them, then.” Midoriya replies, matter-of-factly, turning away from Tenya. “I’m not leaving until I can take both of you out of here, safe and sound.” He shifts, getting himself in a combat position. He’s almost glowing, Tenya realizes, surprised—just how much does Midoriya have hidden in him?

“I have a mission, kid, but you— You are worth keeping alive.” Stain says, slowly walking with purpose toward them. “I’ll spare your life, if you step aside and let me fulfil my duty—“
“Like fucking hell I will—“

They both sprint toward each other. Stain is already swinging his long blade, but Midoriya jumps and twist in the air, managing to connect a kick in the back of Stain’s head. Tenya is both surprised and not surprised at all, Midoriya had shown an incredible speed during the festival -from where that came from, Tenya had no idea-, but the way he moves now seems more flexible and relaxed. Natural. His movements during the festival had been rigid as a plank in comparison.

Stain stumbles forward, a smile twisting his features, like he’s having fun.

They go back and forth for long seconds, dodging, twisting around each other in a deathly dance. Midoriya is fast, but the vantage Stain has with his blades, a longer reach, keeps the much smaller Midoriya at bay.

“Seems I can’t cut you—“

It happens so quickly, like a lighting bolt. Stain forces Midoriya to jump over his sword, and then in an instant his face is so close to Midoriya’s, a unnatural long tongue darting out—

He licks the still slightly humid blood on Midoriya’s chin, and Midoriya goes down like a rock.

—

Izuku feels his entire being freeze as he falls and tumbles, unable to move a single finger.

“It’s the blood—“ He coughs. “You need the blood to freeze us—“

“Nice deduction, kid.” Stain replies. “Now, stay put and let me finish my job.”

“No—“ Izuku grunts, willing his body to move. But, traitorous, it does not. “Don’t touch them!”

Stain is close, so close to Iida, now. His not-light it’s full of murderous intent—
“STOP—!” He yells, and then a big flash makes him flinch, as a mix of extremely hot and extremely cold air caresses him in a gentle way.

“Next time you should be more clear, Midoriya.” Todoroki’s almost placid tone says. “I hope I’m not too late.”

“Todoroki—“ Izuku whispers, relieved. With Todoroki’s incredible strength, now that he’s using both his sides at the same time, they have a chance.

Shouto takes into the scene in front of him. Iida is on the floor near him, bloodied, two clear wounds in his shoulders. There’s a pro hero Shouto distantly knows, Native it’s his name, he thinks, sitting with his back against the wall. A bit further, Midoriya, sweaty, blood on his mouth and chin, is paralysed on the floor, his face turned toward him. His eyes seems to almost glow in the dark.

Stain is standing near him, apparently not interested in hurting Midoriya.

“I came as soon as I saw the message.” Shouto says, bidding time as he thinks what he should do next. “I was confused, at first, when you sent your position to everyone, but then I understood it could only be a call for help, you wouldn’t do something like that just because.”

“Todoroki—“ Midoriya says, strained, baring his teeth. “Don’t let him lick your blood— That’s how he froze us—”

Shouto closes his mouth in a thin line. Soon enough the pros will be there as well, so all he has to do is buy time.—

A knife grazes past his cheek, a tiny cut opening on the skin, just as Shouto is using his ice to slide both Native and Midoriya closer to him. Stain is already on him, incredibly fast, and Shouto manages just in time to feed into the fire, flames turning the small alley in a spectacle of orange hues as Stain jumps back to avoid the searing heat.
“Stop it, damn it!” Iida yells, frustrated. “Both of you—I took my brother’s name for a reason, I have to do it! It’s me that should—“

“You took his name?” Shouto replies, rising a wall of ice to try protect all of them from the brutal strength of the enemy. “That’s funny. The Ingenium I remember would never make a desperate face such as yours.” A sigh. “But then again, I cannot know what is going on behind the scenes of your family.”

He hears Midoriya choke a bit behind him, but doesn’t turn. Suddenly, the ice is cut into small pieces, as Stain’s voice reaches them.

“Trying to hide from someone stronger than you, what a wasteful attempt.”

Shouto’s flames flare up on his arm, ready to attack, when the high sting of pain freezes him for a second as frightfully sharp blades sinks into his forearm. Stain is already up in the air, above him, complimenting his strength as he starts to fall with his blade pointed right at Shouto.

In a second, Midoriya jumps up like a green lighting bolt, grabbing Stain’s blood red scarf and jerking him away from the trajectory, yelling “I can move again!”

They struggle in the air, Stain violently elbowing Midoriya in a side, sending him hitting a wall and then falling down on the floor with a strangled cough.

“Fall back, Midoriya!” Shouto exclaims, his ice already shooting toward Stain. Midoriya manages to roll away and then jump back at Shouto’s side right in time.

“I’m the only one that can move again—“ Midoriya pants. “It could be dependent on how much blood he ingested, or how many people he has stopped already, or—“

“—Or blood type.” Shouto finishes for him. They must’ve been both thinking the same thing.

“Guess you got that right, kid.” Stain replies with a lopsided smile. “Blood type is the answer.”
“That doesn’t help us much, though.” Midoriya says in a low voice, so only Shouto could hear him. There’s a tense note in it. “We could try to run, but—“

“He won’t give us an opening, he’s too fast.” Shouto whispers back. “The pros are coming. I think our only chance is to keep his attention and try to avoid close quarter combat, if possible.”

He feels Midoriya gloved fingers gentle on his wrist, as a strange glow seems to light up his entire body. “You’re losing too much blood.” He says, clearly worried. “I’ll keep him busy, try to be my support.”

Shouto grits his teeth, but his voice is levelled when he replies. “I know. Be careful.” A beat a silence before he adds. “We will protect them, together.”

Midoriya nods, giving him one last determined look before dashing forward. Shouto watches his back, a sting of worry in his heart, and yet all he can do is trust this boy that came and stretched a hand towards him, yelled at him to take it.

Saved him.

Together, they could do it.

He watches, ready for any opening he could take advantage of, as Midoriya charges against the enemy with a kick, forcing him to sidestep. Stain seems unwilling to really hurt Midoriya, somehow, but that doesn’t mean he won’t attack. They dance around each other for a bunch of seconds, quick on their feet, before one of Stain’s frightfully quick blades manages to connect with one of Midoriya’s legs, and a pained cough escapes his throat as blood flies in a almost elegant arc in the air.

“Todoroki—!” Midoriya choke out, apologetic and scared, Stain charging at them.

“Stop it—“ Iida murmurs behind Shouto.

So much pain in his voice, so much resentment, and confusion—

A feeling Shouto is all too accustomed with.
“If you want us to stop, then get up, and really look at the kind of hero you want to be!” The yell is out of his throat before he can even realize, as both his sides flares up with energy in a desperate attempt to slow down Stain.

_The blade is already on his arm, Shouto is going to lose it, it’s going to get cut off clean—_

Iida shoots forward like a bullet, and the snap of the blade breaking seems to almost reverberate in the air.

---

Tenya pants heavily, gaining back control on his limbs. His recipro-burst stopped the attack of Stain right in time, sending him skidding back, but he has no time to stop and rest. He charges again, landing a kick that sends the monster roll backward, away from Todoroki.

Midoriya, a bit further, is trying to stand back on his legs, trembling. Tenya can see the blood roll down from his calf, getting almost lost on Midoriya’s bright red shoe.

“Involving you two in this terrible matter—“ Tenya bites out, trying to control his voice. “Todoroki, Midoriya, I’m sorry.”

“Don’t you start with that whole lone-wolf vengeance thing again—“ Midoriya replies, clearly ticked off, but Tenya shakes his head.

“I won’t allow him to spill anymore of your blood.”

At that, the expression on Midoriya’s face changes in understanding. Almost relief.

Tenya feels like that the dent he put in that bridge connecting him and Midoriya is finally being repaired.

“Don’t try to fool me, brat. A man’s nature doesn’t change that easily.” Stain says, his voice low.
“You are just one more fake hero, warping and twisting the word to his own selfish desire.”

“Don’t pay him mind, Iida.” Todoroki murmurs right behind him. “His ideas are—“

“No.” Tenya admits, feeling like his heart is being squeezed in a fist. “He is right. I’ve been acting in the worst possible way, staining the name of the hero I admired the most.”

Tenya takes a deep breath. He’d been an idiot, stewing in his own resentment, ignoring his friends’ attempt to help him.

**He won’t make the same mistake twice.**

“But still, I can’t give up, now. Not if I want to properly carry the name of Ingenium.”

A mad grin twists Stain’s features, his oppressing presence becoming even heavier. Todoroki doesn’t hesitate, a burst of flame shooting toward the enemy.

Tenya can feel the heat in his rigid leg. The recipro-burst, and that kick— Something might not be working properly.

“Todoroki!” Tenya yells over the cacophony. “Do you think you can adjust the temperature in my legs without clogging the pipes?”

Todoroki turns to him, understanding dawning in his eyes, but Tenya sees something coming. Instinct kicks in as he stretches his right arm forward, shielding Todoroki barely in time as a blade sinks into his flesh. He doesn’t have the time to even make a sound, as another blade hits him, sinking in, pinning him to the ground.

“Iida—“ Todoroki yells, shocked.

“Don’t worry! Do it, quick!” Tenya replies, desperation clawing at his stomach. *They don’t have time—*
Todoroki doesn’t hesitate, his right hand on Tenya’s calf. He feels the ice, the temperature lowering, and in the corner of his eyes he sees Midoriya, standing, his face pointed up at Stain with pure, unadulterated determination on his features, teeth bared, clearly ready to make a jump for him.

Tenya’s own teeth clash on the blade pinning his arm down as he jerks it out, ignoring the pain, and then he jumps.

Time seems to slow down for a second. He and Midoriya, coming to Stain from different sides, both of them twisting in the air ready to hit—

Their kicks connect, Midoriya’s on Stain’s face, his on the lower half of his torso, twisting him like a grotesque puppet for an instant.

But it hasn’t ended yet. Midoriya makes a little, pained sound, just as Stain’s bloodshot eye shoots open, his arm extending—

_I won’t let him spill my friends’ blood, not again._

Tenya turns one more time, putting all he has in his legs, and with one last burst he manages to kick again, the recoil of the hit running up his spine.

Stain’s body twists in the air as he and Midoriya fall, a slide of ice guiding them down safely, and Todoroki’s mouth open as if he wants to warn them—

“He’s out—“ Midoriya says with a cough, his back against Tenya’s chest once they have slides all the way down to Todoroki’s side. “He’s unconscious.”

A beat of silence, and then the three of them release a relieved sigh at the same time.

—

Shouto’s dragging Stain outside the alley with the pro hero, Native, as he apologizes with a contrite expression.
“I could only stand there and watch…” He says, bitter.

“Not much you could do.” Shouto replies, evenly. “In a one on one battle, that man will always have the upper hand. We got lucky that we were in a group, and he made mistakes in his haste.”

Behind them, Midoriya, that refused Native’s offer to carry him, is limping a bit, leaning against Iida’s left arm, seeing as his right was in pretty bad shape.

Iida’s face is a mask, but the pain in his eyes is clear. Without his glasses, he looks much younger.

“The other pros must be coming.” Shouto says once they are out in the street, looking around.

“Were you here for your work experience week, Todoroki?” Midoriya asks, voice tired. Shouto nods, before remembering his friend cannot see him, and vocalize a little yes. Midoriya sighs. “So lucky you were nearby. I don’t know what I could’ve possibly done without you.”

He has his eyes closed, his temple leaning against Iida’s shoulder.

Iida’s himself looks tense, eyes slightly wet. After opening and closing his mouth a couple of times he casts his eyes low.

“I owe you both an apology.” He says, voice trembling. “I completely lost control, let my anger overcome me. Midoriya— you tried so hard to help me, and yet I refused you—“

But Midoriya shakes his head, his eyes cracking open as a little smile appears on his lips. “It’s ok.” He says, gentle. “I— I could’ve done more. Tried more. But— We are ok, and— And you are better, now, so it’s fine.”

That seems to have the opposite effect on Iida, tears finally spilling as he watches his friend with his mouth hanging slightly open.

Shouto turns away. “You’re our class president. Pull yourself together.” Despite how harsh the
words may seem, his voice is gentle. He sees in the corner of his eyes Iida nod, drying his tears away.

A small, old man jumps out an alley on the opposite side of the road.

“Kid!” He yells, angry, and in a second he’s onto them, fast as lighting bolt, stopping in front of Midoriya. “What the hell are you doing here?! I told you to stay put!”

“Gran Torino—“ Midoriya says, blinking. “I’m sorry, sir—“

The old man is glaring at him so hard Shouto is almost glad for Midoriya that he is blind, at the moment.

Soon enough more people emerges from the same alley, approaching them.

“Kids?” “You got terrible wounds, someone call an ambulance!” “Is that the hero killer?!“

Shouto blinks, turning toward one of his father’s assistants. “If Endeavor isn’t here— Does it mean he’s still fighting?”

“Yes.” She answers. “Our quirks couldn’t help, so we were sent here.”

“The noumu—“ Midoriya murmurs, making Shouto turn toward him in shock. Wasn’t the noumu that horrible creature they saw at the U.S.J.?

He sees Midoriya’s eyes go wide as he tenses and turns, pushing Iida away, a scream that doesn’t have the time to leave his lips “GET DOW—“

Shouto stretches his arm up as fast as he can, his fingertips barely grazing Midoriya’s as he’s taken away by the flying creature.
The claws are tight around Izuku’s torso, he can feel the sharp tips of them poking against his skin through his costume.

The sensation of lifting off the ground so suddenly is dizzying, sending his senses into panic for a second, the noumu rapidly gaining height.

The confusion is enough to make him realize an instant too late what is going on on the ground. He turns his face to the little cluster of lights under him, screaming “WATCH OUT! STAIN IS FREE—!”

The hero killer is already on the move. Izuku feels the noumu go rigid, and then the sensation of falling down.

The touch sends a shiver down Izuku’s spine when Stain catches him mid-air, his arm around Izuku’s torso, and lands them safely on the ground, putting Izuku down almost gently.

He feels nausea claw at his stomach, a mix of his senses trying to adjust after his rapid ascent and descent, and of Stain’s oppressive, negative light.

The man is murmuring something as Izuku, lying on his side, tries to turn his face towards his friends, fighting the gagging sensation that’s creeping up his stomach.

Another group is approaching. Endeavor, and some of his assistants, surely. When the man recognizes Stain, Izuku can feel his light go on a frenzy at the thought of catching the hero killer.

In a second, Izuku feels like the weight of Stain’s convictions might just squash him into a pulp. The man turns, angrily murmuring “another phony—“ and for how much Izuku dislikes Endeavor, his instinct still kicks in, one of his hands grabbing at Stain’s ankle in a pitiful attempt to stop him.

But Stain still walks, his voice almost inhuman when he screams out an invitation. “COME! THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN KILL ME IS ALL MIGHT!”

Izuku feels the fear ripple through everyone’s lights like a wave, Stain’s ankle slipping from his grasp. Time seems to almost crawl to a stop as the man keeps moving forward, step after step, an
oppressing silence freezing everyone in place.

Then he stops.

“He’s unconscious—“ Izuku breathes out, shocked. The man it’s still standing, but Izuku knows by his not-light that he must be, like he had known earlier.

Still, the oppression hasn’t let go yet and that finally wins over him, his guts rebelling to him as he spews the content of his stomach on the floor, coughing, bile burning in his throat.

After a few seconds he feels Todoroki’s hand on his back, caressing him in an attempt to comfort him. Todoroki is shivering, but the touch is infinitely gentle.

—

After being thoroughly chewed out both by the pro-heroes responsible for them, and the chief of police, the three of them had no other choice than to accept the back-handed compliments the dog-faced-man gave them for their work, and his proposition to cover up the whole story and avoid the legal repercussions that would come in their way.

The passion in Todoroki’s voice as he first objected, citing the fact that helping is what a hero should do, came as a surprise to Izuku, but a welcomed one. Todoroki changed so much, his light felt much more balanced and serene than it had ever been.

Gran Torino called him outside for a minute, after the chief of police left.

“I will tell Toshinori what happened.” The old man told him in a low voice, before sighing. “You are unbelievable— If it wasn’t for the fact that I know him well, I would almost think you could be his literal biological son. You are like two peas in a pod.”

Despite the reproaching tone, that felt like a compliment to Izuku, so he silently took it with a poker face.

“Now go back in the room and rest. I will be seeing you tomorrow, brat.”
He obeyed, just too tired by the roller-coaster that had been his day. They didn’t try to chat when the lights went off, all three of them probably busy with their own thoughts. Soon enough, Izuku heard Iida’s breath go soft and regular as he fell asleep.

Despite how tired he was, sleep seemed to elude Izuku, instead. There was so much in his head, and he still felt slightly sick to his stomach.

Also, Todoroki definitely wasn’t sleeping, too. Izuku long turned his radar off for the day, but from the way he heard his classmate twist and turn on his bed, it was clear sleep was a foreign concept for him as well.

“Are you thinking about something?” Izuku finally asked in a whisper. Might as well do something else, other than rewinding over and over in his head the happenings of the day.

After a beat of silence, Todoroki whispers back. “Yes. I was thinking about how absolutely insane you are.”

Izuku blinks, debating with himself if he should turn his radar back on to try understand Todoroki’s feelings. But he knew his head -and probably his stomach, too- wouldn’t agree with that, so he avoids it.

“What makes you say that?” He asks, instead.

“When you got taken away by that thing, you turned to try warn us about Stain.” Todoroki replies. There’s a note in his voice Izuku cannot quite pin-point. “And after that, when you were on the ground you grabbed Stain, like you wanted to stop him.”

“… You are quite observant, Todoroki.” Izuku replies after a long second, not sure of what else he should say.

He hears rustling, and then a weight on his cot. Todoroki must’ve sat down near him. Izuku wonders if he can see him. It’s deep into the night and the lights in the hospital room are off, but maybe there’s still a bit of light from outside. He wonders how Todoroki looks like, now, what kind of expression there’s on his face.
The seconds ticks by, Izuku’s face turned slightly towards the soft sound of Todoroki’s breathing.

“Try not to die, Midoriya.” Todoroki says, his fingers a ghost touch on Izuku’s arm. “I won’t be happy if you do.”

He goes back to his bed, after that, saying no more. The sentence had been clear, and yet the tone was almost cryptic.

Still, something seemed to release in Izuku’s chest after that, and soon enough he let himself relax into the sweet embrace of sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Me at the thought I finally got to chapter 12! Next up is 13!

Next chapter is when shit's gonna hit the fan super hard so I'm EXCITE. Hope you guys are ready for some roller coaster of feelings! ; D
Maybe he should actually listen to Aizawa, and go get himself a prescription for some kind of sedative. The way his heart is going madly in his chest cannot be good for him.

He just heard through the grapevines that Endeavor managed to catch the hero killer in Hosu. The news had been very uplifting, one less thing to be worrying about.

Then Gran Torino called. Toshinori looked at the caller id for a good ten seconds before taking a deep breath and answering.

The first thing that came out of Gran Torino mouth was “Your kid just fought, and won, against the hero killer.”

Toshinori was sure he was just about to spit out a lung.

“Granted, he wasn’t alone. There were Todoroki’s son and the kid of the Iidas with him. Still, that brat managed something I couldn’t really believe he could possibly do at his current level.”

“Young Todoroki and Iida, too?” Toshinori exhaled, feeling his head light. “What even—?”

Gran Torino filled him in with what has happened, finishing with an exasperated. “I can’t believe that kid. The way he moves his feet before his brain— It’s just like you.”

“He has that tendency, yes…” Toshinori sighs, a hand on his forehead. “I’m sorry, it must’ve been troubling— My teaching has been incredibly inadequate—”

“You can say that louder.” Gran Torino grumbles, before continuing. “Listen, this whole hero killer business is very troubling, and I have a bad feeling about this.”
Toshinori listens as Gran Torino explains his theory, frowning, his entire body shivering when Gran Torino says in a low voice. “I’m afraid All For One might be behind this.”

He has to force himself to calm down, feeling a drop of sweat running down from his temple. “I refuse to believe he could possibly still be alive after that wound—“

Gran Torino hesitates, white noise filling Toshinori’s ear for a second, before he continues. “Toshinori. That boy absolutely adores you. You must tell him as soon as possible everything regarding you and One For All. You owe him that much, at least.”

Toshinori closes his eyes, frowning. The smile that the boy had given him during the festival after telling him that he now knew how Toshinori looked like resurfaces from his memories, traitorous.

*Take care of yourself. You don’t want to go and break that boy’s heart, now, do you.*

Goddamnit.

“I know.” He sighs, a trembling hand covering his eyes. “I know.”

There’s another bout of silence, then in a lighter, more casual tone Gran Torino says. “Speaking of which, a blind boy? Really? You always had the tendency to pick up strays from the side of the road, but still—“

And for how much he loves and respects his old teacher, Toshinori feels a sting of anger at that. “He’s perfectly capable—“

The laugh through the receiver interrupts him.

“I just wanted to poke some fun at you, Toshinori. Over-protective as always! Don’t worry, the boy is fine. He’s got heart aplenty and brains when he wants to. Would be better if he used it a bit more before acting, though.”

Toshinori deflates on his couch. “Right. That was a cruel joke, though, sensei.” He replies with a lopsided smile, accidentally slipping into the old honorific. “I guess I will have to have another chat
with young Midoriya at the first occasion.”

A sniff. “ **You do that. In the meantime I’ll try cram some common sense in that stubborn head for**

**the rest of the time we have left.**”

“**Good luck with that.**” He can’t help but reply, releasing a little laugh at Gran Torino’s groan.

When they closed the call, Toshinori let his arm fall down at his side, still holding the phone. With

the other he covers his eyes, head resting on the back of the couch.

If it’s not the joint effort of his rapidly disappearing One For All, his collection of wounds, and All

For One to finally do him in, young Midoriya might just be the source of his untimely demise.

**Being a teacher is hard.**

—

Izuku could not hide that he was a bit disappointed that he ended up getting the rest of his work

experience week cut short, since Gran Torino’s teaching permit had been revoked — *his fault, too* —,

but with what has happened it was kind of inevitable.

It had been sad, too, to discover about Iida’s hand receiving a possibly permanent damage, but his

friend took the news in stride, with a renewed resolution to become a great hero. They made a

promise to keep going forward, together, and together they laughed at Todoroki’s weird joke of

being a hand-crusher that turned out not to be a joke at all in his opinion (seriously, Izuku was so

relieved to discover more and more that Todoroki was truly just a very silent, awkward dork).

Soon enough he had to say bye to Gran Torino, and for how harsh the old man had been on him,

Izuku still had a great deal of respect, realizing how much he learnt. That’s why he couldn’t deny

that, as he stood outside Gran Torino’s house, his costume under an arm, he did feel a bit sad.

“**Thank you so much for everything, sir.**” Izuku says with a little bow. “It’s only thanks to you if I’ve

been able to hold my own against the hero killer. I’ve learnt a lot.”
Gran Torino’s cane twacks against his leg. “Don’t get in over your head, kiddo, you got lucky the man wasn’t fighting you seriously!” He reprimands. “Still, it’s a good thing you’ve managed to control your damage output during the fight. Now, if you could exert that control on your own impulses and not jump into dangerous situations like an idiot, that would be for the better.”

Izuku scratches the back of his head, embarrassed, as Gran Torino adds. “If you really want to become as strong as All Might, then you have still a lot of work to do, kid. Don’t relax.”

“I know.” Izuku replies, serious, before giving the man a little smile. “Well, I guess it’s time to go.”

He turned, starting to walk away with a little limp - he hopes Recovery Girl will accept to cure the wound on his leg…- when Gran Torino called after him.

“Kid, who are you, then?”

Izuku turns, perplexed, thinking the old man is trying to play another trick on him, before his minds connects the dots.

“Oh!” He says, a grin breaking on his mouth. “It’s Deku!”

He has the distinct impression that Gran Torino is smiling at him.

—

Izuku, Iida and Todoroki ended up naturally gravitating toward one another once back at school, which really wasn’t all that surprising considering what kind of experience they shared.

They were chatting between themselves with quiet voices by Todoroki’s desk, as the class excitedly shared with one another their respective experiences during the week. Izuku heard Kirishima and Sero laugh almost hysterically as Kacchan’s light emitted pure rage after he entered the class.

“Why are they laughing like that?” Izuku asks, perplexed. There’s a beat of silence before Todoroki answers in a calm, composed tone. “It’s Bakugou’s hair. He looks like he had a cow licking his head, it’s ridiculous.”
“Oh, that would explain it.” Izuku replies, distracted. Maybe in another situation he would’ve laughed at the mere thought, but hearing the cheerful voices of most of his classmates happily sharing their experiences made him realize yet again just in which kind of dangerous situation he, Todoroki and Iida had been. He didn’t felt particularly frayed, but he just didn’t felt like laughing, either.

“…You three, though.” He hears Kaminari say, clearly continuing from some kind of prior discussion as he turns to face them. “You are the one that changed the most. Especially you, Midoriya, you look dead serious right now.”

“Yeah, the hero killer—” Sero intervenes from somewhere in front of the class, his voice slightly muffled. “That must’ve been scary.”

“I’m just glad you guys are ok.” Kirishima added. “You got rescued by Endeavor, right?”

Izuku turns toward Todoroki, his mouth thinning in a line. But Todoroki is perfectly calm as he says “Yeah, we got rescued.”

“When I saw it on the news I couldn’t believe it.” Ojiro says, pensive. “To think a man like that could possibly be working with the league of villains…”

“That’s pretty scary for sure.” Kaminari continues, distracted. “But I have to admit, watching those videos, the man was kind of cool—“

“Kaminari —” Izuku interjects, frowning. It’s clear his classmate realized the slip, his light rippling with regret and shame. But Iida is impassive as Kaminari apologizes.

“I can understand why people would consider the strength of his convictions cool.” He says, voice low. “But he went with it in the worst possible way, and that is unforgivable. That is why I will keep walking the path of becoming a hero with renewed strength!”

Kaminari it’s still apologizing as Izuku pats Iida’s shoulder a couple of times, giving him a knowing little smile.
Later than afternoon, after All Might explained which kind of exercise they were going to do, Izuku found himself a bit excited at the prospect of showing him his progress.

All the classmates he’s racing against are fairly fast and agile. Sero especially will be advantaged by the terrain, and Izuku knew that Iida would give it all, even if he was probably still recovering from the battle.

But still, Izuku wants to show off a bit. The terrain offers him a huge variety of perches to jump to and from.

As he activates One For All at his lower gradient, he promises himself he won’t touch the ground a single time until he has reached the objective.

When the start is given he dashes in a jump, barely landing on a pipe, boosting himself again with just the tip of his feet. He manages to jump from point to point in the little mental course he studied while observing the terrain, feeling agile and flexible. In comparison to the way he felt during the festival, where his body was constantly taut with the exertion of keeping One For All at bay, this was paradise.

It’s exhilarating, in a sense, almost like flying. He’s really, actually having fun.

Of course that is the moment he slips, literally. He ends up miscalculating his footing, and manages to hang from the pipe he slipped on by a thread. As he rushes to climb up and restart his run to the objective, Sero already caught up and surpassed him, claiming the first place right in front of Izuku’s eyes.

“Aw, man—“ He moans as he lands on the platform, Iida, Ojiro and Ashido rapidly following.

“That was a good one, Midoriya, you almost made it before me.” Sero comments cheerfully, giving him an energetic pat on the back. “Nice moves.”

“You have all improved the use of your quirks considerably, good job!” All Might says in his usual booming voice. Then as Sero and Ashido friendly banter between themselves, he approached Izuku, whispering. “You did very good, I almost did not recognize you! Come by my office, later, there’s some things I need to tell you.”
Izuku sighed. Surely All Might wanted to scold him for acting so recklessly that night in Hosu.

And yet, as the little chimes only Izuku could feel vibrated gently back and forth in him, he could not help but feel that whatever All Might wanted to tell him would be much, much more serious.

—

“Say, Midoriya.” Todoroki approaches him quietly in the locker room, voice low. “The moves you’ve shown today, have you learnt them from that old, fast guy you went to for you work experience week?”

He can hear the other boys bicker about one thing or the other, and he has the distinct impression Todoroki is purposefully keeping his voice low for a reason. Izuku wondered if Todoroki saw right through him and his newfound abilities, it wouldn’t be surprising.

Then again it was inevitable that his new, rather flashy talents would pick his classmates’ curiosity. He had to face the music, one way or the other.

“Yeah, you could say that—“ He replies with a little, strained smile.

Todoroki hums, not adding anything else.

—

When he enters into the office and All Might asks him to lock the door, Izuku knows that something is not right.

He obeys, silently sitting in front of his mentor as he clearly fidgets nervously.

“Young Midoriya, I already told you the story of One For All.” He says. Izuku can feel how tense he is, can feel a pool of dark thoughts and feelings in All Might’s stomach like they are in his own. “I also told you of All For One, and of how I fought him five years ago.”
“Yes…?” Izuku replies, slowly, when the silence stretches.

“I thought that story ended.” All Might says. “I thought wrong.”

Izuku flinches. From the story All Might told him the day he asked him to take the mantle of One For All, it was clear in the man’s voice that the idea that that dark, towering danger was out of the picture was a great relief for him.

“I do not know how that is possible, but chances are that All For One it’s still alive, and pulling the strings behind everything that has been happening lately.” A beat of silence. “You had more than a taste of his schemings yourself, after all.”

Of course, it was reasonable that All Might was this tense. He clearly was worried for Izuku, now that he had passed One For All to him. Knowing him, the man was probably feeling guilty of having to put this burden on Izuku’s shoulders.

Izuku takes a deep breath. “I understand.” He says, voice levelled. “I understand and— The prospect it’s scary, not gonna lie, but—“

He takes a moment to gather his thoughts, weight his words. “But I have accepted this responsibility. And I want you to know that I will always answer your call, no matter what.” Izuku forces a smile on his face, wanting to try lift his mentor’s spirit a bit up. “As long as you are with me, I will not be afraid. So, don’t worry about me, ok?”

Somehow, that seems to have the polar opposite effect. He can feel All Might flinch, something dark squirm in his chest, and then the man rises on his feet, walking a few steps away.

He hears his breath trembling in his throat, like he’s trying not to cry.

“There’s nothing I wish more right now than to be able to lie to you—“ He says, voice strained. “There’s nothing that I wish more than to be a coward, and let you live in blessed ignorance as long as I possibly can—“

Something weird is happening. Izuku can feel All Might’s distress like a bitter poison in his mouth.
“But… This link that you have with me, does not allow me that.” All Might continues. “You will know if I lie. You always will know. My boy—“

There’s a long silence, hesitation hanging in the air.

“I— You need to know.” A deep breath. “When the day comes that you will face the dark I… I might not be by your side anymore.”

Izuku’s mind goes completely blank for a second as a keen, unbearable sting of pain in his chest freezes him, like something inside him broke —

Oh. It was his heart.

—

When Toshinori turns around, he tries to convince himself he’s ready to face Midoriya. But he’s not.

The boy is on his feet, looking at him with wide eyes, the perfect picture of distress.

“What—“ His voice is tiny. “What are you saying—?”

“I’ve been through much.” Toshinori explains, willing his voice to be steady. “So has my body. I simply do not know for how long I will still be able to liv—“

Young Midoriya squeezes his eyes shut, hands shooting at the sides of his face, covering his ears. A childish gesture. “Stop!” He yells. “This isn’t funny!”

Toshinori wants nothing more than to take this boy and squeeze him in a hug and apologize to him for all the pain he’s putting him through and never let him go, but he knows he can’t.

Still, he takes a careful step forward, stretching his hand toward him, but before he can ever reach over Midoriya slaps his hand away, his eyes now full of tears.
They stare at each other in silence, and he knows the boy is searching him, maybe for the sign of a lie, maybe for confirmation—

A sob escapes Midoriya’s lips as big tears finally roll down his round cheeks, his features twisting in desperation. He turns on his heels, shooting for the door, and in his distress doesn’t even realize it’s still closed. Not that he needs too, as he’s now strong enough to simply force it open with a loud bang and run out, away from Toshinori.

Toshinori doesn’t follow, his legs giving in. He slides on the floor with his back against the wall.

“I’m sorry—“ He sobs, his eyes stubbornly remaining dry, shivering hands against his forehead. “I’m sorry— I’m so sorry —”

—

Ochako caught up with Iida, finding him in the company of Todoroki, unsurprisingly.

“Boys, wait for me!” She said, the two of them stopping and turning to her.

Today at lunch Todoroki had joined them once more. It seemed like their little trio was well on the way to become a quartet. Not that she’d mind, Todoroki had changed so much since the festival, he was clearly more relaxed and less standoffish, and it seemed that Midoriya highly enjoyed his company. For her, the more friends she made, the better.

“Where’s Midoriya?” She asked once she had walked up to them. Todoroki shrugged as Iida said “I don’t know, he just disappeared. You know how he is.”

She did. Their friend had this tendency of just disappearing out of thin air every now and then. She had no idea for which reason, but usually he would come back in a good mood, so she didn’t feel the need to pry.

That’s why it was very surprising when they walked into Midoriya at just the next corner. Or, better, crashed.
Midoriya came at full speed, crashing directly into Iida that lost his balance, falling down on his behind.

“Midoriya, what gives—“ He started to ask, before the words died in his throat. Midoriya was scrambling to get back up on his feet, pale, shivering, big tears rolling down his cheek, an expression of pure shock on his face.

Ochako froze, Midoriya stumbling back up and past her.

Todoroki grabbed his wrist on the fly.

“Midoriya—“ He tried to say, but Midoriya, keeping his face turned away from them, tried to free himself from the grip. Todoroki did not let go, getting himself dragged unwillingly forward a good meter as he stood his ground. His other hand closed around Midoriya’s wrist as well. “Stop! What’s wrong?!”

And then Midoriya let out a *whine*, like a wounded animal, and fell down on his knees, a puppet that got its string cut. He started sobbing pitifully, folding on himself.

Not only that, she realized. His breath was short and irregular, loud, like Midoriya was trying to gulp in air, and failing.

Todoroki hesitated a bit, before gently letting his wrist go. He circled around Midoriya, bending on his knees in front of him.

“Midoriya.” He said, voice low, gentle. “Breathe. You need to breathe. Follow me, ok?!” He put his hands on Midoriya’s shoulders, counting to him, trying to guide Midoriya’s breathing, as if he was an expert on panic attacks.

A distant little voice cut through the fog of her shock, suggesting that maybe he was.

She stood there, stupidly, unable to move a single finger, watching the shivering back of one of her best friends as he tried to breathe, loud, painful sobs shaking his entire frame, as if someone was stabbing his back over and over.
For the first time in her life, she looked at him, and realized just how small and fragile this smart, brave person she had learnt to care for so much, and so fast, really was.

How small and fragile all of them really were.

—

Something was wrong. Aizawa launched another look around his class.

He just explained the plan for the summer break that was to come in a month, informing his students that those who were to fail the end of term tests would end up in remedial class and won’t be able to go to the camp. He received the expected reaction, a mix of excitement at the prospect of the summer break, fear for the tests, and enthusiastic support to one another.

But something was wrong.

It was like Midoriya was not really there. He was pale, his mouth a small, unhappy line. Despite his condition, his eyes were usually lit up and active and full of life. But not now. He kept his head low all the time, shoulders drooping forward, eyes scarily empty.

He wasn’t really there. A ghost.

And not only that. Todoroki had basically been staring at the back of Midoriya’s head the entire time, his face an unreadable mask. He hadn’t stopped doing that even for a second.

From the other side of the room, Iida and Uraraka were doing the same, with an added exchange of a worried little look to each other every now and then.

Something was clearly wrong.

The bell rang, and excited teenagers started to stand and pick up their bags, chatting between each other as they made their way out of the class. Before the four outliers could leave, Aizawa said in a maybe too severe voice “Iida, Uraraka, Todoroki, Midoriya. You stay.”
“Uuuuuh— someone’s in troubleeee—“ Kaminari sing-songed before cheerfully waving at the four of them and exiting the room. Bakugou launched a little look to Midoriya from over his shoulder, rolled his eyes, and left as well.

The class was empty except for the five of them, at that point. Aizawa sighs.

“Come here.” He says, walking around the desk to stand in front of them, leaning back on it, arms crossed.

Iida, Uraraka and Todoroki exchanged a silent, pointed look before standing. Midoriya stood from his seat in a way that suggested about one thousand ton of rocks were hanging from his neck, face still pointed at the floor. He made his way to stand in front of Aizawa, hugging himself in a probably unconscious gesture. The last one to arrive, despite the fact he was the closest to Aizawa of them all.

“Ok.” Aizawa says, trying to will his voice into a more gentle tone. “What is going on.”

Yet again, Iida, Uraraka and Todoroki looked to one another. Midoriya did not move, not making a single peep. It was as if he wasn’t even breathing.

“If I ask you a question, I expect you all to answer.” Aizawa insists. “Again: what is going on.”

Iida finally let out a little cough. It seemed like even that costed him more than he was willing to give, but maybe his role as class president was pushing him to be the one to take the lead.

“Sensei…” He starts, before hesitating with a frown. “I— We— We don’t know.”

Aizawa blinks. Again, with the look exchange. That was starting to grate on his nerves.

“Midoriya, he, huh—“ Uraraka says, her voice low, nervously playing with her fingers. “He’s very upset, but we don’t know why. He won’t talk.”

Aizawa sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. That was something that he could deduce by himself,
especially considering that the three of them showed more than one time that they tended to act like the Official Midoriya Protection Squad.

“Midoriya, your friends are clearly very worried for you.” Aizawa says, turning to look at him. Not a single reaction. “Why don’t you tell us what is wrong?”

“No, she meant— literally.” Todoroki intervenes, in his usual cold tone. A clear way to defend himself, a shield against the world, that voice, everyone with a pinch of common sense would note, really. “He hasn’t spoken a single word since yesterday.”

That was more troubling. What could’ve sent the boy in such a funk? He knew there hadn’t been any major incidents since the work experience week, and if something had happened to his mother the school would’ve been informed, since Midoriya would’ve been a minor with no legal guardian in sight.

As far as Aizawa knew, Midoriya wasn’t particularly close to any of the other teachers except for himself and Toshinori. That’s why it seemed the right thing to do, to softly say “If you don’t want to talk with us, maybe you can with someone else? Do you want me to call All Might for you?”

That certainly finally shook a reaction out of the boy. He flinched like Aizawa had just whipped him, folding in himself even more for how impossible it seemed, his hands two nervous clamps around his own arms. He turned his head away from them, until all they could see was the dark, greenish curls

That was no good. To see the boy react with anything less than elated joy at the prospect of spending even more time with his idol would already be strange. But this?

And, before he could even realize, Aizawa ended up indirectly asking for a membership card of the Midoriya Protection Squad, the moment he exchanged a worried look with his other three students, in the exact same way they’ve been doing the entire morning.

When he entered the teacher lounge, Toshinori was there, sitting at the table with his fingers crossed under his chin, clearly deep in thought. Thank God. Aizawa didn’t had it in him to search the whole school for him.
“Toshinori.” He started, not even greeting him. “What the hell is wrong with Midoriya.”

Toshinori jumped like someone came up and stabbed him, turning around.

He didn’t look too good himself. Not that he usually did, with that hollow face of his and his tendency of coughing blood whenever he pleased, but it was clear that something was perturbing him as well.

“What do you mean?” He asked, slowly.

“The boy is a pale imitation of himself and for what his friends have told me, he hasn’t spoken a single word since yesterday.” Aizawa explained. “When I mentioned you, he reacted as if I set a box full of puppies on fire in front of him.”

Toshinori blinks, and then seems to fold on himself like he’s holding up the weight of the world on his shoulders -which he is, most of the time-. He pushes his palms against his eyes. His fingers are trembling.

“Damnit —“

That’s not a good response.

“What happened?” Aizawa asks, because Toshinori is his colleague, and Midoriya his student, and frankly, both of them are people he cares for on a personal level as well, and clearly he needs to butt his nose in this, since apparently everyone that happens to wield One For All turns out to be an emotionally stunted mess.

“I told him the truth.” Toshinori replies. His voice is flat, almost inexpressive in a way he hadn’t heard him use in years.

“You mean—“

“Everything .”
There’s only one way Aizawa can possibly react. “Fuck.”

—

Izuku exists.

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he can hear the imitation of a voice. A whisper, barely there, trying to tell him to pull himself together.

He pays it no mind.

Izuku gets up in the morning, goes to school, takes notes, sits at the table with his friends during lunch, he does his training exercises in the afternoon.

He goes home, and studies for the tests. He sits down with his mother for dinner, and then goes to bed. Rinse, repeat.

He eats, because that’s what he’s supposed to do. He drinks, because otherwise he will die. He walks with his friends, because even if his heart is shattered, there’s still some pieces that yells and screams and cry for companionship.

He answers when he’s asked something, using the least possible amount of words. He speaks if he really needs to, but very reluctantly.

He listens, but not really. He’s there, but not really.

He just… Exists.

Some distant part of him sometimes registers that his classmates are catching up. Whispering between themselves, asking his friends what is wrong with him.
Why is he so… like, you know.

Why does he only talk when he’s asked a question, and even then the answers are not real answers at all.

All Might is there in the afternoon exercises, and that hurts. It hurts more than he can possibly bear. But he does, he bears it, in silence. Because that’s what he’s supposed to do, that’s his role now. He accepted it himself. Izuku walked up to the crown, took it and put it on his head, and now he has to sit on this throne whenever he wants it or not.

All Might’s chime vibrates to him, but Izuku’s does not vibrate back.

The written tests are over, and Kacchan is there, growling to him about something or the other.

Izuku can’t really bring himself to care. His lack of reaction sets him off, and Aizawa-sensei ends up having to forcefully detach Kacchan from his collar.

His mom is worried, so are Todoroki, Uraraka, and Iida. Worried sick. It’s the one thing that still makes him feel alive.

He wants to say sorry. To ask them to don’t worry. That he will be fine. At some point. Maybe.

But every time he tries, his voice just… Fails him.

What are you supposed to do when the one constant in your life, the one person you’ve loved and admired and revered before you even came to the realization that you are a thing that exists in the universe, that one person that literally means everything to you, comes and shifts the weight of the world on your shoulders, and then tells you “Hey, just fyi, I’m prob gonna die soon. K bye.”

What are you supposed to do?

Izuku exists.
“This is a terrible idea.”

“You think I don’t know that? If you have any other solution, I will gladly hear it.”

Toshinori cards his fingers through that already messy mane he calls hair, groaning.

“This is all my fault—“

“Oh, for the love of— Don’t start again.” Aizawa snaps back, irritated. “It had to happen, one of these days. It’s not like you could keep it from him much longer, not when the boy can literally read you like an open book.”

“I know.” Toshinori replies, his voice low, avoiding Aizawa’s eyes. “That’s why I told him but— If I had any idea he’d react this badly—“

Aizawa holds up a hand, stopping him. They had this discussion, almost verbatim, at least five times in the last two days. He had enough.

They were sitting basically in the dark, their only source of light a lamp on the desk in the teacher’s shared office. The both of them leaning over the mess of papers, knees bumping into one another, discussing, strategizing, deciding how to challenge the students.

It was supposed to be only Aizawa’s responsibility, technically. But Toshinori looked pitiful, whenever he wasn’t busy with something. A victim of his own too big, too loving heart.

So Aizawa gave him something to be busy with.

Of course, these being the tests destined for the students of 1-A, Midoriya had to come up at some point.

The boy had completely shut down. He was detached. An expressionless doll that acted
mechanically, did the things he was supposed to do just because he was supposed to do them, talking when asked to, but never interacting of his own volition.

His written tests went just fine, which Aizawa couldn’t decide if it was more relieving, since once he’d snap out of it he won’t have to deal with failing grades, or scary.

He spoke in private with the three of the Protection Squad - as he mentally labeled them, at this point, and simply couldn’t shake it off anymore - and told them to give him space. Be there for him, but don’t force him to talk. Just... Be there.

They asked what was wrong. He’d been honest: *I cannot tell you. I know what it is, but I cannot tell you.*

They looked to one another, silent words passing through them.

*Don’t fail your studies for this, now,* he said. *Keep working hard. Midoriya will be fine, at some point.*

That didn’t seem to satisfy them, but it’s not like they had much of a choice. So they accepted it, and did what they could. They’d walk him in at the start of the day, sit with him at lunch, walk him out. It would’ve been almost comical, the way they looked like three bodyguards, if it wasn’t for the fact that it wasn’t comical at all.

Bakugou tried to provoke Midoriya, searching for a challenge before the physical tests. Worked himself into a frenzied rage in front of the absolute lack of any response, before Aizawa intervened to stop him. Lucky the Protection Squad wasn’t there, otherwise things could’ve turned real ugly.

Another problem. Bakugou was talented, and strong, and certainly not stupid at all. And yet he kept falling down in the same trap, working himself into a useless rage over the tiniest things. Unable to step over whatever personal problem he had with Midoriya.

That’s what sparked the idea in the first place.

“Bakugou and Midoriya.” Aizawa suddenly said. Force of desperation, really. “Against you.”
That stopped Toshinori in his tracks, a hand frozen mid-air.

“You… Are kidding, right?”

“Wish I could.” Aizawa replied, and then continued, pensive. “Think about it: Bakugou has a problem with his pride and Midoriya. Midoriya has a problem with himself and you. You have a problem with the both of them, at this point. This test is supposed to try out the students’ ability to cooperate with a partner to overcome an overbearing obstacle. Forcing Bakugou to cooperate with Midoriya will put him in a position in which, whenever he wants it or not, he has to confront his problems and, if he wants to pass, overcome them. Forcing Midoriya to cooperate with Bakugou will push him to get out this wall he has erected around himself and come back to the real world, if he doesn’t want to tank his test. Fighting you will force Midoriya to confront the problem that he’s trying to ignore, and will force Bakugou to accept the fact that there are always bigger fishes, and that he needs to swallow some of that pride.”

When he finally had stopped talking, Toshinori was looking at him with his mouth slightly open.

“You make sense.” He said, faintly. “Why do you make sense.”

“In this case, I wish I did not. This is a recipe for absolute disaster. But I cannot think of anything else.”

A long silence, and then:

“This is a terrible idea.”

“You think I don’t know that? If you have any other solution, I will gladly hear it.”

So here they were. Toshinori self-reproaching, Aizawa stopping him before they could run in circles some more around the Midoriya problem.

A deep sigh shakes the hollow frame, thin fingers going through blond hair for what could possibly be the one thousandth time that evening.
“I hope you are right, because if this doesn’t go well, we will have even more of a mess between our hands.” Toshinori finally says, his voice tired acceptance. “Fine. Bakugou and Midoriya, against me.”

Aizawa sighs, tiredly massaging at his eyes, writing down the combinations.

“I’ll bring this to Nedzu right away.” He says. “At least if he considers it too risky, we’ll have time to think of something else.”

—

Katsuki was at an impasse.

On one hand, he had the chance to confront himself with All Might - finally, it’s all he always wanted, to face the top and test himself, determined to climb to it at any costs - on the other, he had to do it with Deku, of all people.

When they heard the explanation about how the test was going to work - robots his ass - and Aizawa called their names, All Might stepping up in front of them, he felt a mix of excitement at the prospect, and rage about the fact the entire universe seemed hell bent on pushing him back to Deku all the time, no matter how tired of it - and him - he was.

Deku didn’t seem to have a single reaction, although Katsuki was sure he saw his hands trembling.

Speaking of which. Deku was weird as fuck, lately. By the way he acted, Katsuki first thought something might’ve happened to Inko - yes, he worried. She was a nice person, fucking bite him. - but mom told him that the woman was perfectly fine. So Katsuki had no idea what was even wrong with the guy.

The bus ride had been a silent, tense affair. All Might kept shooting them little looks as if he expected Katsuki to spontaneously combust, and Deku to grow another head or something. Then he explained to them how the exam was going to work - fight and catch or flee. As if there was even a real choice - and left them at the entrance, taking his advantage minutes to prepare in the city scape they were using as a test ground.

At the start of the thirty minutes they entered, walking in the middle of the road. Katsuki was looking
around, his unwanted partner silently following him.

“…Oy.” He finally says, turning. How come the guy wasn’t already trying to talk his ear off with some stupid plan or the other?

When he turned, he found himself looking into the face of absolute indifference. Deku didn’t seem to care in the slightest that: a- they were about to fight All Might and, b- if they failed this test, they will end in remedial, wasting time, getting humiliated.

He could already feel the handle on his rage slip away. “What the fuck is with you?” He asks in a growl. “Say something.”

Deku blinks at him, his expression not changing in the slightest.

“Oy, shithead!” He explodes, grabbing him by the front of his costume. “I’m talking to you!”

In front of yet more silence, he let him go with a little push. “Fine, do whatever, I’m going to go ahead and fight him on my own.”

And then Deku finally speaks.

“All you really that fucking stupid?”

—

The words made it out of Izuku’s mouth, low and glacial, before he could even realize.

He’s pretty sure something snapped in him. Broke. If there was still something that could possibly break in his chest.

When he got told he had to work with Kacchan, he really didn’t feel anything- whatever.
Against All Might.

The thing inside him snapped, then. Izuku’s hands were trembling, but he did not react.

Kacchan immediately took the lead, and Izuku knew that all he wanted was to fight. He silently followed, distantly wondering what was wrong with him, why he felt this sensation, this far away whistle in his ears that wouldn’t leave him alone.

Then Kacchan said he was going to fight him alone. *All Might. Alone*.

And the words made it out of his mouth.

He feels Kacchan flinch, turning back around to him slowly.

“What did you just say?”

The words suggested that if Izuku would dare to speak again, Kacchan would explode. A nervous pin in a hand grenade, ready to shoot away at the drop of a hat.

You know what?

*Fuck it.*

“For someone as smart as you, you really are an idiot.” Izuku continues. “You think you can fight All Might alone? He could crush you with his pinky.”

Kacchan darted, grabbing him again.

“I’m not a shitty little nerd like you, who’s too scared to face his favorite hero.” Kacchan hisses in his face, voice cruelly twisting the last two words.
Another piece of the puzzle fell into place. He was afraid of facing All Might.

Was he afraid of facing All Might?

The whistle in his ears was louder. A teapot angrily hissing, that’s what it reminded him of.

Was All Might’s choice to face them for this test? Did he want Izuku to fight him?

Did he want to fight Izuku?

Kacchan’s usually unreadable light was almost shivering with rage, at his lack of response. The sensation felt familiar, and maybe that was it, that strange feeling he felt since that morning, as Izuku distantly realizes that, right:

Five stages of grief.

After denial, comes anger.

—

Toshinori is waiting, and praying, that everything will work itself out as Aizawa had planned.

He’s giving them some minutes to prepare. He frankly does not believe the two boys will magically start cooperating right away, but he wants to give them at least a chance to try.

What he does not expect is to suddenly see young Midoriya dart out from a alley at his left fast as an arrow, One For All activated.

Going straight for him.

He’s too fast, can’t see his face— Toshinori dodges the kick right on time, the boy crashing in the
building that had been behind Toshinori only a few instants prior, rising a cloud of dust, debris flying everywhere.

Young Midoriya doesn’t seem to care, getting back up on his feet, charging at him again in a blur of green light. Toshinori has to dodge a punch, and young Midoriya hits a solid brick wall, the strength of his fist putting cracks into it.

Young Bakugou has appeared from the same alley, his face suggesting someone just went and insulted his entire lineage. When he sees Toshinori dodging young Midoriya’s frantic attacks he yells “DEKU, YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT!”

This is not turning well.

—

This has to be hands down the weirdest day of his life.

“I’m not a shitty little nerd like you, who’s too scared to face his favorite hero.”

Deku didn’t react at all at those words, apparently. But Katsuki saw it, the minute little twitch of his eye, his expression turning just barely from a cold mask of indifference to… Something else.

What that something was, Katsuki did not know.

Then he had grabbed Katsuki’s hand with a grip bordering on painful, taking it away. He sidestepped, walking around Katsuki.

Before he could ask anything, Deku seems to light up. An oppressive energy fills the air, and then he’s off, a lighting bolt, leaving behind him a single, cracked footprint two centimetres down in the concrete.

Katsuki looks at it, dumbly, before slapping himself out of his stupor and follow.
What he sees when he makes to the other side of the alley does not make him happy.

That shitty little crap is trying to fight All Might all on his own. He’s fast, too fast, when did this happen? - All Might dodges a punch and Deku’s small fist lodges itself into a brick wall creating a deep hole, cracks opening from it, and then Deku takes his hand out like it’s no biggie - when did that happen- and turns to All Might, ready to start again, baring his teeth like an angry animal.

And All Might is actually putting effort into dodging.

All Might is actually putting effort into dodging.

“DEKU, YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT!”

This was supposed to be his fight. Like Katsuki was supposed to be the only one from middle school to make it to UA. Like Katsuki was supposed to be the real winner of the festival, and not a sloppy second best when that shitty half face refused to fight him properly. Like Katsuki was supposed to be a step higher, and Deku was supposed to stay were he belonged, between the commoners.

Like how Katsuki was supposed to be above him, and Deku still refused, looking at him with that stupid worried face. Asking him if he was ok. Telling him he looked like he needed help —

The little shit doesn’t seem to show a single sign of giving. He’s still going at it full speed, forcing All Might on the defensive, destroying the fake city around them every time one of his kicks or punches missed the mark, hitting something else.

The man was even trying to be reasonable. Telling that shithead Deku that he was wasting his time and energies, and there was no point in attacking the way he was doing—

Then All Might sprung into action. He dodges another fruitless attack, bending his leg, and his knee connects with Deku’s stomach with a strength that makes even Katsuki flinch.

Deku flies, bouncing on the ground with a loud crunch, rolling backwards some more meters before coming to a stop. Shivering, he turns on his side, heaving, and Katsuki thinks he hears him saying something.
And he says *thinks* because there’s no way those words could possibly come from Deku’s mouth, directed to All Might.

And yet, he’s sure he just heard him say “*I hate you.*”

—

The words hit him harder more than any kick or punch possibly could.

He recognized the anger, of course. The idea that young Midoriya’s attacks could possibly be part of a plan rapidly left his mind. The boy was frantic, desperate, putting too much in every hit, risking too much every time the control of his One For All almost slipped.

He couldn’t manage to look at his face, not as the boy tried over and over and over to hit him, fast as a light.

Young Bakugou was frozen on the spot, watching, his mouth slightly open.

Toshinori had been dodging, because if Midoriya landed a hit, with the way he was attacking, it would actually *hurt*. And also to give himself time to think.

How do I get him out of this?

How do I get *them* out of this?

Young Midoriya was ignoring his words. He tried to call to him, to tell him to stop, that attacking for the sake of attacking was useless, that he was wasting his energy— The boy seemed deaf to his pleads.

He needed Midoriya to stop, snap out of his rage, and *think*. His mind a chant of “*sorry sorry sorry I’m sorry*” Toshinori dodged one last attack, and then countered.

His knee connected with Midoriya’s soft belly - *soft, too soft, he’s so young, why did I even think it
was right to put such a weight on this boy - sending him flying backwards. The boy hits concrete with a painful noise, rolling some more, rising a little cloud of dust as he comes to a stop. He spills, coughing, before trying and failing to get back up on his feet.

And then he says it, clear as day despite his weak voice.

“*I hate you.*”

Toshinori really asked for that, didn’t he.

—

Katsuki slaps himself, literally.

He’s been standing there like an idiot, unable to move. Everything was just so weird, it was like his brain refused to accept what his eyes were seeing.

But— This was his chance. He would not get a second one. If he wanted to measure himself against All Might, this was it.

Deku was still on the floor, and All Might was not attacking him. There’s was something in the air, something heavy, and a small part of him felt like he should go to Deku, make sure his back did not break with the strength of that hit or something—

Wait, what is he *thinking*?!

*Fuck him* — Deku, running towards him, a burning stick in his hand, attacking that stupid pile of sludge — *Fuck him* — His mom, saying to him that Izuku still cared — *Fuck him* — Her comment about how he always managed to bring some sort of feeling out of him — *Fuck him fuck him fuck him*

Katsuki dashes.
All Might looks shocked when he jumps to Deku, puts him on his shoulder like a sack of potatoes and sprints away.

—

“Ok, what the fuck .”

He’s such a dumbass. He had a chance, and wasted it, wasted it because this little piece of shit—

Deku turns to him after Katsuki unceremoniously drops him to the ground, bile on his chin, his eyes unfocused. He’s pale as a ghost, Katsuki notices. Was he this pale the entire time?

“Are you going to go batshit insane again, or are we going to find a way to beat him?”

Deku blinks, shivering, slowly climbing up to sit straight. He puts a hand on his chest with a full-body twitch, and Katsuki thinks he’s going to vomit again, before realizing that he’s not breathing .

“Oy, shithead, the fuck?!“ Katsuki exclaims, punching Deku’s back. That seems to jump-start him, as he takes a painful gulp of air. “Fucking breathe, you idiot!”

Tears collects in Deku’s pale eyes as he tries, and mostly fails, to get oxygen in his lungs.

Katsuki wants to pull at his hair and take it out in desperation. Why had to be him getting paired with this crazy motherfucker, of all people?

“Ok, now listen, and listen well.” He says, because something had to be done, goddammit. “I don’t know what the fuck is wrong with you and I don’t even care, but we can’t win if you keep going like this. You’re acting absolutely crazy. Whatever your deal is, forget it. This is a battle, he’s the enemy and I—“

Katsuki hesitates. He hates this so much .

He swallows, feeling like he’s actually literally, physically swallowing his own pride.
“— I can’t do it alone— fuck — I know he’s too strong for me— But I still wanted to try— Shit —“

Deku’s face is turned to him, now, something akin to tired wonder on his face. At least it’s an expression. At least he’s breathing again.

“If we want to win, and I want to win— We have to do this together.” The words burns in his mouth like acid. “Do you fucking want to win, or not?”

And then something strange happens. Deku blinks, takes a deep shuddering breath, and the look in his pale eyes changes.

It’s impossible to explain with words. Katsuki feels as if he just watched him wake up from a nightmare, right in front of his eyes.

“Kacchan.” He says, and Katsuki somehow knows that he’s back.

“Don’t call me that.” He repeats, as he usually does, rising back up on his feet. “Now get up, we got work to do.”

A scene, from a lifetime ago. Katsuki in the little stream, Deku over him, his little hand offered to Katsuki, asking him if he’s ok—

Their spots are reversed, now.

Katsuki takes Deku’s hand and pulls him back up on his feet, silent.

—

Watching young Bakugou run away with Midoriya had been surprising, to say the least.

When he first dashed, Toshinori had been sure he would go for him. The boy had been shivering in
clear anticipation at the thought of having a chance to measure himself against Toshinori.

Such a strong, talented, smart boy. If only he’d manage to tone down his prideful streak a bit.

But maybe— That had been the first step.

He watched young Bakugou jump to his partner with gritted teeth and a curse on his tongue, putting him forcefully on his own shoulder and then run .

Toshinori waited, giving them time. Maybe that was the wrong thing to do, maybe he should push them, put pressure on them. But Aizawa said that the test was supposed to try the students’ ability to cooperate and overcome a huge obstacle.

And Toshinori had the impression that, despite being hidden from his eyes, they were doing exactly that.

Young Bakugou’s action had to count for something. A step forward. A small change.

Like a little pebble hitting the surface of a lake. A pebble so small, so insignificant if confronted with the magnificence of the lake, and yet creating a ripple that becomes bigger and bigger.

And then—

Toshinori smiles when both boys come at him, together, focused and ready.

Determination is written all over their expression. They are really there. Working with one another.

And when young Bakugou slaps the handcuffs close on his wrists, taking him completely by surprise, a few minutes of struggle later, for the first time in days Toshinori feels like he did something right .

Chapter End Notes

I kind of wanted to use "Katsuki’s guide on how to help your friend having a panic attack, step one: punch them." as a title for this chapter lmao

(A bit of an early posting today because I have to go out and idk when I'll be back so I hope I will be able to drink I nice cup of your tears once I do ;D)
Still something new to find in you

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouto and Yaoyorozu were on the bus, getting back from their test, victorious.

They were speaking in hushed voices, discussing their performances during the test, helping one another to point out what they did wrong, how they could’ve done better. Shouto likes her, she’s smart and knows what she does. He still feels bad for having dismissed her at the start of the test, too into his own head to realize how unsure Yaoyorozu had been.

He launches a little look to Aizawa-sensei. Despite his entire being projecting an aura of “I don’t care”, it’s clear that their homeroom teacher cares. A lot.

He can imagine the all the combinations of his classmates had been throughly studied for the test, to put in the spotlight their shortcomings and push them to overcome them.

That’s why he’s still thoroughly confused as of why sensei thought it was a good idea to put together Bakugou and Midoriya.

Bakugou was literally a ticking time bomb, and Midoriya— Well.

If the past few days were anything to come by, Midoriya would probably end in the remedial class.

“Todoroki?”

Yaoyorozu is looking at him, confused. He sighs, dragging a hand on his face. He tuned her out again.

“Sorry, Yaoyorozu, I just—“

“It’s ok.” She says, gentle, a little sad smile on her lips. “I know you are worried about him.”
They don’t need to name names.

“It’s just so frustrating—“ He admits, voice low. “He has helped me so much, and now I can’t find a way to repay the favor—“

“I think you are going about this the wrong way.” Yaoyorozu says. “Don’t think about it as a way to repay a debt, that is not how friendships works. If you care for Midoriya, just be there for him. He’ll talk when he’s ready.”

Aizawa-sensei said something like that, too.

“…Thanks.” He finally says after long seconds of silence. “Yaoyorozu, um—“

“Yes?”

“You should come sit with us at lunch, sometimes.” He says, subtly shifting his eyes away from hers. “It could be nice.”

A small smile opens on her lips. “I would be happy to do so.”

From the other side of the bus, Aizawa-sensei’s radio give a ping, and then an automated voices says “Bakugou and Midoriya! Pass!”

Both his and Yaoyorozu’s eyes go wide, as they look at one another in shock, and then turn in perfect synchrony toward Aizawa-sensei.

He’s looking at the radio in his hand as if it’s an alien object. Then he releases a deep sigh, melting in his seat “Oh, thank god.”

—

When Midoriya entered Recovery Girl’s tent, he walked right into Shouto, almost losing his balance.
Shouto grabbed his shoulders, steadying him. His friend looked, frankly, like shit: pale, dark smudges under his eyes, the expression of someone that was just about to fall asleep on his feet. There was a bruise darkening under his left eye, curls drenched in sweat sticking to his forehead.

His eyes seems paler than usual, when he turns his face to Shouto. And Shouto immediately receives confirmation that he’s not imagining things when he sees the green of his irises become brighter, more vivid, and then go right back to the pale almost aquamarine, Midoriya muttering a little “Ow.”

Shouto blinks.

“Sorry, Todoroki.” Midoriya says, voice low and scratchy. “I’m keeping my quirk off, my head is killing me.”

You’re talking. Oh my god you are actually talking, finally— Shouto’s head is yelling at him, as he says “Oh.”

Smooth, Shouto. Real smooth.

“Come here, you—“ Recovery girl intervenes from behind Midoriya, pushing him toward one of the cots. “Take your shirt off.”

“I’m fine—“ Midoriya tries to protest, weakly, and she slams her syringe-shaped cane down on the floor with a menacing thud.

Midoriya sighs, struggling with the zips of his costume for a few seconds, and then shedding the bright green clothing.

Shouto can’t help the hiss that goes through his teeth.

There’s a giant bruise covering most of Midoriya abdomen, a triumph of blues and purples, and Shouto is painfully reminded that Midoriya did, in fact, fight with All Might.
Recovery Girl is muttering something under her breath, pawing with expert fingers to estimate the damage. Midoriya does not make a sound, even if little flinches on his face cue Shouto into the fact he’s definitely feeling all of it.

“—I don’t need it!” Comes Bakugou’s voice from outside, in the distance, sounding as his usual relaxed self. “Goddamnit—“

“My boy, it’s just to make sure, it will only take a minute.” All Might replies, and it’s clear they are getting closer. Soon enough, the curtains keeping the tent in some sort of privacy gets dragged open, as Bakugou is forcefully pushed in. He looks pretty tired and beat too, but not as much as Shouto had expected.

“You.” Recovery Girl turns around, her eyes seems to almost be gleaming. Shouto can’t help but compare that to a monster he saw in a horror movie, once. “Come here—“

“I-I-I have to go speak w-with Aizawa!” All Might replies, frantic, not even setting foot in the tent. “I will come back later!”

Shouto watches, shocked, as Recovery Girl zips past Bakugou, outside the tent, with an impressive speed. Silence falls on the three of them, both he and Bakugou looking at the still flapping curtains with equally shocked expression and Midoriya blinking from his cot, confused.

Shouto shakes his head. This school is full of crazy people.

“So…” He asks, casual, interrupting the silence. “How did it go?”

Bakugou scoffs. “How do you think it went? We won, of course!”

Shouto doesn’t miss the use of the word “we”, but doesn’t comment on it.

“And you, half-face?”

“Me and Yaoyorozu also passed.” Shouto replies evenly as Bakugou takes some more steps and let himself sink in Recovery Girl’s chair, legs spread apart. A king on his throne. “She went to eat
something, since she used a lot of energy during the test.”

“Ah, I’m glad—” Midoriya says, a little tired smile opening on his pale face. “I bet Aizawa-sensei must’ve been quite the adversary.”

You are talking you are smiling you are back thank god “He was.”

Midoriya blinks, distracted. He looks a bit out of sorts, which, all things considered, is totally understandable. “Hey, Kacchan.” He says, turning vaguely toward Bakugou. “Why do you call Todoroki half-face?”

“Don’t call me that.” Bakugou replies, a line he likes to abuse. His tone was flat, almost like it has become an automatic response to the word Kacchan, and not something he even thinks about anymore. “That’s because he has only half of a face.”

A look of earnest horror opens on Midoriya’s face, and Shouto scoffs.

“Bakugou, you are an idiot.”

“Hey—!”

“I don’t have only half of a face, Midoriya, don’t worry.”

Clear relief washes over him as Midoriya let out a little sigh, before adding. “That’s good. I can imagine that having only half of a face would be pretty painful.”

Bakugou makes a keen, whiny noise from the back of his throat, jumping back up on his feet. “Alright, I’m done with all this mushy bullshit, I’m out.” He says, going directly for the exit. “I technically went into the tent as All Might told me to do, so I’m clear. See ya ‘round, losers.”

“What a charmer.” Shouto murmurs to himself after Bakugou left, rude and brash as usual. And yet, it was clear that something shifted in him. What that was, Shouto had no idea.
He turned back to Midoriya, that was kind of vacantly staring into nothing. He looked frayed around the edges, like a single push could be enough to break him into one thousand tiny pieces. Careful, Shouto approached him, sitting at his left side on the cot.

There were so many things Shouto wanted to say and ask, he had been mulling over them in his head in the past days, as he watched over his friend living like a ghost of his former self.

But now, watching Midoriya turn his face to him, tired and battered and clearly in need of getting hugged for at least a full week, all these questions he had escaped him.

So he filled the silence. “I have a scar.” He says, voice low. “From when— You know, the incident with my mom.”

“Oh—“ Midoriya says, barely a whisper.

“It’s pretty big, covers about half of the left side of my face.”

Midoriya sighs, his eyebrow creasing in the middle. “I see that Kacchan hasn’t lost his habit to go straight for people’s buttons.” He comments, his voice a mixture of irritation and tired acceptance.”“You should tell him to knock it off.”

“I really don’t mind.” Shouto shrugs. “I’ve learnt to live with it, now, so it doesn’t hurt anymore when people point it out.”

“Still—“

Shouto notices the little movements of Midoriya’s fingers in his lap, and hit by a sudden hunch, before he can stops himself, he says “Do you want to touch it?”

Midoriya’s eyes go wide.

He doesn’t wait for an answer. Takes Midoriya’s wrist, guides his hand to the left side of his face. Midoriya’s fingers are cold, twitching when they make contact with the scarred tissue on Shouto’s face. His touch is barely there, a ghost, at first, but slowly becomes more steady. Midoriya explores
the scarred skin, gently, the palm of his hand resting on Shouto’s cheek.

Shouto watches as the pale eyes fill with tears, Midoriya’s lower lip trembling in an attempt to keep them at bay.

He doesn’t know if he’s crying for Shouto - he probably is - or for himself - maybe a bit of both -, but in the end Midoriya takes his hand away, fingers curling against his own mouth, trying and failing to stifle a sob.

Shouto placed his right hand on the back of Midoriya’s head, left arm circling him in a hug, and Midoriya lets himself get guided against Shouto’s shoulder, pliant, with no resistance at all, sobbing against him, his hands grabbing at Shouto’s clothes.

Shouto remembers that his mother was used to hug him exactly like this, when he was little.

“Everything will be ok.” He whispers, his fingers carding through Midoriya’s surprisingly soft hair. “Everything will be fine.”

—

It’s quite the spectacle, Aizawa has to admit. Toshinori in his All Might form, a towering giant, trying to get away from the tiny Recovery Girl beating his calf with her cane.

“Did you had to hit that boy so hard?” She’s yammering at him, furious. “You made him puke! Do you have no heart?!”

Toshinori looks like a scared housewife trying to avoid a bug on her kitchen floor. Aizawa should’ve took his phone with him, just to snap a picture of this, damnit.

Toshinori doesn’t seem to really have anything to say to justify himself, too, aside from saying “Sorry! I didn’t mean to—” for the umpteenth time, jumping from foot to foot in an attempt to escape from the furious twacks on his legs.

Finally, she stabs Toshinori’s foot with the tip of her cane, growling “If you hit any of the students
with that kind of strength again I will *personally end you.*”

If he keeps sweating like this, he’s probably going to die of dehydration soon. Aizawa finally decides to intervene, sighing.

“The point of this exam was to test the students’ ability to face an adversary overwhelmingly stronger than them. Hitting hard was kind of par of the course.”

She turns to him, squinting. “I have some words for you, too, Shouta.” She hisses. “Later. For now I have to get back, I wasted enough time with you two.”

With an harrumph she turns around, walking back to the emergency tent. They follow, silently, Toshinori looking properly chastised, and when she enters the tent they both take a peek in.

Midoriya is sitting on one of the cots, a pretty damn big bruise visible on his abdomen. His head is hanging low, as he dries his eyes with his wrists. Todoroki is sitting by his side, a comforting hand on Midoriya’s shoulder, leaning in his personal space as he murmurs something to him. They don’t seem to have noticed them, and Recovery Girl turns around, closing the curtains in their faces with a glare.

Aizawa sighs again, patting Toshinori’s bicep and pointing silently at one of the empty buses with his thumb. They climbed and sat in, facing one another.

Toshinori deflates in a small cloud of smoke, the now too-big costume hanging from his hollow frame. He inspects one of his legs, muttering “That actually hurt—“

“Care to fill me in?” Aizawa says, a lopsided smile pulling at the corner of his mouth.

With a deep sigh, Toshinori cards a hand through his hair, and starts talking.

“So, they did manage to work together at the end.” Aizawa replies once Toshinori gave him a rather clinical version of the events, almost as if he was writing down an official report. “That is good.”

“Young Bakugou seemed to have pushed young Midoriya to finally open up again.” Toshinori says,
a hand on his chin. “Considering their complicated relationship, I was truly afraid this would explode in our faces, but it worked out.”

That definitely seemed like a miracle. Despite the reasoning behind the choice, Aizawa himself could not deny that the probabilities of this being the outcome have been very low from the start.

“So, do you think Midoriya is out of the deep end?”

“…It definitely looks like he snapped out of his dazed state.” Toshinori replied. But there was something in his voice, a strained note.

“I feel a but coming.” Aizawa says after a long silence, an invite to keep going.

“He…” A little cough. “He told me that he hates me.”

Aizawa can’t help it, hissing in response, then saying “Ouch.”

“Yeah.”

The air turned a bit heavy. It was clear that Toshinori took it to heart. He was making that sad-puppy face thing he did when something really struck a chord.

“…I doubt that’s the truth.” Aizawa replies in the end, softly, scratching at the back of his head.”That boy adores you too much. You know how teenagers are, they get dramatic.”

“Whenever that’s the truth of not, a part of him must’ve felt that at least long enough to make the words come out his mouth.” Toshinori says, voice low. “I have hurt him immensely. Mending this bond is going to take a lot of work.”

Aizawa really does not have anything to say, to that.
Ochako got back to the class after the tests, as most of their classmates did, since they had to wait for the school day to be over before they could leave. There were still some classmates missing, probably held back in order to be healed after the gruelling battles against their teachers.

Yaoyorozu was there, happy to inform Ochako that she and Todoroki passed the test, when she asked. But Todoroki wasn’t there.

“Where could he be?” Ochako asked, distractedly.

“He went to the emergency tent, to check on Midoriya—” Yaoyorozu replied, lowering her voice. “He was so worried, even during the exam.”

Ochako let out a little sigh at that, Yaoyorozu putting a gentle hand on her shoulder. “I hope Midoriya will feel better soon. We are all very worried.” A beat of silence, and then she added. “Todoroki he… Asked me to join you guys for lunch, next time. If that is ok with you, of course—”

That cheered up Ochako a bit, assuring Yaoyorozu that they’d be happy to share the table with her. Bit by bit she was getting chances to better know every each one of her classmate, which was great.

But still, the thought of Midoriya felt like lead on her soul. She had no idea how he and Bakugou could’ve possibly done during their test, not to mention Midoriya apparently needed to get healed. That sounded very ominous.

Iida arrived just a few minutes later, reporting of his own successful test. They were discussing how their respective battles went when a familiar white and red head poked from the doorway. Todoroki signed her to don’t talk with a finger, before making a little “come here” gesture.

That’s when her and Iida exchanged a little look and silently followed.

Todoroki didn’t led them far, just down the corridor and behind a corner, to have some privacy.

Midoriya was waiting there, already changed in the normal school uniform. He looked pale, and tired, and like a little breeze might knock him over.
“Got ‘em.” Todoroki said, and Midoriya turned toward them with a blink.

“Oh, thank you, Todoroki.” Midoriya says, his voice a little rough. “Sorry if I seem a little off, guys, but I have a terrible headache so I’m keeping my quirk off, for now.” He added, with a small, strained smile.

If Ochako had something in hand, she would’ve totally dropped it.

“I, um— wanted to apologize.” Midoriya continues, nervously playing with his fingers. “I know I’ve worried you a lot in the past few days, and—”

“Don’t— Don’t apologize for that.” Iida says when Midoriya hesitates, his eyes a little wet behind his glasses. “How do you feel, now?”

“If I have to be honest… Not good.” Midoriya replies, earnest, face down. “I— I got a really bad news and I’m having a hard time swallowing it— as you can imagine by yourself, at this point—”

“Oh, Midoriya—“ Ochako sighs, very carefully putting her hand on his shoulder. “Is there something we can do?”

He shakes his head, closing his eyes as if he was trying to hold back tears. “A person… Someone I really care for… They are…” His voice broke a little, there, but he kept going. “They might be dying, so— Um, yeah— not m-much anyone can do, really.”

A heavy silence fell on the four of them, before Ochako whispered “Is it ok if we hug you?”

Midoriya nods, and so they did, closing around him protectively.

They didn’t let him go for a long while.

—

The day after Izuku’s head still hurt, so he did something he didn’t had to do in literal months.
“Honey, are you sure you don’t want to stay home, today?” Mom asked when she saw him take the cane that had been sitting by the door, unused.

“I don’t want to miss school.” Izuku replied, giving her a little smile. “I will be fine, mom, don’t worry.”

“If you are sure…” She hesitated, releasing a sigh and giving him a little hug, “Love you, honey.”

“Love you too, mom.” He replied, squeezing her back with a single arm.

They had a little heart to heart, the night prior. Iida and Todoroki insisted to have Uraraka walking him home, as she was the only one that knew the road and he couldn’t turn on his quirk without worsening his headache. Mom had been immediately worried when they arrived, of course, but also relieved when Izuku finally spoke more than three words to her.

“Izuku, I’ve been thinking about this for a while.” She said, sitting on the edge of his bed, Izuku lying belly up on it with a nice cool towel on his forehead. “You’ve always been naturally emotive, but lately I had the impression you’ve become more… Intense?”

He turned a bit toward her, at that, making a little puzzled sound.

“This little… Episode you had —can I use the word episode?”

That dragged a little, strained smile out of him “I guess that’s a fair definition.”

She coughed. “Anyhow, this little episode you had— I don’t know, to me it just looked like you’ve reached the boiling point and shut down.” She sighed. “If you need to talk with someone, if things get too overwhelming— Just, anything at all, you know you can tell me, sweetheart, right?”

Izuku couldn’t tell her the reason of his little “shut-down”, it really wasn’t his place. So he nodded, silent.
“I’ll keep that in mind, mom. Promise.”

Of course he had a good reason for shutting-down, but what mom said did give him something to think about. He never really noticed, but she was right: he definitely felt more “intense”, as she said, lately.

He would have to reflect on it a bit, but for now, he just wanted to enjoy having snapped back into the real world. Painful, cruel real world, but real nonetheless.

His own head wasn’t really a good place to get lost in for so long.

—

If he had to be honest, there were two more reasons other than the headache that persisted from the day prior that made him decide to try a “radar off day” at school.

1- A theory formed in his mind, and he wanted to test it, and

2- He just didn’t want to feel All Might’s presence all the damn time.

He knew he was being unfair. It’s not like the guy was happy about the thought of an untimely death coming to him, nor it was like he told Izuku for shit and giggles.

But still, it hurt too much. He had to continuously shoo the thought away, because even only thinking about All Might in passing made him feel like his heart was breaking all over again.

Izuku needed some space, and it was a tad difficult to have it if his radar made him feel like All Might was sitting right at his side all the time, made him feel everything he felt, even if he actually was on the opposite side of the school.

He would speak to him, he had to, at some point. But he just wanted some peace for a bit, time to put back in order the mess that exploded in his brain after All Might’s confession.
He left earlier than usual, just to be safe, since he never went to UA without the use of his quirk before. He’d rather have some extra time, if he ended getting a bit lost.

That ended up not being the case, muscle memory and a bit of recalling helping him find his way without any particular issue.

Now the problem is that he was at least half an hour earlier than usual.

He debated for a bit if he maybe should go get himself something to drink outside the school grounds in the meantime, but summer’s heat was already gnawing at him, and the idea of UA’s nice, cooled corridors and classes was too tempting to ignore, so he decided to enter. He’d just spend the half hour re-reading some of his notes or maybe just relax, it wasn’t that big of a deal.

He made his way to class in blessed silence. At that time the school was still pretty much empty, and the only sounds keeping him company were his own footsteps and the the rhythmic ting-ting of his cane in front of him as he swung it back and forth. He palmed at the door, having a bit of difficulty remembering at which height the handle was, and when he slid it open he softly asked “Anyone in?”

No response. He imagined he would be the first one, but knowing Iida it wouldn’t have been surprising to have found him there already.

Stifling a yawn, Izuku sat at his desk, carefully putting the cane on his left side, were no one would risk to stumble into it walking by. He took out his braille display, with the intention to read his latest notes —the ones he wrote when he had been completely out of his mind. Or, maybe it’d be more right to say when he’d been completely into his mind— but at the same time he didn’t felt like it.

There was just something weird, a dream-like sensation, being alone in this place that he had grown to know so much, but always with the use of his quirk. It was like being in a whole new place that somehow felt familiar and dear to his heart.

Izuku relaxed against the back of his seat, eyes closed, taking in all the sounds that he never really noticed before. The slight hum of the air conditioning, birds chirping outside. Someone passed in a hurry, probably in the next corridor over, judging by how far the sound was. The door of the class slid gently open, but the silence continued.

Izuku opened his eyes, turning slightly to his right. He could feel the presence of someone, but without his radar he had no idea who it could be. The sensation was— disconcerting.
“Who—?”

“Midoriya.”

With a sigh, he relaxed. He hadn’t even noticed how tense his shoulders turned in the few instants of silence.

“Aizawa-sensei.” Izuku exhaled, forcing a small, probably pitiful smile on his face. “Good morning.”

—

When Aizawa noticed Midoriya walking down the corridor to class 1-A swinging a cane, he felt a sensation akin to whiplash.

The boy hadn’t noticed him in the slightest. Aizawa watched him stopping in front of the door, his hand sliding on it as he searched for the handle, and then he got inside.

Aizawa looked down at his clock. It was incredibly early, what was Midoriya even doing at school at this time?

Curiosity picked, mixed with the fact that he actually needed to speak to the boy privately, Aizawa decided to give up his morning coffee for now and go see what the kid was up to.

When he opened the door Midoriya was at his desk, eyes closed, relaxed on his chair with his hands resting palms down on the desk. But then he blinked, turning slightly toward him, a little confused frown appearing on his face, the lines of his shoulders tensing.

“Who—?”

The boy had his quirk turned off. Of course, you idiot.
“Midoriya.”

He relaxed with a little trembly sigh, a lopsided, unsure smile appearing on his face. “Aizawa-sensei. Good morning.”

It was so easy to forget that Midoriya was, in fact, blind. Aizawa had gotten used to reading aloud whatever he had to write on the blackboard to the point it became second nature. All the little adjustment that had to be made to accommodate the boy turned into normal routine. No one questioned it, no one even gave it a second thought, and Midoriya had no problem keeping up. The way he moved around never betrayed a single moment of fear or doubt. When in a group he would always turn toward whoever was speaking, and had no problem following the movements of those around him.

Yes. It was really easy to forget that Midoriya was actually blind.

“I’m keeping my quirk turned off, for today.” The boy explains, maybe picking up on Aizawa’s silence. “My head still hurts a little bit from yesterday, so I’d rather not put anymore stress on it.”

“Maybe you should pay Recovery Girl a visit.”

“No way.” A little strained laugh. “She’d never let me hear the end of it. No, it’s ok, I wanted to kept it turned off in any case, for a bit.”

“Any particular reason?” Aizawa asks, casual, walking up to the teacher desks to put his bag down.

Midoriya opened his mouth a couple of times, before shrugging. “It’s… Kind of a hard to explain.”

He seems definitely back to normal, but the signs are still there. The way he holds himself as if he’s afraid a little touch may break him, the serious and melancholic expression that seems to constantly find its way back on his face. He must feel raw, like an open wound.

Biting back a sigh, Aizawa sits in Bakugou’s chair backwards, putting his arms on the backrest, facing the kid.
“Midoriya.” He says, and that is all the prompting the boy needs. He nervously scratches the back of his head.

“Aizawa-sensei I— Uuh— I know I kind of freaked out for the past few days.” He says, voice low. “I’m sorry. I’m ok, now.”

Freaked out. An understatement. “Are you?”

The words might’ve been a slap, for how hard the boy flinches.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” He whispers, the silence stretching.

“You know that I know exactly what the issue is, right?”

Midoriya squirms in his seat, clearly uncomfortable. “Sensei— I finally managed to wake up feeling almost normal, this morning. I’d rather not ruin the rest of my day, if possible.”

An open wound. And a rather snappish one, at that.

“Alright.” Aizawa concedes, because he’s not cruel, and wounds needs to heal. “What do you want to talk about, then?”

In front of Midoriya’s perplexed blink he continues. “We are— About twenty-five minutes too early on schedule. We might as well talk about something, while we wait for actual school hours to start.”

The boy takes a few instants to think. By the look on his face, his mind must be a minefield of topics he’d rather not touch.

“Well… My mother told me something that made me think, yesterday.” He finally starts, carefully, like the words might hurt him on the way out. “I think there’s a side-effect of my quirk I’d never quite noticed.”

When Aizawa doesn’t answers, he keeps going. “I think feeling people’s emotions all the time might
be kind of stressful for me. I wanted to test this out, today.”

*That’s* certainly a new one. “…Emotions?”

Midoriya tilts his head on a side. “Huh?”

“What do you mean with *emotions*?”

“Have I never mentioned— Oh.” Midoriya says, surprise flashing on his face as a hand raises to his chin. “Mh.”

“*Midoriya.*”

“Well— As I said, I can feel people’s emotions?” The boy explains, shrugging, eyebrows twisting in a clearly perplexed expression. “I guess I never really mentioned it, but the lights I feel are not just for position. I usually can gather what others are feeling, if they are sad, happy, if they are aggressive —”

It’s like finding the last piece of a one thousand pieces puzzle after years. Aizawa drags both hands on his face with a loud groan. Midoriya closes his mouth, blinking, as if *Aizawa* is the weird one.

“Midoriya, you are a smart kid. But also a goddamn idiot.” Aizawa let the words slip. They were off school hours, technically, dammit, he could be a bit informal. “You *kind of forgot* to mention you are an *empath*?”

“An empath—“ Midoriya murmurs, like he’s tasting the word in his mouth.“Is… That important?” he then asks, clearly more confused than ever.

“Yes.” Aizawa replies, forcing himself to don’t give in to the need to bash his head repeatedly on the backrest of the chair. “Empathic quirks are to be kept under control, otherwise the holder might get overwhelmed and *shut down*. Sounds familiar?”

Understanding finally dawns on the kid’s face gradually, as he goes “Oh. Ooh. *Ooooodh—*”
“Oh my god.” Aizawa finally gives in, letting his forehead fall against the chair with a thud.

—

“Toshinori, no offense, but your boy is a fucking dumbass.”

Toshinori sighs. Aizawa barging in the teachers’ lounge, not even a greeting, using curses? It was going to be one of those days.

He was already tired and depressed enough, unable to sleep the night prior, as he turned and twisted everything that has happened in the last few days in his head. Running himself in circles, trying to think of a solution to try rebuild the bridge between him and his young pupil—

Yamada, that was sitting near him looking over some english homework, looks up with a blink. “Shouta, you didn’t had your morning coffee, didn’t you.” He says, not even a question.

“I’m going to need at least three morning coffees to deal with this.” Aizawa replies, making a beeline for the coffee machine sitting on the counter.

“What did he do, now?” Toshinori asks, tired, a hand massaging his forehead. Un timely demise by Midoriya, here I come.

“He—” Aizawa starts, sarcasm so deep in his voice it was almost palpable as he trafficked with the machine. “—just so happened to forgot to mention he’s an empath.”

There’s a beat of silence only filled by the gurgling of the coffee coming out, and then both Toshinori and Yamada go “Oooooh…”

“Yes. Oh.” Aizawa’s eyes are bloodshot when he turns around. “Did he ever tell you anything about it?”

“Not that I recall—” Toshinori blinks, his head feeling light after the revelation. “That side effect that
presented when he received One For All— That certainly makes more sense, now— Oh, that poor boy—“ He exhales, finally connecting the dots, his eyebrows furrowing. “No wonder he shut down so badly. He was feeling my feelings on top of his own—”

“…We all should’ve noticed.” Aizawa sighs, his eyes casted at the floor. “All the signs were there, and I did not notice—“

“Hey, now, Shouta, Toshinori, c’mon.” Yamada interjects, his voice gentle. “There’s such a huge variety of perception quirks out there, how could you have imagined? The boy probably didn’t had any idea himself. It’s a good thing it finally came out, at least he can be prepared.”

“He didn’t even think it was important.” Aizawa sighs with a little shake of his head. “In retrospect, so many things make much more sense, now.”

They sure did. Toshinori should’ve seen it coming, really, the boy had shown more than once just how easily attuned he was to other people’s emotions. Now that the truth was out it was so obvious.

“Now that I think of it, I remember him saying something about being able to understand when people are lying, once—“ Toshinori mutters to himself, unable to recall the exact line young Midoriya said now months ago.

The empty plastic cup in Aizawa’s hand makes a pitiful creaking sound when he crushes it in his fist. “Toshinori. I will fucking kill you.”

Being a teacher is really, incredibly, absolutely, damn hard.

—

Izuku was still in shock over the revelation that Aizawa-sensei launched right in his face.

He never really questioned the fact that his quirk made him able to perceive other people’s emotions. It was just a thing, that was there. Part of him.

How stupid he had been, just taking it all for granted, not really thinking about what it could all mean
for his own sanity.

Aizawa-sensei sounded so incredibly done with it all that Izuku hadn’t even needed to have his quirk activated to imagine his teacher was probably contemplating the idea of launching him into an active volcano.

“Why haven’t you told anybody?” He asked, exasperated, voice slightly muffled.

“I never really thought it was important—“ Izuku answered, honest. Embarrassed. He soon started muttering, deep in thought. “Thinking back, a lot of things make much more sense, now— How I froze in front of Shigaraki during the U.S.J. incident, it was like I could feel him in my soul— And that night in Hosu, the pressure of Stain’s convictions made me literally physically sick—“

“It’s probably a testament to how incredibly bullheaded you are that you have kept your quirk on at all times for months and never had a nervous breakdown before.” Aizawa-sensei muttered, probably standing back up going by the noises he made, before adding. “And that is not a compliment.”

Silence stretched between them, before Aizawa-sensei spoke again. “We have to go and speak to Toshinori about this. Right now.”

That sent a painful churn through Izuku’s stomach, and a keen pain in his chest reminded him that his heart was still pretty much in pieces barely kept together.

“No!” He said, his voice sounding a little too strong. “I mean— Sensei, I’m sorry, but I’m not ready to face him yet…”

Aizawa-sensei hadn’t answered, so Izuku continued, his face pointed at the desk, willing his voice to be steady and mostly failing. “Empath or no empath, I— I need some time still— It hurts, like hell, and I just— I need space. It’s fine if you tell him, but I can’t speak to him yet.”

After that Aizawa-sensei let out a little sigh, putting a gentle hand on his head in a single, short pat.

“Alright, kid.” He said, softly. “I’ll take care of this. You better keep that quirk of yours off for a bit, give yourself time to get back in your own head properly. When you are ready to speak with Toshinori, let me know.”
He heard steps, and then the door sliding open.

“Aizawa-sensei—” Izuku blurted. *Tell him I’m sorry. Tell him I don’t really hate him—*

But he could not ask that of sensei. He had to take responsibility for his own actions and words.

“Yes?” Aizawa-sensei nudged from the door.

“Nothing—” Izuku replied, shaking his head. “I… See you later.”

So, here he was, sitting at his desk feeling like an idiot.

*A giant idiot.*

“Oh my god.” He mutters, letting his head fall down on his desk with a thud. “I’m so *fucking stupid—*”

—

“Oh, here you are!”

Izuku turns to the door. After he finished insulting himself in every possible conceivable way and then some, he gave up with a sigh the thought of just relaxing and palmed for his braille display once more, distracting himself by reading his notes.

“Good morning, Uraraka.” He replies, hearing more footsteps than could possibly come from a single person. “…And also Iida and Todoroki, I guess?”

When a beat of silence follows, Izuku continues. “My head still hurts a bit, so I’m keeping my quirk off for the day.” And, as if punctuating his words, he pats the cane sitting by the left side of his desk.
“Oh, I understand.” Iida mutters to himself, adding in a louder voice. “You must’ve come pretty early, we were waiting for you at the entrance.”

Right. Izuku is suddenly, rudely reminded that his three friends practically turned into his shadows for the last few, painful days.

He feels a blush coming to his cheek. His reaction feels so over-blown to himself, now. His friends really did not deserve what he had put them through.

“Sorry—“ He forces himself to say, scratching the back of his head. “I was afraid it might take me longer to arrive, without my quirk, but I ended up getting here with plenty of time to spare.”

“You look better.” Todoroki comments, softly.

“I feel better.” Izuku admits, turning his face up in what he hoped was the right direction. “I mean— That… It still hurts, of course. But I already feel better, like I’m myself again—“ Of course you do, now that you’ve turned your quirk off, you big idiot.

Uraraka releases a relieved sigh. “I’m so glad—“ The amount of feelings she manages to convey through that single word are astounding. “If you need to talk about anything you know where to find us, ok?”

“I do.” He smiles. “And… Guys— thank you. For sticking with me."

“Don’t mention it.” Iida says, and there’s something in his voice. An understanding. Izuku doesn’t need to ask why.

He feels Todoroki’s hand on his shoulder, gently squeezing —it can only be his, it’s so warm— just as the door slides open, and more of his classmates starts to trickle in.

He’s so very damn lucky to have friends like his.
Ochako feels like the world is right again.

After finally watching Midoriya smile again, looking normal, if still a bit stressed out, she realized just how wrong everything felt in the past few days.

She knows she doesn’t have much power over it, but if she never has to see him like that ever again, it’d be all the better.

Aizawa-sensei told them more about the summer break in the upcoming month, and revealed that in the end they will all to go, even the few of them that failed the physical tests. It had been hilarious to see Iida react with a mix of awe and irritation after yet another one of Aizawa-sensei’s “ruses”.

The break was shaping to be an interesting, fun time and the morning lessons went by in a blur, the bell signaling the start of the lunch break. As it had become normal for them, she, Iida and Todoroki reunited by Midoriya’s desk as he also got up, taking the cane that was propped at the side of his desk.

They made their way to the cafeteria, talking, trying to imagine what the camp had in store for them. It had been a little strange to see Midoriya walk with his cane, but not in a bad way. Just… New.

But when he entered the cafeteria, Midoriya seemed to hesitate. The place was chaotic, as usual, and Ochako could only imagine that it must be hard for him to orientate without his quirk with all the noise.

She notices Todoroki turn, and blink, probably thinking the same thing that she just did. Silent, he steps by Midoriya’s side, taking his free hand and guiding it to rest on the crook of his elbow. Midoriya shoots him a little, grateful smile, still without saying a single word as he let himself being guided by Todoroki, trustful.

She’s unsurprised by that. Todoroki seems to have a talent in understanding Midoriya without needing him to speak a word. The two had become friends hard and fast. It was clear that something happened to them during the sport festival because, despite their bloody battle, they became pretty much attached at the hips right after that.
She was almost jealous of the way Todoroki just seemed to get him, but for the most part she was just happy. It was nice, to know that someone as incredibly strong as Todoroki was out there, watching Midoriya’s back.

They slid in an empty table with their lunches, Midoriya folding his cane and putting it in his pocket, when Yaoyorozu approached them.

“Hello.” She says, sounding a little unsure.

“Yaoyorozu!” Midoriya replies, happily. “Do you want to sit with us?”

“If it’s ok for you—“

“Of course!” He immediately replies, scooting over a bit and bumping into Iida. She sits down, giving them all a little smile.

“Are you feeling better, Midoriya?” She asks, then, as they all start to get a bite of their respective lunches. “You look much healthier, today.”

Midoriya nods, giving a little embarrassed smile. “I’m ok, now.” He says. “I— Uh, turns out there’s a bit of a side-effect of my quirk I hadn’t taken in consideration.”

That certainly catches everyone’s attention. Ochako blinks, looking up from her lunch, as they all did.

“What do you mean?” She asks, curious.

“Well, my radar—“ He starts, before tilting his head on a side with a pensive expression. “I never mentioned it before, it didn’t seem all that important— But well, I actually can feel people’s emotions? And I hadn’t realized how stressful that was for me before… You know.”

He trails off. There’s a long silence, before Yaoyorozu let out a little understanding “Oh.” followed by “I see. You are an empath. That makes sense.”
“That’s what Aizawa-sensei said, too.” Midoriya replies, taking a bite of his lunch. He seems famished, like he hadn’t really eaten anything in days. “I had no idea that was even a thing— But in retrospect, it makes sense. I guess I will have to be more careful with my quirk usage, from now on.”

It took Ochako a bit to connect the dots. An empath… He could feel people’s emotions— Of course he had been so stressed. And all those times he seemed to change mood so fast… Ochako could not imagine how it would even feel to constantly have other people’s emotions being launched at her from all sides—

Wait a second. He can feel people’s emotions. He—

Oh. Oh no.

And as she feels a blush rising to her cheeks, all the implications of this new discovery crashing into her, she notices she’s not the only one having a revelation. At her side, Todoroki had gone tense, the hand holding his chopstick showing the tiniest sign of shivering.

Chapter End Notes
Fun fact: I'm drawing the art for this fic totally out of order. Like the first thing I ever drew was actually something I'm going to post for next chapter, lol. I have even some stuff I drew for a chapter that I have yet to write ahahahah
Edit: actually I'm going to post some of the art I've already shared in the past chapters later so idk if you want to do something with it come visit my tumblr blog.
“Hey, Midoriya, what’s with that face?”

Izuku and Kirishima are waiting for their turn to go in the afternoon exercise. After lunch — *during which the silence had been filled mostly by Iida, Yaoyorozu and Izuku discussing the intricacies of the newest discovery about himself, Uraraka and Todoroki strangely silent and distracted* — it was time for yet another afternoon exercise.

Aizawa-sensei explained that the focus of today’s exercise would be team work and communication, dividing them in pairs. He ended up with Kirishima, but as they waited their turn, Izuku had been internally debating if he should maybe sit this one out, nervously playing with his cane.

“Oh, sorry—“ He replied to Kirishima, after some seconds of silence. “It’s just— I can’t use my quirk, today, so I’m afraid I might be not very useful for you in this exercise, I should probably go tell sensei to pair you with someone else—“

“Midoriya, wait.” Kirishima stopped him, a hand on his shoulder. “The point is team work and communication, right? We can still do that!”

“But—“

“You won’t be useless.” Kirishima interrupts him, his voice sure and steady. “C’mon, we’ll find a way!”

Izuku must be still showing sign of doubts, since Kirishima added. “And even if it doesn’t go well it’s not the end of the world, dude! It’s called exercise for a reason!”

“Well— I guess…” Izuku finally conceded. Kirishima answered with a gentle little fist against his shoulder, probably grinning at him.

When their turn came - *they were almost the last ones to go-* the door they were waiting in front of opened.
“Your mission is to search for a blue box, retrieve it, and bring it safely to the exit in the least amount of time possible.” Came Aizawa-sensei’s voice from some speakers on the ceiling. “The way you go at it it’s your choice.”

Izuku took a deep breath “Ok, Kirishima. What do we have in front of us?”

“It looks like a deposit, high ceiling.” Kirishima immediately started to describe. “Big containers. Probably very labyrinthic, it’s hard to tell from this entrance. There’s a sort of overpass hanging from the ceiling, and a ladder going up to it, but I doubt this box we are searching for it’s just up there. We must search between the containers.”

There’s a beat of silence as they think what they should do, and then Kirishima says “If we both go in this maze it’ll take us forever. I can go up there, see if I can find this box, and guide you there from above.”

Izuku blinks “Are you sure?”

“Yeah man! Get ready, I’m going to climb up!”

Izuku heard the steps, and then metallic sounds as Kirishima climbed up this overpass probably made of metal grates, going by the noise.

“I see it!” Kirishima says from the little radio in his ear, after a few instants. “Ok, get ready, Midoriya. Advance forward from your position and take a left when I tell you to.”

Izuku steels himself. He has to trust Kirishima, if he walks he would waste too much time. Gripping his cane tightly, Izuku carries it pointing it a bit forward, just so he would at least not crash face first into something in front of him, and then starts running.

“Ok turn! Perfect— Take a right— NOW! Ok listen up, there are these robots patrolling, I’ll guide you to avoid them!”

Somehow, it’s working. Kirishima is concise and precise, guiding him without a trace of doubt in his voice. Izuku keeps running, his heart beating madly, a strange feeling of giddiness bubbling up his
throat, Kirishima’s steps on the metal following him from above.

“Midoriya, surprise baddie incoming! It’s one of the robots, I’d say as tall as you— Looks pretty light, pretty sure you can knock it down easily— Its defending the only way to the box, coming from your right. The next corner it’s just two meters in front of you, now—“

Izuku hears the whirr of metal, and without thinking too much he launches his cane in the air vertically, and charges. It doesn’t take much to down the lithe robot. Izuku hits with his palm, pushing it backwards, and a couple of fast kicks are enough to send it crashing to the floor.

He catches his cane on the way back before it can even hit the floor.

“YE-HEA!” Kirishima laughs in his ear, enthusiastically, the sounds of grates over his head suggesting his partner probably jumped in the air. “That was sick! You’re almost there, keep your right, the box is just at the next intersection!”

Unable to help himself Izuku let out a little laugh, charging forward. Kirishima tells him to stop right as he is in front of the box, and when Izuku kneels, palming down, he immediately meets the object.

“Make a one-eighty and then take the first left, the exit is real close and there’s ladder for me right here, so I’ll meet you in a sec!” Kirishima says, before Izuku can hear his steps getting a bit further. When they meet at the point Kirishima described, his partner gives him an energetic pat, guiding him the rest of the way to the exit with a firm hand on his shoulder. They are stopped by some more of the robots, and Izuku gives Kirishima the honour with a nod and a smile, sure that his energetic classmate can’t wait to punch something.

A bell sounds over their head when they step over the exit, Aizawa-sensei’s voice back from the speaker. “Good job, you two. Nice time.”

“I told you we could do it!” Kirishima sounds just as giddy as Izuku feels. “Man, you need to tone down the coolness, you are making us all look bad. When you caught your cane mid-air? That was hella manly!!!”

Izuku laughs heartily, his arms around the box, his cane, folded, hanging from his wrist. “I couldn’t have taken a single step without you, your guidance was impeccable.”
“Oh, stop it, now— You’ll make me blush—“ Kirishima replies with a purposefully exaggerated shy tone, lightly pushing him playfully. “Let’s go, I’m sure the others can’t wait to swoon all over you.”

Izuku splutters and laugh again as Kirishima’s hand goes back on his shoulder, guiding him down the corridor to go meet up with the rest of the class.

“And to think you didn’t even want to try—” Kirishima says, Izuku is sure he’s probably shaking his head, exasperated. “Say, Midoriya, I actually have something I wanted to ask you.”

“Yes?”

“It’s… You and Bakugou.” A moment of hesitation. “You guys have like… History.”

The way Kirishima stresses the word it’s pretty telling. A gentle way to say you guys’ relationship is a castle of cards missing some key support, barely kept together with spit.

“Kirishima, if you are scared I might get offended if you make friends with Kacchan, you don’t need to.” Izuku replies evenly, because sometimes even he doesn’t need an empathic quirk to get people.

He feels Kirishima tense a bit at his side, and then relax. “Gee, am I that transparent?” He replies, a smile in his voice.

“I just noticed you spend a lot of time with him.” Izuku shrugs. When Kirishima doesn’t reply, he continues. “I’m serious. Listen, I know Kacchan doesn’t like me, and probably never will. That’s fine. I can still be happy for him, if he makes some friends of his own.”

“It’s just… I like him, but I don’t like some things he does. And I told him that. Multiple times.” Kirishima says, his voice turning a bit serious. “And I also like you, too, and I don’t want to hurt anyone, you know?”

Izuku turns to his daily partner, smiling. “I won’t be hurt, I promise. So, don’t worry.”

“Thanks, man, you’re the best.” Kirishima replies with passion, just as another door swooshes open right in front of them, rejoining them to the rest of the class.
“Midoriya that was sssooooo cool!” Ashido is already in their faces, excited.

“…You really like hand-to-hand techniques, Ashido, don’t you?” Izuku replies, recalling some other comments the girl made in the past.

“Heck yeah I do!” He can hear the giant grin in her voice. “But that was like, seriously cool. I think Uraraka and Todoroki were really about to swoon for a minute, there.”

“I’ll take this—“ Aizawa-sensei interrupted, taking the box away from Izuku’s arms. “Go join the rest of the group, now, you over-excited teenagers.” His voice was a mix of fondness and exasperation.

They obeyed, Ashido answering with a cheerful “Yeees sensei!”, and Izuku didn’t had the time to really let her words sink in and ponder over for what reason would Todoroki and Uraraka, of all people, swoon over anyone, let alone him, before he was dragged into a lively discussion about his and Kirishima’s performance.
“Wait, aren’t you—“ The new voice says, just after Miki had introduced him to Izuku. “Yes, you’re that Midoriya! I saw you at UA’s sport festival!”

Izuku still isn’t used to people recognising him randomly during his life hours outside of UA. Maybe he never will.

They were meeting in a fast food restaurant, nothing big. Miki had called him the evening prior, asking him if he was free for the weekend.

“Tomorrow, yes. On Sunday I have something planned— Speaking of which, want to come to the mall with me?”

“Pass.” Miki replied. “Got a ton of homework to do. But if you’re free tomorrow, want to meet for lunch? There’s someone I want to introduce to you.”

“Yeah, lunch sounds fine— Who do you want to introduce to me?” He asked, perplexed.

“It’s a guy. I— Uh, like him. A lot.” She answered, hesitating a bit. “And well, you are my best
friend, and I never told you about him because I wasn’t sure of my feelings yet— But it’d be nice if you could meet him.”

“Of course—” He replied, a small smile on his lips. “Where do you want to meet?”

So here they were. Nothing pretentious, just grabbing a greasy lunch, being introduced to Miki’s -maybe, not really, don’t ask for now, Midoriya- boyfriend.

Haruo Hayanari, that was his name, shook Izuku’s hand before recognition dawned in his light and blurted out that phrase.

Izuku turned his quirk back on that morning, finally. He would make sure to don’t overdo it and take pauses, but feeling the familiar presence of the lights around him had been very comforting, especially considering how demanding his previous radar-off-day at school had been.

“Ahah— Yeah, that’s me—” He replies, embarrassed, almost intimidated when he felt a caress of admiration coming from the boy.

“Haruo it’s kind of a little hero nerd. Not at your levels, but he’s pretty into it.” Miki snickers. “I knew he’d go insane when you two would meet.”

“Miki-chan, you didn’t tell me your best friend is a hero-in-the-making, how could you.” Haruo replied in a fake dramatic tone, making her laugh. Then her phone starts ringing.

“Oh, it’s mom— I have to take this, I’ll be right back, you two can talk in the meantime!”

She steps away, leaving them with their trays of food and a little, embarrassed silence.

“You must think I’m a bit silly—“ Haruo starts, a hesitant note in his voice. “But well, Miki-chan is right. I do like heroes, and you were pretty sick during the festival. It’s cool that you are friends with her.”

“Not silly at all.” Izuku replies with a smile. “Some of our teachers are heroes that I totally fan-stalked long before I started high-school. It’s been months at this point, and I still kind of get the cold
sweats talking with them.”

At that Haruo splutters a little laugh. “You’re really nice! Most people think that UA’s students are kind of arrogant, but it’s cool to see it’s not true.”

“I don’t know, I can think of some examples of arrogance—” Izuku replies, pensive. “Besides, if I was to do that whole best friend threatening you to treat her well or else routine, you might change your mind.”

“God no, please don’t.” Haruo replies, a smile in his voice. “You are probably strong enough that you could fold me like an origami and not break a sweat. I’ll be good to Miki-chan, promise.”

“You better be.” Izuku replies, with no real bite in his voice, pointing a fry toward Haruo, making him chuckle.

Haruo takes a sip of his drink, his voice sounding a bit dreamy when he speaks again. “Besides, I would never hurt Miki-chan, she’s just so… You know.”

The way his light felt— Izuku felt different kind of affections coming from all sorts of people, but he never felt something quite like this before.

He wasn’t exactly a leading expert in romantic relationships — that’s what spending a good chunk of your formative years blind and lonely does to you, he guesses— but if Izuku had to imagine how love would feel, it probably would feel the way Haruo was feeling now.

Izuku was nothing but an accidental witness of that, but it still seemed pretty nice.

“To be honest, I don’t really know— But you sound really… Smitten.” Izuku says with a chuckle. “How have you met? Classmates?”

“At the first-aid course, actually. I was there for personal reasons. She— She helped me a lot with some stuff I was going through. I swear that she’s an angel.” A pause, then he adds with a chuckle. “A punk-rock angel.”
Izuku feels a bit of melancholy washing over him as he smiles. “I know what you mean. She really is.”

A little silence falls over them, promptly interrupted by Miki coming back. “Mom wanted me to pick something up from the grocery store on the way back, but she ended up giving me a giant list.” She laughs, sliding back into her seat. “So, what’s up?”

“I was just asking Haruo how did you two met.” Izuku filled her in. “Speaking of which, how’s the course going? And school? We didn’t really had much time to talk, lately.”

Because I’ve kind of gone insane for a few days, there, but I don’t think I’m going to tell you that.

Izuku sat back and listened to the two talk animatedly about their course and all sorts of things, almost not intervening at all.

After all, Izuku was the protagonist of his own life just as much as Miki was to hers. She deserved an audience every now and then, at the very least.

—

“Hey man waddup”

Izuku was startled out of his concentration, fingers going still on the braille display when the text came in.

The lunch went well and Izuku parted ways with Miki and Haruo not long after, sensing that the two wanted to spend some time alone. He was fine with it, he could catch up with some homework in the afternoon and be able to spend the whole day with his classmates at the mall, tomorrow. Then Miki’s text came in during the evening.

“Hey. So, did I make a good impression on your totally-not-boyfriend?”

“Don’t tease me, Midoriya.”
“But yes, maybe even too good. Like stop being so nice”

“Haruo was super pumped to meet u and he couldn’t stop commenting on how chill u were”

“lol. I’m glad. He seems like a nice guy. But if he treats you bad you know who to call.”

“Spare me. As if I need ur help to defend myself, mr hero”

“Anyhow. I’m glad I saw u today, u kind of disappeared lately and I was worried”

That stopped Izuku in his tracks. Of course she was. Man, he was a really bad fucking friend. Carefully he composed his response. He felt terrible about lying to her, but he just didn’t had it in himself to say Sorry, I kind of overloaded on emotions and went crazy for a bit, don’t mind me. He knew she would worry herself sick, if he did.

“I’m sorry. A lot of stuff to do with the end of term exams. I’m glad we got to meet today, too. I miss being with you everyday, speaking on the phone is not the same thing.”

“I miss u too, but not much we can do about that I’m afraid.”

“R u going with your classmates at the mall tomorrow? u could use the occasion to score some”

“MIKI.”

“Boo, ur boring. C’mon, there must be someone you like in ur class”

“There’s no one. Besides, I’m kind of too busy trying not to die to think about romance, here.”

“Excuses excuses. U should ask All Might for pointers, I bet the man has seen plenty of action through his life if u know what I mean”
Here it was again, the sting in his chest that made him feel like his heart was about to shatter all over. Izuku forced himself to take a deep breath. Calm down.

Act normally.

“First of all: gross. I don’t need to think about him “getting some”. Secondly, I’m fine, ok? I know you mean well but I’m really not interested in a relationship, for the moment.”

“Ur always so serious Izuku relllaaaaax”

“Anyhow if u ever realize ur getting the hots for one of ur —almost all very hot, frankly— classmates u know u can tell me”

“You do realize I have no idea how hot my classmates are, right.”

“I guess not. I hope u get a crush on the one with the bird head, that would be fun”

“The one with the WHAT”

The day was sweltering, as they walked into the crowded mall.

Ochako fanned herself with her hand, looking around. The place was brimming with people, vendors calling out to them as they noticed the rather peculiar physiques of Iida and Shoji. Most of her classmates that came to the appointment were chatting between themselves, talking about the different things they needed to purchase for the summer boot camp that was to come.

Midoriya at her left looked a bit pale, massaging his forehead with a hand.
“Are you ok?” She asks, carefully. He turns with a little smile.

“’S nothing, it’s just that this place is packed.” He says with a little sigh. “I mean, I’ve been in crowded places ever since I discovered my quirk, but this is definitely something else.”

Right. His _quirk._

Ochako sighs internally. She had time to reflect upon it, yesterday.

…And came to absolutely no certain conclusion.

She had no idea what Midoriya could be possibly thinking of her. Discovering that he was an empath had been so utterly embarrassing— And yet, Midoriya seemed to act as he always did, nice and friendly and apparently not put off by Ochako’s feelings at all. The conclusions she came to were two:

1- Midoriya wasn’t interested in something more with her and had very kindly decided to ignore her obvious crush, deciding to pursue just a normal friendship.

2- Midoriya had no idea she had a crush on him.

That second idea seemed ludicrous, at first. How could someone that felt other people’s feelings not realize _that?_  

But then she recalled what Miki said, about how “immature” he still was, on that front. And she recalled what Midoriya himself said. About how lonely he had been until he made friends with Miki, how he never really had anyone else in his life until he started at UA. And suddenly the idea didn’t seem ludicrous anymore.

Maybe Midoriya hadn’t realized, because Midoriya never felt those sorts of feelings before.

But if that was the case… For how long could she go, before he recognized them?
Ochako still didn’t want to pursue anything more with him. It was just a silly crush, Midoriya was cute and very nice —and also kind of hot, bite her, the guy is packed—, it was bound to happen and it would go away with time. But if Midoriya was to realize how she felt it might put a damper on their friendship, and Ochako definitely did not want that.

Maybe she should just bite the bullet and tell him and get it all out of the way, get rid of all this insecurity plaguing her—

“Uraraka…?”

She jumps. She had gotten so distracted that she didn’t realize that suddenly it was just her and Midoriya.

“I’m sorry—!” She rushes to say. “I totally got lost in thought— Were are the others?”

“They all left to do their own thing.” Midoriya shrugs with a small smile. “We have an appointment at the food court in a hour and a half. Did you had to pick up something specific?”

“No much, I just wanted to get some bug repellent for the boot camp, you?”

“I needed to go pick up some new wrist-weights. I guess there’s no need to split up, if we just have to do that, right?”

_Goddammit stop smiling like that you adorable bastard—_

“I guess not.” She sighs internally, surrendering to her upcoming demise caused by Midoriya ‘I have the cutest face in the world and the hottest bod on the planet’ Izuku.

So they make their way through the crowd side by side, Ochako looking around for the shops they needed, when suddenly Midoriya puts an arm around her shoulders and leans into her, his curly hair tickling her forehead, his breath caressing her cheek.

_MAYDAY MAYDAY—_
“Uraraka—” The urgency in his whisper immediately stops the embarrassed panic in her head. “Don’t turn around, don’t talk, keep walking normally. Listen. Take my phone, there’s the contact of a man named Naomasa Tsukauchi. Call him immediately, tell him that Shigaraki is here—“

Pure fear immediately claws at her throat as she makes a choked sound, Midoriya pushing the phone in her hand insistently.

“No— Ssshhh— Don’t talk—“ She dares to turn her eyes to him a bit. He’s pale as a ghost, sweat rolling down his face, his eyes pointing forward with a determined expression. “Enter into the shop closer to you, act normally. Call Tsukauchi and tell him that. Shigaraki’s following us, I’ll try to lead him away from the crowd—“

“Izuku…!” She whispers, tears stinging at her eyes. “You can’t—“

“I’m the only one that can keep tabs on him at all times without actually looking at him and make him notice that we noticed—“ Midoriya replies, biting down his lower lip. “If he goes on a rampage here, I cannot imagine how many people would die.”

“B-but without your phone— How will we find you?” She objects, urgency in her whisper. “Izuku, this is too dangerous, you can’t—“

“I’m afraid I will have to count on luck for that. Now go, hurry—!” He says, ignoring her protests, a plead in his eyes as he takes the arm on her shoulders away.

Ochako hates herself more than she hated anything ever in her life, as she forces herself to act normally while she enters in the shop immediately to her right, feverishly searching for Tsukauchi in Midoriya’s address book.

—

Toshinori just came out a shower and put on some fresh clothes when the phone rings.

Thinking nothing of Tsukauchi’s name flashing on the screen he picks up with a little “Hey”, dragging a tuft of blond, wet hair away from his face. Tsukauchi voice is slightly muffled, the noise
of a car engine going at full speed in the background.

“One of your students called from Midoriya’s phone, telling me Shigaraki is at the Kiyashi-Ward shopping mall. She told me Midoriya was going to try lead him away from the crowd. I already sent a car to your address and I’m on my way with my team, I’ll see you there.”

Toshinori is pretty sure he just forgot how to breathe.

—

Izuku had been walking for what felt like forever.

He felt as if every sound was far, muffled. He was a ghost, walking amongst humans, but not really there.

He forced himself to keep his steps calm. He forced himself to don’t make a beeline for the nearest exit. He forced himself to act as if he was interested in the shops, hesitating every now and then in front of one like he was considering entering, before starting to walk again. He forced himself not to turn around— don’t turn around don’t turn around don’t turn around don’t turn around don’t turn around —

And don’t puke on yourself for the love of god please—

Shigaraki was following some meters behind. Not a sign in his not-light that betrayed the fact he had noticed anything amiss in Izuku’s behaviour, as far as Izuku could tell.

Izuku was slowly making his way toward a secondary exit that seemed to be pretty much ignored. He had no idea where he could go from there, but if he could at least drag the monster away from the majority of the crowd, that would be something.

It took forever. His nose still felt runny after he had to clean blood away from it. It always happened when he expanded the radius of his radar over his normal limit, and Izuku kept dabbing at it with a nervous hand.
Finally the crowd started to decrease bit by bit. He only passed a couple of people as he made his way to the exit that seemed to lead to some sort of underpass that was completely empty.

Shigaraki was still following.

They made it maybe ten meters through, before a voice stopped him in his tracks.

“Midoriya Izuku.” Shigaraki said, voice strong. “Are you leaving your friends behind? That is not very nice.”

Izuku stopped, feeling his lower lip tremble, sweat rolling down his face.

“Don’t think I hadn’t noticed what you were doing.” Shigaraki continues. “It took me a while to realize, I admit. You are very smart, and somehow incredibly perceptive.”

The jig was up. Steeling himself, Izuku turns around.

“What do you want?” He asks, his voice far more steady than he really felt.

“Just to have a chat with you.” Shigaraki answers casually, closing the distance between them. Or so he tried, as Izuku took a step back for every step Shigaraki took. Shigaraki stopped trying to advance, keeping the distance. “Maybe you can answer some of my questions.”

Izuku bit down on his already abused lower lip, frowning.

“Oh, don’t make that face, now.” Shigaraki says with a little sigh. “I mean, if you don’t want to chat I can always go back there and put my hands on some random, innocent passerby. Your choice.”

*I’m faster than you, now, I won’t let you*— He doesn’t say that. Better not to provoke.

“Fine.” He says, instead, steel in his voice. “Let’s talk.”
Toshinori pretty much launched himself out of the car.

Rather than a team, there was a platoon. He could see police cars as far as the eye went, people were being evacuated from the mall as orderly as possible, a huge crowd of curious being kept at bay behind the police lines. The agent that drove him here guided him over the line, over a series of cars, behind an armored truck.

Tsukauchi was there, leaning over the hood of a car with a map spread on it, talking in a radio as he alternated orders to his agents with wide gestures.

Not much further, young Uraraka. She was sobbing desperately, trying repeatedly and failing to dry the tears away from her cheeks, shivering, as one of the agents was keeping a comforting hand on her shoulder.

“Toshinori—!” Tsukauchi says, dead serious, when he sees him approaching in haste. “Come here, you know that boy better than me, maybe you can figure out where he could’ve led Shigaraki.”

Toshinori doesn’t waste anytime, leaning over the map. It’s a multilayered map of the shopping mall.

“I already sent teams on this, this, and this exits—” Tsukauchi explains, pointing on the map. “Uraraka told us that Midoriya was planning to try lead Shigaraki away from the crowd. I think trying to get out of the mall would be the most sensible option— This exit—” More pointing. “Leads to a parking lot that connects directly to the highway, so I don’t think he could’ve gone there—”

“What’s this?” Toshinori asks, pointing at a little corridor signaled with a barred exit, in the very back of the mall.

“That one’s out of commission. Leads to an old, now unused bus station—” Tsukauchi’s breath hitches in his throat, as he connects the dots. “Midoriya can see— Of course, he must’ve lead him to the less trafficked exit—” He immediately takes the radio to his mouth. “Team gamma! Team omega! First floor exit, section b, to the left of the closed apparel shop!” He orders in a bark. “Toshinori, you should stay here and—”

Tsukauchi falls silent. Toshinori is not sure what expression he’s wearing, but it must not be a good
“…At least take one of the bulletproof vests.” He finishes to say, instead, before turning around. “LET’S MOVE NOW! MOVE MOVE MOVE!”

—

“So, it all goes back to him, in the end.” Shigaraki sighs. “All Might.”

Trying to talk with Shigaraki it’s like playing hide and seek. Without his quirk.

A minefield of false starts and traps. Of little words missing, and body language he cannot read. It’s like trying to play chess without knowing the rules, without seeing the board.

“Thank you, Midoriya.” Shigaraki says after long seconds of silence. “Our chat had been quite… Enlightening.”

What now? Izuku thinks. Please go away. He adds, a fruitless plea.

Izuku had bought as much time as he possibly could, stretching sentences and answers as long as humanly possible, leading Shigaraki in circles in his completely disconnected way of reasoning by throwing him more words and ideas whenever it looked like the man was actually reaching a conclusion.

He knew that Uraraka had done good because the mall was almost empty already, and what little people were left were closing to the main entrance. It was clear that, as he led Shigaraki down this cul-de-sac — because, yes, it was a blind exit. Lucky him —, the police started evacuating the mall, and kept doing a steady job of it as they spoke.

Of course Shigaraki did not know that. He even asked why Izuku’s nose had suddenly started bleeding in an almost light tone.
“It does that when I talk with assholes.” Izuku could not stop his mouth from saying. Shigaraki laughed, finding amusing his little act of rebellion.

But what now? Apparently Shigaraki was done, Izuku was cornered, and no one seemed to be coming their way, for what he could feel from the now much, much smaller -his head hurt like a bitch- scope of his radar.

“So—” Izuku starts, because Shigaraki is silent, and that cannot be a good thing. “Is your friend with the portals going to come give you a lift, or…?”

Shigaraki chuckles. “Why, do you want to get rid of me already? I thought we were friends.”

*I’d rather eat shit.* “Seems you have found what you searched for, I don’t see any reason why you should hang around anymore. This place is boring, anyway.”

“But what if we make it less boring?”

*Fuck.*

“What if I start my new path now, my new creed— What if I leave a little message to All Might.”

*FuckShitFuck.*

“Letting him know— Yeah. Let’s start with that. Your body will make for a fine letter.”

*Sonofabite—*

Izuku activates One For All.

“Oooh, that’s new!” Shigaraki says, a broken imitation of wonder in his voice. “Last time you didn’t light up like that! They make you work hard at that school, huh?”
“What makes you think you can beat me?” Izuku asks, voice low. “Last time I didn’t light up, and I was still kicking your ass.”

Immediate irritation overcomes Shigaraki’s not-light.

“That’s very not friendly.” He says, barely hidden anger in his flat tone.

“We’re not friends.” Izuku replies through gritted teeth. “I’m giving you a chance to go away unscathed. Take it, or face me.”

Izuku knows he’s stuck between a rock and a hard place. If he fights, he will get in trouble legally since he still doesn’t have a license, but if he does not— Well.

He dies.

*Please fall for the bluff, please fall for the bluff, please fall for the bluff—*

“Mom? Where are you?”

Izuku’s breath hitches on his throat, his head suddenly feeling dizzy with panic.

There’s a child behind Shigaraki, not far from the exit door.

Shigaraki is closer to her than Izuku is—

Izuku *charged.*

—

The two teams are closing in, Tsukauchi at the helm. He tried to tell Toshinori to stay in the backline.
Toshinori ignored him, walking right at his side.

They were finally approaching the door in the ignored, badly lit up corner of the mall. It was open, despite the sign over it that declared the exit as out of commission.

Tsukauchi gave some gestures and a nod to his teams, silent. The two groups surpassed them, their weapons pointing right in front of them as they moved silently as cats.

Only thirty meters away and suddenly they hear someone scream “RUN!”

There’s a choked, high pitched yell, and then a young girl that couldn’t be older than ten suddenly rolls out of the door as if someone had launched her over the threshold. She scrambles, trying to get away with fear on her face. Young Midoriya rolls out, too, not alone.

He’s struggling with Shigaraki in a mess of limbs, one of his hands on Shigaraki’s face as he tries to push him away, the other around Shigaraki’s wrist, keeping the deadly fingers only a few centimetres away from his own face. Shigaraki forces him belly up on the floor, grabbing the front of the boy’s shirt with his other hand, the cloth rapidly dissolving, and Midoriya kicks him in the stomach, turning back on all fours and jumping toward the child as Shigaraki, that rapidly bounced back from the kick, does the exact same.

Midoriya’s slight advantage allows him to reach the child first, covering her with his own body protectively. Shigaraki arrives an instant later, his fingers sinking into the boy’s back.

Midoriya screams.

—

Ochako can’t stop crying.

The agent near her is kind. She’s keeping a hand on her shoulder, gently caressing her back with the other. She doesn’t offer empty words or platitudes, just stands there, a silent promise of protection.

What could’ve Ochako done to protect Midoriya?
She felt like she had no choice. Midoriya’s plan was the most sensible one. Immediately alert authorities so they could evacuate the crowd far from danger as soon as possible. Lead Shigaraki away, so he could hurt no one.

No one, except Midoriya himself.

Why did she not insist more? Why did she let him do it? Why hadn’t she thought of something, anything, that could help them reach the same goal without endangering Midoriya?

The look in his pale eyes had been so scary. A mix of fear, and determination.

*The look of a hero.*

And maybe, now, Midoriya will never become a hero. Maybe he’s inside there, somewhere, turned to dust, to a pile of flesh and blood—

Another sob wracks her. Maybe she’ll never see him again, maybe that arm on her shoulders would be the last time she ever had the chance to feel him close.

She wondered where their classmates were. If they were in the crowd, asking what was going on, not having the slightest clue Midoriya might be dead as they speak.

Loud voices are suddenly getting closer, sounds like someone is screaming— She looks up, her vision blurry with tears as she looks to the now empty entrance.

Two teams of armed, armoured men come out running, one of them holding a crying little girl. Behind them there’s that agent Midoriya had told her to call, Tsukauchi. He’s yelling something she cannot hear over the cacophony.

Right behind him, comes a blond, tall, thin man. Ochako had seen him before, she realizes. At the sport festival, when they went to the infirmary to see how Midoriya was doing after his battle with Todoroki.
That man had been there, a silent presence.

He looks pale, his emaciated features taut in an unreadable expression.

Tsukauchi moves a bit to the left, and a choked scream dies in her throat as her hands shoot up, covering her mouth.

The blond man is carrying Midoriya between his arms. Midoriya is white, hands feverishly grabbing at the vest the blond man is wearing, gritting his teeth with an expression of pure pain on his face. There’s blood everywhere, drenching the big jacket rolled around Midoriya, dripping down, leaving a little trail as the blond man keeps running forward.

“WE NEED THE AMBULANCE, NOW!” Tsukauchi is yelling furiously over the chaos. “NOW! I TOLD YOU VIA RADIO! WERE THE FUCK IS THE AMBULANCE?!”

Two paramedics pushing a stretcher run forward as the ambulance closes in. The blond man deposits Midoriya on the stretcher, leaning on it when Midoriya refuses to let him go, screaming as he tenses on the stretcher, the paramedics uselessly trying to keep him still—

“It’s ok, it’s ok, Izuku, my boy, it’s ok, you can let go—“ They are close enough, Ochako can hear the blond man, now, as he frantically tries to comfort her classmate with a broken voice between Midoriya’s choked screams of pain. He’s caressing his face with frantic hands, smearing blood on Midoriya’s skin. “You’ll be fine, I promise, you’ll be fine soon, you can let go, I’m not going anywhere, ok? I’ll be right there with you— You can let go, I promise—“

Midoriya is wracked by coughs, blood splattering on the blond man’s face. A choked, gurgling whine follows, tears that had collected on the corners of Midoriya’s eyes rolling down to his temples.

“N—“ He tries to say, taking painful, wheezing, wet gulps of breaths. “— A— ight—“

Finally, he let go, fingers going slack as he loses consciousness. The paramedics immediately push the stretcher on an ambulance, the door closing as the vehicle takes off, wheels screeching.

The blond man is standing, unmoving. He’s covered in blood, his arms covered in blood, his hands covered in blood. He stares to where the ambulance had been only a handful of seconds prior, before falling to his knees. His face gets stained in Midoriya’s blood some more when shivering, thin fingers
run up the skin, going to grab at his hair. A sob wracks him, but no tears follow.

And, from the distance of her own shock, Ochako cannot help but think that that must be the saddest sound in the world.
... Hi. I know you all hate me now LOL.

(let me know if the pic in the middle of the chapter is too disrupting, I wanted to try it out and see how it goes)

I will be posting the pics from this last chapter on my tumblr as well in a couple of hours, so if you want come reblog them to yell at me feel free to do so lmao
They came to the hospital as soon as possible. Hizashi probably broke one or two -or twenty- traffic codes as he drove them there.

A police agent was waiting for them at the entrance after they presented their cards at the gates, where an entire platoon was stationed. He didn’t even ask them anything, he just nodded and then guided them inside the hospital, down a corridor. They walked through a series of doors each with three more police agents stationed. They stopped in front of another closed door, their guide nodding at them again before leaving to go back to his post by the entrance.

They didn’t even knock. When they entered, principal Nedzu was already there, as was Ishiyama. Agent Tsukauchi was there, too. He was speaking with Nedzu as the three of them were leaning over a table in the center of the -probably- conference room, over some maps and sheets of papers.

“…Took the shot as soon as possible.” Aizawa heard as he and Hizashi entered. “It hit him in the shoulder. That was enough to shake him off before he could do more damage, but he must’ve been prepared because he got immediately teleported away.”

Nedzu sighed. “It’s a shame he managed to escape again, but at least he didn’t finish the jo—” He
hesitated, launching a little look into a corner of the room. “… How’s the little girl?”

“Scared, but unharmed…” Tsukauchi was saying, but Aizawa tuned him out when he looked over to where Nedzu’s eyes lingered.

Toshinori was sitting there, folded on himself, his hands resting between his knees. He was covered in blood.

“Fucking hell—“

Nedzu looks up.

“Aizawa, Yamada.” He welcomes them, voice grim. “Do you know the ETA of the other teachers?”

“We heard from Kayama as we were on out way. I don’t think she will arrive before at least another hour.” Hizashi replies, voice low. “Nothing from the others.”

Nedzu sighs, his little eyes closing.

“This is a terrible time for us all.” He murmurs. “… How’s Uraraka?”

“Currently being looked after.” Tsukauchi replies, voice low. “Unharmed as well, but in shock, clearly. We have already called her parents, but they will take a while to come. We—“ A moment of hesitation. “We sent a car to escort Midoriya’s mother. She should be here any seconds, now.”

There’s a good minute of heavy silence, interrupted by a soft knock on the door. The door opens, the same agent from before peeking his head in. “The mother’s here.” He murmurs softly.

Toshinori gets up from his seat, suddenly, stumbling a bit. He looks completely lost as he makes it for the door.

“Where do you think you are going?” Aizawa hisses, putting his hand on his shoulders to forcefully stop him.
“She—“ Toshinori tries to reply, before his voice dies in his throat.

“Toshinori.” Aizawa insists, softening his tone, as Toshinori keeps trying to push over him. “Toshinori, you can’t— Stop. You are covered in his blood.”

That’s enough to stop him cold. He looks down at his own reddened hands, like he’s only now noticing.

“Ishiyama, please help Toshinori get himself cleaned up.” Nedzu says, softly. Ishiyama nods, putting an incredibly gentle concrete hand on Toshinori’s shoulder, leading him out of the room. A sigh. “Agent, let her in.”

The man nods, and disappears for another minute, before coming back with Inko Midoriya.

She’s sobbing, her red eyes and nose and the wet tracks on her cheeks suggesting she’s been doing that for a while. Aizawa gently guides her to sit down, her arm shivering under his palm.

“Miss Midoriya.” Tsukauchi says, infinitely kind as he kneels in front of her. “I cannot express with words how heartbroken we all are.”

He takes one of her hands in his, as her other is covering half of her face as she sobs and sobs.

“Your son today has done something incredible.” He continues. “His courage and ingenuity has potentially saved hundreds of lives.”

“He—“ She tries to say, hiccupping. “They t-told me— he— ’s in surgery…?”

“Yes, he’s currently undergoing an emergency reparative surgery.” Tsukauchi murmurs. “The damage to his back had been extensive. most of his skin and muscles are gone. Part of his lungs and spleen had been destroyed, along with portions of his spine and ribcage. They are currently operating a reconstruction of the damaged tissues and bones.”
She whines, folding into herself.

“He has lost a lot of blood—” Tsukauchi sighs, before continuing, clinical. “— His spine might have received permanent damage, but we will not know until he… He wakes up.”

If he wakes up. The words hang in the air, unspoken.

“Miss Midoriya, we assure you that our most competent medics and specialists are taking care of him.” Nedzu intervenes, gentle, putting one of his paws on her knee. “They are amazing. Your son will be fine, you’ll see.”

“How— He was just supposed to spend a day with his friends.” Another series of sobs. “What happened?”

Tsukauchi sighs again. “You surely know of the man called Shigaraki Tomura.” He says, and she nods, trembling. “Your son— He was walking with his classmate, Uraraka Ochako, when he must’ve perceived Shigaraki’s presence with his quirk. He was following them, so he urged Uraraka to call me with his phone immediately, taking onto himself to lure Shigaraki away from the crowd.”

At that another series of sobs shakes her, fat tears rolling down her cheeks.

“Thanks to his quick thinking we’ve been able to intervene in the shortest time possible, evacuating the mall immediately. Our teams were searching for him, I was there when we found him. He— He was defending a little girl, shielding her with his own body. That’s how he got hit.”

Inko eyes go wide as she looks down to Tsukauchi, her lower lip trembling.

“Your son— He saved that girl. And not only that. A warm, early summer sunday like this? The place was filled—” A sigh. “If he hadn’t been there we might be talking hundreds of casualties, right now.”

The silence is heavy on them, like a stone filled blanket.

“Miss Midoriya— Your son—” Tsukauchi hands take hers in a tight grip. “He— He is a true hero.”
“Aizawa-sensei…?”

“Hey.” He says, gentle, closing the door behind him.

Uraraka looks a mess. Pale, bloodshot eyes looking up at him. She has one of those space blankets on her shoulder. A nurse is gently keeping her hand, as she looks quizzically to Aizawa.

Aizawa gives her a little nod, and she pats Uraraka kindly one more time before silently leaving the room.

“Aizawa-sensei—“ She sobs, eyes filling with tears. “I could not— He— Midoriya—“

“It’s ok, kid.” Aizawa murmurs, sitting by her side. “He will be fine, you know? He’s strong, that one.”

She rubs at her eyes, trying to angrily wipe away the tears. “He was covered in blood—“ She sobs. “He was screaming in pain— he— he—“

Aizawa puts an arm around her shoulders and she sniffs, leaning into the embrace.

“I let him go away alone with that man following him—“ She says in a rough whisper. “Why— Why did I let him d-do that—“

“Nothing you could do, kiddo.” Aizawa replies in a low voice. “You both did the right thing. What happened— Was unfortunate. But you both acted in the right way. You do not blame yourself for this, now, ok?”

“B-but—“
“Uraraka.” Aizawa puts a hand under her chin, turning her face up to him. “We both know that Midoriya took the most sensible decision. He found a way to alert authorities fast while simultaneously avoiding mass panic, and protecting the lives of hundreds of people. I understand that it is terribly painful, now, when the person you care for has been badly hurt. But your actions, today, have saved hundreds of lives.”

Tears roll down her cheeks, but she does not look away.

“As your teacher, I’m proud of you both.” Aizawa whispers. “And as an adult that has been watching you grow, I’m deeply pained by what has happened. All we can do, now, is wait and hope. So, do not blame yourself for things you had no possible control over, alright?”

After long seconds of silence she nods, closing her eyes with a trembly sigh.

“Your parents will arrive as soon as possible, so I can keep you company while we wait for them, if you want.” Aizawa adds, rubbing her back.

“Midoriya’s mom—“ She says, sniffing. “Is she—“

“She’s here.” Aizawa replies.

“…Can I see her?”

Aizawa hesitates. Maybe giving that woman another kid to fuss over will take her mind away from her own son fighting for his life, even if only for a moment.

“Let’s go.” He whispers, leading the girl outside with a hand on her back.

—

‘This is all my fault.’ It’s all Toshinori could think.

He’d been guided in a dazed state out of the room. Ishiyama helped him getting under a shower,
found a set of clean clothes for him. Toshinori stood a long time under the lukewarm water, watching
the pink stream slowly getting drained away, staring at the blood on his hands disappear bit by bit.

*Young Midoriya’s blood.*

His mind kept flashing at him nightmarish images. Midoriya, screaming, red *pouring* out of him as parts of his body disintegrated under Toshinori’s own eyes. The sound of him choking on his own blood, unfocused, pale eyes full of tears, small hands gripping at him, not letting go.

The way he tried to call him with his broken voice. A child, lost and scared.

When he finally found the strength to clothe himself again and stepped out the bathroom, Ishiyama was nowhere to be seen. He walked aimlessly, his mind nothing but white noise, until he heard the soft sound of voices.

He followed, turning a corner. All the way down the corridor, Inko Midoriya was sitting on some plastic chairs, hugging young Uraraka tightly.

“Don’t cry, dear.” She was whispering, gently carding her hand through Uraraka’s hair. “You know Izuku. He’s stubborn. He will be back on his feet in no time, and then we will have to knock him down ourselves to make sure he rests.”

Uraraka let out a little, watery chuckle, before sobbing.

Toshinori watched, his mind nothing but white noise. Maybe he should go and hug them both. He was not sure.

Aizawa appeared at his side out of thin air, apparently. Took his arm, guiding him away. Inko’s voice became barely a noise and then disappeared, as they walked away.

“...He flatlined a couple of times.” Aizawa murmured when they stopped in a barely lit corridor. “They’ve managed to resuscitate him. The reconstruction is going well, but they still need to close him up and put some blood in him.”
Toshinori blinked.

“Toshinori, I need you to snap out of it.” Aizawa says, an indescribable note in his voice. “I know how much you care about that boy. I know. But we need you. He needs you.”

“It’s my fault.” Toshinori finally murmured.

“What?”

“This is all my fault.” Toshinori whispers. “If I hadn’t meddled in his life, he would have never ended here. He would be out there, normal and happy, living without having to worry about immortal beings and people disintegrating his body with a touch.” A pause. “I did this to him.”

The slap comes as a shock. Toshinori blinks, a hand instinctually rising to his cheek.

“I want you to remember this exact moment for the rest of your life.” Aizawa hisses. “Because if you dare say something like that to that boy when he wakes up, I will do more than just slap you.”

The silence stretches, heavy.

“Listen.” Aizawa sighs, putting a gentle hand on his shoulder. “Maybe you’re right. Maybe if he had never met you, he wouldn’t be here.”

Toshinori flinches, but Aizawa continues. “Or maybe he would be out there, alone and unhappy, his dreams crushed, nothing to really live for. Maybe he would’ve given in to the dark, ending up bitter and resentful like Shigaraki. Maybe he wouldn’t be alive at all, if he hadn’t met you.” The fingers on his shoulder tightened. “What I’m trying to say is: You can’t know that. We can’t constantly question ourselves with what if’s. What we do know is that the boy loves you. You made him happy, you gave him hope, and a chance to grow and mature in a nice, loving person. A person that today has saved hundreds of lives.”

Toshinori feels his ears pop, like pressure has released around him. He looks down at his hands, his trembling hands. They are clean, but they still feel like the blood is staining them.
“It’s ok.” Aizawa whispers. “You can let it out, big guy. You’re allowed to cry, too.”

He blinks, noticing how watery his vision feels.

Oh. He is crying.

—

She had fallen asleep.

It’s the only conclusion she could come to when her eyes shot open, and instead of finding herself being hugged by Midoriya’s mom she’s lying down a cot, another blanket over her.

Ochako slowly sits, rubbing at her eyes. They still burned, and she still feels like crying.

Of course she does.

She has no idea what time it is, nor how much time has passed. There’s a bottle of water and a little chocolate bar sitting on a minimalist nightstand near her head.

She takes a tiny bite of the chocolate, but she barely manages to gulp it down, her stomach giving a nauseous churn. The water goes down a little smoother, an elixir on her parched throat.

Abandoning the opened sweet on the nightstand, she silently slides off the cot on her naked feet. The floor is chilly, and in the semi-darkness of the room, only lit up by the the glowing green sign saying exit over the door, she sees her bag sitting on a chair.

She rummages through it, taking her phone out. The bright numbers on the screen — her heart feels like breaking when her eyes meet her background picture, a selfie of her, Midoriya and Iida, smiling, one of the first pictures with them she had ever taken. Midoriya doesn’t even have his little scar, yet — let her know that it’s past three in the morning.

It’s been hours. Is Midoriya out of surgery, yet?
There are a ton of messages, too. He opens the first one in the list, Iida.

“Urara where are you? They are evacuating the mall, I met up with Ashido and Tokoyami for now. I’m sending messages to everyone, please respond as soon as you can.”

“Urara, we’ve all met up, the only ones missing it’s you and Midoriya. Please, respond”

(1 missed call)

(1 missed call)

(1 missed call)

“Urara, I think an assault squad just arrived, something serious is happening. Please respond.”

(1 missed call)

(1 missed call)

“Urara, I just saw someone seriously wounded being taken out the mall. He looked like… No, nevermind. Please, respond, we are all very worried for you and Midoriya.”

(1 missed call)

“Urara, I just saw the news. The person I saw was Midoriya. Urara he. was covered in blood

PLEASE RESPOND”

(1 missed call)
“Uraraka, please, I can’t take this anymore. If you’re there, answer me.”

A little sob find her way out of her throat. Of course Iida would be worried. She feels horrible, here, not knowing how Midoriya is, and she’s the one that knows the most of them all.

She has no idea if Iida would still be awake. Probably, considering the situation. She doubt he’d been able to sleep.

But she knows her voice will betray her if she tries to talk. So she composes a text.

“**Iida, I’m sorry I didn’t answer you earlier. I’m ok, but a lot is happening, I couldn’t get to my phone. Midoriya was badly wounded but he—**“

He’s ok? He will be fine? He could be dead as she’s writing, for all she knows. he deletes the last two words, and restarts.

“**Iida, I’m sorry I didn’t answer you earlier. I’m ok, but a lot is happening, I couldn’t get to my phone. Midoriya was badly wounded and is undergoing surgery. I do not know yet how he is doing. I will let you know the instant I know myself. Please, pass this message to the others. I will explain more as soon as I can. Love you.**“

The other messages are in the same vein as Iida’s, classmates trying to contact her, to ask her if she’s ok, to ask what is going on. She doesn’t have the strength to answer them all, counting on Iida to pass the word around. The last ones she opens are from mom.

“**Sweetheart, we just got the call from the police. Me and dad are going to come right away, but it will take a while. Hang in there, ok? If you need anything, talk with your teachers. We’ll be there super soon.”**

“**Me and dad are just a couple of hours away, we’ll be there soon. Hang in there, my little**
champion.”

That one was the most recent, just from an hour prior. Another hour and mom and dad would be there. The thought was already immensely comforting.

“I can’t wait for you guys to be here. Love you.” She sends, letting them now she’s awake.

In the meantime, a new text from Iida came in.

“I’m glad you are ok, I was so scared. The news are so unclear on what happened, I have no idea what is going on. Please give us more info as soon as you can, and let us know how Midoriya is doing. I passed the message to others in the meantime. Love you too.”

She pockets the phone with a trembly sigh, padding outside the room. She walks down yet another nameless corridor, looking around in hope to see any familiar face. As she rounds a corner, a door opens, Aizawa-sensei and Midoriya’s mom coming out of it. She’s silently dabbing away tears from her eyes.

Heart shooting up to Ochako’s throat in panic, she runs to them. When Miss Midoriya notices her she blinks, surprised.

“Dear, what are you doing up? You should try to sleep some more—“ She tries to say with a trembly voice.

Ochako shakes her head, squeezing her eyes. “How’s Midoriya? Can you tell me anything?” She asks, her voice hitching in her throat.

She watches the woman and Aizawa-sensei exchange a little look.

“He’s… Out of surgery.” Aizawa-sensei says, voice carefully flat. “But he’s not completely out of danger, yet. He’s in intensive care, for now.”

Midoriya’s mom let out a trembly sigh, wiping more tears away from her eyes. Ochako looks at the door behind them, and then back at them.
“You went to see him, didn’t you?” She asks, watching them try to hide a surprised reaction. “Can I see him? Please—“

“Dear, you…” Hesitation. “You wouldn’t want to see.” Midoriya’s mom finishes in a whisper.

“Please, just for a minute—“ She pleads, desperate. “I need to see him with my eyes, please—“

The exchanged another little look, before Aizawa-sensei sighs “Alright. But only for a minute.”

—

When she entered the room, the blond man was there.

Standing in front of the glass wall dividing Midoriya from the rest of the world, shoulders slumped. A long tuft of blond hair hides most of his face to her, but it’s not hard to imagine which kind of expression is on it.

His right hand is splayed against the glass, as if he’s trying to reach over and put a kind touch on Midoriya’s head.

She silently walks up to him, standing by his side, and looks.

Midoriya is barely recognizable. Pale as death, purple circles around his closed eyes. A tube is stuck in his throat, smaller ones in his nose. He has tubes coming out of him from everywhere, she realizes. He’s connected to so many machines the sight is dizzying. He looks so small, sinking in that giant bed. The only parts of his body visible in all that clutter are part of his face and his left arm, sitting on the covers, fingers slightly curled.

His hand seems so tiny.

She wouldn’t have been able to recognize him, hadn’t it been for the freckles dusting the white of his skin and his curly hair.
She wants to cry. She turns a bit, looking at the blond man. He has a far-away expression, like he’s not really there.

If she had to choose a picture to represent the word *sadness*, it would be this man.

She doesn’t know what possesses her in that moment, but she puts her hand over the blond man’s arm. He jumps as if he just got zapped by an electric shock, turning to look down at her with wide eyes.

“Um—Mister—“ She hesitates. “…You look really sad. I’m sad, too, but Midoriya, he— he’s strong.” She forces a smile on her face. Strained, barely there, ready to break at a moment’s notice, but a smile nonetheless. “He’s so strong. He will be fine. So, don’t be so sad when he wakes up, ok?”

The blond man blinks, before his other hand raises to his face, hiding his eyes. When he talks, she can hear the tears in his voice.

“Yes.” He whispers. “He is strong.”

—

When Tenya entered the classroom, all eyes turned on him.

He couldn’t catch a lick of sleep, the past night, and his body let him know that it was not happy. He felt sluggish, his eyes burning as he forced them to stay open.

No one is laughing or joking, that morning. He passed the word around to every each one of their classmate, even those that had not been present at the mall with them. Those who did — *that were with him when they caught a glimpse of someone covered in blood, screaming, being transported out the main entrance in haste- someone so familiar, their minds refusing to accept it really could be him, until they heard the news and Midoriya’s name being spoken* — look just as pale and unhappy as he feels.

“Hey, man.” Kirishima says, his voice lacking the usual joyous bite. “Did you hear more from…?”
Tenya shakes his head, making his way to his desk. Uraraka’s desk behind his, empty, seems to be almost making fun of him.

He does not dare to look over to the other side of the class, at Midoriya’s.

“You know as much as I do.” He finally replies, as he looks at his phone that’s still rudely insistent in not showing him any new text from Uraraka.

He wants nothing more than to see one, to read the words *Midoriya is ok* on the screen, but it hasn’t happened yet.

Tenya sits down as silence falls on the class. When Aizawa-sensei enters a couple of minutes later they are all already sitting, looking at him with the same worried, questioning faces.

“I’m sure you are all already aware of what has happened yesterday.” Aizawa-sensei says without even a greeting. He looks like he hasn’t slept at all, as well. Yaoyorozu raises her hand up.

“Sir, all the news are being very contradictory—“ She says, frowning, before adding in a lower voice. “Can you… Can you tell us what happened to—“

Aizawa-sensei sighs. “Shigaraki Tomura was there.”

A series of gasps and little “*What?!*” ripples through the class, silence falling back again when Aizawa-sensei holds his hand up.

“Midoriya and Uraraka were together when Midoriya saw him with his quirk.” He keeps explaining. “He made Uraraka call the police as he acted like a lure, guiding Shigaraki away from the crowd. We still don’t know what happened in the time Midoriya left Uraraka behind and the moment the police found him, but when they did he was fighting with Shigaraki, trying to protect a little girl from him. Midoriya—“ A moment of silence. “Shigaraki managed to put a hand on his back, before being teleported away.”

Yaoyorozu’s hands flies on her mouth as she pales, similar shocked expressions appearing on everyone’s face.
“I won’t lie to you.” Aizawa-sensei continues in a tired whisper, a hand massaging his forehead. “Midoriya it’s still in intensive care after undergoing reparative surgery. We don’t know yet if he will wake up, and there’s a chance his spine might’ve suffered permanent damage.”

Tenya feels like puking, Tensei’s voice rising to his memories.

*Please, not again, not Midoriya, too—*

No one is speaking. Aizawa-sensei slowly looks at all of them, his eyes betraying the pain he really felt despite his apparently indifferent expression.

“Considering the strenuous situation, your afternoon lesson is cancelled for today.” He says. “Morning lessons will go normally, your teachers are arriving for the day. We will keep you all informed if something changes.”

There’s another pause before Aizawa-sensei adds. “These are dark times, and now more than ever we need to stick close. I want all of you to support one another, to look at each other’s back, to put away personal squabbles and grudges and offer a kind hand to everyone at your side. Your two classmates have acted with the good of others in mind, as a hero should.” A deep breath. “Don’t let yourself fall to despair. As long as we are together, there will always be hope.”

—

Tenya did not really focus on the morning lessons at all, and he was not the only one.

Whenever he would look at his left, Todoroki would be in the same position. His arms crossed on the desk, his head down, face hiding between them. He would almost appear to be sleeping, hadn’t it been for the minute tremors that would shake him every now and then.

He didn’t move for the entire morning, as Tenya and Yaoyoroizu occasionally exchanged a tired, worried look over his head.

—
“What do we do, now?”

The lessons were over, and they all grouped outside class. Technically speaking they were free to go, as no afternoon lesson was to come.

Of course, no one did.

“Iida, you should call Uraraka.” Ashido says, hugging herself. “I bet she’s at the hospital with Midoriya. She can tell us where it is, so we can go visit—“

It was so strange, to stand there as other students passed by on their way for lunch. Their day was normal, undisrupted, untouched. They chatted and laughed, like nothing was wrong.

An irrational part of Tenya wanted to scream at them, to yell that everything was wrong.

“Midoriya is in intensive care, they won’t let us in.” Jirou sighs, unhappily looking at the floor.

“Still, Uraraka said she was ok, right?” Sato intervenes, frowning. “Even if they won’t let us see Midoriya, we can still visit her. I cannot imagine how she’s feeling right now.”

The corridor had emptied, now, just the seventeen of them standing around Iida. Silent, he took his phone out of his pocket, starting the call on speakers.

Uraraka picked up after three rings.

“Hey.” Her voice is slightly distorted by the speaker. She sounds tired. “I heard from Aizawa-sensei that the afternoon class was going to get cancelled. Is everyone ok?”

“That’s what we wanted to ask you.” Kaminari says, frowning. A little surprised gasp comes from the phone.
“You are on speaker.” Iida explains, curtly. “The whole class is here.”

Her sigh is scratchy through the phone. “Hey, guys.” She says, her voice sounding like she’s forcing a smile on her face.

“Uraraka, we wanted to come by and visit since there are no more lessons for the day.” Yaoyorozu explains gently. “Can you tell us where you are?”

“I’ve asked already, but they won’t tell me.” Uraraka replies, unhappy. “It’s like a sort of top secret place, for what I gather. There are police agents everywhere. I’m afraid I cannot help you.”

There’s a pause, before she adds. “But I haven’t seen Aizawa-sensei back yet, so he may still be at school. You could try to milk the info out of him. The chances he tells are pretty low, but you could at least try.”

“Thanks, Uraraka.” Tenya says, sighing. “We will try. You are not alone there, are you?”

“No, mom and dad came last night.” She answers. “And M-Midoriya’s mom is here, too, so I’m not alone. Don’t worry, Iida.”

“Alright. Please, keep us informed about everything, ok?”

“’course.” She sounds so tired. “I hope to see you guys soon. Love you all.”

There’s a short round of greetings before Tenya closes the call.

“We should split up to search for Aizawa-sensei.” Ojiro immediately says. “No point in all of us going in the same places.”

“I’ll try go to the teacher’s shared office” Yaoyorozu replies. “Someone should go to Aizawa-sensei’s personal one, and the principal’s office, too.”

They split, agreeing on going in different directions. Tenya was to act as the info relayer since he
was the one who had everyone’s contacts. He lagged behind, tiredly massaging his eyes behind his glasses.

He wasn’t alone. Bakugou was standing with his back against the wall, hands in his pockets, looking down with a contrite expression. There was something unreadable in his eyes.

“…Four eyes.” He says, voice low. “Better fucking send me a message when you know something, ok.”

And with that he turns, leaving.

Tenya watches him go, silent. *Who knew what was going through that explosive head.*

Bakugou was not the only one that stayed behind. Todoroki was there, too. Tense, hands closed in fists at his sides. His eyes were casted low, white and red hair covering his expression.

If Tenya had to be honest, he wasn’t very good at social—things. Uraraka and Midoriya had been easy for him from the very start, with their openness and kindness, the way they seemed to just *understand* him despite the fact he’d never been really good with friendships. And Todoroki was nice, too, of course, but he was more guarded. Complicated.

Without Uraraka and Midoriya acting as a buffer, Tenya was at a complete loss of how to act with him during such a arduous time.

But it was clear that now, more than ever, Todoroki needed a friend.

“Hey.” Tenya says, softly, approaching him. “This… This sucks, doesn’t it?”

The word is alien in his mouth, not a way he’d usually express himself. Still, that is enough to make Todoroki look up at him. He’s pale, dark smudges under his eyes. He seems angry, eyes glinting with something undefinable, making Tenya wish he could borrow Midoriya’s empathic quirk for a minute, just to *understand*.

“I told him.” Todoroki says, voice low and bitter. “I told him to try not to die, that *stupid idiot.*”
“I don’t think I’ve ever had a class as stubborn as this year’s 1-A.” Aizawa says, entering the room.

He puts something down on the table, in front of Toshinori. Looks like take-out food in a little square box, a pair of disposable chopsticks on the top.

“Have no idea if they are naturally like that, or if Midoriya’s terrible habits have rubbed off on them.” A mirthless chuckle. “They wanted to know where this place was, wouldn’t leave me be until I threatened them with expulsions if they kept trying to get info on a confidential location.” A moment of silence. Aizawa pushes the box toward him a bit more. “Eat.”

Toshinori sighs, slowly sitting a bit straighter as he picks open the box. He knows better than to get on Aizawa’s bad side, especially now that they are all running ragged.

“How are you doing—“ Aizawa sighs, sinking into an armchair. Not quite a question.

“I’m contemplating the idea of hunting Shigaraki down myself and squash his head open like a mature tomato with my bare hands.” Toshinori says, flat, breaking the chopsticks apart.

“… A tad gruesome.” Aizawa murmurs, non-committal.

“That’s because you didn’t see him disintegrate Midoriya’s body with your own eyes.” Toshinori replies, putting food in his mouth, not really tasting anything. “If you did, you’d feel like I do. Trust me.”

There’s a long stretch of silence as Toshinori eats, his eyes not really seeing. His mind is a mess of racing thoughts, prayers —sensei, I’m sure you can’t wait to meet him personally but please, give him more time. Don’t take him yet—, and pure, unadulterated anger that was trying to bubble up his throat, trying to overcome him.

“…It’s always disconcerting to see your darker side.” Aizawa says after a while, voice low. “Sometimes I feel like you can do no wrong.”
“I can do plenty wrong.” Toshinori replies with a mirthless chuckle. “My soul is not pristine. It has plenty of terrible things to offer.”

“But you always took the better choice.” Aizawa replies after a single beat of silence. “And you always will.”

—

Consciousness comes back in little pieces.

It’s the feeling of something under his finger here, the sound of something mechanical there. The impression of voices, far away in the distance.

The pain. Sadness. Not his, someone else’s. A sadness so deep it feels like a single drop of water slowly but surely digging into rock.

A movement, muscles twitching.

Consciousness comes back in flashes, not enough to shake him awake, but still enough to remind him even if only for a brief moment that he’s still there, lights flashing around him like short bursts of fireworks.

—Consciousness comes back in full force, finally wrapping its cruel arms around him, pain flaring into his entire body like he’s being slowly cooked on a searing fire—

Oh. A small, detached part of Izuku thinks, distantly, as something near his ear beeps madly. I’m alive.

Chapter End Notes

today’s inappropriate chapter title of the days is: Aizawa Shouta is the emotional pillar of this entire fucking circus.
Also, just so I can pull at your heart strings some more, here's Ochako's phone background selfie : D (which is actually phone sized so it could be used as a actual background pic if you particularly hate urself lmao)
Inko did not know what to do with herself anymore.

She forced herself to go back home, at some point. Take a shower, make a little bag with some fresh change of clothes for Izuku, for when he’ll wake up. —If he wakes up— —No, stop thinking that, he WILL wake up—

She took his braille display, too. Surely he would get bored without anything to do in that hospital bed, later. He wasn’t one for just sitting there and resting, an overactive mind like his needed distractions.

She also took his phone charger. The battery was almost dead, how could he speak with his friends without his phone?

She got back to the hospital with her own car, presenting at the entrance the pass she was given. The place was intimidating, looking almost more like a prison rather than a hospital, with those high concrete walls constantly patrolled by police forces.

When she arrived back into the waiting room, Ochako was on a seat, dozing off. The poor girl, she must be exhausted. Her parents were speaking to each other in hushed tones, Ochako’s mother flashing Inko a little, sad smile when she entered.

They were very nice people, it was unfortunate they had to meet for the first time in such a terrible situation.

And now she was sitting there, waiting, waiting, waiting. She simply did not know what to do other than keep the constant prayer in her mind, that had never stopped, going.

Please, dear, don’t leave me—I need you, I can’t go on without you—You have to be strong, don’t give up, don’t give up—

With a sigh, she looked down at Izuku’s phone that she plugged in. There were a ton of missed texts
and calls, obviously. Inko knew that his classmates had been informed of the situation already during the morning, so she ignored the messages from the names she was familiar with as she kept scrolling, just to make sure no one else needed to be informed regarding Izuku’s status.

Her heart fell down to her feet, when she saw the texts from Miki.

“**Izuku I just saw the news, that wasn’t you, right? It was just someone that happened to share you name. Crazy coincidence, right?**”

“Izuku, please, tell me you are ok. This isn’t funny.”

“Please, answer me.”

“**GODDAMNIT**”

*Oh, no, they talked about it in the news?!* Inko had no idea— She’s been cooped up in this hospital for *so long*, not even thinking about the outside world— She dragged a hand on her face, incapable of imagining what Miki and Ichiko must be feeling, now.

Trying to will a fresh wave of tears away, she called.

“**IZUKU?!**” Miki immediately answers, tears in her voice.

“Miki, dear, it’s me.” Inko whispers, her voice trembling. “I’m sorry I haven’t called you earlier, I had no idea they talked about it in the news—“

She hears Miki let out a choked sob. “*It r-really was him—*” She says, her voice strained with desperation.

“They are taking good care of him, I promise.” Inko says, trying to comfort the young girl. “He will be fine in no time. So, don’t cry, ok?”
Inko accidentally tunes her out, when Aizawa opens the door, looking pale but relieved.

“He woke up.” He simply says.

—

Toshinori watches from a corner, feeling like an intruder.

Young Midoriya was awake, even if sluggish and confused. They had pretty much pumped him full with painkillers after he woke trying to scream and choking around the tube in his throat. That had been taken out, he’s mostly breathing on his own but still wearing a oxygen mask, small tubes in his nose. Inko Midoriya was at his bed-side, crying, as she petted his hair with a trembling hand.

He still was attached to so many machines, most of which Toshinori had no idea what they were for. There still were too many tubes intruding his body. He was still too pale, weak, not all there.

But he was awake. He was alive.

Midoriya blinks, his pale eyes unfocused as his mother gently cards her fingers through his hair, whispering reassurances to him.

At some point. Inko turns. Eyes full of tears, but a small, frail smile on her lips. She gestures at Toshinori, inviting him to come closer.

Toshinori obeys, despite the fact he doesn’t feel it’s right for him to be here. Slowly, he approaches the bed, putting a careful hand on the edge of it as if he’s afraid it might catch fire the moment his skin touches the sheet covering the boy, looking down at him.

“All Might is here, too.” She whispers, her knuckles brushing gently on young Midoriya’s jaw. “He’s been waiting for you all this time, too, you know? You gave us all quite a scare—“
The boy blinks, his mouth opening and closing silently. A sheen of tears covers his eyes.

“A—“ He tries to say, voice weak, barely there. “ — ight— ell— ou—“

“Honey, you don’t have to speak if you don’t feel well.” Inko says in a trembly voice, her hand stilling on his chest. He coughs weakly, takes a painful, wheezing breath.

“No—“ Young Midoriya whispers, more understandable now, voice still weak. “Have— to tell—“

“What, sweetheart?”

“I don’t—“ A deep, shuddering breath, tears finally spilling from his pale eyes, rolling down to his temples. “— don’t— really hate you—“

It’s like time stops. Toshinori is sure he’s not capable of breathing anymore. A sound comes out of him, from the depth of his chest, a mix between a laugh and a sob.

He kneels by the bed, his hand finding young Midoriya’s smaller one, squeezing gently with trembling fingers.

“I know—“ Toshinori sobs, shocked, not believing that with all this boy has been through his first thought is to reassure him. “I know, my boy— I know, it’s ok, I know you don’t—“

He watches through the tears, a giant knot in his chest finally releasing, when young Midoriya gives him a weak, frail, and yet undeniable smile.

—

Ochako wakes up in a strange place again.

She’s not on a bed, this time. Her place of -accidental- choice is far less comfortable, now.
She slowly rises from the seats in the waiting room, stretching, her neck giving a painful protest. Dad’s jacket falls off from her, and she shivers a bit, suddenly feeling cold.

She’s alone again, completely confused, again. What time is it, now?

She get up, poking her head outside the waiting room. There’s a congregation down the corridor, not far from her. Mom and dad, Aizawa-sensei, principal Nedzu, Miss Midoriya and the blond man that she does not know the name of in a circle, speaking animatedly.

She approaches, blinking, and Miss Midoriya must notice her from the corner of her eyes, because she turns to her with a huge, relieved smile.

A huge, relieved smile.

Ochako does not dare speak what her heart is yelling to her, as the woman closes the distance between them, takes Ochako’s hands in hers, still smiling.

“Dear, come with me.” She says. “There’s someone that really wants to meet you.”

——

When she enters the room, it’s not from the other side of a glass wall, this time.

Miss Midoriya’s hand on her shoulder is warm, reassuring. She guides Ochako toward the bed, and Midoriya —pale, tired, alive— slowly opens his eyes, turning his head minutely toward them.

“Sweetheart, Ochako is here.” Midoriya’s mom says in a low voice, petting his hair. “I told you she was fine, didn’t I? So you don’t need to worry anymore, ok?”

He blinks, a small smile pulling at his lips under the oxygen mask.

“—araka.” He says, weak. He slowly moves his arm, turning his hand palm up toward her.
Ochako stifles a sob down her throat. He doesn’t need her to cry all over him, now. She forces a smile on her face despite the tears filling her eyes, taking his hand in a gentle hold with four fingers. He weakly squeezes back, fingers shivering.

“Hey.” She says, voice watery. “You owe me big for this one, Midoriya.”

He smiles again, his eyes closing.

“You can’t stay for long.” Miss Midoriya says gently, patting her shoulder. “But I’ll give you a couple minutes, ok?”

She exits, softly closing the door behind her. Ochako turns back to Midoriya, his eyes are still closed.

“I’m glad— You’re—Ok—“ He speaks slowly and weakly, taking deep breaths almost between every word. There’s a long pause as Ochako stands there, holding Midoriya’s hand as he breathes slowly, like it takes him focus and energy to do so. “Wanted—To ask— you somethin’—“

“Of course.” She replies, leaning a bit closer to hear him better. His voice is so weak.

“Tokoyami—“ He says, surprising her. Why is he thinking about Tokoyami, now? “Does he—really have— a— bird head—?”

Ochako splutters, taken aback. Well, Midoriya is blind, so of course he wouldn’t know—

“Yes?” She replies, confused, a smile pulling at her lips despite everything. “Why are you asking?”

“Miki— told me—“ Midoriya replies, his eyes cracking open just barely. “Thought— she was joking —“

Ochako laughs, tears stinging in her eyes. Midoriya is smiling again.
“That’s— really funny—“

—

“Midoriya is awake. He’s ok.”

That’s all the text from Uraraka says. Tenya jumps on his feet with an exhilarated laugh, proceeding to immediately forward it to the entire class.

He can’t stop grinning for the rest of the day.

—

Aizawa feels like he could possibly sleep for the next three months.

From the moment the boy had woken up, the tension finally released. The heavy atmosphere that seemed to permeate every single nook and cranny of the hospital was lifted like an early morning fog giving way to the shining sun. Tiredness crushed all of them, making them realize for how many hours they’ve stretched their bodies and minds taut, waiting.

The boy was in bad shape, and help him say bad. But he wasn’t rejecting the repaired tissues inside him as they all worried it might happen, and despite the fact they had to fill him up to the gills with painkillers to avoid the poor kid to start screaming in pain, —not a nice scene, Aizawa could personally confirm— his body was slowly recuperating.

They were pushing the process forward as much as they possibly could with an array of healing quirks. In only a couple of days the change had been obvious. The boy was still weak, and still needed a lot of care, and couldn’t leave his bed yet, but they could hook him off some machines, take some intruding tubes out of him, baby steps to finally make him feel human again.

His legs were responsive, —hadn’t that been a relief, goddamnit, a giant one — confirming that he’d been lucky enough in the horror to avoid permanent damage to his spine. The boy would often look a bit confused, sometimes getting lost mid-conversation, or saying senseless things, thanks to the painkillers. But he still managed to be lucid, most of the time.
Maybe even too much.

“So, when do we leave for the summer boot camp?”

Aizawa stopped, his hands hovering mid hair over the homework that was sitting on his legs, waiting to receive grades. He turned, launching an incredulous look to the boy, sitting upright on his bed with his back sinking in a pillow almost as big as him, face pale and hair a mess, a shit eating grin on his lips.

His dark-circled-eyes full of life.

“…Toshinori, did you hear what he just asked?”

Toshinori chuckles from the other side of the bed, cutting an apple in little cubes on what little space there was on the bedside table. It was mostly covered with gifts from the boy’s classmates that Aizawa had personally delivered. “I heard it just fine.”

Aizawa waits, waits for some sort of “No, you can’t go, Midoriya, you almost died, actually you did die two times during surgery, what is wrong with you.” that never came.

Aizawa sighs. “Seriously—?”

Toshinori chuckles again. “You try to tell him what he can or cannot do.” There’s fondness in his voice. “I give up.”

Midoriya snickers -the little shit he is- and Aizawa can’t help the palm that smacks against his own face.

“Toshinori, you suck, your teaching sucks, you are the worst—‘ Midoriya snickers again like he’s having a world of fun, while Toshinori, placid, puts the plate of small apple cubes in Midoriya’s hand. The boy happily puts one in his mouth, crunching. “Midoriya, you can’t even get off your bed for two minutes straight without going down like a newborn kitten, how do you think a boot camp would go?”
“Well—“ He replies, launching another couple of apple cubes in his mouth, obnoxiously crunching. “Means I’ll have to go with my entire bed.”

Aizawa let his head fall back, looking at the ceiling with a loud groan, the two little shits — *Is it One For All? It has to be One For All, they are like twins* — laughing at him.

—

Toshinori is just about to stand and get out of the room, when there’s a knock on the door and then young Uraraka pokes her head in with a big smile.

She’s not alone. Iida and Todoroki are with her, too. They raised hell on earth, Aizawa said. Cornered him, pestered him until he bargained a way for them to be able to visit Midoriya.

—*He called them the Midoriya Protection Squad. Wasn’t that funny (and very true).*—

So they got to be driven in a car with dark tinted windows to the secret location of the hospital and back four times a week. They never missed a single appointment, bringing notes from the lessons with them, keeping young Midoriya updated on everything with infinite patience.

It was a good thing, to be honest. Young Midoriya did not like being cooped up in his room, bored and lonely, and he’d probably raise hell himself hadn’t he be allowed to have these visits. For how much time his mother tried to spend with him, for how much both Toshinori and Aizawa came by to visit, — *Aizawa saying it was his role as a teacher, as if Toshinori couldn’t see right through him, knowing how attached he had grown to the boy himself* — it simply wasn’t enough. Young Midoriya needed people his age, his friends, to reassure him they were there and that everything was going to be ok. He needed to feel loved and secure. Keeping him calm was the key to speed up his healing process, after all.

He was doing so much better, already. Now capable of moving on his own, even if it tired him out quite fast. They had finally started to increasingly reduce the dosage of painkillers, too, which was definitely a big step.

Tsukauchi came by just a couple of days prior when he heard that the boy was back on his feet. Both in a official manner, and as a friendly visit.
It had been quite funny, to watch young Midoriya’s face go slack with shock after Tsukauchi told him the police forces wanted to assign him a medal for what he had done.

“Excusemewhatdidyoujustsay?”

Both Toshinori and Tsukauchi laughed at the sentence let out in a single breath. Midoriya blushed furiously —*which was very nice, to see some colors on his now permanently pale face*—, trying to say that there was no need, it was no big deal—

“That’s not up for you to decide.” Tsukauchi replied, gentle. “Let us honor your courage. It will mean a lot for many people, not just you.”

And Midoriya, that between many others surely understood perfectly well the meaning of *symbols*, shut his mouth and nodded, eyes as big as plates.

Tsukauchi asked him to give a statement, too, if he felt up to it. The boy agreed, relaying the full story to them. How he felt Shigaraki’s presence, following he and Uraraka, the decision he had taken. How he led Shigaraki away to that secluded exit, forcing himself to keep calm and don’t raise any suspicion in him. How Shigaraki had called him out in that underpass, and how Midoriya kept him busy by talking.

“I thought I would go insane, speaking with him.” He said, shaking his head. “The guy doesn’t make a lick of sense. I kept leading him to intellectual dead ends, buying time, but in the end he managed to get to whatever conclusion he wanted from our little chat.”

He told them of how he had tried to intimidate Shigaraki into going away willingly, and how that backfired. He told them of the little girl, that was just so unlucky to stumble into them, and how both he and Shigaraki sprinted for her.

“And… Well, you know the rest.” He finished with a little tense frown, understandably not really wanting to remember in too vivid details how he got his terrible wounds.

If Toshinori could’ve bleached away from his brain the image of young Midoriya, screaming in pain as parts of his body got pulverised, that kept coming back to him in his restless sleep, he would’ve done it already.
Tsukauchi put a hand on Midoriya’s shoulder. “I have nothing to say, if not thank you.” He said, serious. “Everything you’ve done—every second you’ve bought, could’ve been a lost life. I know you are only at your first year, but if I have to be honest, you are already a full fledged hero in my eyes, Midoriya.”

Midoriya blushed again, a small smile appearing on his lips, as he silently accepted the compliment. In the end, Tsukauchi had to bid farewell to them, busy with his work, promising that he would call young Midoriya once he’d be completely healed to let him know when the ceremony to assign him his medal would take place.

“A ceremony?” Young Midoriya asked, looking a bit out of it, as if he had already forgotten what they were talking about. —The painkillers must be kicking in—“I’m going to need some decent clothes for a ceremony, I think I only have jeans and t-shirts…”

Both Toshinori and Tsukauchi laughed at that, Tsukauchi saying “I’m sure Toshinori will be happy to help you find a nice suit.” before finally leaving.

And now, young Midoriya’s friends were here again.

Toshinori got up from his seat, putting a gentle hand on Midoriya’s shoulder. The boy gave him a little smile, his friends approaching the bed, gathering the chairs in the corner of the room to sit by his side.

“You can use mine, I was just about to go.” Toshinori says, gesturing to the armchair that was always to the right side of Midoriya’s bed.

“Wait, mister!” Young Uraraka says, approaching him with a smile. “I keep meeting you and I don’t even know your name! Are you a friend of Midoriya?”

Well… Of course she’d get curious, they did meet quite the number of times, at this point.

“He’s—A family friend.” Midoriya came to his save. Not a total lie, in a sense.

“I saw you when—“ Uraraka hesitates. The words—*that day, holding Midoriya as he almost died*—
“Mm.” Toshinori replied, non-committal.

“Well, do you have a name?”

Toshinori looked at her, smiling and eager, and then at young Iida and Todoroki that already sat down by the left side of the bed, eyeing him curiously.

“Call me Toshinori.” He replied, already more than he really wanted to give. He didn’t liked the idea of lying to his own students, but he still needed to protect them from info that might put them in danger.

Young Midoriya seemed a little embarrassed, when Uraraka greeted him with a chirping “Well, it’s nice to meet you, Mr. Toshinori.”

The boy still didn’t had it in him to address Toshinori by name, no matter how much he tried. A small smile tugged at his lips, as he shook Uraraka’s hand as if it was the first time they’ve met.

—

“He’s kind of an odd guy, but he seems nice.” Uraraka commented once All Might had left the room, taking place in the armchair he was sitting in just a couple of minutes prior. “For how long have you known him? For a while, by the way he acted, I thought he was your dad, Midoriya.”

Izuku splutters the juice he was drinking, coughing. Then he starts to laugh.

“N-No, definitely not my father.” He finally manages to wheeze out.

“Mmmhh…” Uraraka replies, sounding unconvinced. "Whatever you say…”

“Do I look blond to you?”
Uraraka snickers, as Iida sighs in exasperation at their shenanigans.

“C’mon, you two, the amount of notes we have to go through today is embarrassing. The earlier we start, the earlier we finish.”

“Aye aye, big bro.” Izuku replies with a grin, making Todoroki release the tiniest giggle-snort.

They went over the last two days of notes, dutifully. Izuku had no idea what he could’ve done without his friends because the amount of stuff he was missing from school was rapidly reaching the size of a little planet. Hadn’t it been for them, he would’ve totally fallen behind big time.

When he apologized for forcing them to go through stuff that they already studied, they scoffed at him almost in perfect synchrony. “This is actually helping us, too.” Iida said, dutifully. “It’s a good way to commit the info to memory. So, don’t mention it.”

They would usually finish with about an hour to spare to just chit-chat and relax. Today was no exception, as Izuku put away his braille keyboard and recorder with a satisfied sigh, sinking back into his pillow as Iida launched in a description of today’s afternoon exercise, were Kaminari and Mineta had somehow managed to knock each other out completely by accident.

Izuku was laughing so much at the anecdote that he was almost in tears, when a sting of intense pain let itself known from his back. His mind went fuzzy, and when it cleared again, he could feel the presence of his friends hovering on him, Todoroki’s hands—it could only be him, with how one felt like an icicle and the other like an oven—on his shoulders.

“Huh— Sorry.” He rasped out. “They are cutting down on the painkillers again.”

He heard three simultaneous sighs, Todoroki’s hands lingering on him for a few more seconds.

“Maybe it’s too soon, should we call the nurse?” He asks, worried, but Izuku shakes his head.

“It’s fine, I’m getting better. Besides, you know I don’t like that stuff. It makes me feel all weird and fuzzy.”
“That’s what painkillers tend to do, Midoriya.” Iida explains patiently.

“Yes, and I don’t like it— Let me just—” He gently takes Todoroki’s hands away, turning with a grunt. Now belly down on his bed, he says. “Todoroki, can you put your right hand on my back?”

When his friend complies, silent, Izuku let out a muffled moan in his pillow. The chilly sensation on his burning back was paradise.

“Please don’t ever leave.” He murmurs, relaxed. “Uraraka, Iida, can you— like— Staple his hand on me, please?”

They both snickered as Izuku felt a weight shift on his bed. Todoroki must’ve sat in a more comfortable position to keep working as Izuku’s personal human ice pack.

“Oh! I almost forgot!” Uraraka says after some seconds of silence, Izuku turning his face away from his fluffy pillow toward her. He hears rustling, as if she’s searching in her bag for something. “Bakugou gave us something for you, today.”

There’s a long beat of silence, as Izuku blinks.

…I must’ve actually died and this is some kind of afterlife, because there’s no way you said what you just said.” He replies, deadpan. Todoroki’s hand on his back trembles, as he tries to stifle a laugh. —he’s still embarrassed of laughing in front of others, as if laughing is something bad. Izuku is trying his best to correct that.—

“I know right? I think my brain crashed and rebooted ten times when he told me that!” Uraraka says, cheerful. “But hey, I have eyewitnesses. It totally happened— Oh, here it is.”

“I… Would hardly define that a get-better-gift.” Iida says, in his usual serious tone. “But considering from whom it came from, it might be the equivalent of a giant flower bouquet from a normal person.”

Uraraka pushes something in his hand. It feels crinkly, is it something packaged? It’s as long as his palm, and bumpy—
“It’s a chocolate bar.” Uraraka says.

“…Let me take a guess.” Izuku deadpans again. “Peanuts.”

“How—“

“I hate peanuts. He loves them.”

There’s a second of silence, before they all start laughing.

“That’s the most Bakugou gift I can possibly imagine.” Todoroki finally comments with a little sniff. “Unbelievable.”

“I will forever preserve it, a memory to that one time Kacchan almost managed to take his head out of his ass and think of someone else, for a change.” Izuku sighs dramatically, satisfied in feeling Todoroki’s hand tremble against his back again.

“He even made a little card!” Uraraka says, surprised, peeling something away from the packaging. “…It says: *what the hell are you waiting for, get better, stupid Deku.*”

“Poetic. Brings a tear to the eye.” Iida says, a grin clear in his voice, making Izuku giggle-snort loudly against his pillow.
Shouto falls on his futon, dead tired.
As he usually does after every visit to Midoriya, he just feels emptied of any energy. It was terrible every time, having to separate from him, watching him giving them that sad, unconvincing smile that screamed ‘I don’t want you to go but I don’t have a choice’. It was almost the end of the second week they’ve been visiting, and it still felt painful.

Shouto just didn’t want to leave his side ever again. The pain he felt during those excruciating hours in which Midoriya had been hanging between life and death would last Shouto a lifetime. He had no idea he was even capable of feeling that much pain anymore, he was pretty much sure the numbness had long ago stifled most of his feelings. —But then again, whenever Midoriya was involved, Shouto’s feelings tended to come back in full force, so maybe that shouldn’t have surprised him at all.—

At least Midoriya was doing so much better. The first time they’ve visited, he looked like a corpse. So pale, connected to all those machines, his voice was so weak, his smile so strained. He hadn’t been very responsive at all, mostly in and out consciousness, his words slow and confused. He had improved at such a speed that Shouto had no doubt that he’d soon start to ask to be released, maybe within the week. Midoriya was definitely the kind of person that would go insane if he stayed in a hospital room for too long.

Shouto sure was tired of having to visit people he cared for in hospital rooms.

His phone buzzed as he relaxed on his futon, eyes closed, hair still wet after the shower tickling at his nose. He palmed on the floor blindly, only cracking his eyes open once he found the phone. He got a text from Uraraka.

“Heeeey mr ice pack! *wink wink*”

He splutters a little laugh. He and Uraraka ended up developing quite a strange bond, lately, connected by the same predicament: caring a tad too much about a certain someone that needed a cold hand on the back during this last hospital visit.

One would think that that would make them rival. Instead, they had found comfort in each other, whining to each other about their woes. —Which, considering the almost suicidal tendencies of the subject of their affection, Shouto felt were kind of justified.—

It had been Uraraka taking the first step, telling him she had realized the way Shouto felt toward Midoriya. She confessed she had been crushing on him for a while, now, but that she didn’t had any
intention to act on her feelings, preferring to just maintain their friendship. Shouto could understand her reasons as of why. Heck, he should probably do the same, they were good reasons.

But, to be honest, he also didn’t want to do the same at all. He was too chicken shit to take the first step, but at the same time he could not deny he harbored a secret wish of making his and Midoriya’s relationship more than just a friendship. He just didn’t want to let go of these feelings, this warm, fuzzy sensation in his chest, so new, and painful at times, but that also brought him so much joy whenever he was around the object of his affection.

So, he kept his embarrassing crush close to his heart, in silence, while whining via text to the one ally that could totally understand him. He had even gotten more relaxed with that, the way he expressed himself much less formal.

“Don’t tease me, it’s cruel.”

“I thought you were about to set Midoriya’s bed on fire for a second, there, lol. It’s a good thing Iida is so incredibly oblivious.”

“I’ve got very close. I mean. Fuck that moan.”

“IKR? You made such a face, dude.”

“Stop laughing at me.”

“Who’s laughing?”

“You are, I know that you are, don’t you even try to play dumb with me, miss.”

“Alright, I was laughing. Not my fault, tho, you should’ve seen your face.”

“…I’m hopeless, aren’t I.”
“A bit, but I have hope for you. I hope your future babies will have green, white and red hair, like an italian flag.”

“I don’t think that’s biologically possible.”

“It’s a joke, Todoroki, you dum dum.”

Right. He did not recognize those sometimes, still.

He was just about to reply with the most sarcastic “ahah very funny” he could possibly muster via text when their group chat started buzzing. He switched windows, curious.

**Small Might:** Hey guys, I have a favor to ask.

**Go2GoFast:** Yes, what is it?

**Small Might:** I need you to convince Aizawa-sensei to let me come to the summer boot camp.

**Go2GoFast:** …Midoriya.

**Small Might:** Please???

Shouto sighed. Ignoring the silly nicknames that Uraraka had forced on them when she made the group, he starts to write.

**Popsicle On Fire:** Midoriya, you need to rest. A boot camp is just about the exact opposite of RESTING.

**Small Might:** I know, I know, but the thought of you guys going camping while I’m stuck here kind of makes me want to cut my wrists open with a yogurt lid
**Small Might:** That’s a joke by the way, don’t try to call the doctors on me like that nurse that thought I was serious when I told her I would try to drown myself in the pudding if she didn’t lower the dose of my painkillers.

**CutiePie:** First of all, Midoriya, treat your nurses well, you caveman. Secondly, stop trying to quit your painkillers cold turkey, you dumbass. And third, we KNOW you. If you come to the camp with us, you’re going to push yourself too much and get yourself hurt again.

**Small Might:** Wow taking a page from Kacchan’s book much, there?

**Small Might:** I won’t go overboard, I promise!

**Small Might:** Pppppppppppppllllleeeeeeaaaaaaaassssssseeeeee

**Small Might:** And you better take me seriously because it took me ages to dictate all those letters in, goddamnit.

**Small Might:** It just makes me so sad to think about you guys and the whole class out there having fun, while I’m stuck here with my back hurting like a bitch.

**Popsicle On Fire:** … Now that’s just manipulative, Midoriya.

**Small Might:** I have no idea what you are talking about, my dude.

**Small Might:** besides, it’s not like I really can go overboard. As I just said: friends, meet my back. It hurts like a bitch.

**CutiePie:** Oh really? I thought your back was just fine since YOU KEEP TRYING TO QUIT YOUR PAINKILLERS COLD TURKEY

**Small Might:** Why are you so mean to me.
Small Might: Ok but no, seriously. I know it’s crazy, but I’m going crazy myself, here. I just want to come spend some time with my friends in the outside world. I will be a good boy, rest plenty, eat my vegetables, take all my meds, and won’t try to punch baddies in the face if they come visit.

Small Might: Also tell Aizawa-sensei that without me a certain set of precautions we agreed on would go bye bye.

Go2GoFast: Huh???

Small Might: Just tell him that. He’ll know.

Small Might: I have one last weapon: I heard through the grapevines that apparently Aizawa-sensei cannot resists Uraraka’s big puppy eyes, it’s his weakness.

Popsicle On Fire: Do I even want to know how you know that

Small Might: I heard him and All Might talking about it when they thought I was sleeping lol. It was a bit after you guys mobbed Aizawa-sensei into letting you visit me.

CutiePie: Oh, All Might came to visit you? What a nice guy!

Small Might: Ahahah yeah he’s nice

Shouto raised an eyebrow at that. The answer had come strangely fast, and was pretty short for Midoriya’s usual brand of All Might fanboy-ing whenever the topic came even close to the guy.

Oh well. It was probably because Midoriya seemed absolutely hell bent on having his way.

Small Might: guys please, I know I’m asking a lot, I’m just. I want my life to go back to normal. I’m tired of this.

Small Might: And I know that sounds manipulative, but it’s the truth. I’m just done with this
hospital, and I miss spending my days in the class with you, instead of spending a bunch of hours a week in a hospital bed feeling like a zombie with you.

**Small Might:** I promise I will be good, you can even tell Aizawa-sensei that if I step even a single toe out of line I’ll go back to the hospital without a protest

**Go2GoFast:** Alright.

**CutiePie:** IIDA YOU GAVE UP RIGHT AWAY

**Go2GoFast:** I think I would go crazy, too, in Midoriya’s place, to be honest. I can understand what he means.

**Small Might:** Thanks, man.

**Small Might:** You can even show sensei this conversation if you want.

**Small Might:** …Maybe skip the part were I was faking being asleep while he and All Might spoke, though.

**CutiePie:** I already know I will regret this but… Alright. Fine, we’ll try to speak with Aizawa-sensei.

**Small Might:** Todoroki?

**Popsicle On Fire:** I don’t think I have much of a choice, at this point.

**Popsicle On Fire:** But you have to promise me you’ll be careful.

**Popsicle On Fire:** Because if you do something stupid, I will personally freeze you to make sure you can’t run away, and bring you back to the hospital myself, and then tie you to your bed.
When Aizawa approached Inko Midoriya, he noticed just how pale and emaciated she looked, like she had lost a lot of weight in a very short time.

That made him feel really like shit for what he was about to ask. This poor woman went from having what she thought was a blind, quirkless son to a boy that was definitely not quirkless, still just as blind, and that also ended up inheriting the power of the symbol of peace. A son that had been collecting an increasingly more dangerous series of wounds, until the culmination of the Kiyashi-Ward incident, when death had been just a breath away from him. All of this in the spawn of about a year.

She must have nerves like steel, at this point. Or no nerves at all, it was hard to say.

She was observing Midoriya going through a session of physiotherapy. She had a distant look in her eyes, dazed, as she watched the specialist guiding the boy through a series of exercises to gain control back on his abused body.

He sat down at her side, making her jump a bit. She turned, her eyes clearing over.

“Oh, Mr. Aizawa, I didn’t hear you coming at all.”

“I can be pretty sneaky without realizing.” He replies, as a manner of apologizing. “How is he doing?”
“Far too excited at the idea of getting back on his feet and with the energy that only a fifteen year old boy can possibly have after what has happened. He’s forcing himself even though his back hurts, I can see it in his eyes.” A sigh. “I told the doctors, but they say it’s good to force things a bit as long as it’s kept under control, so he can recover faster.” She sounds reproaching.

Aizawa scratches at the back of his head. He’s starting to think the boy might be a bit of a masochist. “I don’t think there’s any possible way we can keep him in bed short of tying him to it.” He finally says. “I’ll give him two more days before he’s going to start asking to get back to school. Speaking of which…”

Aizawa really did not want to do this.

“He has unleashed the Squad on me.” He finally forces himself to say, Inko blinking perplexed at him. “I mean— Uraraka, Iida and Todoroki. Apparently he asked them to try convince me to let him go to the summer camp.”

The expression on her face is enough to make him give a little mental prayer for Midoriya. That boy is grounded from here to infinity, for sure.

“I know, I know.” He continues, not needing words to understand what she thought of the idea. “And frankly, I don’t think it’s a good idea. It’s not even a decent idea, really. But— I think you should give him permission to go anyway.”

Now Aizawa is the one that’s definitely grounded. Her eyes are like burning coals of silent rage.

“Please allow me to explain.” He interrupts just as she’s about to open her mouth. “Apparently he has promised to don’t overdo it, that he will be good, take it easy, take his meds, and also has said himself that if he steps even a toe out of line, he will go back to the hospital without protesting, verbatim.”

She closes her mouth.

“He just really wants to reconnect with his friends, feel normal again.” Aizawa says, his voice lowering. “And I think it’s the right thing to give him a chance. He’s been closed in here for too long, if we force him to stay any longer, I’m afraid he might turn reckless in his need for freedom.”
Inko slowly turns to look at the boy. Stretching and sweating and yet so happy as he finally gets to burn some energy in the little hospital gym, specialists fussing over him.

“I know.” She finally says with a sigh. “I know. He’s like a bird. You may be able to put him in a cage and keep him there, but that won’t make him happy.”

“I promise I will personally keep an eye out to him and make sure he doesn’t get himself hurt.” Aizawa says, perfectly aware of the kind of responsibility he’s taking onto his shoulders.

She takes another, deep sigh, dragging her hands on her tired face.

“Alright. He has my permission.” She finally says, sad acceptance in her voice.

—

“So, you’re going in the end, huh?”

Izuku snickers into his phone, Miki giving a big exasperated sigh.

“You’re impossible. Always getting what you want.”

“It’s because of my big, beautiful eyes.” Izuku replies in an over-dramatic tone, making her laugh. When the laugh subsides, she sounds serious.

“Just... Be careful, ok? I don’t want to turn on the tv and hear that you’re half dead ever again.”

“I’ll be super careful, promise.” He says, voice low. “Besides, the school is taking all the possible precautions to make sure our destination will stay hidden.”

“Hasn’t stopped any of those fuckers before, it seems.”
“Seriously, Miki, it’s just a camping trip, and I’ll be there. The human radar.” She laughs again. “What could possibly go wrong?”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter contains a line that could be considered a silly inside joke of mine. I wonder if someone will be able to spot it ahahah!

As per usual, reminder that you can follow me on tumblr if you are interested in reblogging the posts I will make collecting the art for this fic : 3

Important reminder for those of you that only watched the first two seasons of the anime: from the next chapter we will go into full spoiler territory, so keep reading at your own risk!
Illusion of normality

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“MIDORIYA!”

Izuku’s grin is almost face breaking, as he approaches the now surprised and happy lights of his classmates with a bag on his shoulder, ready, after Mom had insisted on driving him to the appointment herself. (“Remember to obey to Aizawa-sensei.” “Yes, mom.” “And tell him right away if you feel unwell.” “Yes, mom.” “Don’t push yourself too much.” “Yes, mom.” “And call me everyday.” “Yes, mom.” “And take you medications.” “Yes, mom” “I asked Ochako to make sure you take your medications, so if you don’t do it in front of her I will know.” “Yes, m— wait, what?”)

The surprise that went through the class in seeing him approach felt like a zap. Apparently Aizawa-sensei has kept the news to himself to the very end.

“Midoriya! It’s great to see you, man!”

“How are you doing?”

“We’ve missed you!”

“Are you coming, too?”

He’s surrounded, hands on his arms and shoulder, making him laugh.

“I’ve missed you guys, too!” He exclaims, unable to contain his own joy, blindly patting back to whoever he’s closer to. “I couldn’t miss the summer camp!”

Aizawa-sensei sighs, not even try to contain the chaos that has surrounded him. Izuku feels the also very familiar lights of class B approaching. —how could he not, their class was just right besides his, it’s a bit strange to realize how familiar they feel despite having rarely talked to any of them—
“Alright, everyone, on the bus! Orderly!” Iida says, dutiful as ever, before approaching Izuku with a lower voice. “I’m glad you could make it, Midoriya. This trip wouldn’t have been the same without you.”

Izuku grins, joining the line for the bus. Aizawa-sensei was standing a bit further, speaking with his mom in hushed voices, but he’s now approaching, stopping Izuku before he could climb up the bus.

“Let’s lay down some rules, you and I.” He says, after he leading him a bit away to have some privacy. “First of all, my word is law. If I tell you something, you obey, right away, no questions asked. Are we clear?”

“Yes, sensei.” Izuku replies, dutifully.

“Secondly, you will take it easy. I don’t care if you think you might be falling behind, or whatever. You don’t move a muscle unless I tell you to. Got it?”

“Yes, sensei.” Izuku replies, again, because it’s not like he can do much else.

“Third: If anything, anything at all is wrong, you come to me. I don’t care what time is it, if you have to wake me up in the dead of the night. You. Come. To. Me. Clear?”

“Sensei, c’mon—“ Izuku sighs. “I will be a good, obedient boy, cross my heart and hope to die if I don’t.”

There’s a moment of silence. Aizawa-sensei sniffs.

“…Ok, that was a bad choice of words. Anyway—” Izuku continues, before Aizawa-sensei can stop him. “— I know you are happy I’m here, too. I will play the nice, human radar and make sure everything is safe.”

“Midoriya, you’re becoming awfully cheeky.” Aizawa-sensei sighs, pushing a finger against Izuku’s forehead. “Tone it down, you are walking a fine a line, kid.”

Izuku snickers, unable to help himself.
“I’m serious, though.” Aizawa-sensei adds, his voice lowering. “I personally took responsibility of your well being to convince your mother to let you go on this trip. I do not take kindly to those who break my trust, Midoriya, so you better make sure you act responsibly, because there won’t be a second chance if you don’t.”

Izuku gulps, before letting out a little, decisively more serious “…Yes, sensei.”

“Glad we could clarify everything. Now get on the bus, you impertinent little brat.”

—

There’s a constant traffic of his classmates going up and down the bus to come by his seat and have a couple of minutes to properly greet him from the moment the trip starts.

It’s heartwarming, really, to feel just how much they care for him. They all have something nice to say, or a gentle pat on the shoulder to give, some anecdotes he absolutely has to listen to that happened while he was recovering.

When Yaoyorozu, that was sitting behind him, leans over a bit to give her greetings, Izuku turns to give her a giant smile.

“Yaoyorozu, I don’t know what the thing you sent me is, but I love it.” He says, happily. “It’s the softest thing I ever touched. Can you make me, like, one thousand more?”

She chuckles. “I was practicing soft materials and I thought that you might like the sensation considering your tactile sensitivity must be more developed than normal. I’m glad you’ve enjoyed it.”

“It makes for a great stress-ball, I can hardly put it down.” Izuku laughs. “I’m pretty sure I’m destroying it bit by bit, for how much I’ve been squeezing it.”

“I will be happy to make you more.” She says, her fingers ghosting on his shoulder. “It’s good to have you back, Midoriya. We all have missed you a lot.”
He flashes her one last smile, as Aizawa-sensei turns around on his seat, to announce them they will stop in about an hour. Izuku blinks, perplexed, because something feels off about Aizawa-sensei’s light.

Aizawa-sensei must catch his eyes, because he comes over and leans down to him, while Iida is too busy scolding Sero in the back that was trying to stand on his seat to notice.

“When we arrive at the stop, you stay with me and don’t move.” Aizawa-sensei whispers. “Do not say a word about what you will see, and that is an order.”

Izuku silently nods.

—

Aizawa is happy to see that the boy is actually capable of listening when he wants to.

When they arrived at the stop, he had stepped down by Aizawa’s side and hadn’t moved a finger, not saying anything as Mandalay and Pixie-bob introduced themselves to the class. He watches the realization starting to dawn on his students’ faces, some of them trying to make it back to the bus, when he notices that Midoriya at his side has both hands covering his face, his shoulders shaking.

Aizawa is left speechless for a second, just as Pixie-bob is using her quirk to send the students down the mountain, and he almost puts a hand on Midoriya’s shoulder, trying to understand why he’s crying, before the boy makes a spluttering noise and starts laughing loudly, hands sliding down to hold his belly.

Aizawa is pretty sure that from the general chaos of soil, rumbling down the slope like a waterfall, someone just yelled “MIDORIYA, YOU JERK!”

“Oh my god—” Midoriya says, breathless, still shaken by little laughters as he dries a tear away from his eye. “Aizawa-sensei, I don’t know how you keep a poker face during your logical ruses, I thought I was about to explode—”

Cheeky little brat.
“Get back on the bus, kid.” Aizawa says, a smile pulling at his lips despite everything. “We are going to go wait for your classmates at the lodge.”

The trip is mostly uneventful, Mandalay discussing plans for the week with him while her nephew was sitting all the way in the back, a frown on his face as he looks out the window.

“Your student is pretty focused, huh?” Mandalay says, observing Midoriya. “He’s the kid of the Kiyashi-Ward incident, right?”

The boy was sitting across from them, still as a statue, his face facing the forest, clearly concentrating. Probably observing from afar what his classmates were doing.


The boy shakes his head like he just snapped out of a dream, turning to them with a couple of blinks.

“Yes?”

“How are they doing?”

Midoriya’s new signature shit eating grin makes an appearance once more. “I’m only catching glimpses, they are moving pretty erratically instead of in a straight line so they are not always in range of my radar. I think Uraraka is making Asui float up every now and then to try keep them on track, but they are constantly getting turned around. Pixie-bob’s creatures are pretty brutal, I think Kaminari is having a lot of trouble with them, since his quirk has no effect on them, same for Koda. They are mostly keeping behind the others, for the moment.”

Mandalay sounds excited when she speaks “You can see all that from here?” She asks, clapping her glove-pawed hands. “Boy, you would be a god-send in search and rescue missions! Why don’t you join us when you graduate?”

Midoriya’s grin turns a bit more shy, as he scratches the back of his head, embarrassed. The mental imagine of him dressed up as one of the Wild Wild Pussy Cats immediately rises in Aizawa’s mind, traitorous, and he shakes his head to chase it away. He had no idea if Midoriya would be more adorable of weird.
“Miss Mandalay, your quirk is some sort of telepathy, if I remember right?” Midoriya asks, turning on the seat to face them.

“Just call me Mandalay.” She says with a smile. “And yes, I can telepathically communicate to whoever I want, although they cannot answer me back. Why you ask?”

“I was wondering if you could explain to me how it works? How does it feel to you? How far does it go? Do you have limitations, or can you speak to whoever you want? Do you need to have some sort of contact with them before? To how many people can you speak at once? Can you—”

“Whoa, hey, those are a lot of questions!” Mandalay laughs, putting her hands up. “You are very curious!”

Midoriya blushes, recoiling from his own over-enthusiasm. “I was just thinking that, in a sense, our quirks are similar.” He says, pointing a finger against his temple. “It’s all in here. So I was wondering if knowing more about a quirk of this kind from someone that has years of experience might help me sharpen the use of my own.”

“Midoriya.” Aizawa says, rising an eyebrow. “You are not supposed to do anything at all during this trip. You know that.”

“Sensei—” He grumbles back, pouting. “Ever since I got— You know.” He coughs, making a vague gesture with his right hand. “I’ve only been training my body. I think it’s time I focus on my quirk a bit more, I’m sure there’s much I can do with it, still.”

In front of Aizawa’s silence, he insists. “As I just said, it’s all in my head. I don’t even need to move, to train with it. Please, let me do this.”

Aizawa should’ve known that his obedience so far had been too good to be true. The little shit had a plan.

“You might be the most insolent student I’ve ever had the displeasure to deal with.” He sighs,
massaging his forehead. He wanted to say no, but then again, Midoriya’s quirk was pretty much invisible. The kid would surely go straight ahead and do things his own way, if Aizawa didn’t reign him in properly. “Alright, fine. But I want you to be careful, stay by my side, and if you feel tired, you *stop*. If I realize you are going overboard I’ll ship you right back home, Midoriya, are we clear?”

Midoriya grins happily and nods, turning back to Mandalay. “So, if you are willing, Mandalay, could you tell me more about your quirk?”

She laughs, clearly having found the exchange between them rather funny. She crosses the little gap, sitting at Midoriya’s side.

“Alright, little kitty. Ask me what you want to know.” She says, smiling. “But one question at a time, please.”
After lunch, Midoriya isn’t done with Mandalay yet, apparently. She seems to have taken a liken to him, answering his infinite questions with just as infinite patience. She tells him of various missions of hers, of how she used her quirk in varied situations, how she trained and tried it in all sorts of ways. Midoriya is clearly drinking it all up, listening in rapt silence as he helps her washing the dishes.
Aizawa observes as Mandalay’s nephew looks at them from behind a corner, with the same frown he had been wearing from the moment he got dragged to meet the class with his aunt. Midoriya turns around to him, at some point, tilting his head on a side.

“You don’t have to hide, you know?” He says, kind. “If you want to come talk with us, just step forward. I don’t bite.”

The kid jumps, his frown deepening. “As if I’d want to speak with you.”

Midoriya blinks. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t speak to losers that go on and on about their stupid quirks and how they wanna become heroes.” The kid spat out the word like venom. “It’s all a load of stupid stuff.”

Midoriya blinks again, a serious expression finding way on his face, while Mandalay also turns.

“Don’t be rude, Kouta.” She says with a sigh. “Midoriya here has already done a lot. He saved a girl that was just your age a bit ago, you know?”

The kid scoffs, muttering “Whatever.” before turning and leaving, hands in his pockets.

“I’m sorry about that.” Mandalay says in a low voice. “He’s my nephew, Kouta. He’s not… The easier to deal with, as you can see.”

“… He has a lot of pain inside him.” Midoriya says, slowly, his eyes pointed in the direction Kouta left. “It’s too much, for a child so young.”

At Mandalay’s confused blink, Aizawa intervenes.

“Midoriya is an empath.” He says, curtly.
“Oh—I see.” She replies, a sad smile on her face. “You are right, he does carry a lot of pain. His parents were heroes. The duo Water Horse, you might’ve heard of them.”

“I did.” Midoriya replies, serious, nervously fidgeting with the rag he was using to dry the dishes. “A terrible story—I did not know they had a son.”

“Ever since then, Kouta has declared that he hates heroes and quirks.” She says, sadly, leaning against the sink while crossing her arms. “For us, their death had been honourable. But for him, it’s just a painful mystery he can’t make sense of. Parents are the world for a child, and for him that world got destroyed, all in the name of an ideal he cannot possibly understand yet.”

Midoriya sighs, his eyes casted down. “…Ok.” He only says, voice low, turning back to the dishes.

He and Mandalay finish washing in silence.

—

When they finally emerge from the forest in a clearing were the lodge was situated, the sun is making its way to the horizon, the sky a spectacle of red and orange hues.

Ochako is pretty sure she might just fall asleep right there and then. Or puke everything she had ever ate in her life, she’s not sure.

Aizawa-sensei is waiting for them in front of the lodge, along with two of the four member of the Pussycats they’ve already met and Midoriya, sitting on a wooden table, swinging his legs in an almost childlike manner.

“Gee, you didn’t even made it close to lunch…” Pixie-bob comments with a snicker, as they all pant and groan, hungry and tired.

“Aizawa-sensei how could youuuuu—“ Kirishima moans. “I’m so hungryyyyy—“

“You should’ve moved faster, then.” Aizawa-sensei replies, mercilessly. “You are lucky that dinner’s ready for today. We will discuss some of the lacks in your first day performances while you
There’s a long moment of silence, as they all must be trying to make sense of how could Aizawa-sensei even know how their performances in the forest went, and then nineteen pairs of eyes turn to Midoriya, still sitting on the table.

“Midoriya, you snitch!” Hagakure protests, her uniform movements suggesting she’s jumping up and down in rage.

“Who, me?” He replies, putting a hand on his chest with the most fake innocent expression on the planet. “I would never! And to even think I helped making dinner for all of you! The betrayal!”

Loud grumbles from their stomachs seems to be the only reply they have, as Midoriya snickers with a grin, jumping down the table.

—

“It’s been what, twelve hours? And I already got called a jerk and a snitch.” Midoriya says, calmly eating his dinner instead of cramming food in his mouth the way a lot of their classmates were doing. “It’s good to be back.” He adds, laughing.

Ochako, sitting at his side, did not think she would be able to stomach anything, but as soon as she sat down at the table, she realized just how famished she was. She laughs, too, her mouth full.

“I cannot believe you joined into Aizawa-sensei’s dark schemings.” Iida says, sitting in front of them, with a clearly fake serious tone. “We will never be able to trust you ever again.”

“Hey, he threatened me. If I need to throw you all to the sharks in order to stay the full week, you bet I will.”

“Truly a hero.” Todoroki, by Iida’s side, joins in with his usual deadpan sense of humor, making them laugh again.

Aizawa-sensei made true to his promise, tearing into them without any pity as they ate, criticising
their performances in the forest, which had apparently been relayed to him in pretty accurate bits and pieces.

“You’ve been observing us a lot, huh?” Ochako asks once Aizawa-sensei is finally done. “Wasn’t it tiring?”

“I wasn’t going to just sit on my behind all day.” Midoriya replies with a shrug. “I mean, there’s only so much a person can be entertained while chopping vegetables and cooking rice. Besides, I need to train, too. It was a good way to warm my quirk up since I haven’t used it for so long.”

“Midoriya.” Iida says, adjusting his glasses with a frown. “You’re not supposed to train, actually. You do remember that, right?”

“Well, Aizawa-sensei gave his permission, sssooooo…”

There’s a moment of silence, the three of them looking at him with equally unimpressed expressions.

“I’m not lying! You can ask him!” Midoriya replies, pouting. “I’m only going to train with my quirk! I can do that while relaxing in a bed, if I want to!”

“—You’ve been planning this from the start.” Todoroki suddenly says, understanding dawning on his face. “Midoriya.”

He has the decency of looking ashamed, at least. “I cannot deny that the idea might’ve popped up at some point, lately.” He mutters.

They sigh — in unison, again, it was starting to happen more and more often —, Iida pinching the bridge of his nose.

“I don’t even know what do with you anymore—” He really sounds like an older brother, now. “At least try to don’t overdo it— Oh, what am I saying, you must’ve overdone it already, today, if you’ve been observing us so much. There’s no way we were close enough—“

“Nah.” Midoriya interrupts him, serving himself some more vegetables. His tone of voice could only
been defined as obnoxious. “You definitely were close enough. You guys just have a lousy sense of
direction, you’ve been skirting in my range most of the afternoon and still managed to get yourself
turned around I don’t even know how many times—”

A single chopstick comes flying from out of apparently nowhere, hitting Midoriya in the back of his
head, Bakugou’s voice from the other side of the room yelling an embarrassed “SHUT UP, DEKU”

—

“… Yes, I did take them—Mom, I know Uraraka has already sent you a message— I still can’t
believe you asked her to check my mouth—Yes, I’m ok. All I did today was peeling potatoes,
seriously.”

Shouto rolls his eyes. Just peeling potatoes. Such a bad liar.

“Alright, I’ll call you tomorrow around this time as well, ok? Bye.” Finally Midoriya turns around to
them with a little sigh, pocketing his phone. “She’s such a worrywart.”

“I would be, too, if I had you as a son.” Shouto deadpans, making Iida snicker. “Were are your
towels? We are going to the baths.”

He and Iida are both ready, having changed in more comfortable clothes, towels under their arms,
only lagging behind in the boys’ shared room because Midoriya was on the phone. Midoriya on the
other hand looks anything but, still wearing the school uniform.

“Oh—“ Midoriya says, blinking. He looks a bit lost, his face slightly pale, as usual, dark smudges
under his eyes. Shouto doesn’t even remember anymore how he used to look like, before the Kiyashi
Ward incident. “Oh, sorry I didn’t tell you— Go ahead, I’m not coming.”


“Super hot water on this?” He says, pointing at his back with a thumb. “Not a good idea. I’ll go take
a shower and meet you guys back here later, don’t worry about me, go enjoy the baths.”
“Well, you don’t have to necessarily get completely into the water, you could just sit on the edge of the pond—” Iida tries to insist, but Midoriya gives them a little smile.

“ Seriously, just go! It’s not that big of a deal!” He says, waving at them. When they hesitate he rolls his pale eyes, literally pushing them out of the room. “C’mon, you’re wasting time, I can’t even imagine which kind of shenanigans are going on while the *class president* is not there.”

He literally closes the door on them.

Shouto looks up to Iida, which expression totally matches his. They silently start to make their way for the baths.

“You are worried about him.” Iida says after a bit, not quite a question.

“Are you not?” Shouto replies. “I mean— It’s clear why he doesn’t want to come to the baths. And he’s obviously tired.”

“We shouldn’t have convinced Aizawa-sensei of letting him come.” Iida says, sounding regretful as he pinches the bridge of his nose. “It was too early.” A moment of hesitation. “But then again, I’d possibly be even more worried if he stayed behind. I cannot imagine the antics he’d come up with, alone in that hospital.”

Shouto can only agree with the sentiment as they both sigh, exasperated.

—

When they came back, Midoriya was already asleep in his futon lying on a side, hair still wet from the shower.

He looks more than tired, he looks *spent*. Shouto sighs kneeling by his side, adjusting the cover on him properly since it was sitting mostly at his feet, as if Midoriya had only lied down while waiting for the rest of the class to come back and had accidentally fallen asleep.

He did not even wake up at the incredible amount of noise Kirishima, Kaminari and Sero were
making (not to mention how accidentally noisier Iida was being while trying to calm them down. Not even stirring a bit.

Shouto huffs, sitting on his own futon to the right of Midoriya’s, collecting his knees against his chest. Iida was right, it had been too early. Midoriya had pretty much been spending most of his time in a bed until just a few days prior, only recently starting with some physiotherapy. Of course he still needed to recover.

But Iida was also right at how possibly even more worrying the prospect of leaving him behind had been when they accepted to speak with Aizawa-sensei on his behalf.

Why do you have to be so incredibly stubborn? Shouto thinks, pulling at small tuft of dark green, curly hair.

“Out like a light, eh?” Ojiro comments, passing by, a small worried smile on his lips when Shouto looks up. “Must’ve been quite a day for him.”

“Mmmh—” Shouto replies, non-committal. “I’m surprised he didn’t try to jump after us when Pixie-bob sent us down in the forest. Probably because Aizawa-sensei would’ve skinned him alive.”

Ojiro let out a little laugh. “Kind of a shame he didn’t, though, he could’ve led us directly to the lodge—”

The door opens with a loud bang, Aizawa-sensei entering with an irritated expression.

“If you have so much energy it’s clear that you haven’t worked hard enough, today.” He says, voice promising pain. “Stop being so noisy and go to bed, because hell awaits you, tomorrow.”

As everyone starts to shuffle back to their respective futons, muttering, Aizawa-sensei turns to Shouto, points at him, then points at his own eyes with two fingers, and finally points down at Midoriya.

The message is clear: keep your eyes on him.
Shouto really does not need to get told that. He already was.

Maybe even too much.

Izuku was a man on a mission.

He had woken up sore all over, his back protesting painfully, and feeling like he hadn’t slept at all the past night, despite the fact he apparently went out the moment his head touched the pillow. But he could not dwell in his own weakness, now, there was too much he needed to do.

Talking with Mandalay the day prior had given him so many ideas to try. The ways she applied her own quirk sounded so ingenious to him, it made him feel stupid for not thinking more in depth about his own ability.

But from today on, he was going to test all he could.

There was only one problem. Aizawa-sensei wanted him to be in his vicinity at all times, not trusting Izuku to don’t overstep his limits.

When Izuku protested about the fact that literally every each one of his classmates were training to do exactly that, Aizawa-sensei poked his forehead with a finger.

“What did I tell you about being cheeky?” He said. “Your classmates are not recovering from an almost deadly injury. Don’t push your luck, Midoriya.”

(And wasn’t he tired to hear that. Yes, he almost died, he knew. The chronic pain in his back was doing a perfectly fine job of reminding him that, thank you very much.)

So, Izuku was stuck there, sitting a bit behind Aizawa-sensei that was keeping an eye on his classmates giving it all to strengthen their quirks.
The moment even a single drop of blood made it out of his nose, it would be game over, and he knew it. He had to go at it slow and steady.

Izuku closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and plunged in his own head.

He had a lot of work to do.

—

When Shouto opened his eyes and the futon at his left was empty, a moment of panic overcame him.

He forced himself to calm down and be reasonable. Maybe Midoriya only got up to go to the bathroom or go drink a bit of water.

Silent, Shouto sat. Everyone was deeply asleep, a concert of differently timed snores and breathings all around him. He waited for a bit, what he felt would be a reasonable time for someone to be able to go do his business and then come back.

But Midoriya wasn’t coming back.

With a sigh, he climbed up on his feet, silently stepping out in the corridor. All the lights were off.

—Yes, of course they are, he doesn’t need them, you idiot.—

He took a left, directed to the bathrooms, and when he walked by the big glass entrance doors, he saw someone standing outside, their back to the door, bathing in the silver light of the moon.

The mop of curly hair was unmistakable.

Midoriya was leaning against a tree, shoulders slumped. He did not move when Shouto got out after putting on a pair of slippers, approaching him with the soft crunch of humid grass under his feet. When he got close enough he could see how red Midoriya’s cheeks were, his face covered in sweat, his breathing a little heavy.
He did not move even when Shouto put a hand on his forehead. He was burning.

“—just needed some fresh air” Midoriya tried to say, weakly.

“You are a terrible liar.” Shouto replies, voice low. “And your fake cheery tone does not convince anyone.”

Midoriya doesn’t seem to have anything to say to that. He refused to go to the baths with them during that evening, too.

“Let me see.” Shouto says, knowing he doesn’t need to add anything more for Midoriya to understand.

There’s a long beat of silence, Midoriya heavy lidded eyes pointed forward. “I got told ’s pretty bad —” He finally slurs, voice low and tired.

“Do you think I would care?” Shouto replies. “Hello? half-face here, remember?”

That gets a little, rough chuckle out of Midoriya.

“Let me see.” Shouto insists. “Unless you want me to go call Aizawa-sensei.”

“That’s a low blow, Todoroki.” Midoriya replies, a sad, strained smile on his lips.

“You’ll live. Let me see.”

The silence stretches some more, the only sounds around them the rustling of leaves in the gentle night breeze.

“Midoriya.” Shouto says, voice a little stronger.
Midoriya releases a deep sigh. Slowly he stands more upright, grabbing at the cotton of his shirt from the bottom, taking it off in a single motion.

Shouto has to bite down on his tongue in order not to hiss.

Midoriya’s back is pretty much completely covered by a web of scarred tissue, bumpy and irregular, angry red lines zig-zagging, crossing each other, like a twisted imitation of a thunderstorm.

It looks raw and irritated. It’s probably burning up as much as Midoriya’s forehead is.

Shouto sighs. “Come here.” He says.

Midoriya turns to him, his eyes are slightly wet. “Huh?”

“Here—” Shouto guides him, gently. He closes the distance between them, leaning a bit over Midoriya and softly putting his entire right forearm vertically against his back, his hand just below the start of Midoriya’s neck.

Midoriya stiffens and hisses at first, but then relaxes with a trembly sigh, resting his forehead against Shouto’s shoulder.

Under his colder right arm, Midoriya’s back feels like an oven.

“Better?” He asks, voice low, when Midoriya doesn’t say anything, simply standing there in that awkward half hug with his hands slack at his sides, breathing against Shouto’s chest.

“Very.” He finally murmurs. “I forgot how convenient your right side is— Actually, your left side ’s pretty convenient, too— Nice job with dinner, earlier—”

“Don’t lie to me.” Shouto replies, a smile in his voice. “I know you only keep me around to work as your personal ice pack.”

That wins him another little laugh.
“Is this a thing that happens often?” Shouto asks, gentle. “The fever, I mean.”

“—‘sn’t happened in a while.” Midoriya replies. He sounds tired, his speech a little slurred.“—‘m not used to sleep in a futon— think my back don’t care much for it, either—“

Shouto sighs. “You should’ve said that sooner.”

“—gotta swallow some pain.” Midoriya replies. “If I keep letting myself get stopped at every little bump— ain’t gonna get anywhere—“

Shouto wanted to grab his shoulders and shake him, in hope some common sense would finally enter that stubborn head. He refrained.

“I doubt this counts as a little bump, Midoriya, you—“

“—Almost died. I know.” He interrupts, irritated. “—y’all keep telling me that— As if I don’t know —“

The silence feels more tense, now. Still, Shouto doesn’t take his nice, chilly arm away. The idea felt cruel.

“We only say that because we care.” Shouto murmurs. When the silence continues, he adds. “Remember what I told you in the hospital, after we fought Stain?”

“…Try not to die.” Midoriya replies, shifting a bit against him. “—haven’t done a good job of that, haven’t I.”

“I guess not. So I’m going to repeat it, now. Midoriya: please try not to die. I still will not be happy if you do.”

“—’ll try.” A beat of silence. “Don’t wanna make you sad— I like being around you— makes me feel good—”
And Shouto, that so far had managed to keep things friendly and clinical in his mind considering the situation, feels his heart skip a beat.

Midoriya shifts again, turning his face to the left a bit. His forehead pushes against Shouto’s neck. It still feels hot even though it’s pressing against Shouto’s left side. That’s enough to bring him back on earth.

“You’re burning up—“ Shouto sighs. “Midoriya. We really should go to Aizawa-sensei.”

“Noooo—“ Midoriya whines weakly. “It’ll go away by morning— It always does—“

“What if it doesn’t?”

“It will.” Midoriya insists, petulant. “—’f we go to sensei now— ’s gonna send me back.”

Shouto sighs yet again. Midoriya’s back feels a little less hot under his arm, but not by much. He’s right when he says that Aizawa-sensei would probably send him back right away, if he sees how feverish Midoriya is, now.

“Ok, let’s bargain.” Shouto finally says, hit by an idea. “I won’t go tell sensei if now we go back to bed, and you do what I tell you to. Deal?”

“—y’all only want to boss me around.” A sigh, hot breath against Shouto’s collarbone. “ —aight, deal.”

“Ok.” Shouto says, slowly retreating his arm. When they stand in front of each other, Midoriya still looks feverish, and just about ready to fall asleep on his feet. Shouto helps him put his shirt back on, before taking his wrist and guiding him back into the lodge, to the boys’ room.

Once inside, he gently guides Midoriya back on his futon, belly down, and then drags his own closer to Midoriya’s, in a sort of king-sized single futon. He lies down himself, in the same position as Midoriya, and then put his right arm on the other’s back again.
Midoriya’s eyes flutter close with a soft sigh, as he relaxes under Shouto’s cold arm.

“Now, sleep.” Shouto whispers.
As usual you can find me [on tumblr](https://example.tumblr.com).

Also shameless self-plug: Yesterday I posted a [smutty tododeku oneshot](https://example.tumblr.com/post/1234567890) in case you want to read it ;D (but it is explicit so do what you will with it).
Ochako had been moving around, not really paying much attention to where she was going while she juggled as many objects as possible with her quirk, forcing herself to ignore the nausea that had taken permanent location in her stomach. After what Aizawa-sensei told her and Aoyama, about how the two of them had managed to pass the physical test just barely, she knew she had to absolutely push over her limits.

She distractedly walked around her classmates, in a attempt to keep the objects she was making float stable over her head, and hadn’t realized she had come by Todoroki until he said that.

She turned, looking at her friend. Todoroki was immersed in a barrel full of boiling water that himself was feeding into with his left side, while simultaneously creating ice with his right. He was completely drenched in sweat, his face suggesting he might just pass out at any second.

“What?” She asks, quickly, because she doesn’t trust herself to open her mouth too much without risking her breakfast to come out of it.

“Last night—“ Todoroki pants. “Me and Midoriya had— A moment— I guess.”

Ochako blinks.

“We woke up— hugging.” Todoroki continues between a breath and the other. “Uraraka— My crush— is not just a crush anymore— I’m fucked.”

Ochako blinks again. Then she starts laughing, her stomach giving a nauseous churn in protest.

“It’s— not funny—“ Todoroki tries to protest, scandalized. “It’s a disaster—“
Ochako, still snickering, stumbling a bit on her feet to keep the objects stable, turns toward Aizawa-sensei. Midoriya is sitting behind him as he had done the day prior, legs crossed, hands in his lap, eyes closed and a look of intense focus on his face. He doesn’t seem to be flustered, at all, unlike Todoroki.

“Woke up hugging, you say?” She dares to ask, quickly, her eyebrows doing a little suggestive dance. “How did he react?”

“Said— Good morning— And smiled like nothing was wrong—“ Todoroki’s left hand rises a bit to dry away the sweat on his forehead, only managing to add more.

“Todoroki, that’s almost first base, good job.” She snickers, ignoring his death-glare. “But seriously, shouldn’t you be happy?”

Todoroki grumbles something undefinable, making her laugh again, which is the last nail on the coffin for her stomach.

_Apparently I’m destined to puke on all my friends at least once, _Ochako thinks distantly, as Todoroki makes a strangled noise and uselessly tries to dodge her breakfast coming back up to say hi.

—

Midoriya seems the have had the same thought, as he laughs mercilessly during lunch.

“You’ve received the Official Uraraka Ochako Baptism.” He says once he’s done, putting a solemn hand on Todoroki’s shoulder. “Congratulations. Next up should be Iida, expect vomit to come for you soon in the future, my friend.”

“I’d rather not.” Iida replies with a dignified sniff. Todoroki, clean clothes back on him, is picking at his food with a rather unconvinced expression on his face. Probably didn’t felt very hungry after their little morning incident.

“Must you rub salt in the wound?” Ochako replies, embarrassed, stabbing at her food. “It’s bad enough that I’m making poor Todoroki wanting to skip his lunch without you pointing the spotlight on it.”
At that Todoroki clearly forces himself to gulp down a couple of bites despite looking a bit green. *Such a sweetheart.*

“I’m sorry, it’s just too funny—“ Midoriya replies with a snicker, wolfing down his own lunch with no issues.

“Next time it happens I’ll come for you, since you are spending your time sitting in the same spot completely unguarded.” Ochako grunts, pointing her chopsticks at him.

“You wouldn’t.”

“Would do. Maybe it’ll teach you a lesson or two.”

Midoriya pouts, grumbling “I’m not completely unguarded, anyway.”

“Speaking of which…” Iida intervenes, kindly steering the discussion away from the topic of bodily fluids while they *eat.* “What it is that you are doing, exactly, Midoriya? You always looks so *focused.*”

Midoriya gives them an almost wolfish smile. “Experimenting.” He says. “The first day I had the chance to speak a lot with Mandalay, which gave me some ideas on how to apply my own quirk. I’m happy to report that some of these ideas seems to be *working.***”

“Oh, considering her type of quirk I can see why you would draw inspiration from that.” Iida hums, thoughtful. “I’m happy you are being successful in your efforts, then. What have you accomplished?”

“Nuh-Huh.” Midoriya replies, turning his nose up. “It’s a surprise.”

He seems to be done with his lunch, but he has taken a fresh plate, piling a bit of everything on it.

“You’re going to that kid again?” Ochako asks, a small smile on her lips.
“Kouta, yes.” Midoriya replies. “He’s gotta eat too, right?”

“Where is that he disappears to all the time, anyway?”

Midoriya shrugs. “He called it his secret base. It’s not too far from here.” He sniffs, sliding off his chair with the plate of food in hand. “He keeps trying to tell me to leave him alone, but I can feel that a part of him is happy that I keep visiting him.”

He waves them bye, walking away toward the forest.

“He’s so kind, worrying for that child.” Iida comments with a little smile.

“A heart of gold, that one.” Todoroki mutters as he moves his food around in the plate. “Butting his nose in other people’s business all the time.”

There’s a mix of indiscernible feelings in his voice. Ochako decides not to ask.

“A test of courage!” Pixie-bob explains, excited. “Class B is already in position, waiting to scare you! All you have to do is reach the end of the route and pick up the tags with your names! You’ll be going in pairs!”

Izuku blinks in the moment of silence that follow that sentence. He has the distinct impression all his classmates -minus the remedial gang, that got whisked away by Aizawa-sensei for a lesson despite their protests, and Kacchan- are pointedly looking at him.

“I think it’s better if I sit this one out, since we are an uneven number.” Izuku says with a little grin. “And since my quirk makes me capable of seeing exactly where everyone is. I don’t want to ruin class B’s fun.”

That’s followed by a small chorus of disappointed “Aaaaw-” and “Damnit, I wanted to pair with
“That sounds fair.” Pixie-bob replies, a grin in her voice. “Alright then, the rest of you come here, we are going to draw the pairs!”

Izuku decides to sit down on a table, crossing his legs. For him it will be more fun observing his classmates from afar, anyway.

“Oy, tail boy, switch with me.” He can hear Kacchan say after the pairs had been selected. He ignores Ojiro’s protests, adding. “I don’t wanna go around with Deku’s boyfriend.”

Izuku splutters a little laugh, surprised, missing the split second of shock and embarrassment that shook Todoroki’s light, wondering from where did that even came from. Kacchan had the weirdest ideas, sometimes.

In the end, he and Todoroki —both their lights giving away a feeling of mutual distaste— are forced to go three minutes after Shoji and Tokoyami had already entered the forest, despite Kacchan’s grumbles. Only a minute after they got out of his range, something new suddenly popped into Izuku’s radar, making his heart rise up to this throat as a startled gasp itches in his mouth.

“MANDALAY!” Izuku immediately yells, jumping down the table, feeling the tension in the woman’s light and surprise ripple through the classmates that were still there as soon as he opened his mouth. “WARN EVERYONE! WE’VE GOT ENEMIES INCOMING!”

—

Aizawa had barely started the remedial lesson after finally managing to calm down his hyperactive students, when Mandalay’s telepathic voice came in loud and clear.

“Everyone! Immediately fall back to the lodge! We’ve got enemies incoming!” She says, urgent. “I repeat, this is not a drill! We’ve got enemies incoming, fall back to the lodge right away! NOW!”

A surprised gasp ripples through all of them, freezing his students in their seat. Aizawa swears under his breath, turning toward his colleague.
“Sekijiro! Stay here with the students!” He exclaims, running out the lodge. In the little clearing, Midoriya is standing with Mandalay’s hands on his shoulders. Most of his students are luckily still there, circling loosely around the two with worried expressions.

“Midoriya!” The boy has his eyes closed, hands cupping over his ears as he focus. “How many?!”

The boy’s lips move silently as he counts. “I can feel six, for now—” He says, opening his eyes. “I don’t recognize any of them, but they don’t have good intentions, I can feel it.”

“The others?”

“Hurrying back as we speak—“ He closes his eyes again, gritting his teeth in a little frown, a single drop of blood running down from his nostril. “They are grouping up, Kacchan and Todoroki are pretty far, almost out of my range— along with most of class B— I can’t feel Tokoyami and Shoji— Ragdoll, she’s— Something’s wrong, she’s agitated—“

Aizawa swears again under his breath, turning to Mandalay. “Tell them to hurry, and don’t stop for any reason.”

Mandalay nods, a serious expression on her face as she relays the message.

Suddenly Midoriya releases a strangled noise, eyes opening wide in fear.

“Kouta—“ He says, breathless. “He’s at his secret place— Something is coming right in his direction!”

Mandalay turns to him, eyes wide with panic. Midoriya turns to Aizawa.

“No.” Aizawa immediately say.

“Sensei—!” Midoriya replies, eyes glinting. “He’s just a kid!”

“So are you. “Pros are here, someone else will go pick him up—“
“We don’t know where his secret place is—“ Mandalay murmurs, her voice broken, a hand on her mouth. “We— We wanted to give him space—“

Another swear find its way out of Aizawa’s mouth. “Midoriya, can you explain to Mandalay where Kouta is?”

“I— I could give a general direction but the terrain is—“ The boy stammers, his eyes squeezing shut in an angry expression as he punches his thigh furiosly. “He’s moving, but— I don’t know how to explain! Damn it!”

Mandalay still has her hands on her mouth, eyebrows twisted in clear worry.

“Sensei—“ Midoriya turns back to him, desperate determination written all over his features. “Whoever it is, it’s rapidly closing in on Kouta. Please, I’ll go as fast as I can, take him and bring him here right away, I can do it, you know that I can—“

Aizawa hesitates. Midoriya is under his protection, Midoriya it’s still recovering, Midoriya—

“Sensei, please!” He yells.

“GODDAMNIT!” Aizawa roars, gritting his teeth. “GO! AND GET RIGHT BACK! GO AS FAST YOU CAN, MIDORIYA!”

The boy is off, a green lighting bolt, before Aizawa even has the time to finish his sentence.

When Izuku meets Kouta, his light is plunged in a mix of confusion and fear. His small voice hitches in his throat when Izuku lands in front of him after a jump, dust rising from under his feet as he drifts against the hard soil, the power one One For All running through his veins at the rhythm of his madly beating heart.
“Kouta!” Izuku exclaims, closing his arms around the little boy. “Hang tight on my neck, ok? I’m bringing you back to safety—“

Trembling, Kouta nods, his arms circling Izuku’s neck. He lifts the boy in his arms, turning, ready to spring right back to camp—

“Where are you two going?” A new voice asks, deep and malevolent, sending a chill running down Izuku’s spine.

Izuku doesn’t stop to answer, his legs releasing a shock-wave when he makes a sprint with One For All, arms tight around the small boy hanging to him for dear life. But whoever it was that had closed in on Kouta’s position so fast doesn’t seems to be deterred, sprinting after them with an uncanny speed.

Izuku’s breath stops in his throat for a moment, when the corrupted light closes in on them.

“Not so fast, kid.” The voice says, close, too close, something connecting with Izuku’s back.

His world goes dark with pain.

—

When he comes back to, he’s shivering so hard his teeth are chattering and there’s a unpleasant taste in his mouth, as if he just threw up.

The lights in his head are unfocused and confusing, the scope of his radar is so small, barely including the three of them, as if his own brain is trying to protect Izuku from reality by refusing to take in more of it. The pure pain from his back is keeping him frozen on the ground on a side, cold sweat collecting on his body.

He has no idea for how long he blacked out. But it can’t be too long, he can hear Kouta hiccup in fear.

“You…” He sobs, weak. “You killed mom and dad—“
Izuku snaps back to focus, he forces himself to, despite his radar being so small around him. The now not-unknown threat—He killed the Water Horse duo, Muscular is his name—Can create muscular fibres on his body at will—laughs in an unpleasant way.

“What a surprise.” He says, sounding almost amused. “You are the Water Horse’s kid. This is destiny.”

Izuku is trying to stand on his unsure limbs, and failing. The pain from his back is unbearable, every movement a torture—He can feel Kouta trying to attack—water, like his parents—and fail with a sob.

“Don’t worry, little one, you’ll see them soon enough.”

Something snaps in Izuku’s chest. Fury encompasses him, finally relegating the painful protests of his back in a corner of his mind. He charges.

His hand gets trapped in something—he can grow muscle fibres, that’s what he must’ve done—that wraps around his wrist, when the man dodges his right hook at the very last second, and Izuku is basically hanging on his shoulder from an arm as Muscular makes a surprised noise.

“You’re still alive.” He notices. “Considering the number Shigaraki did on you, I thought a punch in the back would be enough to take you out. You are far sturdier than you look, kid.”

Kouta it’s still sobbing, frozen on the spot.

“Shut the fuck up—“ Izuku hisses, voice coming like gravel from his burning throat. “Kouta, run! Go back to your aunt!”

“There’s nowhere he can run—“ Muscular tries to say, sarcastic, and Izuku uselessly punches his chest with his free hand.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!” He repeats, furiously baring his teeth, before turning his face toward Kouta as much as he can. “Kouta, run! I promise you he will not touch you! I will protect you!”
Breath stops in Kouta’s chest with a strangled sob, surprise rippling through his small light.

“I promise, Kouta!” Izuku roars. “I will protect you! I promise! RUN!”

Finally, the boy turns and runs into the forest, toward the lodge. Muscular chuckles, as if he finds it all funny.

It all happens in a second.

Izu

I

The overbearing, all-encompassing pain Izuku feels at the hit gets channeled right back to who caused it, as Izuku’s mind blacks out.

___

Most of the students made it back safe and sound, scared expressions on their faces. They are all grouped together, three of the Pussycats surrounding them protectively, hoping the rest will get back soon, ready to evacuate at any second.

Someone it’s still missing, as Aizawa and Sekijiro count them up rapidly. A part of class B, that was unlucky enough to be too deep into the forest. Ragdoll. And from his own class, Shoji, Tokoyami, Todoroki and Bakugou hadn’t made it back yet.

Midoriya it’s still missing, too. It’s only been a few minutes, but the seconds tick by, every each one feeling like an hour. Aizawa needs that boy to be back, asap, both to make sure he’s ok, and because apparently they can’t do their own damn job anymore without his incredibly useful radar. Aizawa has to physically fight the need to run into the forest himself, to search for the rest of the students. It would be stupid to do so, when he has no idea where any of them are currently located, but the need still burns in his soul like a hot rod.

Suddenly there’s a rustling of leaves as Mandalay’s nephew runs into the clearing, dirt stains on him, breathing heavily, tears streaming down his face.
“KOUTA!” Mandalay hiccups, leaning down to hug him when he runs into her arms. “You’re ok— Thank God—“

“Aunt—“ He sniffles. “The m-man who killed mom and d-dad— Was there—“

“Muscular…?” She whispers, her eyes widening in shock.

“That boy—“ Kouta sobs, more tears falling down his little cheeks. “Midoriya— He stayed behind — He told me he would p-protect me—“

Aizawa closes his eyes, his chest giving a painful churn.

**Stupid, stupid Midoriya—**

---

When Shouto and Bakugou accidentally met with Tokoyami and Shoji, it had been clear that something was wrong with Tokoyami.

“We have to hurry—“ Shoji said from one of his arms, the others keeping Tokoyami in a tight grasp. “He’s losing control—“

“It’s what we’ve been trying to do all along, dumbass.” Bakugou replies through gritted teeth. “This damn gas is closing in, we don’t have time to stroll at a relaxed pace, bird-face.”

“S-shut-up—” Tokoyami replies, clutching at his head.

“We mustn’t be far from camp—“ Shouto interjects, trying to calm the increasingly boiling nerves. He steps closer to his two classmates. “Tokoyami, stay close, I can use my fire to stop Dark Shadow,
if necessary.”

Tokoyami nods, tense, as they resume their run back to the lodge.

The gas, ominous like a snake sliding down through the grass, seemed to be following them, forcing them to take a far longer path back to camp than Shouto had hoped. He had no idea what was going on, or how everyone else was doing, their only point of contact Mandalay’s occasional message. She even told them they had permission to fight if necessary, on Aizawa-sensei’s behalf.

He really wished he could borrow Midoriya’s quirk for a minute, right now.

Suddenly, a series of something looking like impossibly long blades cuts through their path right in the middle, scattering them in different directions as they dodge the sharp metal, and three things seem to happen in rapid succession.

Shouto is forced to roll away to avoid getting cut in half, separated from Tokoyami, and Dark Shadow finally overcomes him, coming out with a shriek, a giant beast of rage. Whoever had attacked them -a monstrous person, completely clad in some sort of straight-jacket, only his mouth free as blades come out of it- immediately suffers the consequences, as Dark Shadow makes a beeline for him with a furious roar.

Shouto hears a gasp from behind him, and then a sort of popping noise. When he turns, Bakugou is gone.

—

Midoriya finally came back.

He stumbles into the clearing on unsure legs, right on the furthest edge from them. His hands are completely covered in blood that rises up to his elbows, stains on his clothes as well, but his arms don’t appear to be broken. There’s blood on his face and neck, too, abundantly rolling down from his nose, dripping in fat drops from his chin. He’s sweating, panting, his eyes completely unfocused.

Aizawa manages to run up to him and catch him a second before he goes down, guiding him to kneel on the ground.
“Midoriya, what the hell—“ He hisses. The boy is shivering. He turns his face vaguely up to Aizawa, looking confused.

“— Sensei.” He mumbles, slurred. Then he tries to stand, turning to the left like he wants to enter back into the forest.

“Where do you think you are going?” Aizawa asks, keeping him in a tight grip.

“—’s in trouble.” Midoriya mutters. “Tokoyami— Lost control—“ He must be observing the few that are still missing, Aizawa realizes. “Ragdoll— unconscious— Ibara too— Tetsutetsu ’s holding her—“

Sekijiro, Tora and Pixie-bob had come closer to also listen as Mandalay kept the kids grouped near the bus, ready to leave the instant everyone was back.

“Something— Wrong with Kacchan—“ Midoriya keeps mumbling, as if he’s in a trance. “ —Feels weird— Shoji’s hurt— Todoroki— Confused— Enemies— Around them— Four— Five—“

“Kid, where are they?” Pixie-bob asks, kneeling by Midoriya’s side as Aizawa keeps him upright, nothing of her jovial attitude in her voice.

Midoriya blinks, his eyes distant, swaying a bit before he raises his arm to point to the forest.

“Tora, with me!” Pixie-bob orders, the towering man rapidly following her in the direction Midoriya pointed to. The boy tries to stand, as if he wants to follow.

“Kid.” Aizawa murmurs, keeping him steady. “You’ve done enough. That is enough. You can stop, ok? You can stop, now.”

Midoriya turns back to him, blinking, as if words cannot quite reach him.

“Sensei—” He says, voice hazy. “Behind you.”
Izuku’s not sure what is going on, it’s like his body and mind are completely disconnected. A garbled mess, short instants of lucidity coming back to him before being swept away by this fuzzy, white noise filling his head.

He knows the pain. That one is clear. It hasn’t stopped, not even for a second. His back feels like it’s about to crumble down again, the way it did when Shigaraki sunk his hand into Izuku’s flesh.

He’s far away, his mind not his anymore. He feels garbled, he feels slow, like he’s trying to move through molasses. There are voices around him, but words don’t seem to make real sense most of the time. He feels like he’s trying to find his way through a labyrinth that keeps shifting and turning under his feet.

There are hands on him, keeping him up, dragging him around. Hands on his face, voice calling to him, but he cannot answer.

He feels them, the lights, some familiar, others not. Frantic, angry, scared, determined.

_Fighting._

He should be helping. He should be fighting, too. But the hands don’t let him go. They drag him away, stopping him from moving. And then he’s lying down, he thinks, he’s not sure, someone is holding his head up, something in his face, voices calling.

They are here, _almost all— and class B, too— Sensei— He’s hurt._

_The Pussycats— Ragdoll and Pixie-bob aren’t here. Todoroki and Uraraka are near, worried, comforting—_

_Kacchan isn’t here._
“Where’s Kacchan?” Izuku murmurs, because they are all here, his classmates, but Kacchan isn’t, and that is wrong.

“Where’s Kacchan?” He asks again, because no one is answering.

Where’s Kacchan?

—

Aizawa’s left arm hurts like a bitch. That bastard -Dabi, that was his name, he said- surely made a number on him when Aizawa was forced to protect Midoriya from the flames with his own body, before Pixie-bob and Tora came back with the missing kids in tow. They were finally able to leave, Dabi disappearing in a now way too familiar black mist with a smug smile on his face. Aizawa let Sekijiro medicate him with what they had on hands on the bus, after he’s finally done with the all of the students that are sitting, silent, holding to one another in the deep of the night, the only noise the rumble of the engine as they drive away from danger.

Aizawa looks down at Midoriya. The boy is completely out of it.

Todoroki, bruised and scrapped after the fight he’d been through, is keeping him steady on the bus floor. Not enough space for all of them, pressed together as much as they could. He’s holding Midoriya, keeping his back against his right side, a small sheen of ice covering him. Uraraka, pale, eyes glinting with unshed tears is kneeling by them in the cramped space, keeping Midoriya’s own shirt pressed under his nose, trying to stop the blood that still comes out of it, slowly.

The boy doesn’t seem to understand what is going on. His eyes are far, head lolling back against Todoroki’s shoulder. He’s clearly feverish.

“Where’s Kacchan…?” He murmurs yet again, Uraraka biting down her lower lip without an answer.

Sekijiro gives Aizawa a silent pat, a contrite expression on his usually already contrite face. Aizawa tests his arm a bit, and it still hurts, of course, but not much he can do, for now.

He uncomfortably kneels down in what little space there is. “Todoroki, let me see.”
The boy seems to hesitate, at first, his eyes avoiding Aizawa. With a sigh he gently jostles Midoriya forward, Uraraka helping by taking his shoulders to steady him. She chokes on a trembly sob when she sees Midoriya’s back.

It’s not a nice spectacle to look at. The scarred tissue on the boy’s back is a canvas of horror. It’s clearly irritated, an angry red, and when Aizawa barely grazes it, feeling just how utterly scorching the boy’s skin is, Midoriya tenses with a pained sob.

“…Keep cooling him down.” Aizawa says, watching Todoroki give a minute nod as he gently takes Midoriya’s weight and lean him back on against his cold, right side. Midoriya relaxes, even if just barely.

“Uraraka, you don’t happen to have his painkillers with you.” Aizawa says turning to the girl, not quite a question.

She’s drying away the tears from her eyes, shaking her head. “They are in his bag, back at the lodge.” She says, voice low and angry. Frustrated.

Of course they are. If Aizawa learnt something in these past few months is that if something can go wrong, then it will.

Iida is approaching them. “Sir, everyone seems to be fine.” He reports, dutifully, serious. “Shoji’s wound is not life-threatening, and Tokoyami is back under full control.”

“Thank you, Iida.” Aizawa replies, carding a hand through his hair tiredly. “Please, make sure everyone is ok until we reach the hospital.”

“Of course, sir.” Iida seems to hesitate for a moment, looking down at his three friends. Uraraka meets his eyes, giving him a small, determined nod.

We are taking care of him. Her eyes seems to say. So, don’t worry, check on the others.

I guess you can’t sway a member of the Protection Squad off duty so easily, even if he’s also class president. Aizawa thinks to himself with the tiniest, most dry hint of humor trying to find a way out
his weary soul.

Aizawa steps carefully over his students to go to the front of the bus. Tora is driving, silent, Mandalay holding a sleeping Kouta between her arms sitting near him.

“Anything from Pixie-bob?” He whispers.

“She’s still searching.” Mandalay reports, her eyes casted low. “The police reached the lodge and men are joining in the search. They’ve found and arrested some of the unconscious villains, too.”

“…They’ll find her, I’m sure.” Aizawa tries to comfort. “Ragdoll is strong.”

Mandalay nods, but doubt is weighing all over her, clear in her eyes. Aizawa squeezes her shoulder gently one last time, before sitting down on the floor himself, letting his head rest uncomfortably against the plastic between a seat and the other.

They should have been secure. They should have. But they weren’t.

Students risked their lives. Some of them had to fight. More fear had been instilled in their hearts. Aizawa had broken two promises that night.

The first, to Midoriya’s mother. That empty hope that he could possibly be able to stop the boy from hurting himself once more.

The second, the one he silently makes to the parents of all these children. The unspoken promise that they will be safe in Aizawa’s care.

Bakugou was missing.

Aizawa had failed.
*does the 'I know you hate me' dance*

Before this chapter's art, the usual link: here from my tumblr
Today's art happened off screen, so here's the freaking out corner 2: the revenge.
(also if you are still reading: another smutty (with feelings) tododeku oneshot happened! At this point it's going to turn into a series, so if you are interested in that, be aware a third installation is in the works lmao)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
The sky was rumbling, rain insistently hitting against the windows, deafening. A summer storm.

*Appropriate, considering the situation.*

The door opened with a soft click. Toshinori entered, his face a mask of cold rage, a small, old man in tow.

Gran Torino. Toshinori’s old teacher.

When they closed the door behind them, the room was plunged into a semi-darkness again, the only light a cold, steel gray coming from outside.

“Tsukauchi is on his way.” Gran Torino says to the unasked question, as he and Toshinori take place at the table in front of Aizawa. “At this point it’s clear we have to act. This has been the straw that broke the camel’s back, we cannot allow any more of *his* schemings to continue.”

Aizawa nods, silent. His left arm still felt raw even after the burns on it had been healed.

“But you didn’t want to talk about this, for now, did you.” Toshinori intervenes, not a question.
There’s a glacial quality to his voice. One more sign of the kind of anger storming inside him.

“We will have plenty of time to plan our attack once Tsukauchi and the other pros get here.” Aizawa replies with a nod. “While we wait, I wanted to talk about Midoriya.”

Gran Torino sighs. “What about that brat, now.” He says, tired. “Every single time I’ve been hearing his name since the work experience week, it has been in a situation in which he’d got himself in trouble.”

“The police reports came back.” Aizawa says, crossing his fingers on the table. “One of the villains that was found and arrested was not in the group that Tora, Pixie-bob and the kids ended up fighting before we evacuated. He was the one that Midoriya faced.”

Neither Toshinori or Gran Torino seems surprised in the slightest.

“I have no idea what happened.” Aizawa rummaged through the considerable pile of paper in front of him, taking out a file. “But I have a theory.”

He launches the file across the table. Toshinori picks it up, Gran Torino leaning over his shoulder to read.

“Muscular—” The old man says, eyes widening. “He fought against this guy?!”

“He couldn’t have been gone for more than ten minutes, and he came back with technically no new wound on him.” Aizawa says, crossing his fingers under his chin. “Read what the report says.”

He gives them time. Two pair of eyes moving back and forth on the paper, both of them going wide when they reach the most glaring issue in the report.

“—Offender’s wounds are mostly located in the facial area. Deep and irregular lacerations disfiguring the offender’s features, as if the flesh has been scratched out with bare hands.” Gran Torino reads aloud. “Upon a closer medical examination, part the offender’s frontal lobe has been found to have liquified.” A long moment of silence. “What does this mean? Do you think the boy literally scratched his face out?”
“His hands and arms were completely covered in blood when he came back from the fight.” Aizawa replies, voice low and carefully flat. “Apparently, the nurses reported finding biological material stuck under his nails when they washed him.”

Toshinori slowly puts the reports down on the table.

“And not only that.” Aizawa continues. “The boy spent a long time speaking with Mandalay, apparently very inspired. You know how her quirk works. I’m pretty sure in the two days we had, he’d been searching a way—“ Hesitation. Both Toshinori and Gran Torino’s eyes are set on him, waiting. “…I think he found a way to make his quirk work backwards.”

“Backwards?” Gran Torino presses.

“His quirk allows him to perceive the people around him, like an antenna taking in signals—” Aizawa continues. “A quirk that might have grown stronger since the boy received One For All, if his uncanny connection with Toshinori is anything to come by. As far as we know, his quirk only allows this connection to work one way. From others to him. But what if he managed to reverse the process? From him to others?”

Gran Torino hands rises to his chin as he thinks. Toshinori seems to be frozen, his eyes not moving away from Aizawa.

“—Muscular’s frontal lobe liquefied.” Gran Torino finally murmurs after long seconds of silence. “If he managed to do what you say, Aizawa— He might—“

“We cannot allow him to go down this road.” Aizawa says. “It’s just a theory, but I have the hunch he will confirm it for us, once we ask.”

Toshinori slowly stands, walking up to the window. He looks at the rain pouring outside, a hand on his mouth.

“I don’t think his quirk was ever supposed to do that naturally, at least not this strongly.” Aizawa continues, patting the report about Muscular. “His nose didn’t stop bleeding for a long while after he came back. If he managed to liquefy someone’s brain, trying to imagine what it could do to him. Just one slip of control and— It’s too dangerous.”
“—Not to mention the implications.” Gran Torino adds, voice low. “If he really did that to Muscular, he might’ve felt *all of it*.”

Aizawa let himself melt on his seat with a tired sigh. “I don’t think I’ve ever had a student giving me so much work before.” He mutters, massaging his forehead. “Toshinori, that boy is taking one too many steps directed right to an abyss without even realizing. He needs to calm down.”

Toshinori does not reply for long seconds. When he does, his voice is rough. “Yes.” He says. “I agree.”


---

Kacchan was gone.

That’s what his classmates had told to him, once he woke up in a hospital bed, sore and in pain and confused and not remembering a lick of what has happened after Kouta ran away from him and Muscular.

The villains took him.

*Kacchan was gone.*

Izuku wanted to scream. He wanted to punch something. He was utterly *furious*.

Yet again he’d been useless. Yet again something went wrong. Like at the U.S.J., it did not matter that Izuku saw the enemy, they still got what they wanted.

Like it did not matter that he felt Shigaraki’s presence at the Kiyashi-Ward shopping mall, because that only won him a wound so debilitating it rendered him even more useless than he already was.

What *fucking* good was his radar if he could not prevent bad things from happening? What *goddamn fucking* good was the power of the symbol of peace in his hands?
Why have you given me this power, All Might? Why to someone as weak and useless as me?

Izuku was stuck on a bed, yet again. Alone, stewing in his anger.

He should’ve never been born. It would’ve been better for everyone if he never existed. All Might would’ve given his power to someone more worthy, someone capable of doing actual good with it.

The door to his room opened. Izuku turned his face a bit as he sat on his bed, turning his quirk on. His head hurt but he ignored it as Aizawa-sensei, All Might - he felt so closed off and far, now, like there was a wall between them. He felt… cold.— and Gran Torino entered. Maybe he should’ve greeted them, but he just didn’t had it in him. He waited, in silence.

“Kid.” Aizawa-sensei said, before sighing. “We got some stuff to talk about.”

Izuku resisted the urge to roll his eyes, steeling himself for another round of scolding to come.


“What?” Izuku blinks, frowning.

“I’m asking you how. We need to know what happened.”

Izuku takes some time to think, trying to recall exactly what happened. His memories aren’t clear from that first punch that made him black out for a bit. He’s sure he got up, he remembers trying and failing to hit Muscular, telling Kouta to run away. He remembers trying his new technique in desperation—

His memories definitely became a garbled mess from there.

“…I don’t remember.” He admits, voice low. “I tried… To do a thing, and maybe it worked, but I don’t remember from there.”
“A thing.” Aizawa-sensei replies, something unexplainable in his voice. “Did you try to reverse the effects of your quirk on him?”

Izuku’s eyes go wide in surprise. Sensei knew already?

“I guess that answers my question.” Aizawa-sensei continues, voice flat. “Midoriya. Don’t do that ever again.”

“What?” The word is out of Izuku’s mouth before he can stop himself. “But—“

“No buts!” Aizawa-sensei roars, furious in a way Izuku had never felt before. “You’ve forced your quirk to work in a way so forced that it’s a miracle your head is still on your shoulders! Did you not realize how dangerous that could be for you?!"

“I practiced it—“ Izuku replies, rage bubbling up in his throat. “I was practicing, and I was fine!”

“You were fine, huh? That’s why you don’t even remember what happened after you did that to Muscular?”

Izuku does not have anything to reply to that. He grits his teeth, frustrated. “But it could be useful!” He tries to insist. “Sensei, I found a way to extend the effect of my quirk so much! I can find Kacchan with this, I can help—“

“I’ve had enough with you!” Izuku jumps, Aizawa-sensei closing in on him with two strides. “Do you have any idea what you are doing to yourself?! To the people that care for you?! You need to stop and listen, boy!”

Izuku’s breath is coming short to him, as he frowns up to the furious light of Aizawa-sensei.

“Toshinori.” Aizawa-sensei says, cold, after long seconds of silence.

All Might steps closer as well. His lights suddenly feels overbearing in a way that Izuku had never felt before. Never pointed at him, at least.
“Aizawa is right.” All Might says, voice carefully flat. “You’ve gone too far, young Midoriya. You need to examine your actions and realize that you’ve been pushing yourself over the line, instead of counting on the people surrounding you, the people that want to help you. You cannot put the weight of the world on your shoulders all the time—”

Something bites in Izuku, a blinding rage grabbing at his heart. “Maybe if you all stopped treating me like I’m made of glass I could count on you!” He snaps back. “And you decided to put the weight of the world on my shoulders!”

A heavy silence falls on the room as Izuku pants after his little outburst. He turns his face away, frowning.

“I had a way to try find Kacchan—” He says, voice lower but not any less angry. “And now you all waltz in and tell me I should not use it?!”

“Exactly.” All Might says. His light is closed off, the wall is getting higher.

Izuku recoils, turning back to them.

“You should not worry yourself with this matter anymore.” All Might continues, flat. “The police is already on it. An operation to rescue your classmate is going to take place tomorrow. It is not something that is between your hands anymore, so your role now is to properly recover and, for once in your life, obey to what you’ve been told.”

Izuku feels it, the traitorous sting of tears in his eyes. He turns away from Aizawa-sensei and All Might before they can roll down his cheeks, angrily biting down his lower lip.

“This is the last chance, Midoriya.” Aizawa-sensei says, his voice steel, but not without a tiny note of kindness in it. “You’ve done enough. Let us take care of this, and trust our judgment when we say something is bad for you. Don’t use your quirk in the way you did anymore. Please.”

Izuku does not reply, a tear rolling down his cheek, falling from his chin. Aizawa-sensei sighs one last time, and then just as silent as they came in, they go.
Their lights are still close. But they feel so, so far.

—

“Midoriya.” Kirishima’s voice is low, serious. “Could you… Could you find him?”

Izuku blinks, turning his head just slightly.

“What are you saying?” Uraraka replies, a frown clear in her voice. “Of course he can’t— We don’t even know how far he must be—“

He’s sitting on his bed, legs crossed, picking at the soft pants he was wearing. The entire class was here. Everyone’s lights felt weary, sad, angry. Despite that they had tried to cheer Izuku up, and failed miserably.

Izuku feels distant, all he can feel is a soup of rage boiling inside him. Maybe he was about to have another one of his episodes, as mom had defined it. He should probably turn off his stupid quirk.

He doesn’t.

“What if I tell you that maybe I can.” He replies, voice low.

Surprise ripples like a wave through everyone.

“What?”

“I might have a way to find Kacchan.” Izuku continues. He can hear Aizawa-sensei’s voice in his head, don’t use your quirk like that anymore.

He ignores it.
“What are you talking about? Midoriya—“ Uraraka intervenes, worried. “You shouldn’t— I know you are worried, but—“

“It’s one of the things I’ve been practicing at the camp.” Izuku explains, flat. “I can… Reverse the effect of my quirk. Send the signal out instead of just taking it in. I can use people like antennas— extending the range of my quirk far beyond what I thought was possible. From person to person— Like a long chain. I never went too far— but if I do that, I might be able to pin-point Kacchan’s position.”

Silence falls in the room, heavy as lead.

“Midoriya.” Iida’s voice is strangely flat, almost cold. His light is tense, as if he’s trying to reign in panic. “Stop.”

Izuku flinches.

“We understand that you are worried. We all are.” He continues. “But— If I have to be honest, you are scaring me. Please, don’t— Don’t try to do that.” The sentence had turned in a whisper as he spoke, worry tainting it.

Izuku turns his face up, frowning. “What do you mean?” He replies, angry. “I can find him! Why the hell doesn’t any of you understand??”

“Because you look like you are about to fall apart, right now!” Iida snaps back, desperation clear in his tone. “If you could see yourself from the outside—“

“Well, I fucking can’t!” Izuku interrupts, furious, rage burning in his throat. “I can’t look at myself! I can’t look at anything! I can’t ever do fucking anything to help, and now that I finally have something that might make me useful you all tell me I should ignore it?!”

“Midoriya—“ Uraraka’s voice sounds tiny, pained. “Don’t— Don’t say things like that, you’re not —“

“Not a stupid dead-weight? Not a useless piece of shit? I can go on, the list is infinite—“ With a growl he jumps off his bed, feeling his classmates take a step back as if they are afraid of him. “Fucking forget it.”
He’s out the door before any of them can even call out to him.

To be honest, he knows they are right, all of them.

There’s still a tiny, logical part of him that’s screaming at him to don’t be such an idiot. He’s overreacting. He just treated his friends like crap, they are only worried for him, what the hell is wrong with you.

But is he not worried, too? Because he is worried. A lot.

Because they took Kacchan. And every time Kacchan is involved, Izuku can feel his control slip, years and years of piled up issues and unspoken bitterness and god only knew what else in that mix of pure chaos rising up his throat like bile.

Because Izuku can’t stop himself from caring, no matter how many times he’s been wounded, both in body and mind. Because there’s always this single, small thread hanging between them, giving him hope that maybe one day things will turn ok.

Because Kacchan had tried to grab that thread himself, in his strange, twisted ways.

And Izuku… He just wanted to be stronger. More useful. To help. Isn’t what All Might wanted from him, as well? To have Izuku be able to help?

And when he had found a way to do that, a new way to help, everyone around him scolded him for it, as if Izuku might break if he tried.

He spent a lifetime of being treated like literal glass. He thought he was done with it. Clearly, he was wrong.

He sniffs, angrily wiping away the tears. He hated this. Like he hated Shigaraki, and his stupid
With a sigh, he slowly leaned back, concrete not the most comfortable seating, but not much of a choice when you’ve chosen a hospital roof as a place to brood. All Might said that the police was on it, that there would be an operation to go get Kacchan back.

But how could they? If they had a lead on the league of villains, why hadn’t they acted sooner? Why did they wait until one of them had been kidnapped to finally do something?

And why had the villains found them despite all the precautions that had been taken for their summer camp?

The more he thought about it, the less All Might’s words rung true, despite the fact that Izuku had perceived no lie from him. Could he have twisted the truth in a way that wouldn’t feel like a lie to Izuku? Maybe he just said that to keep Izuku in the dark, keep him calm? Try to avoid Izuku butting his nose were All Might did not want him to?

Not to mention that Izuku was starting to think that someone in their midst might be working for the enemy.

A spy.

And if that was true… If there was a spy as he suspected, and the police and heroes were really about to attack, what assured All Might that this spy would not interfere, feed info to the enemy? Did they not think of such a possibility at all?

There was just so much that could go wrong, and Kacchan’s life was on the line.

And yet, despite the fact that Izuku offered them a chance to discover exactly where to hit, they refused.

A literal glass.

Izuku was so tired. So, so tired. Of all this rage and this negativity storming inside him. Of the
distrust and confusion. Of the fear he felt inside his friends’ hearts as they took hit after hit, the foundations of their lives shaken, forcing them to leave behind the innocence of their younger years.

Not children anymore. They could not afford that.

Izuku closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. If All Might did not want him to help, then Izuku was going to force him to accept his help. Show him he wasn’t made of glass.

He got to work.

—

The chain was working. A constant feed, right back to him, as he inexorably advanced person after person after person, the signal jumping around the city like a cricket of pure energy.

_Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he registered something, just barely. Warmth running down his mouth and chin, down his cheeks. He ignored it._

The lights were everywhere, giving him something to connect to, a platform to jump forward, searching searching searching…

_Snippets of feelings not his, thoughts not his, over in a flash before he could even truly register them, like zapping through tv channels as fast as possible—_

Something familiar finally tickled at him, he followed, getting closer— Some of the enemy’s lights he felt in the forest, and then—

_Kacchan._

_He found him. He was so close to them, so close—_

Izuku felt a zap when he connected to Kacchan. For a second he felt his pure rage, and a touch of fear he was trying his best to stifle, the impression of voices Kacchan must be hearing— _—he’s alive_
he’s alive thank god— and then Izuku steps away. He did not need to linger, he knew where Kacchan was, now, putting a signal on him, like a pin on a map—

But there was still something strange. Not far from Kacchan he could feel those strange cluster-lights of the noumus— Izuku went in exploration, any info could be good—

And then he met the dark cloud.

Izuku never felt something like that, before. Not even Shigaraki’s not light had that strange quality around it.

He jumps closer, carefully—

Katsuki was going to be sick.

Ok, he wasn’t literally going to be sick, he’d never give these fuckers the satisfaction of thinking they got to him.

But this bitch was really grating on his nerves.

They tried to speak to him, tried to make him join their league of losers. As if.

They thought they knew him, and they had no idea. He laughed in their faces, watching that fucker, Shigaraki, grow more and more irritated as Katsuki refused them, spit on them, and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Because, seriously, they really thought they could get him to join their side. They really were that stupid. That was so funny it was unbelievable.

—And he laughed so much because he could never admit the fear, deep inside him. The knowledge that if something didn’t happen soon, the only way Katsuki would get out of this shit hole would be
Shigaraki had given up for the moment, leaving him be, ordering that stupid girl to watch him to make sure he wouldn’t try something funny. As if he could, he had already tried to do something funny and the fuckers had tied him really well. Fucking hell.

So here she was. She hadn’t done much, at first. Taking a chair and sitting in front of him while she played with a knife, a stupid, dreamy smile on her face.

“Say, since we are here…” She started at some point. “Why don’t you tell me more about little Izuku?”

Katsuki forced himself to school his face into absolute, cold indifference, not answering.

“He’s so cute— Like a little, wild animal.“ She sighed, launching the knife in the air and catching it again. “I saw him in the forest, you know? I wasn’t supposed to be there, but well— When you guys somehow realized that we were coming the plan changed, so I ended up stumbling into him.”

Katsuki keeps not answering, his left cheek twitching as she let out another lovestruck sigh.

“He was so beautiful, all covered in blood.” She continues, undaunted by his silence. “I saw him, you know? He did something funny with Muscular— Somehow sending him straight down without doing apparently anything and then as Muscular struggled on the ground he went— He turned— He was so— So— Feral.” She whispers after stumbling on her words, her face lighting up when she finally found the one she was searching for. “He kept fighting and scratching— He really was like a angry beast out for blood.”

There’s a beat of silence and then she sighs again. “And before I knew it, I was already in love.”

Katsuki was going to be fucking sick.

“I hope to see him like that again, soon.” She adds, in a low, dreamy voice.
Izuku opens his eyes, and darkness is around him.

It was a different type— his darkness had always simply been the lack of sight. This darkness was actual, literal blackness surrounding him, he could tell the difference—

He blinks, when he notices he could see something out the corner of his eyes.

Wait... What?

Izuku looks down. He sees hands. His hands.

He... Sees.

Fascinated, he turns them around, wiggling the fingers of his right hand. They move, misshapen, confirming that yes, this is undoubtedly his right, scarred hand, the one he had broken multiple times during the festival. That he’s seeing.

And not only that. He can see his legs. They look so long in the soft pants he’s wearing— He’s so much taller, now that he’s not four anymore. His naked feet move when he shifts his weight from one to the other. He turns around on himself, looking down at his own body curiously.

He wonders if there’s a mirror here, somewhere, in this strange black place. Maybe he could finally see his own face. But when he looks around, all there’s as far as the eyes go it’s just that.

Black.

*Where is he? Why is he—*

“Hello...?” He calls out, confused. A rumble in the distance makes him jump. Then a voice.

“*Who are you?”*
It’s deep, it sounds like it’s everywhere and nowhere at once. Izuku turns, blinking when something seems to rise up from the black in front of him, something gooey, and dark, like everything else seems to be, here. With a splash, the goo falls, and disappears, sinking back to where it came from. A man in a suit is standing in it’s place, now.

“Who are you?” The voice repeats again, the man’s mouth moving with it.

When Izuku tries to focus on his features, tries to see him, it’s like his face shifts and change, making this person look blurry.

Then the man chuckles, surprised.

“Oh, I see who you are, now.” He says, wonder in his voice. “Look at you, all shining and bright like a beacon in the dark, Midoriya Izuku.”

“I—” The words itches in his mouth, his mind feels fuzzy.

What was he doing, again?
“I don’t remember—"

“That is understandable.” The man replies, nodding with his strange blurry face. “To wander like this, you must have been very desperate. What would push you to walk in the abyss voluntarily, my boy?”

Walk in the abyss? “I don’t understand—"

“Oh, my dear boy, there is so much you do not understand.” The man makes a big gesture, as if showing incredible wonders that are not there. “I’ve been around for a long time, and there is much I do not understand myself. As an example, I do not understand why nature has been so cruel to you. Taking your eyes away, depriving you of the wonders of the world you could have enjoyed if you hadn’t been blind.”

“I’m blind?” Izuku asks, tilting his head on a side. He looks down at his hands. “But I can see—"

“Only here, apparently. Another cruel joke of destiny.” The man sighs, walking up to him. “Oh, my poor boy, what have they done to you.”

Izuku feels weird and disconnected. Tired. Like he might fall asleep right there. His own mind escapes him, like he cannot quite connect with his own thoughts anymore.

“You have been lied to for so long.” The man whispers, putting a gentle hand on Izuku’s cheek. “You have been pushed to take a choice not really your own, in the name of someone that, in different circumstances, might have not spared a second glance in your direction.”

“Who?” Izuku asks, confused.

“But who else, if not him, of course.”

Suddenly, there’s someone else at their side. Izuku turns, looking up into the face of a tall, blond man with hollow features wearing some sort of costume that hangs too big on his thin frame. The blond man looks back down to him, sadly.
“Oh, so that is how he looks like, now.” The man with the blurry face comments. “I had not the honour to see myself.”

Izuku knows this person— He knows this person, right?

“Who is he?” He asks the man with the blurry face, unable to look away from the blond man’s sad expression. The answer eludes him, like a word you have right on your tongue and yet you can’t pronounce.

“He’s your zero.” The man with the blurry face replies. “He’s the point that every each one of your decisions has ever started from. He’s the north on your compass.”

“…Is he?” Izuku asks, trying to raise his arm to touch the blond man, and failing, like the blond man manages to move away from him without actually moving.

“Oh, he is. He’s the shining ideal that had been forced in your head from the very first time you have come into this world. Something invincible, and pure, and just.” The man with the blurry face keeps saying, voice becoming more and more emphatic. “The person that led you to believe that justice will always prevail, when in reality justice is constantly failing.”

“But I—” Izuku tries to retort, confused, the man with the blurry face putting two gentle fingers on Izuku’s lips to stop him.

“You have been lied to for so long, Midoriya Izuku.” He says, kind. “I want to show you.”

And suddenly, the man with the blurry face is not blurry anymore. He has no face at all, Izuku realizes. Only scarred skin, and a twisted mouth, grinning down to him.

“This is what he has done to me, my boy.” The man says. “The symbol of peace. Look what he has done.”

Izuku tries to step back, but the man is keeping one hand on his shoulder, his other keeping Izuku’s face up to him, fingers like a vice.
“Do not look away.” He whispers, leaning down on Izuku. “This is his doing. And he has hurt you, too, hasn’t he? He has hurt you so much, I can see it in your eyes— He used you, made you feel loved and then stomped on your heart. He pushed you to injure yourself, and then turned his back on you when you needed him the most. He does not trust you. He has shown it through and through with his insincerity.”

Izuku frowns. It feels like there’s something not quite right in what this man is saying, but he cannot pinpoint what it is.

“You and I, we will meet again.” The man says, patting Izuku’s shoulders amicably. “We are connected by fate, after all. As he is your dawn, I am your sunset, two faces of the same medal. One could not exist without the other. And that is why I want you to remember, to remember what he has done to me, to remember what he has done to you. I want you to remember it all, for the next time we will face one another.”

“Why?” Izuku asks, perplexed. “If he has hurt me so much, as you say, why would I want to remember?”

“So you can see the truth.” The man replies. “So you can make a decision, a real decision this time, and be freed from those shackles that have been forced on you. I only wish for you to be free, to be who you really are. I have no ill will toward you, my dear boy. It is not your fault if others have made decisions for you, after all.”

“Who— Who are you?” Izuku asks, because he’s so, so tired, and feels strange, and nothing makes sense anymore, and this man that seems to be speaking to him so kindly hasn’t even introduced himself— at least Izuku thinks he hasn’t, he’s not sure, everything feels strange—

“You will know once you wake up.” The man chuckles, putting a gentle hand on Izuku’s hair. “I am afraid our time together is about to run out. It has been quite a pleasure to finally meet you, my dear boy. I was impatient to do so, if I have to be honest. I wish you the best of luck for your future. Now go back, before you die of blood loss.”

And with that, he’s gone.

—

Going back is painful.
His eyes don’t work—*but they did, they did work, just a minute ago, why don’t they anymore, I want to see*—, his back hurts—*but it did not hurt just a minute ago, why does it hurt again, it hurts so much, please stop*— and he feels weak, so weak, and so confused. His head feels like it’s about to split in half, and he can’t see anymore, his lights are gone, and he cannot turn his quirk on again or his head will really split in half—

His nose feels clogged as he slowly tries to make sense through the fog of pain. He’s lying down on a side on something hard and cold. He breathes through his mouth, painfuNly, and coughs shakes him, something unpleasant coming out his throat and mouth. Tastes like iron.

He has to focus on breathing, just on that, just breathing through his open mouth until the world stops spinning.

He cautiously tries to move a hand. He feels so light, and yet so heavy at the same time. He moves one hand, and then the other, palms meeting something squishy and wet as he weakly tries to sit up, almost rendering his effort null when they slip.

He manages to keep his balance, finally sitting. Now, he tries to move his legs. They feel alien, like they are not quite his, and it takes him so long to collect them closer to himself, and try to bend them, put some strength in them so he can stand.

When he finally manages to push himself up, he almost goes right back to the floor, only stopped when in his stumbling he hits something hard with his right shoulder.

His left hand searches for the hard surface he’s leaning on, finding it cold and rough under his palm, and then he slowly tries to walk forward without breaking that contact, his only guide in the dark. His fingers hit something slightly different, and he carefully palms at it, recognising it must be a door.

He takes him three tries to push it open, it’s so heavy, and then he stumbles forward. His stomach hits something cold, hands blindly grabbing.

*It’s a railing. A tiny part of him registers. Stairs.*

He makes his way down, slowly, so slowly and yet he almost falls down two times, slipping on his unsure legs, confused and lost in his world of darkness, only saving himself by gripping at the railing
with what little strength he has.

He keeps stumbling forward once he finally makes it down the ramp, his palm sliding on a wall. He can hear voices in the distance, so he follows.

“— was really angry.” Someone says, worried. “I didn’t want to upset him, I really didn’t want to—Oh my god.”

He feels hands on him, just a second before his mind blacks out once more.

___

When he wakes, he’s lucid again, if absolutely broken. He can feel the iv line in his arm, the drip of something being inserted into his veins. He doesn’t hear noises around him beside the soft hiss of hospital machinery nearby. It must be deep in the night.

Izuku blinks, plunged back into his personal brand of darkness, as the name of the man that first had a blurry face and then had none at all comes to him along with a realization.

He just spoke with All For One.

Chapter End Notes

HEY IT ONLY TOOK 20 CHAPTERS AND 100+K WORDS TO FINALLY GET TO THE SCENE THAT SPARKED THIS ENTIRE FIC AND GAVE IT ITS TITLE WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT.

*pops confetti*

As per usual, here for my tumblr

Also in case ur ok with B/w comic violence, click here for a little comic page of the moment our favorite gurl Toga fell in love
“Dude. Hey.”

Izuku turns to the voice, snapping out of the tired, dazed fog that took over his head, hearing Kirishima hesitating on the door. He knows he must look like a zombie. *-he certainly feels like one-*

“Hey.” He replies, weakly, as Kirishima finally gathers his courage and steps into the room. He gets closer, sitting down on the edge of Izuku’s bed.

“Listen—“ He tries to say, before his voice dies out.

“You feel guilty.” Izuku replies. His quirk is turned off *-his head still hurts, of course it does. He went and got way over it and now he’s suffering the consequences, welcome to his life-* but it’s not hard to pick the tone in Kirishima’s voice. “No need to.”

“Need to.” Kirishima replies with a sigh. “I shouldn’t have pushed you around like that.”

“You only asked me a question.”

“*Midoriya.*” Kirishima replies pointedly. “Don’t play dumb. We both know you are not. I knew how you felt and I still asked you something stupid that pushed you to do something stupid.”

A beat of silence.

“Which was very stupid, by the way.” Kirishima adds.

“I think I’m aware of that, now.” Izuku murmurs, tiredly dragging a hand over his throbbing-in-pain-face.
“Are you?” Kirishima asks sarcastically, noises suggesting he’s crossing his arms on his chest. “Because I had to see you emerge from a dark corridor bleeding from your eyes. That gave me a whole new perspective on the concept of doing something stupid.”

“Oh.” Well, that explained some things. “I’m sorry.”

Kirishima sighs. “Listen, I’m just—I was frustrated, and I wasn’t thinking, and I still am, frustrated I mean, frankly, because fuck— All I could do while those sons of bitches snatched him away was dumbly stand and wait and that irritates me.”

Izuku does not comment, blinking. He definitely could relate.

“And I know you feel the same way I do, this sense of powerlessness— It sucks big time.” Kirishima continues. “But, Midoriya— You constantly take everything and drag it a step further than it needs to, and if you don’t stop, you’re gonna get yourself killed for real, next time.”

Izuku turns on a side, his knees gently bumping against Kirishima’s back as he sinks half his face in the pillow.

“— I never know what I’m supposed to do.” Izuku whispers, muffled. “I just— I just want to help—”

“And that is a noble cause, but there’s helping, and then there’s self-destructing yourself because you think you’re not good enough.” Kirishima says, his voice a mix of kindness and sadness. “Midoriya, I think I can understand a bit how you feel— I don’t pretend to fully understand you, but— At least a bit.”

Izuku closes his eyes, trying to hold back the sting of tears.

“And— I don’t know what has happened to you through your life that made you think you’re not enough— Because I assure you, you are more than that. You’ve been an unstoppable force ever since you’ve set foot in class with us.” Kirishima continues, a gentle hand finding Izuku’s shoulder. His voice was low, strangled, worried. “So, please— For yourself, and all of us— Slow down. Give us a chance to reach you and offer our help. If you keep running down the way you are, I’m not quite sure we will get to our second year together.”
Because you’ll be dead. The words hang around, unspoken.

A painful knot has found its way in Izuku’s throat as Kirishima spoke. He releases a shuddering sigh, cracking his eyes open just barely. Kirishima is right. Izuku knows he’s right. And yet the pain squirmed in his chest, the dark thoughts nibbling at the back of his head—

He keeps seeing a scarred not-face, burned into his brain, an after-image of horror. He hates that the one time his eyes were working, in whatever that hellish dreamscape was, what he had the chance to see was that.

The wonders of the world my ass.

“Kirishima.” Izuku murmurs, because he doesn’t want to linger on what Kirishima said, on the deep guilt, on the fact that he disappointed everyone that cared for him— And he doesn’t want to think about that… Man. “How do you look like?”

“Huh?” Kirishima replies, perplexed.

“You. How do you look like.”

“…We’ve known each other for like, months, and you’re only asking that now?”

“I’ve been knowing people for years and never asked them once.” Izuku replies, a little sarcastic tone in his tired voice. “Consider yourself honored.”

“Um, well—“ Kirishima starts, indecisive. “Let me think— I got sharp teeth and a little scar over my right eye that I got when my quirk manifested for the first time— My hair is red—“

“Mh.” Izuku sniffs. “Red. Suits you.”

“Right?” Kirishima laughs, elbowing him gently. “Fiery like my spirit!”

Izuku closes his eyes again with a weak, lopsided smile as Kirishima keeps attempting to describe
himself an mostly fails. But that is ok.

He much prefers trying to visualize what Kirishima is saying. He just does not want to think about the man with no face anymore.

—

Shouto is not surprised to meet Iida in the hospital hall.

They walk in at the same time from different directions, blinking at each other when they cross paths.

“Hey.” Shouto says first, because if he feels like shit, going by the look on Iida’s face he does so even more.

“Hey.” Iida finally sighs, tired. “I will take a guess and say we are both here for the same reason.”

Shouto shrug, as if to say which other reason could there be?

“Oh, you two.” Shouto turns, Kirishima is approaching them. He looks a bit pale, but less taut than he did yesterday, after Midoriya had stormed out his own room in rage. “I just went and visited our resident wild boy.”

If Iida finds the definition “wild boy” inappropriate, he does not express it outside a single raised eyebrow.

“Let’s say he’s less wild and more approachable, now.” Kirishima continues, scratching the back of his head. “I wanted to apologize for putting pressure on him and we had the chance to chat a bit. It’s clear he feels bad for his outburst, so don’t be too hard on him, ok?”

“That is good to hear.” Iida replies, adjusting the glasses on his nose with a little frown. “I was really afraid he might have done something stupid after yesterday—“

Kirishima hisses through his sharp teeth. “Yeah, about that—“
“What.” Shouto asks, voice flat.

“I, um— Well I came back yesterday evening because I wanted to talk with him, right? But when I got there he still wasn’t back in his room. All Might was there, though, he looked worried, so I told him what happened—“ Kirishima says hastily, as if he’s afraid the words might fail him if he stops. “Well, while we were talking, Midoriya came back and, huh— Let’s just say I’m going to see that in my nightmares for a bit. He was pretty much out of it, muttering something about a man with no face, but managed to tell us that he actually went and did it.”

“What?” Iida exhales.

“He found Bakugou.” Kirishima says with wonder, shaking his head. “Can you believe that guy? Granted, they had to give him a transfusion and he looks like absolute shit right now, so I think he learnt his lesson, but he actually went and did it. All Might didn’t say a word the whole time, when I asked him if he was going to use the info he told me they were working on everything, and not to worry. Then he just up and left.” Kirishima sighs again, putting his hands on his hips. “You guys must have nerves of steel, by this point. Midoriya is the textbook definition of a handful.”

“My nerves have stopped existing.” Iida replies, tired, massaging his eyes behind his glasses. “Goddamnit.” He adds in a tiny whisper.

“… I really feel bad for pressuring him.” Kirishima says, his voice lowering as his eyes get casted low. “I was so wrapped in my own frustration I did not see his own until it was too late.”

“It’s not your fault.” Shouto says evenly, dragging a hand on his face. Fucking Midoriya. Shouto was so tired. “Midoriya, he— Has the tendency of taking things a bit too… Intensely.”

“Yeah, I noticed that, now.” Kirishima replies with a sad, lopsided smile. “I kind of scolded him, too. Maybe if we keep nagging, at some point something will manage to make it in that thick skull.”

“You still have hope, oh naive one.” Shouto tiredly deadpans, managing to get a small, broken snicker out of Iida. “Punch your card, we have a point system by now.”

Kirishima guffaws after launching him a surprised look. “You should whip out that sense of humor more often, dude!” He says once he’s calmed down. His smile it’s still a bit tense, but also genuine. “Why don’t we go grab lunch together after you two are done trying to punch your cards some
more? I’ll wait for you here.”

—

He lost concentration mid-sentence. *Again.*

Toshinori sighs, giving up to the fact he needs to take a pause. He’s been trying to read this latest report on the League of Villains movements for the last five minutes, his mind wandering away three sentences in, the words not really sinking into his head. He relaxes against the back of his chair a bit, launching a little look at Aizawa, three seats over. He’s reading something, too, but his eyes are glazed over, tired.

He looks up to the rest of the conference room. Other pro heroes are sitting around, focused on taking info like Toshinori himself was trying to do, or grouped up in little circles, speaking in low voices. The door continuously opened and closed, as people went in and out, busy with the preparations for the rescue mission that was going to take place that evening.

Toshinori ought to focus. This was important. The police had confirmed the lead on the League of Villains, and the location where young Bakugou was kept imprisoned. This operation was of the utmost importance, now that one of his students’ life was on the line.

But he was so tired. So, so tired. Regret and guilt gnawed at his frail heart, making his chest sting in pain at every breath. He kept thinking back to his own words and actions, to the expression of desperate anger on young Midoriya’s face when he snapped back at them.

To the memory of him, stumbling out from behind a corner on unsure legs, the front of his shirt covered in blood, pale as death, streams of red down his cheeks, like a twisted imitation of the tears that would always come so easily to his young pupil.

Toshinori wondered distantly what would Nana think of him. She had always been an amazing teacher, she was so good at understanding him, back then when he was but a little egg himself. She always managed to find the right words for him, to give him courage, to make him think— To just be at his side, in silence, when he needed it.

Toshinori was an absolute disaster, compared to her. All he seems to be able to do is to hurt young Midoriya. To make him sad and angry. And he cannot help but think once more that maybe he would’ve been happier, if Toshinori hadn’t meddled in his life.
Sadness and anger seemed to be everything Toshinori could give him, apparently.

Toshinori snaps out of his musings, violently, when he feels a pat on his bicep. Gran Torino is sitting at his side, he didn’t even hear him move the chair to do so.

“You need to sleep.” He says.

Toshinori sighs, massaging his tired eyes. “I need to read everything before the operation, is what I need to do.” He replies, voice croaking in his throat.

“There’s time, and you need to rest. You haven’t been able to sleep at all, last night, didn’t you.” Gran Torino frowns at him. “You are sluggish. I will take you off the roster for this operation if you don’t go rest right now. Don’t think even for a moment that I will not.”

Toshinori groans. He knows that Gran Torino is serious.

He can’t get benched for this mission. Young Bakugou needs him.

“The same goes for you, Aizawa.” Gran Torino continues, and Toshinori sees out of the corner of his eyes Aizawa flinching just a tiny bit and looking up from his own set of documents, a dark expression on his face. “Even if you will have to act as distraction, that doesn’t mean that you don’t need to be rested and ready. Go take a nap, the both of you.”

Aizawa opens his mouth, as if replying, but then closes it, the scowl on his face deepening.

“We are all worried and angry.” Gran Torino says after a long pause, his voice lower. Kinder. “Tensions are high, and we already made mistakes.”

Toshinori doesn’t need to ask what he means.

“After this mission is over, and that kid is back in our hands safe and sound, you will have time to sit Midoriya down and have a long needed talk with him.” Gran Torino jumps down the chair, poking
Toshinori’s thigh. “He’ll be fine. He’s got heart, that brat. It’s just been a bit— misplaced, lately. But all you need to do is to open your own to him, and he will understand, ok?”

Opening his heart— Yeah, that’s what he’s been doing wrong, isn’t it? He closed his heart to young Midoriya, afraid to hurt him again, and in doing so he hurt him even more.

Gran Torino looks up at him, his expression serious but not without a note of kindness in his eyes. “You’ve chosen well, Toshinori. Don’t doubt yourself, nor him. He will be fine, I know it.”

—

At some point he slid back into the sweet arms of sleep, but Izuku’s rest is not peaceful.

That man keeps following him. All For One. A ghost of something Izuku could not quite understand, heavy with broken pieces of a fight that never belonged to him in the first place.

The way he had seen All Might, with that deeply sad expression, plagues him, too. Is that how Izuku unconsciously perceived him? A sad man, dragging himself forward, slowly and painfully, with what little energy he had left?

Does All Might make that sort of expression, when he looks at Izuku? What does he sees, when he looks into Izuku’s unseeing eyes?

Is that all Izuku can offer him? Sadness?

All For One’s words kept taunting him. His kindness hid the poison behind them, and Izuku just didn’t want to think about what he said, he refused to—

“You’ve been lied to for so long.” One For All says. “I wish you no ill will, my dear boy.”

Shut up. Izuku yells, angry. You don’t know anything.

“But neither do you.” One For All replies. “You do not know anything about the man you call idol.”
What would you find under the superficial shine, if you tried to go deep enough? He did this to me, after all.

The scarred face is close, so close, now, and Izuku cannot walk back, All For One is laughing at him, he can’t run, he can’t hide, All For One keeps laughing and laughing —

“SHUT UP!”

“Whoa, Midoriya, dude— sorry. I thought we were whispering—”

Izuku blinks, panting heavily. He’s sitting in his hospital bed, hands grabbing at the sheets, sweat rolling down his face.

“I don’t think he was talking with us.” A female voice says, softly. Yaoyorozu. “Were you having a nightmare, Midoriya?”

Izuku nods, wordlessly. He still sees All For One’s scarred face like he’s just standing in front of him.

Someone pushes something in his hand. A bottle of water. Izuku tests his tongue, feeling how dry his mouth is, and with unsure hands twists the cap, turning his head back to drink. He almost empties it in one sitting.

“Thanks—” He says, voice rough, after he’s done. “Um—”

He heard Yaoyorozu, of course, and Kirishima that apologized when he woke up accidentally screaming at them.

“…How many of you are in the room?” He asks, because he can feel more people, but he still doesn’t dare turn his quirk on.

“…Me and Iida came by this morning, but you were sleeping.” Todoroki replies, in a low, controlled voice. “Uraraka joined us a bit ago.”
Oh, of course. Izuku sighs, tiredly massaging his eyes. There’s a tense atmosphere in the room.

He doesn’t need to ask why.

“Guys— Sorry I snapped at you, yesterday.” Izuku finally forces himself to say. “I just—“

He opens and closes his mouth a couple of times, silently, words failing him. It always happens, for all his empathic-whatever quirk and the easy, open way he displays his joy, when it comes to the frail, darker parts deep inside him all that honesty and simplicity comes to lack.

“You don’t have to—“ Yaoyorozu tries to say, but he stops her, holding a hand up.

“I do. I have to. I’ve vented my own frustration on all of you, as if all this shitty situation is your fault.” Izuku continues, slowly. “And that is not right. You guys have always been so good to me, have always tried to understand me, and that is the way I repay you? Frankly, that sucked. I suck.”

“…You don’t suck.” Uraraka says, something indefinable in her voice. “To be honest, I’m totally mad at you right now. But not for the reasons you think I am.”

Izuku takes it, silent, lowering his head.

“Just— Stop undervaluing yourself so much.” Uraraka continues, severe. “It’s… Bad. And also very disrespectful toward all of us. Are you trying to imply that the respect we feel for you means nothing?”

“No, of course not!” Izuku replies, carding a nervous hand through his hair. “That’s not what I meant at all— I —“

“It may be not what you meant, but that’s how it felt to all of us.” Uraraka interrupts him. “So, stop. The entire point of this conversation is exactly the fact that you do not suck, and you have to stop thinking you do.”
Kirishima told him something like that, too, in the morning.

*Man, he really done messed up.*

The silence stretches, Izuku keeping his head low in shame. He feels the bed tipping down, as if someone sat at his side.

“Midoriya.” Todoroki says, voice low. “What you said about yourself— it’s not true.”

Izuku doesn’t have anything to say, so he doesn’t. Todoroki continues, after releasing a deep sigh. “I — I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for you. I would be out there, cold and uncaring, and— The thought scares me, sometimes. To think about which kind of person I would be, now, without you. And it pains me, to realize how low you think of yourself, when you’ve given me so much.”

Gulping around a knot in his throat, Izuku slowly turns his head toward Todoroki’s soft voice. Wondering, as usual, how he looks like, now, which kind of expression he’s wearing—

“And for how selfish it is of me, to say this… I still want to be at your side. So, please— Don’t give up on yourself like that. Because I haven’t given up on you, and I never will.”

The knot in Izuku’s throat wins, as he let out a strangled sob. He shifts forward, blindly finding Todoroki, circling his arms around his shoulders. Todoroki tenses for a second, but then relaxes, circling Izuku’s waist as one of his hands goes up to gently comb Izuku’s hair, much like he did way back, after their end of term tests.

“It’s fine, to be sad.” Todoroki murmurs, gentle. “But you don’t need to be sad all alone, ok?”

Izuku nods against his shoulder, sniffing. He stays there, grateful for Todoroki’s firm, gentle presence, until he finally feels the tears recede, and his chest a bit lighter. He feels Todoroki let out a little sigh, not letting him go, and Izuku finally shifts his face up.

“I’m sorry, guys.” He murmurs, a bit broken. “I really am. I— You are all right, and I’ve acted like an idiot. I won’t let it happen again, I promise.”
He hears Uraraka let out a trembly sigh, and then another weight on his bed, as she sits near them.

“So, you finally got into that thick head the fact that you don’t suck?” She asks in a low, gentle voice that betrays a bit unsureness, but she playfully pokes his cheek.

That finally drags a small, wavering laugh out of Izuku, the atmosphere in the room lightening significantly.

“I got it, I’m sorry.” Izuku sighs, a lopsided smile on his face. He gently shifts a bit away, relaxing the hug. Todoroki’s hand on his hair lifts, to then go rest on Izuku’s hand in his lap, and stays there. “I keep making the same dumb mistakes and let myself get dragged too into my head. If it happens again, please just— Slap me out of it, or something.”

“I’m holding you to it, Midoriya. I will not hesitate.” Uraraka says, a grin in her voice. There’s a moment of silence, before she speaks again, her tone lighter. “Anyhow, speaking of another issue… A little, red-haired bird told me you asked him how he looks like, this morning.” A pause. “I’m like, personally offended you never asked us that, before. Offended deeply into my soul, Midoriya.”

Izuku splutters and laughs, surprised, as Kirishima says “Hey! That’s like, textbook throwing me under the bus, Uraraka!”

“I’m sorry—“ Izuku hiccups, trying to stop laughing. “I just— I don’t know, I needed a distraction and that just came up—“

“Gee, thanks. I thought that was meant to be some bro-bonding moment. You wound me so, Midoriya.”

Izuku laughs again.

“Alright. To be honest I— I don’t usually ask because I can’t really visualize descriptions. I don’t really remember much of the world before I lost my sight.” He finally admits, his heart feeling a bit lighter. All For One is still there, but he’s a distant thought in the back of his head, even if only for a moment. “But since you clearly care more than I realized— how do you all look like?”

There’s a long silence, and Izuku wonders if he maybe he shouldn’t have said that, it probably saddened his friends—
“Well, for starters Todoroki’s hair is like, two different colors, split right in the middle. Red on the left, white on the right.” Kirishima suddenly starts enthusiastically, a grin in his voice. Izuku blinks.

“It is not.”

“It is! I swear!”

“You’re shitting me—“ Izuku frowns. “That’s— C’mon, seriously?”

When the silence stretches, Izuku can’t help but splutter again.

“You have green hair, Midoriya, you really don’t have any leg to stand on.” Todoroki replies, a tiny offended note in his voice, turning Izuku’s splutter in a full fledged laugh as he apologizes, squeezing his hand a bit.

—

Ochako looked at the time on her phone. Visiting hours were almost over already, they’d probably get kicked out of the hospital, soon, if the look the police officer that was stationed out of Midoriya’s room launched to her as she got out to grab another bottle of water was anything to come by. They’ve spent a couple of hours just chatting with Midoriya, that looked like death warmed over -and when was the last time he did not? Ochako can’t even recall- but at least less frayed on the edges, less like he might just fall on the floor with a whine, a broken doll, the way he did when he shut down before the end of term tests.

He’s such a handful, this one.

But despite everything, despite his sincere apology and the clear way he felt bad for his outburst, there was still something in Midoriya’s eyes. Something dark, that he was keeping at bay, a thought that must’ve been nagging at him incessantly the whole time they’ve been talking.

And Ochako knew she wasn’t the only one that noticed. Yaoyorozu kept meeting her eyes with a little worried frown, a silent communication between the two of them.
There’s a lull in the conversation, Midoriya sitting on his bed with his back against a wall, legs crossed, shoulder brushing against Todoroki’s, sitting near him in the same position. He turns his face away from them, pensive, that dark thing in his eyes emerging back.

“Ok.” Yaoyorozu finally says taking a deep breath as if she’s steeling herself. “There was another reason I came here today, other than to visit, of course.”

Midoriya blinks, turning back to her.

“Midoriya, I know you’ve been able to locate Bakugou.” She says, voice lowering. “You… You are not thinking of going there, are you?”

He doesn’t answer, casting his eyes down with a little frown.

“Midoriya.” Iida intervenes, voice carefully flat. “You, between others, already know what it would mean to do something like that.”

He and Todoroki exchange a small, knowing look. A secret Ochako is not part of.

“— There’s something that is worrying me.” Midoriya replies, voice low, slowly. “Beside the obvious, I mean— I—“

He bites down on his lower lip, unseeing eyes moving as he thinks.

“I saw— *Something*, yesterday. Not far from where Kacchan is kept.” He finally says, his tone
measured. “And I—I don’t know if the pros have any idea what is waiting for them, there. And that worries me.”

“Something?” Yaoyorozu inquires, frowning. “What kind of something?”

And then he makes it. *The face.*

It’s the expression he makes when there’s something he has to say, but either can’t or doesn’t want to.

“— Something bad.” He finally whispers.

“All Might is going to be there, dude.” Kirishima says, frowning. “You know that.”

Midoriya gulps, his throat bobbing, his eyes glinting with something unreadable. “What if—“ he starts, faintly. “What if I told you that *that thing* might be dangerous even for him?”

That certainly catches everyone’s attention. Midoriya, All Might’s number one fan boy, doubting his strength?

“You are serious.” Todoroki says, faintly. “Midoriya. What did you see?”

He turns to them, slowly, his expression a mix of fear and sadness. He doesn’t talk, but a look in his pale eyes is enough to perceive a distant echo of the horror he must’ve accidentally witnessed.

—

“This is the worst idea—“

“I know, Iida.”
“I’m only coming to make you sure you guys don’t do something stupid—“

“So do I.” Yaoyorozu and Uraraka added at the same time.

Izuku sighed, along with Kirishima. Todoroki was silent at his side, a stable presence. His light felt like he had just given up and went with the flow, surrounding Izuku with a reassuring warmth. It was as if his light was saying ‘since I can’t stop you, I can at least come with you, protect you’, which made Izuku feel much more reassured.

“I know, guys.” Izuku replied, low, as they made their way down the busy streets. “Look, I told you, I just want to tell him, alright? Just that.”

“And I just want to make sure everything goes ok.” Kirishima adds with emphasis. “We don’t need to fight, necessarily, but we still might be of help, you may never know.”

Izuku had tried to be reasonable. He tried the mature solution, first. Tried to call All Might, and then Gran Torino, and then Aizawa-sensei, and then agent Tsukauchi, but none of them answered. (His friends hadn’t asked for whichever reason Izuku even had All Might’s personal number, although he did feel the curiosity in their lights.)

So here they were. He ended up having to turn on his quirk and ignore the headache that inevitably came back in full force, but at least he could guide them to where Kacchan was kept, counting on the far feel of him on Izuku’s radar, and quite the time spent trying to understand where that direction went on a map with everyone else, thanks to the fact Izuku had pinned him down when he connected to him the prior night. —and wasn’t that something that he had done pretty much unconsciously- he ought to explore the possibility more once he will have the time—

“Hey, look, it’s Aizawa-sensei!” Ochako suddenly said, stopping.

Izuku focused over the noise in the street, as their little group stopped under what he imagined was some sort of big tv screen. They listened as Aizawa-sensei, principal Nedzu and Sekijiro-sensei gave their apologies for what has happened during the summer camp, reporters tearing into them question after question.

“They are treating them like it was their fault…” Iida murmurs, clearly irritated.
The atmosphere around them has turned pretty heavy. Izuku sighs turning his head away, toward where they were directed.

“Let’s just go.” He mutters, sadly. The words of Aizawa-sensei, how he had told Izuku that he had taken personal responsibility for him, emerged into his mind, making him feel more than a bit guilty for the fact they were out there in the streets, instead of staying put as they’ve been told to do.

He really ought to apologize to sensei, after this nightmare would be over.

—

“This is where I saw that… Thing.” Midoriya whispers, voice serious.

Tenya looks around nervously. They had turned away from the more trafficked streets, going through a path leading in a less than savoury part of town. Sticking close to one another, as Midoriya led them without a falter in his steps.

“Looks like some kind of warehouse—” Kirishima whispers back. “I can take a look inside—“

“I know what’s inside already—“ Midoriya replies, a drop of sweat rolling down his pale face. “That place is full of noumus.”

They all turn to look at him with wide eyes.


“That thing is in there— too.” Midoriya continues, his voice hitching a bit. He’s starting to tremble. “It’s waiting.”

The way he said that sent a shiver down Tenya’s spine.

“What do we do, then?” Kirishima whispers, turning to look at Midoriya with a frown. “This is not the place they are keeping Bakugou, though, right?”
“No, that’s— We have to keep going down this road.” Midoriya hesitates. “Maybe— We should warn someone. Of the noumus.”

He tiredly massages at his forehead, like he just now realized the incredible amount of flaws in their little plan.

“—Let’s just keep going.” He finally says. “Once we reach the pros we can tell th— RUN!”

It happens before Tenya can ever register Midoriya’s yell. There’s a strange noise, squishy and wet, right above their heads, and when he looks up the giant form of Mount Lady is falling from the sky.

Tenya grabs Uraraka and Yaoyorozu that were the closer to him and darts forward, just as Midoriya does the same with Kirishima and Todoroki, lighting up with that mysterious glow that seems to give him his amazing speed and strength.

They manage to get away just in time, the shock-wave of the giant woman hitting the ground sending them tumbling into concrete as debris flies over their heads. Tenya turns around, his arms still circling Yaoyorozu and Uraraka protectively, watching Mount Lady sit, half the warehouse in pieces under her weight.

“Ooow—“ She mutters, and there are more squishy noises, a strange, black goo appearing apparently in thin air, spitting out pro hero after pro hero in the warehouse, in the middle of the street —

“Get up get up get up get up get up—“ Midoriya is frantically whispering, eyes big as plates on his pale face. He still has his arms around Kirishima and Todoroki’s waists, as he hauls them on their feet, before crouching near Tenya and the girls to do the same. “We have to hide! Now! Now!”

They don’t hesitate, letting Midoriya push them down the street, toward a wall, exchanging silent worried looks. Tenya looks behind himself one last time before Midoriya can push all of them behind the corner.

A man with a suit and a strange sort of mask is standing in the middle of the half destroyed warehouse, noumus slowly rising from the floor around him.
Tenya’s heart stops beating for a second.

—

Izuku is cursing up a storm in a low hiss. He can’t help it.

Everything went wrong right away.

They were just supposed to reach the pros and warn them. He was just supposed to go to All Might and tell him of All For One.

They had been too late.

He’s thankful for Iida’s presence of mind that had pushed him to sprint forward just as Izuku did the same with Todoroki and Kirishima. Hadn’t it been for him, Uraraka and Yaoyorozu might’ve ended squashed under Mount Lady. His classmates’ lights felt confused after they ended up hitting the concrete painfully with the shockwave of Mount lady’s fall, but thankfully none of them seemed hurt as Izuku frantically dragged them up to stand, guided them to hide before All For One could notice them.

“Midoriya—” Iida’s voice was barely there, choking with fear. “That man— He—“

“It’s him—” Izuku hisses back, trying to will his body to stop shivering. The pressure of the mere presence of All For One is suffocating, and apparently not just for him, going by the absolutely terrified stillness of the lights at his side. “Shit shit shit shit—“

What do I do now? Godfuckingdamnit, I even dragged all of them in this— What the fuck do I do, now? Izuku thinks frantically, as more and more lights seems to be teleported by All For One’s goo on the spot. A hiccup itches in his throat when another, familiar light gets spit out on the scene.

“Kacchan—” Izuku exhales, and that seems to shake his friends’ out of their freezing panic, Kirishima turning and jumping to peek just slightly over the wall.
“What the fuck is this shit? It stinks—” Comes Kacchan’s voice, not so far from them.

This was turning from bad to worse.

What the fuck do I do, now?

Kacchan was right in the middle of it all, right in front of that man, and they couldn’t intervene, All For One would destroy them— His mind flashed at him nightmarish feelings, the idea he could feel his friends’ light contort and disappear like All Might’s One For All did way back at the U.S.J.—

He almost vomited at the mere thought he could feel their lights disappear one by one— Todoroki, and Uraraka, and Iida, and—

Izuku couldn’t risk his friends’ lives, not like this, and they weren’t even supposed to fight, they weren’t—

An idea came to him as he blinked, still frozen on the spot, shivering with cold sweat running down his face, as he tried to calm his increasingly shortening breath.

“Guys—“ He says, low, ignoring the broken note that scratched against his own throat. “Listen. I think there’s something we can do—“

__

Toshinori is furious as he flies. Everything went wrong. The plan seemed to work just fine, at first, they were so close to rescuing young Bakugou, to stop the league of villains, until a furious Shigaraki said those words.

“Sensei. Lend me your strength.”

Instantly his allies started to disappear, one after the other, sucked in by the black goo— Noumus started to appear in their places, villains whisked away from under their hands— Complete chaos.
And then young Bakugou had been taken, too.

Toshinori tried to follow, desperately, Gran Torino yelling at him to *just go, we will take care of this!* And Toshinori obeyed, jumping high in the sky, looking around and seeing in the distance the clear signs of a battle that was starting, making a jump for it.

*He* was there. Standing proud in the middle of a semi-destroyed warehouse, some sort of wicked mask covering his face. Some of the other pros were already down, noumus rampaging in a fight with those who were still standing, the members of the league popping one after the other near their boss, safely— and young Bakugou—

All For One looked up at him, rising both his hands to stop Toshinori incoming attack.

“*You’ve slowed down with time, All Might.*” All For One says conversationally as the shock-wave of their clash reverberates around them, sending dust flying.

*How he hated that voice*—

—

Katsuki gritted his teeth.

He was surrounded. These dipshits of the *league of stupid* all around him, after the man with the weird mask ordered that dumbass Shigaraki to leave, and take him with them.

*As if he was going down without a fight.*

Still, he was surrounded, and he couldn’t see a way out. He dodged, frantically, noticing that these idiots were just as nervous as he was. He had to keep calm, and think. He was outnumbered, but if there was a way, *any way*, he could manage to put distance between himself and these little shits, to leave All Might space— *He was holding back on his behalf, afraid Katsuki might get caught in the crossfire, he could see it*—

*Goddamnit*— He thinks, furious, sending that stupid magician that was trying to put him back into
that irritating small cage flying back with an explosion— What the fuck do I do now—

“BAKUGOU!”

No way.

Katsuki looked up, breath hitching in his throat. They are flying above the battlefield, dust rising in a arc under their feet. Deku looks like a shooting star in the night, with that weird-ass green glow surrounding him, and—

It was them. It really—

“BAKUGOU!” Kirishima yells, his arm stretched out toward him, desperation on his features. “TAKE MY HAND!”

—

“Oh.” All For One comments, as Toshinori looks up to the sky, shocked, watching his students -brilliant, reckless, stubborn students- soar above the battlefield, young Bakugou propelling himself up, grabbing young Kirishima’s hand without hesitation—

From where did they even came from?

Young Midoriya’s head was turned, pale eyes pointed down at them, an unreadable light in them. They kept watching as the boys tried to make their escape, Mount Lady rising up to shield them, giving them the chance to run away unscathed— And they disappear in the columns of smoke that were rising up to the sky, as Toshinori’s heart beat painfully tight in his throat.

Young Bakugou was safe. His kids were safe. They got away, his kids, so brave and smart and absolutely irresponsible—

“Would you look at that—“ All For One says, slight surprise in his voice, head turned toward the direction the little group had disappeared to. “I hadn’t noticed your boy was here.”
Toshinori cracked his knuckles, as a sense of proudness for his amazing children filled his chest. Now, there was no need to hold back.

They only stopped running after the noise of the battle had become a pale echo in the distance.

Izuku leaned down, hands on his knees, catching his breath, adrenaline making him shake slightly. So did his friends, panting loudly, shaken to their cores. All around them confused people, asking what was going on in the distance, not having any idea from which kind of fresh hell they’ve managed to escape.

“We did it—“ Kirishima finally says, his voice trembling as if he cannot believe himself. “We actually did it!”

“All of you—“ There’s something unreadable in Kacchan’s voice. “You stupid idiots—“

“You’re very welcome.” Kirishima says, panting, a grin in his voice.

“Midoriya.” Iida is catching his breath, too, but he sounds serious. “That man— All Might— Do you think…?”

Izuku slowly stands more upright. He feels like shit. His back hurts and his head hurts and he just might lie down and fall asleep right there in the middle of the street.

He keeps observing the battle from afar. All Might and All For One are forces to be reckoned with, their polar opposite lights clashing in bright explosions that sent stings of pain through Izuku’s already throbbing head.

“He has to do it—“ Izuku whispers. “He has to—“

Todoroki, Uraraka and Yaoyorozu are catching up to them after they separated, their lights
incredibly relieved when they notice that they are all fine, and that Kacchan is with them.

“You, too?” Kacchan asks with a growl that doesn’t really sound angry at all.

But Izuku is distracted, focusing only on the battle now far from them, ignoring the warning pains of his head as he strains his quirk. All Might’s light—It’s so tense. Izuku knows he must be almost out of time. At every hit the light fades a bit more—

*When the day comes that you will face the dark I… I might not be by your side anymore.*

Tears sting in his eyes. He cannot accept this, *not like this,* not today, not after the last thing Izuku had done to All Might had been angrily throwing back in his face a bitterness that Izuku never really felt for All Might, as much as he did for himself.

His friends had fallen silent around him. Izuku can hear the voices of reporters coming from above, witnesses of the incredible battle that was happening right at that moment, showing it to the world—

Everyone was seeing All Might taking hit after hit, hope becoming thin, fear rising in everyone’s light.

*Could Izuku not do anything to help? Anything at all?*

He gritted his teeth, angry. *Powerless.* He hated this feeling so much, if only there was even a tiny bit he could help—

Realization suddenly came to him with a choked gasp, making his head feel light. Maybe—There was *something* he could do to help.

*I’m sorry, Aizawa-sensei.* Izuku thought, closing his eyes. *This will be the last time. I promise.*

---

Toshinori felt desperation grabbing at his soul.
He was weak, so weak. He had no strength anymore— One For All did not answer to his call anymore as he stood there, a shadow of his former self, showing to the world what he really looked like—

And All For One was standing in front of him, with his not-face, making fun of him, throwing him words, telling him—

_Shigaraki— Sensei’s grandchild_

How could it be? Was destiny really this cruel? Had All For One chosen that boy with the sole purpose of hurting Toshinori? A profound desperation clashed in him, a deep sedated sadness, a mix of pity for the boy that was linked by blood to his late, beloved sensei, and the anger he still felt at the mere thought of what Shigaraki had done to young Midoriya—

“Where’s your smile, now, huh?” All For One teases, tilting his head on a side. “Where are your ideals, symbol of peace? The people out there are calling to you, can you hear them— Oh.”

Toshinori blinks at the surprised tone in All For One’s voice. He seems pensive. Then something— Something seems to connect with Toshinori, something inside him— He feels strange, as if there’s someone closely standing right next to him—

“Your boy is here, too.” All For One says, careful. “Can you feel him?”

Toshinori takes a deep, shaky breath. His eyes see nothing other than the enemy and the destruction around them, no one else, definitely not young Midoriya, and yet—

Yes. He can feel him.

“Dear boy, it is such a pleasure to have you with us, too.” All For One says, opening his arm in a grandiose gesture. “I admit, I did not imagine I would meet you a second time so soon. You are truly full of surprises, Midoriya Izuku. So, did you reflect upon what I have told you during our first meeting?”

Toshinori has no idea what is going on anymore, and a small jump shakes him, when he hears young
Midoriya’s voice loud and clear from inside his own mind.

“Yes. I did.” He says, tone flat.

“So, what is your choice, now that your hero has shown his true colors in front of everyone? Do you have an answer, my boy?” All For One asks, amused.

“Yes.” Young Midoriya’s disembodied voice says, and somehow Toshinori feels it. A sliver of strength coming back in him, like a gentle, warm hug, as if young Midoriya himself is right here, protective arms around Toshinori’s shoulders, channeling the force of his One For All right back into Toshinori—

All For One’s smile disappear from his not-face when Toshinori transforms again, strength flowing through him. Toshinori feels as if young Midoriya’s hands are still on his shoulder, firm, as if he doesn’t want to let him go—

He speaks once more, his voice a low hiss of focused rage.

“I do have an answer, All For One. Go fuck yourself.”
Ochako can’t stop looking, can’t tear her eyes away from the screen hanging above them showing them the raging battle, her hands on her mouth.

Everyone is frozen, suspended, almost not breathing as they watch the final, incredible punch of All Might connecting with the villain, finally stopping him, sending him sinking into concrete to never move again. A man, a symbol, larger than life, rising his fist to the sky in victory. Everyone around them explodes in jubilation, screaming and laughing and chanting the name of the greatest hero of all.

But Ochako keeps watching, unable to move, as the man shifts and turns once more, becomes smaller, his features so, so familiar—

Because she knew him already. She had seen him, holding a wounded Midoriya tight to his chest with an expression on his face that suggested his entire world was coming undone around him— in the hospital, watching Midoriya suspended between life and death as if he wanted nothing more than to reach over hug him, a sadness too deep to be expressed with words on his face— putting a
friendly hand on Midoriya’s shoulder, smiling at him, laughing with him, clear signs of an affectionate relationship between them—

He had seen him, a family friend, according to Midoriya -Midoriya, that jumped too high, and ran too fast, and hit too strong-, torturing himself with worry—

He was standing there, now, his identity bare in front of everyone’s eyes, head turned to the sky, eyes closed.

“Thank you.” His voice is picked up by the microphones of the reporters, tired, and yet strong, clear as day. And then— “—You’re next.”

The excited crowd replies with more noise, more joy, more enthusiasm—

Ochako slowly turns around. She can see she’s not the only one between her friends to be doing so. They look at Midoriya, behind them, standing still and silent with his eyes closed, blood dripping from his nose. There’s an expression of deep sedated sadness on his face, tears running down his cheeks. Expression that turns as he slowly opens his pale, unseeing eyes, and looks forward, head held up high, features shifting in determination.

You’re next.

Chapter End Notes

Heyooo, the feelings train keeps going *choo-choos at the speed of light*

As per usual, here for my tumblr
They walked in silence.

Too much on their shoulders, too many thoughts in their heads, too many doubts in front of them. A puzzle with so many pieces, and yet not enough pieces at all—

No one spoke as they made their way to the nearest police station, no one said a thing when the agents reacted with shock at seeing this group of kids come in and, with them, the UA student that had ended up all over the news after being kidnapped.

Bakugou got whisked away as the police agents made all the calls that needed to be made. They go whisked somewhere else, asked to sit in a little waiting room until someone responsible for them could come pick them up.

No one spoke, no one dared to say anything, to pronounce those words, to ask those questions, to imply anything at all.

They sat. In silence.

—

Aizawa took a peek into the room, releasing a deep sigh. Apparently, now Kirishima and Yaoyorozu, too, were part of the goddamn Squad. Just perfect.

When he entered, five pairs of eyes looked up to him, five similar expressions of guilt rising to their faces. Only Midoriya didn’t bother, just barely turned, his expression unreadable, blood that had been badly wiped away drying and cracking under his nose and chin. He was pale, dark smudges under his eyes. He probably felt like shit— Kind of deserved it, if you asked Aizawa.

This kid is the worse possible influence on the face of the planet, I swear.
“There’s a car waiting outside for you, we are getting all of you back to your houses.” Aizawa says, loosening a bit the tie he was still wearing after the press conference. “We will have words. But for now, the top priority is to get you safe and sound to your parents.”

“Sir—” Kirishima says, rising his hand up as if they are in class. “Technically speaking— We didn’t fight, so—”

Yaoyorozu face-palms.

_The. Worse. Influence._

“Technically speaking, you are not in trouble legally, yes.” Aizawa replies, curtly. “That doesn’t mean we won’t have _words_ at the proper moment. Now get your behinds out there, before I lose my patience.”

Kirishima doesn’t seem to be particularly frayed by his words — _he almost looks cheerful, the little shit_ —, nor does Todoroki, while Yaoyorozu, Iida and Uraraka definitely shows at least some signs of shame. Maybe there’s still hope, maybe he could at least save _them_ from the _Midoriya’s Terrible Influence_ affliction.

Midoriya silently follows, expression still blank and unreadable. Aizawa stops him with a hand on the shoulder.

“Not _you._” He says. “You are coming with _me._”

—

The kid didn’t seem to have anything to say.

He just sat in Aizawa’s car, silent. He definitely was there, lucid and conscious, did not show any sign he might’ve been out of his damn mind as he had been far too often in the recent past.
He was just… Silent.

The reason why wasn’t so hard to understand, obviously.

Aizawa had about one thousand things and then some to say to him, but the idea of doing it now felt needlessly cruel. His expression had shifted, there was a sort of tired acceptance in the boy’s eyes, now, like he knew already that this was the end of an era.

That All Might was no more.

And, knowing him, he probably realized that long before anyone even had the chance to do so.

They still did not talk once they got to the hospital, off the car, up some stairs, down the corridor, and finally in the room.

When they entered, Tsukauchi and Gran Torino turned with equally surprised expressions and Toshinori -pale, bandaged, tired- blinked, sitting on his bed.

Midoriya hesitated. The air was full of unspoken words and the lull of regrets, and his scarred, misshapen hand lingered on the door jamb. Then he seemed to steel himself, still not a word coming out of his mouth, and he advanced. He walked right between Gran Torino and Tsukauchi, head held high, unseeing eyes pointed forward. With no hesitation he climbed on Toshinori’s bed on his knees, circling Toshinori’s neck with his arms in a tight hug.

Toshinori blinked, something unreadable in his eyes, and then he closed them with a trembly sigh, his own arms gently cradling the boy. Tsukauchi smiled a bit as he stood from the chair he was sitting on, Gran Torino shaking his head with exasperation despite a small smile of his own on his lips, and they both silently walked away, following Aizawa out the door.

There would be time for words and questions and trying to cram some common sense into that unbelievably stubborn head, but for now, Aizawa could let them have a moment.
Toshinori keeps his eyes closed, silent, just enjoying the warmth of young Midoriya’s breathing against his shoulder, just enjoying the feeling of having him close in his arms. Warm, safe, alive.

The boy had given him one too many scares, lately. One too many times he’d been truly afraid of losing him, in all possible ways.

They stayed like that for a long time, young Midoriya’s curly hair tickling against Toshinori’s hollow cheek as he rested his head against the boy’s.

Midoriya is the one to break the silence. “I can’t feel it anymore.” He murmurs softly. “It really is gone, isn’t it?”

“I’m afraid it is, yes.” Toshinori replies, voice just as soft.

Slowly, young Midoriya releases him, shifting to sit on the edge of the bed, facing him. There’s so much written in his tired eyes, too much, maybe.

He’s still the doe-eyed kid with round features that make him appear younger than he is, and yet something in his expression makes him seem more… Adult.

Forced to grow up too fast.

“It didn’t feel like it was painful, this time.” He says. “It just—it was there and then... It was not.” Turning his face down a bit, he seems to be looking at his own hand before putting it on his chest. “I can’t feel the chimes anymore, too.”

“... I do wonder if that is for the better. I think having to constantly look into someone’s soul, whenever you want it or not, is probably not a good thing.” Toshinori muses, slowly.

The boy replies with a non-committal hum, turning his face back up to him.

“You and I— We are very similar in many ways, I think.” Toshinori continues, gently. “We care a lot, but we are not very good at expressing our feelings, aren’t we?”
That finally puts a frail, small and tired smile on young Midoriya’s face. “Yes. I think that’s a fair evaluation.” He whispers back.

“We’ve both said things and performed actions that ended up hurting each other, even if that was not the intention we had.” Toshinori takes the boy’s right hand, examining the criss cross of scars on it. “And now that my power is gone— Now that I’m not All Might anymore, but just Toshinori Yagi—I would like to have a fresh start with you.”

Young Midoriya blinks, his fingers tightening a bit around Toshinori’s hand. “What do you mean?”

“I mean that, if you’ll allow me, I would be happy to still follow you in your growth. Teach you what I can. And also be a confident, someone you can trust.” Toshinori replies, not taking his eyes away from young Midoriya’s pale ones, for how pointless the gesture was. “I would like to still be there for you. A trusted figure, a friend, someone you can speak with freely, with no fear of shame or judgment.”

There’s a moment of silence, as the boy seems to be weighing Toshinori’s words in his mind.

“It might not be easy, for either of us.” Toshinori adds in a low voice. “But we can learn together. You’ve taught me as much as I’ve taught you, and I do not wish for us to accidentally hurt each other anymore.”

“A clean slate.” The boy murmurs. “Is it fair, though? I— I’ve not been—“ He seems to be struggling with words, a tense expression on his face. “I’ve done things I should’ve not. And said just as many. I don’t think I should get to walk away from it unpunished.”

“The fact that you are saying this, for me, it’s proof enough that you understand what you’ve done wrong.” Toshinori replies, putting a gentle hand on the boy’s head. “And so do I— I also think the pain we’ve caused in one another is enough punishment, don’t you?”

That’s when the tears finally rise to the boy’s eyes. Toshinori is actually surprised it took so long.

“He was wrong—“ The boy murmurs, closing his eyes, tears rolling down his cheeks as he hangs his head lower. “I knew he was wrong, and yet he managed to plant a seed of doubt in my heart—“
Toshinori blinks, perplexed. “Who was?”

“All For One.” Young Midoriya looks back up, a fresh couple of tears falling down the wet tracks on his face. “He told me you didn’t trust me— I’m sorry I believed that, even if only for a second.”

“… He is very good with his words.” Toshinori concedes. “Do not be so hard on yourself. He managed to get the best of me, in the past. He still does, to this day.”

The boy sniffs, drying his tears away with a hand, releasing a trembly sigh.

“…Could you tell me how you managed to speak with him, anyway?” Toshinori finally asks, because he has so many questions, and the boy himself ended up touching upon the topic, after all.

“When I— When I was searching for Kacchan, the other night—I accidentally stumbled into him.” Midoriya says, voice low, nervously picking at the covers on Toshinori’s bed. “We sort of— connected. We spoke for a bit— Actually, mostly him. He knew who I was and I was so confused, I kept forgetting things, couldn’t even remember you— it was very strange.”

Toshinori has to resist the urge to curse, rage bubbling up his throat. Who knew which sort of sweet lies his mortal foe had been whispering in this poor boy’s ear.

“I remembered all of it when I woke up— And I realized who he was—” Midoriya continues, shaking his head. “Earlier today— During the battle— I didn’t mean to connect to him, too, it just sort of… snapped into place.”

“…I see.” Toshinori says, still mostly confused, but not asking for a clarification. This boy’s inner world was something he probably would never be able to understand. “Still… That had been quite… Amusing, in a sense.”

When young Midoriya blinks, confused, Toshinori can’t help the little chuckle coming out of his mouth. “Go fuck yourself. That was truly funny, in retrospect.”

The boy snickers and makes a face as if he had even surprised himself by doing so. “I’m not very good at witty comebacks, I’m afraid.” He says, tilting his head on a side, dragging and hand on his cheek. “That was the best I had, at the moment.”
Toshinori takes a deep breath, as something in his chest release. It’s been too long since he last saw young Midoriya laugh and mean it. “Thank you for your help— Even if you shouldn’t use your quirk like that anymore.”

There’s still a bit of blood drying under his nose.

“I know. I know why you and Aizawa-sensei told me to stop—‘ Midoriya sighs, tired. “I know how dangerous it is for me, now— I won’t use it like that anymore. I promised this one would be the last one. Besides, I’m probably going to have an headache for the next one thousand years after the little trick I pulled, so—“

“Let’s just… Stop with the self sacrificing, at least for a bit, mmh?” Toshinori says, gently ruffling his hair. “I think Aizawa will go gray early, at this rate.”

“I’ll try.” The boy replies, a small smile leaving place to a guilty expression. “I’m sorry I caused you both to worry so much…”

“I’m sure he will have his piece to say to you, but for now let’s not think about that. I think we both had a full, difficult day, so I’d rather not linger on past mistakes and relive old pains, if that is ok with you.”

The boy nods, silent, before surprising him again by shifting closer and leaning against Toshinori’s chest in another hug. Toshinori let himself relax, circling an arm around young Midoriya’s shoulders, his weight firm and reassuring against him.

“But— I think—‘ Midoriya says after a while, his voice low and tired. “Even if you don’t have One For All anymore, I— You’re still All Might. You’re still my hero. Nothing will ever change that.”

“…Thank you, my boy.” Toshinori whispers, gently carding his fingers through the soft curls. Then he adds, chuckling. “Now that everyone knows who I am, though, you will probably have to actually start to address me by name, you know.”

“…That is not happening.” The boy replies, matter-of-factly -and vaguely terrified at the prospect-. “Like… Ever.”
Toshinori’s chest hurts, but he does not stifle the laugh that comes out from the very depths of it.
“Thank you so much for calling me, Mr. Aizawa.”

Inko Midoriya looks just about as done with everything ever as Aizawa feels. He’d almost feel bad for the boy, if it wasn’t for the fact that he really, really asked for it all.

Izuku Midoriya was just about to get his bottom grounded until he at least reached the adult age, going by the look on her face. Oh, well. That’s what you get when you silently escape from your hospital room from the window, to go butt your nose where you really should have not.

—although the intervention of the new and extended Midoriya Protection Squad did manage to retrieve Bakugou without having to directly enter the fight, so that had to count for something. Maybe Aizawa will intercede for him. Just a bit. Giving him a week less of grounding. Maybe.—

He guides her through the corridors, muttering “I’m pretty sure the only places we are meeting are hospitals.” when he’s hit by the unwanted familiarity of it all. She sighs.

“If I can avoid to set foot in another one for at least a year after this, it’d be all the better.”

He doesn’t feel the need to add much else, as they stop in front of Toshinori’s room. Aizawa knocks, but when he receives no response, he cracks the door open, both he and Inko peeking inside.

Toshinori and Midoriya seems to be asleep, the boy lying on a side against Toshinori’s chest, a protective arm on his shoulders. He looks so small compared to Toshinori’s considerable height.

Inko makes a surprised little sound as she slowly opens the door a little more, silently approaching the bed, Aizawa right behind her.

They look so peaceful.

Aizawa watches the woman as she stares and stares with a surprised expression, before her eyes turn a little wet, a hand rising to her chest, a deep sigh shaking her frame.
Aizawa looks down at the boy, at how young he looks, and how innocent he seems to be as he sleeps curled up against the man that had grown to be more than just a symbol in his eyes, looking nothing like the little, angry terror that had completely turned their lives upside down in the past few weeks.

*Kid’s lucky they make such a cute picture. Maybe he will only get grounded until he’s seventeen, instead of eighteen.*

—

Inko followed quietly as they entered in a waiting room. Without asking, Aizawa approaches the vending machine in a corner and fishes a coin purse out of his suit slacks. The sound of the coins being inserted is almost deafening in the deep, heavy silence engulfing them, and after a minute a hand holding a plastic glass enters Inko’s field of vision. She accepts the coffee, silent, and Aizawa sits on the row of plastic chairs in front of her, sipping his own.

“What am I supposed to do?” She asks, breaking the silence after what felt like an eternity. Aizawa does not respond, and she continues. “My first thought was to go visit your principal straight away and pull Izuku out of school.”

She doesn’t miss it, the tiniest flinch that shakes the man in front of her. His fingers tightened around the plastic, and he took a slow, methodical sip.

“I… I don’t know how much of this I can take, anymore.” She coils a bit into herself, closing both hands on the warm beverage. “Izuku, he… He’s been through much, for his entire life, and it only seems to be getting worse. And I— Despite how much I want to stop him, I don’t know if I—“

Words seems to stumble onto her tongue and she sighs, dragging a hand over her face.

“He’s never been so happy.” She whispers. “Even when I thought things would finally turn for him, when he was still in middle school— Even then, he’s never been as happy as he has been in these months.”

Izuku’s smile emerges in her mind. The way he grinned and his unseeing eyes lit up as he spoke to her of his friends, of the lessons, of all the amazing experiences he was having. Even when he was stuck on a hospital bed, pale and tired and just barely alive—
Even then his smile, whenever they spoke of his current life, of the people that he was growing to love so much, had been blinding.

“There’s nothing that I want more than stop him, and protect him from further harm. And yet—I don’t know if I have in me the strength of doing so. Of ripping this happiness away from his hands. And I know—I know he will not stop, even if I do so.” She says, her voice hitching and trembling as her eyes sting with tears. “What am I supposed to do?”

The silence stretches as she slowly breathes in and out, tears pooling at the corner of her eyes, but never spilling.


She looks up, meeting his dark, tired eyes.

“I found myself in front of a choice.” He continues, holding her gaze. “I found myself having to choose between abandoning a child to certain death, or sending another child to his aid, hoping the both of them would make it back safe and sound. And this… This is what we do, all the time. We make choices other people can’t. This is what a hero does— And yet—“

He hesitates, taking a deep breath. “I tried to reason with myself. That Midoriya is in my class for a reason. To become a hero. To one day take the burden of those choices onto himself— And I tried to reason that I made the right call— But at the end of the day, I broke the promise I made to you. And then I failed him a second time, when I couldn’t stop him from taking one more false step, when I spoke to him in a way that made him feel cornered.”

The silence falls once more. There’s a deep, tired regret weighing into Aizawa’s eyes.

“I’ve been teaching for years—“ He continues, when she says nothing. “I’ve been through many classes— And I— I do not have children of my own, and probably never will, but that never stopped me from trying to do my best with those that have been entrusted into my hands. Never stopped me from caring for them, from trying to give them the tools to do their best in life. And yet, at times, I fail. Like I did with Midoriya.” A pause. “And for that, I am deeply sorry. I do not think there’s a single way I will be able to earn your forgiveness.”

Inko gulps around a knot in her throat, searching his eyes. He never looked away from her, not even
once, and yet she saw the minute tremor of his fingers.

“I don’t have an answer for you.” Aizawa says, slowly standing. He carefully makes his way to the trash can near the vending machine and throwing his empty glass in. He stands there, only half turned to her, but still not leaving her eyes. “I cannot tell you what the right thing to do is. He is your son, and at the end of the day, you have the last word. All I can say to you is this: If you are willing to give me a second chance despite my complete failure, I will do everything in my power to don’t let it happen a second time.” His voice drops in volume, but it’s steady, not a trace of doubt in it. “He will not stand down, no matter what we say. So I will do everything I can, to make sure he will be ready for what he will face in the future.”

—

When Izuku slowly wakes, he feels good in a way he hadn’t felt ever since he almost kicked the bucket after his little encounter with Shigaraki.

He’s still sore, his back pain it’s still there -and it always will, probably-, but it’s manageable, and he can push it away in the back of his mind. He’s still a bit tired, but not in that way that made him feel as if he could fall asleep at any moment. His heart still feels frail -too many hits in so little time- but Izuku now knows that things will be ok. Difficult, and painful, surely, but they will be ok.

He carefully turns his quirk on, just a bit, barely a circle around him. His head feels heavy, but it doesn’t hurt anymore. He dares expanding the scope some more, realizing he’s alone in a hospital room he does not recognize—

Oh, wait. He fell asleep in All Might’s bed. He must still be there—

Well, that’s just a tad embarrassing.

Sighing, he slowly drags himself up to sit. He can hear the chirping of birds outside, and the warmth of sun rays hitting part of his arm. He must’ve slept right through the night.

He cannot recall having any nightmare. That’s new for sure.

He carefully takes in more of what is surrounding him. There are various lights he does not recognize around, above and below, until he pinpoints a group of very familiar ones not far in the distance.
Izuku silently slips off the bed, padding on his socked feet outside the room and down a corridor directed to the little group.

He stops in front of the door, when he hears Gran Torino’s voice, slightly muffled.

“—did what?”

“I have no idea how—” He can hear All Might’s reply, pensive. “I don’t think I will ever be able to understand how his quirk truly works, or the way he perceives the world around him— But yesterday, he managed to channel one last flame of One For All back in me. Without his help, I’m not sure I could’ve defeated All For One.”

They are talking about him—

Izuku hesitates at the door, blushing a bit. He knows that eavesdropping is not exactly nice, but after hearing that he doesn’t think he can just barge in. Would feel like waltzing in the spotlight voluntarily.

“How even—“ Gran Torino sighs. “And All For One knew him?”

“For what young Midoriya has been able to tell me, he stumbled into him while he inappropriately used his quirk searching for young Bakugou. Apparently, All For One had much to say to him.” A sigh. “I’m glad he seems to have understood and decided to stop using his quirk in that way. The mere idea he had to spend even just a minute listening to that man sends a shiver down my spine.”

“For the love of—“ Gran Torino replies, tired. “Are we sure he’s not your actual son?”

“I’m pretty sure, sir.” Izuku hears mom reply, not without a trace of amusement in her voice. “I’m sorry Izuku had given you all so many troubles…”

Aizawa-sensei sighs. “You know what irks me the most about him—“ He starts, his voice a mix of irritation and tired acceptance. “For every time he disobey and does something he really should not, he manages to balance it out by doing some good and solving our problems. Makes it all the harder to scold him.”
Izuku drags a hand on his face, trying not to grin. All Might was right, he was probably causing Aizawa-sensei to go gray young. He really needed to get in there and apologize.

Squaring himself with a deep breath, he knocks. Silence falls in the room, and then the door clicks open, Tsukauchi’s light standing in front of him.

“Well, here you are.” He says, a smile in his voice. “We were just talking about you.”

“Oh, really?” Izuku replies, the lie rolling a tad too easily on his tongue as he enters. He can feel eyes pointed at him as Tsukauchi closes the door behind him. “Um— Good morning?”

“It’s almost two in the afternoon.” Aizawa-sensei replies, flat.

“Oh. Explains why I’m so hungry.” Izuku mutters to himself, pensive. “I— Um—“

The silence stretches as he sighs, scratching the back of his head. Then he turns to face the little group of lights sitting around a table, and formally bows to them. “Everyone— I’m sorry. I know I did a lot of messed up things, lately.”

He feels mom’s tense light relax.

“I promise I will reflect on them, and make sure I will not make the same mistakes.” Izuku adds, before slowly standing straighter. “And… Aizawa-sensei, I know I gave you a lot of flack, especially. I’m really sorry.”

Aizawa-sensei sighs, tired. “See, this is what I meant.” He mutters. “Every time I want to get mad at him, he manages to get out of it.”

Izuku can’t help but grin a little, as the tense atmosphere in the room dissipates like clouds making way to a warm, joyous sun.
They all left him in the conference room, producing from apparently out of nowhere three boxes of takeout that both mom and All Might had unsubtly pushed in front of him. Not that Izuku would complain, he was absolutely famished, and he happily dug into one, leaving the adults to do their adult thing and probably talk some more about him away from his ears.

At least his apology seemed to have been acknowledged. Hopefully, things would pick up from there—

He hears the door open, and then a huff as someone sits in front of him. Izuku blinks, and keeps eating, his quirk turned off to avoid putting more strain on his already pretty heavy head.

“A doctor’s gonna check you up after you are done eating.” Aizawa-sensei says, voice flat. “How are you feeling?”

Izuku shrugs. “My back hurts and my head feels heavy but— All in all not so bad.” He admits, licking some curry away from his lips. “I mean— I don’t think I’ve been able to sleep without getting woken by nightmares for at least a month? But I did tonight, so it’s not so bad.”

Aizawa-sensei hums, and says nothing for a long while Izuku finishes his rice. Sniffing the boxes, he decides to attack another that seems to contain some chicken.

“I think we’ve got a bit of miscommunication going, you and I.” Aizawa-sensei suddenly says, his voice still not giving anything away. “I wanted to apologize for not being clear with you.”

Izuku almost chokes on a piece of chicken, at that. It’s strange, and a bit unsettling, having sensei apologizing to him, especially considering how much Izuku had messed up lately. “Uhh, sensei— there’s no need, really—“

Aizawa-sensei sighs. “I’m only human, and sometimes I make mistakes. Owning up to them is the least I can do.” He says, frank. “I should’ve told you why I was so worried in the first place, instead of just putting a ban of this new ability of yours you’ve just discovered.”

Izuku palms around, searching for the bottle of water he left there. When he can’t seem to find it, Aizawa-sensei pushes it in his hand, silent. He takes a generous sip, before talking. “I— I understand. The headache, the bleeding— It’s clear that putting so much strain on my quirk is dangerous—“
“Do you still not remember what happened?” Aizawa-sensei asks, softly.

“I— Muscular purposefully punched my back, and I think I just— Sort of sent back the pain I felt. But I don’t remember what happened after, it’s just— My memories all are scrambled and messy, I can’t really make sense of them.”

When Aizawa-sensei speaks again, there’s a note of stifled anger in his voice, and Izuku’s heart falls to his feet for a second, before he realizes that the anger is not directed at him. “…I can only take an educated guess.” Aizawa-sensei says. “I can guess that the strength of that connection had been too much to handle, and you shut down, acting on pure instincts.”

“… Sensei, what happened?” Izuku asks, blinking, because it’s clear that Aizawa-sensei is holding more than he is letting on.

“Muscular, he—“ A long moment of hesitation. Another sigh. “Part of his frontal lobe got destroyed.”

The chopsticks fell out of Izuku’s hand, as he paled. “What?!"

“…It’s not your fault, kid. Your brain is equipped to deal with that sort of stress, even if you suffered a backlash. His wasn’t. You couldn’t have know the possible side effects—” Aizawa-sensei continues, voice carefully low. “It was a strenuous situation, and you were face to face with a man that wanted to kill you and Kouta. Two children. I’m ready to bet that his aggressive intentions might’ve exerted an influence, as well.”

Izuku slowly falls back against his seat, pulse rabbiting in his temples. He feels a bit sick to his stomach, and Aizawa-sensei must’ve noticed, because he can hear him standing and then sitting back down right by his side, putting a careful hand on his shoulder.

“We’ve got so used to them we don’t really think about it— but quirks are a dangerous thing.” He says, slowly. “The wrong kind of power in the wrong kind of hands, and that’s how you get people like Muscular, like All For One— But you, you are nothing like them. You’d never purposefully and consciously inflict that kind of damage on someone, wouldn’t you?”

“…No.” Izuku chokes out after a beat of silence, feeling his eyes burn. Aizawa-sensei squeezes his shoulder, kind.
“We will have time to talk about the possibilities of your quirk and the limits we must impose to it, but I trust that you’ve understood our concerns, and you will act accordingly.”

Izuku nods, speechless.

“Now finish your lunch. You need your strength, kiddo.”

He silently obeys. Aizawa-sensei doesn’t take that gentle contact between them away until he’s done.

—

The ride back home is a bit strained, understandably so.

Izuku feels tired already, despite the fact he only woke a couple of hours prior. He feels like the fatigue he’s been dragging around, ignored, finally caught up to him, taking its place on his shoulders, especially after the serious chat he had with Aizawa-sensei and the long medical visit he went through after.

His heart felt a bit heavy, but admittedly the thought of going back home, not think about anything, just rest as he had been ordered to do, was very inviting. His back felt sore and stiff —no surprises, there— and Izuku just couldn’t wait to take a shower and sink into his bed, back into his room after what felt like ages, and maybe sleep for at least the entire day.

But before that, there was mom, and all the fucked up shit he did in the last few days.

“…What are you thinking about?” He asks, careful and meek, as the silence stretches.

“You tell me.” She answers, her voice deliberately measured.

Izuku flinches. “I’m sorry. But you know that already.” A sigh. “I can’t imagine how worried you must’ve been. I didn’t take your feelings in consideration at all, too wrapped up in my own issues, and that was… Really uncool of me. To put it mildly.”
She doesn’t answer for a long time, before slowly saying, “I should pull you out of school.”

Panic sparks in him, a knot forming in his throat immediately at the mere thought. If she did that, Izuku would never be able to see his friends again—*He wouldn’t be able to make Todoroki laugh again, to speak with Iida about their favorite heroes, to keep Uraraka company when she felt lonely*—

He doesn’t say a word, biting down on his lower lip as his eyes stings. He knows his hands are trembling, and he closes them into fists into his lap, as he tries to reign in his panicked breathing.

“But you… You have taken this road.” Mom says after what felt like an eternity. “And you’ve made it too far to turn back, now. You will never stop, even if I beg you to, Izuku.”

It’s not a question. Slowly, Izuku turns his face up to her, that familiar yearning for his eyes to work, *for once*, filling his chest.

“Just… Please, from now on, just… Think about all the people that care for you, before taking any decisions, ok?”

He doesn’t trust his voice not to crack, so he nods, and then hears mom sigh, resigned.

He turns his face away before she can see the tears finally spilling from his eyes, as his heart drums madly in his chest. He let his head fall on the backrest of the car seat, closing his eyes, taking a deep breath.

He hurt her so much— It’s a miracle she’s allowing him to still go to UA.

*This is the last chance you get, you utter dumbass.* He says to himself, harsh. *Don’t fuck it up, this time.*
“You knew, you little shit.”

Miki’s call came in the evening of his second day back home, waking him from the nap he was taking. —Then again, that really couldn’t be considered a nap. Hadn’t it been for that call, he probably would’ve slept right through the night.—

Izuku answered it after the fifth ring. He honestly didn’t want to, but well— The jig was up. And he didn’t had anywhere to run.

So he stayed there, finally back home and relaxing on his bed, squaring himself as he took a deep breath.

“What do you think?” He replied, a bit sleepily.

“Bro.” Miki says, her voice suggesting she still could not quite believe it. “Talent scout my ass. You’ve been hanging out with All Might for months and you knew.”

—It was an accident.” Izuku sighs, weary, trying to twist the truth in ways that will allow him not to lie to his loved ones more than necessary. “I just so happened to stumble into him and discover his secret— I think you can understand why I had to keep it to myself.”

“Yeah.” She sighs. “I mean, me and mom almost had a heart attack when we saw him on tv, but— Yeah, I can understand.”

“Thank you—“ Izuku replies, relieved. “I didn’t want to lie to you— Or to anyone else, for that matter. But it’s not like I had much of a choice.”

“It’s strange to think back to those months before the start of high-school, now that I know— He’s kind of a huge dork, isn’t he?”

Izuku snickers. “Yeah, he’s pretty chill when he’s not out there being the symbol of peace and stuff.” His heart gave a little painful churn when the words made it out of his mouth. It still was a hard pill to swallow, the idea that All Might will never go out there being anything, now.

Miki must pick up on his silence, her voice gentle. “This must be pretty awful for you.” She says. “I’m sorry he had to retire. But still, he’s going to keep teaching at UA, right? It’s not like you’ve
lost him forever.”

“That is true.” Izuku admits. All Might would still be at his side, for as long… Well, for as long as possible.

That still was hard to accept, too, but it’s not like he had much of a choice in the matter. Izuku was going to make the most of their time together, that’s for sure.

…I’m surprised you are only calling now, I expected to find you waiting for me here, ready to give him the scolding of a life-time.” Izuku tentatively says into the silence. She scoffs.

“I wanted to, but you’re lucky your mom asked me to give you a bit of time to rest. You shithead.”

Izuku sighs. “I know. I’ve been a giant shithead. I’m sorry.”

She sniffs, not saying anything for a bit, before taking a little sigh. “Look, I just— Be careful. For real, next time. I think I lost ten years of life in the last week only.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m not going to say that everything is alright, because that was not alright, but I trust that you’ve learned your lesson and won’t try to long-distance kill us again, mmh?”

“Yeah. I promise that won’t happen again.”

She sighs yet again, just answering with a tiny ‘ok’, before the silence falls on them once more.

“Say—“ Miki continues, her voice a bit more casual, interrupting the lull in the conversation. “Why don’t we organize a day out before the summer break is over? I think taking a day to relax would be good for all of us— I would like to see you, and to meet your other friends.”

Izuku blinks, shaken out of the little sleepy daze that took hold of him in the silence. “My friends?”
“Yeah! I already met Ochako, but I still have to meet Iida and Todoroki too, right?”

“I mean, I guess—“

“Ochako’s selfies of you four are quite cute, but I think it’s time I get to see them in the flesh, don’t you?”

“—Right.” Izuku admits, unsure. Still, the idea of a day out seemed really nice, and he did want to see Miki as well. “I’ll ask them that. But you should bring your friends from school, too. And your totally-not-boyfriend.”

“Shut up, Izuku.” She replies, making him laugh. “Anyhow, next time you see Dad Might say hi from me.”

Izuku almost chokes on his own spit. “…Dad Might?!”

“Dude, like, c’mon. He acts as if he’s your adoptive dad.” She replies. “You two give that father-son vibe all over the place, ya know.“

“Oh my god—“ Izuku whispers, desperate, as Miki snickers in his ear.

—

“Hey.”

Ochaco looks at the text, indecisive. It has been a couple of days since the Kamino-Ward incident, since All Might had been revealed to the world, since his real name made it out in the open. A name half of which she already knew.

A couple of days of absolute silence. Everyone was taking their time to recover and reflect about it, just like she did, clearly.
Everyone was ignoring the elephant in the room. That is, until she received that text from Todoroki.

She had no idea a single “Hey.” could contain so many meanings.

“Hey. So… What do you think.”

“I think that I don’t have the slightest clue of what is going on anymore.”

“I think we need to talk to him.”

“Yes, that is also what I think. But I’m scared.”

“I am too.”

“If I have to be honest, I’m not sure if I really want to know the truth. Whatever that might be.”

She sighs, sinking on the single, battered armchair in the tiny kitchen of her apartment.

“I’m going to write in the group chat, now.”

She tries to steel her resolve, opening the window that had remained stubbornly silent in the past two days.

**CutiePie:** Hey guys. Everything alright?

**Go2GoFast:** I’m doing fine. I hope you all are as well.

**Popsicle On Fire:** Doing ok.
The conversation lulled, as it was clear that the three of them were waiting to hear from him. Her heart did a little somersault when the window announced that Midoriya was composing a message. It took him a while.

**Small Might:** Hey. So, well. I’m sure you all have a lot of questions, so I’m going to answer the most obvious ones. Yes, I knew he was All Might all along. No, I did not want to lie to you, but I think you all understand why I kept the secret to myself. And no, he’s NOT my father, why do y’all keep asking that for the love of god.

Well, that nickname sure stuck out like a sore thumb, now. Still, the last part of the message made her snicker.

**CutiePie:** Are you sure…?

**Small Might:** Yes, Uraraka, I’m pretty sure I’d know if All Might was MY FATHER

**Small Might:** I’m sorry I lied, but I’m also not sorry. It was a secret too big and too dangerous to blow off, even if I trust all of you with my own life.

**Go2GoFast:** It’s understandable. I think we would all have done the same in your shoes.

There was another long pause. All of them afraid to ask, to say the first word, to even imply—

**Popsicle On Fire:** Remember what I told you at the sport festival, how I could tell there was something between you and him?

**Small Might:** Yes.

**Popsicle On Fire:** Well?

Ochako feels as if that little “Small Might is writing…” at the bottom of the chat is making fun of her. It takes forever.
Well, that’s a let down for how long he has taken to reply. She wonders just how many times Midoriya had dictated a message in, only to delete it and start from scratch. But he was still writing.

Small Might: It’s true that he’s kind of a family friend, at this point. I accidentally discovered his secret before high-school and he was forced to explain to me and mom. He’s kind, you know that, and he decided to take responsibility for my education, help training me to get me in UA. Before him I never even dared to think about trying the exam, I was sure I could never be able to. But he’s been there for me, and I can’t deny that he’s more than just a teacher for me.

Small Might: I’m sorry if this doesn’t make much sense. It’s just all very emotional. And even if you are my best friends I’m still scared of people knowing, you know?

Ochako sighed. Of course he was scared— She would be, too, had she been in his shoes. And well, in retrospect, considering what she had seen— What they all had seen, it was clear that All Might had a special relationship with him. She smiles a little sadly looking down at the phone, before an idea to light up the atmosphere a bit strikes her.

CutiePie: So, basically… He’s not your dad but he’s kinda your dad.

Small Might: oh my GOD

Go2GoFast: Ok, I actually laughed, that one was good.

Popsicle On Fire: Same.

Small Might: I hate all of you

Small Might: Anyway, off topic, but before the summer break is over we should organize a day out, or Miki will skin me alive. She really wants to meet all of you.

CutiePie: I thought you hated us?
Ochako still had many questions, as she’s sure they all did. But she also felt that, maybe, some secrets are better left untouched.

“That didn’t answer much— But I think I’m just going to take it, to be honest.”

She looks at the message Todoroki sent her, in private, echoing her current feeling.

“Same. I just feel like it’s better not to poke this sleeping dog.”

“Yeah. Besides, if there’s more to that, I’m sure he will tell us when he’s ready.”

“Well, I guess I’ll see you soon, Uraraka. Take care.”

Chapter End Notes

Ok, so, important PSA: Since I feel we sort of wrapped up an arc, here, from now on I'm going to slow down on the updates.

Yes, I know, please don't yell. This hurt me as much as it does you, because I'm an impatient asshole. But I'm rapidly catching up to what I wrote (started working on chapter 30, today) and I need to give myself some time. I think I'm going to update every three days, from now on, thank you for your patience *praying hands emoji*

Next chapter: These kids can finally have some time to chill! And hey, something romantic might happen... (°_°)

As per usual you can find me on tumblr, if you want. Also I'm still writing that TodoDeku smutty series of connected one-shots on the side, so if you're interested in that keep an eye out. I'll also don't exclude I might write/draw plenty of other stuff for this fandom so idk, if you like my works just be aware of that!
He could feel mom’s indecisiveness.

Honestly, he couldn’t blame her. Last time he went out for a day with friends, he ended up with a good chunk of his body and internal organs destroyed. He turns on the door.

“I’ll send you texts and pictures during the day, ok?” He says, the *so you will know I’m still alive*-kind of hanging there, unspoken.

“Ok, sweetheart.” She finally say with a little sigh, a sad smile in her voice. “Have fun.”

He waves to her one last time, before finally heading out, a messenger bag with the essentials on his shoulder. He listened a bit to the news on his phone - *everyone was still talking about Kamino Ward and All Might, of course, they will probably talk about that for the rest of eternity* - as he made his way to the appointment. When he got there, he felt the familiar lights of Miki and Haruo, along with three other lights he did not know. Presumably Miki’s friends. Todoroki was already there, too, a bit further, of course not having any idea how Miki looked like.

“Izuku!” Miki called him over, cheerful. He approached with a smile, feeling a tinge of surprised nervousness from the lights he did not know. Miki gave him a quick hug, that he happily reciprocated, before turning away from him. “Girls, this is Izuku. Izuku, my friends: Kotoe, Masae and Fuyumi.”

He properly shook hands with a smile, the three girls’ lights feeling a bit starstruck and intimidated. Weird.

“Hey, man, I’m glad to see you well.” Haruo says amicably with a shoulder pat, after all the introductions were over. He felt genuinely happy to see him. “When I heard of the Kiyashi-Ward incident in the news I almost got a heart attack!”

“Yeah, that whole situation kind of sucked big time— But I’m ok, now.” Izuku admits with a little lopsided smile and a shrug.
“B-but— you saved that girl, right?” One of Miki’s friend -Fuyumi, he thinks- asks, wonder in her voice.

“Oh, yeah— Poor thing was so scared, I’m glad she didn’t get hurt. She even sent me a letter and a drawing, after.” Izuku replies, smiling to himself at the memory. He can’t read it directly, but he’s still keeping it well preserved.

When he realizes that the feelings of admirations he can perceive coming from them are actually directed at him, Izuku feels a blush rise to his cheek.

“I— One of my friends is already here, I’m going to call him, ok?” He stammers, embarrassed, before walking toward Todoroki. He can hear one of Miki’s friend whisper “Oh my God, Miki I thought you were shitting me, but it is him! He’s cuter than he looks on tv, too—“ which makes him blush even harder, to the point that when he approaches Todoroki he can feel the surprise in his light.

“You are not sick, are you?” Todoroki asks, feeling Izuku’s forehead worriedly, making him splutter and laugh.

—

Shouto was not sure about this whole day out idea, at first, but he has to admit that so far it’s not too bad.

They all met up at the subway station, Uraraka and Iida joining them not much after Midoriya approached him, getting introduced to Midoriya’s friend from middle school -Miki, as she had adamantly insisted they called her-. She seemed nice, and it was clear that she and Midoriya were really close to each other going by the easy camaraderie between them, plain to everyone’s eyes as they exchanged words and joked with one another. Miki’s friends seemed ok, too, although her totally not boyfriend, as Midoriya said, and the three other girls were kind of starstruck and too intimidated to talk much. That didn’t surprise Shouto, he was well accustomed with the world of heroes and the kind of social status that being a student of UA’s hero course brought with it.

It wasn’t just the four of them and Midoriya’s friend, though. They ended up inviting the entire class, and although most of them were either away from town or already busy with other things, some had answered. Kaminari and Kirishima were making an absolute ruckus as they entered in the amusement park, while Yaoyorozu and Asui chatted animatedly with Uraraka. Midoriya and Iida were deeply engaged in a discussion with Miki’s boyfriend about some hero news as she laughed and playfully called them nerds, her friends shyly trailing behind her. Shouto was left mostly walking in the middle of the group, not talking with anyone, but it wasn’t a bad sensation, nor it felt lonely.
He just felt… Serene.

He was pretty sure he’d never been to an amusement park before, he thought as he looked up at the roller coaster. Or if he did he had simply been too young to remember, so the day was surely going to be full of new experiences, for him.

“So, what do we want to do, first?” Midoriya asked cheerfully, when they stopped in the main plaza, the noises of the rides and people having fun all around them. Shouto had been so happy to see him finally looking just— Decently healthy. Not pale, no dark bags under his eyes, not wincing because of an headache— He looked like he finally managed to get a decent amount of sleep and resting, and some good, warm meals.

About damn time.

“THE ROLLER COASTER!” Kaminari and Kirishima immediately reply, predictably.

“The haunted house could be fun, too.” Asui says, a finger on her mouth.

“Noooo— I don’t want to go to the haunted houuuuuse—“ Uraraka replies, grabbing one of Asui’s arms and shaking her. “Why did you had to say thaaaaat—“

Midoriya snickers. “I don’t have any preference, to be honest. Todoroki?”

Shouto blinks, surprised about having his opinion asked directly. “I— I don’t have any preference either.” He replies, even. “I’ve never been to an amusement park, so—“

At that, Kaminari gasps like he just insulted his entire lineage, making Miki and her friends laugh at his overblown reaction.

“Dude, no way.” He exhales, aghast. “We gotta do the roller coaster, then— Shock introduction is the best.”

…and that sounds ominous, but Shouto let himself getting dragged to the roller coaster when they all end up agreeing on that.
It can’t be that bad, right?

—

It was worse.

Shouto is really trying his best not to get sick all over Midoriya, as he fusses over him with a worried expression.

“Wow, you really took that badly.” He says, a lopsided smile on his lips. He rummages in his bag, fishing a bottle of water. “Here, drink a bit. It’ll make you feel better.”

They are sitting on a bench after the ride. Shouto could say with certainty that he’d much rather risk to break his neck by sliding on his own ice twenty meters off the ground than to ever climb of one of these hell rides ever again.

The others had left them to go to the haunted house when Shouto assured them that he would be
fine, just needed a minute, and Midoriya stayed behind with him, saying that he didn’t mind missing on the haunted house to make sure Shouto would be ok, since he couldn’t really make much of it anyway. *said while vaguely gesturing at his pale eyes*

Shouto forced himself to drink a bit, slowly feeling his stomach settle down.

“Why do people ride that *for fun*?” He finally asks once he’s sure he won’t puke all over Midoriya if he opens his mouth.

Midoriya chuckles. “It’s not so bad. But if you suffer from motion-sickness, then yeah— it’s probably pretty bad.”

Shouto sighs, sitting a bit straighter, playing idly with the bottle in his hands, and finally realizing that it’s just him and Midoriya, now.

His mind, traitorous, flashes at him what Uraraka texted him the past evening. Something about using the occasion to create a romantic situation or whatever.

Yeah, almost puking on the person you’ve fallen in love with. *So* romantic.

“Do you feel better?” Midoriya asks, gently, showing him that kind, warm smile that makes Shouto feel as if his own brain is about to melt out of his nose.

*Goddamnit*— “Yeah, better.”

Midoriya distractedly turns his head on a side, blinking a couple of times, before turning back to Shouto. “Looks like the others will be stuck in line for the haunted house for a bit. Do you want to do something else in the meantime?”

He must’ve checked with his quirk.

“How convenient quirk is convenient.” Shouto murmurs, making him laugh. “I don’t know. I don’t think I can stomach anything too arduous, for now.”
“Well, we can go to see some of the carnival games? No risk of getting sick, there.” A pause.
“Unless you decide to eat something from the street vendors, then yeah, might still risk getting sick.”

Shouto snickers, can’t help it, Midoriya’s sense of humor is just the kind that always gets to him. Midoriya seems satisfied at that.

“C’mon, no point in sitting here doing nothing.” He says, standing. He gently grabs Shouto by finding his forearm first and sliding his palm down until he could circle his fingers around Shouto’s wrist— and Shouto totally did not feel a sense of thrill running up his spine at that, nope, *not at all*. Midoriya easily hauls him on his feet, which reminds Shouto just how *strong* Midoriya really is, as if his toned arms and the way his shirt stretches on his chest and shoulders aren’t already enough of a giveaway.

*Brain, please, don’t melt, I need you still—*

—

“Psst, look—“

Ochako turns around when Miki elbows her gently, whispering. She blinks, following the direction of her pointing finger, noticing Midoriya and Todoroki walking away in the distance, clearly chatting with one another.

“Thinking what *I’m* thinking?” Miki asks with a grin and a wink, making Ochako splutter.

“Nah.” She answers, shaking her head. “Midoriya is clearly completely oblivious and Todoroki is a disaster. It’s not happening.”

“What is not happening?” Yaoyorozu asks, curious.

The line for the haunted house shuffles a bit, and so do they, while Miki lowers her voice a bit more in a conspiratorial manner.
“You may never know, Ochako. Amusement parks are a magical place, after all.”

Tsuyu has turned, too, tilting her head on a side.

“Oh—” She says, understanding dawning in her dark eyes. “You think Todoroki will confess.”

Yaoyorozu blinks, confused, as Ochako stifles a laugh in her elbow.

“Wait, you mean—” Yaoyorozu says, her eyes widening in understanding. “You mean Todoroki likes Midoriya?”

“I’ve only met him this morning and it was painfully obvious.” Miki snickers. “I mean, he was pretty much making heart eyes at Izuku while we waited for you guys.”

“He’s been liking him for a while, now.” Tsuyu adds with a little croak, matter-of-factly. “You liked Midoriya, too, Ochako. But you don’t like him like that anymore, don’t you?”

Ochako finds herself blushing. Tsuyu is observant and blunt as always, and a little cough finds its way out of her mouth as Yaoyorozu turns to her with eyes big as plates.

“…It’s true.” Ochako admits. “I had a crush on Midoriya, but I got over it—I’m just happy with being friends, now. Todoroki, on the other hand…”

Yaoyorozu seems vaguely distressed, putting a hand on her chin. “…I completely lack social awareness in this sense.” She finally says, analytical. “I hadn’t noticed at all.”

“You’re not the only one, don’t worry about it.” Ochako consoles her with a little pat, pointedly looking at Iida standing just in front of them, chatting with Kirishima and Kaminari. “Todoroki is way far gone. Like, full blown over the crush phase and straight in the pining phase, the poor thing.”

“So, you think he’s going to confess?” Yaoyorozu asks turning to Miki, suddenly very interested.

“Who knows. With the right atmosphere he might manage to get even through Izuku’s thick skull.
But you guys know Todoroki better than I do.” Miki replies with a shrug.

They all hum in unison as they think, making Iida turn with a perplexed look.

“…Are you ok?” He asks.

Kaminari puts a hand on his shoulder, shaking his head with some sort of wise-old-man expression on his face.

“Girls.” He says, dead serious. “Don’t ask. Trust me.”

Honestly Izuku couldn’t hope for anything better.

He was with his friends, they were having fun, and no one had tried to kill him -or them- yet. He hummed a little tune to himself, happily, as he and Todoroki made way to the games. If the day kept going like that, it might just turn out to be the most successful day Izuku had in a long while.

Also, it just felt nice to walk with Todoroki. His friend had always this warm, soft feeling around him that made Izuku feel like a moth going toward light. It just felt good to be with him.

“…You look really happy.” Todoroki comments softly after a while.

“I am.” Izuku replies, turning a smile to him. “We all went through some pretty harsh stuff. It’s nice to be able to just spend a simple day like this, having fun.”

Todoroki hums. “You’re right.” He finally says. “It’s good to spend a day just relaxing, every now and then.”

“Did you really never went to an amusement park, before?” Izuku asks, curious. Todoroki seems to hesitate for a while, before answering.
“…My father thinks it’s a waste of time that can be used better.” He finally says, evenly.

Izuku’s good mood definitely takes a punch at that. It was easy to forget the kind of home life Todoroki led, when he was such a nice, affectionate friend.

“Well, wouldn’t be the first time that guy is wrong about something.” Izuku mutters, knowing he’s pouting. He leans a bit on the side, meeting Todoroki’s shoulder with his cheek. “You have all the rights to go out and have fun, ok?”

Todoroki seems to have tensed a bit, which is understandable considering the subject they have touched upon. But then he relaxes with a little sigh.

“Yeah.” He says, in a low voice. “I would like to go to other places with you, in the future.”

Izuku gives him a big, happy grin. “I would like that, too!”

——

“Uraraka help, he’s killing me.”

“???”

“Midoriya. He’s being overly cute in that I’m-adorable-without-realizing-it way. I am dying. Please help.”

“ldsjklkwdx DEAL WITH IT”

“YOU TRAITOR”

“I’m sure your little, faint gay heart can take it, my friend. Good luck.”
So much for her being his ally.

Shouto glares down at his phone as if he could send a thundershock directly to Uraraka through it. He had used the occasion of Midoriya sending a couple of messages to his mother—after having asked Shouto to take a picture with him to send her, pressing his cheek against Shouto’s with an arm around his shoulders—to slip in a desperate plea of help to her. A fruitless effort, clearly.

“Ok, all done.” Midoriya says, turning to him with another giant smile.—Those smiles were kind of killing him, but he much preferred them to the tense, sad expression Midoriya seemed to wear most of the time, lately—

Shouto surrenders to his upcoming death as Midoriya drags him to the games. There are all sorts of booths with different type of challenges, offering a wild range of prizes. One in particular catches Shouto’s eye, were an array of All Might merchandise is proudly shown. The man might have retired, but it’s not like he didn’t still have a loyal, loving following. Shouto chuckles when he notices a big, round plush with the signature hair tufts softly sticking out. Midoriya would probably love it, if he could see it.

“Did you see something you like?” Midoriya asks, his hand still around Shouto’s wrist. “Want to try it? Although these games are usually rigged, so don’t take it personally if you don’t win anything.”

Shouto hums. They do have time to kill, so might as well… “Yeah, let me try.”

Midoriya stands at his side with a content smile as Shouto examines the game. The man at the booth explain he has to shoot down the targets that are moving in the very back, and try to make as many points as possible.

“How many points for that one?” Shouto asks, a plan hatching in his mind. He makes a silent shushing motion with his finger, the other hand pointing at the All Might plush, and the man at the booth blinks before taking into Midoriya’s pale eyes and nodding in silent understanding.

“I’m afraid you are going to need the biggest score for that one.” The man replies with a smile. “Good luck, kid.”

Shouto takes the fake gun after paying for his game, weighing it in his hands, and then gets to work.
“What is it?” Izuku asks, pleasantly surprised after Todoroki had put the prize he just won—after stubbornly trying six times, saying he was figuring it out—in Izuku’s arms, announcing it was for him.

“A bunny.” Todoroki replies distractedly, and Izuku is too busy happily testing how soft the object is in his arms, hugging it tight, overjoyed about having got a gift from Todoroki, to feel the smudge of a lie that flashed in Todoroki’s light for a split second, rapidly stifled by the usual, gentle, warm feeling he exuded.
“Oh my god, you did not.” Ochako whispers after Midoriya walked away with most of the group to
go get something to eat, leaving just her and Todoroki to claim a picnic table before the place got too
crowded.

She had almost died laughing when they met back with them, Midoriya hugging that ridiculously big
All Might plus to his chest -seriously, it was almost as big as Midoriya’s entire torso- with a giant
smile, saying “Look, Todoroki won a bunny for me!”, adding a perplexed “…Is something wrong?”
When all of them clearly started to snicker. Todoroki, at his side, stayed silent, looking like his entire
being was just about to catch fire, not just his left side.

“Shut up.” Todoroki hisses back, holding the offending object between his arms with what could
only be described as a pout on his face. “I don’t speak with traitors.”

“So kind of you, to win him a prize.” She continues, mercilessly, tugging at the soft hair tufts of the
plush “A bunny, nonetheless.”

Todoroki huffs, suspiciously red in the face. “I wanted to tell him what I really won, but then I felt
stupid.” He admits, not looking at her.
“Tell me the truth, you just wanted to see him hug that plush. He was positively adorable, after all.” Ochako grins, nudging her friend with her shoulder. “Wonder how Mr. adoptive dad will react, if he sees it.”

“Oh my god—“ Todoroki exhales, dragging a hand on his face, eyes going wide. “I didn’t think of that—”

Ochako’s belly is going to explode, if she keeps laughing like this.

—

The day had gone by way too fast, for Izuku’s taste.

They pretty much managed to ride everything in the park. Even Todoroki found the courage to try some of the more risky ones, not getting as sick as he did on his first ride, thankfully, although he definitely felt more at ease on more relaxed rides like the ferris wheel, sitting near Izuku and describing the scenery to him. No villain popped up from behind a bush to ruin their day, and no one got hurt. This had seriously been one of the best days he had in ages.

They parted ways at the subway station, tired and happy, as the sun was starting to set. Izuku felt relaxed, almost sleepy, as he stood on the train, the plush Todoroki gifted him under one arm, the other grabbing at the pole near him to keep his balance. Todoroki himself was standing by his side, silent. For some reason the girls all insisted he should walk Izuku back home with something he could not quite understand in their voices.

To be honest, everyone had been acting really strange at times, today. Izuku had no idea why, maybe it was due to the fact that they could finally relax after so many incidents? Stress could do weird things to people. He would know, he’s kind of the leading expert of stress making him go a bit crazy.

Todoroki ended up giving in under the pressure, and Izuku could feel that part of Todoroki didn’t want the day to end, too, so Izuku hadn’t protested, despite the fact that he did not need to be walked anywhere, really.

“Oh, do you want to stay for dinner?” Izuku asks, blinking himself out of his thoughts. He should at least offer, since Todoroki was coming with him all the way to Izuku’s place.
He could feel the hesitation in Todoroki’s light, so he added. “Unless you need to go home, of course—I mean, I don’t want to trouble you—“

“…No one’s home.” Todoroki says, evenly. “My siblings are all out for their summer breaks and my father is… Really not around much since— You know.”

_Not that I mind._ Todoroki’s light seemed to almost say.

“I see. So it’s no problem if you come for dinner.” Izuku smiles at him.

“…I guess not. Ok.” Todoroki finally concedes, something charged in his low voice.

—

This is the day Shouto will die of sheer embarrassment. It was bound to happen, it was destiny, _clearly._

They reached Midoriya’s house just as the sky was starting to darken. Small place, modest, nothing like the giant residence Shouto grown up in. But from the moment Midoriya opened the door, a greeting on his lips, it had been obvious just how much more lived in and warm his home was. There were pictures of Midoriya with his mother on the walls, the smell of something cooking on the stove, as someone was chatting in low, relaxed voices from the kitchen. That stopped after they closed the door behind them, Midoriya’s mother poking her head out of the kitchen with a smile, before blinking, surprised.

“Izuku, you could’ve told me we were about to have guests!” She said, good-naturedly. _Loving._ As if her son suddenly bringing a guest home without any warning was just normal business.

So very different from Shouto’s own home situation.

“Sorry, we were already almost here when I asked—“ Midoriya replied with a little embarrassed smile. “Mom, this is Todoroki.”
Shouto bowed properly, because he had manners ingrained in him, and when he looked back up he almost had a heart attack.

All Might was there, too.

He was looking at them with slight surprise on his emaciated features, then his eyes tracked down to the plush under Midoriya’s arm.

This is it. This is how I die. Todoroki Shouto, killed by too much blood to the face.

“…What is that?” All Might asks with a tint of amusement in his voice.

“Oh, this?” Midoriya replies, holding the offending object up. “Todoroki won it for me, it’s—“

Shouto’s hand clasps on Midoriya’s shoulders like vices, as he interrupts him, gritting. “Is your room upstairs?”

“Um— Yes…?”

Shouto starts to push him forward and then up the stairs, not daring to look at the two adults watching them with perplexed gazes as Midoriya stammers. “Wait— What are you— Todoroki— Waiiitt—“

Izuku stumbled in his room, perplexed. Todoroki closed the door behind them, before letting out a little “Oh my god.”, his entire light yelling ‘I’M CURRENTLY VERY EMBARRASSED.’

“…Are you ok?” Izuku asks, still hugging the plush between his arms.

“I’m very much not ok.” Todoroki replies, something undefinable in his voice. “All Might is downstairs and you—” He trails off.
Izuku waits for more, blinking. “… Should I have told you? I wasn’t really focusing on my radar, I didn’t even notice myself, at first, to be honest. Sorry.”

“It’s not that—“ A groan. “I’m sorry, I— When I won that plush for you I lied because I felt stupid. It’s not a bunny.”

Izuku frowns, palming at the object. And then realizing.

“Is this an All Might plush?” He exhales, hearing Todoroki groan again. Izuku splutters, laughing almost hysterically.

“That’s not funny.” Todoroki tries to protest, slightly muffled, as if he’s hiding his face in his hands. “I’ve never been so embarrassed in my entire life—”

“Aww, don’t be like that.” Izuku laughs, approaching him and pushing the soft object against him repeatedly. “He takes this kind of stuff in good spirits. I can’t recall how many times I’ve embarrassed myself in similar ways, don’t worry.”

Todoroki snorts, the tenseness in his light subsiding bit by bit. He finally takes the plush away after Izuku kept bumping it against him non-stop, playfully launching it on Izuku’s bed.

“Why did you feel stupid about it, anyway?” Izuku asks, tilting his head on a side as he stands in front of his friend. “It’s a nice gift.”

Todoroki hesitates, before sighing. His light seems back to normal, back to that warm aura that makes Izuku feel always so nice and happy whenever he’s around Todoroki.

“When I saw it I thought you probably would’ve liked it— But—“ A pause, his voice lowering. “It doesn’t matter. It’s dumb, really—“

“Of course it matters.” Izuku insists, softly, closing the distance between them a bit more to better hear him. “You can tell me. I won’t laugh, I promise.”
There’s something charged in the air, something Izuku cannot quite pinpoint, but it’s not bad. It makes him want to just stay like this, near Todoroki, after having spent a nice, fun day with him. Basking in this warm feeling that seems to be almost embracing him.

“I just… Wanted to make you happy.” Todoroki finally murmurs.

“How’s that a bad thing?” Izuku asks with a soft laugh, gently pushing a hand on Todoroki’s chest. “You’re silly, sometimes, Todoro—“

Todoroki kisses him.

Izuku’s breath itches in his throat as Todoroki’s fingers gingerly ghost under Izuku’s chin, rising his head up a bit. Izuku is frozen for a second, shocked, before he slowly relaxes, his mouth opening slightly under Todoroki’s lips. That seemed to shake Todoroki out of his own nervousness, as he gently turns the kiss from just a tense pressing of lips to something more relaxed, sweeter, his hand sliding down on Izuku’s neck and shoulder.

*He feels— Warm and loved and— Nice— Like his entire soul is basking in the warmth of a gentle sun— He doesn’t want to stop— He just want to stay like this— forever—*

Izuku’s lips part a bit more when he feels Todoroki’s tongue tentatively dart over them, and a soft little hum from the back of his throat rumbles in Izuku’s chest as the kiss deepens, Todoroki gently holding him closer, as if he’s scared he might break Izuku if he squeezes too hard. Izuku’s hands sits on Todoroki’s chest as he tips his head up more, hungrily chasing the slow, messy kiss.

—This is perfect— This is what he always wanted— So pliant and warm between his arms— Beautiful and kind and perfect— What else could he ask for— So lucky to have met him— So lucky he had been there— Giving him a hand— Offering his help— Dragging him out the darkness he had lived in for his entire life—

Izuku’s mind screeches as he feels the sudden disconnect in his thoughts and he pushes, sending Todoroki stumble back against the door of his room with a thud. He takes three steps back, his head feels light, like he just woke up from a strange dream, and a hand rises to cover his mouth, eyes wide in shock.

His lips still tingle with the sensation of the kiss.
He can feel the pure fear in Todoroki’s light as they stare at each other in silence, frozen, as if they are afraid one might attack the other if they move first.

Izuku’s heart is beating madly in his chest as he connects the dots— That warm feeling he always felt around Todoroki— That made him feel so appreciated and nice and loved— That had been—

And now— what he felt just now, during the kiss— They weren’t his thoughts.

They were Todoroki’s—

Inko frowns when he hears a muffled thud coming from upstairs.

“Boys?” She calls, and upon receiving no answer she turns to look at Toshinori, sitting at her kitchen table with a tranquil expression as he calmly fiddles with his phone. The man looks up to her when he feels her eyes on him, and shrugs.

Then she hears the door of Izuku’s room open, the sound of hasty steps coming down the stairs, and Todoroki Shouto zaps by the kitchen door holding his head down, hair covering his face. By the time she pokes her head out the kitchen he has already slipped his shoes on, opening the door.

“Todoroki, where are you going?” She asks, perplexed. “Dinner is almost ready!”

The boy hesitates on the door, not turning to her. “I— I can’t stay—“ He stammers, tense. “Sorry for the trouble.”

And before she can add anything, he’s out.

“—Is something the matter?” Toshinori asks, as confused as she feels, poking his head outside from behind her. When Izuku doesn’t come downstairs after long seconds they exchange a look, before climbing up together.
When they enter the room, Izuku is standing right in the middle of it, both hands on his mouth, an expression of pure shock and confusion on his face.

Chapter End Notes

Hello, long time no see my dearests. I promised you some romance, didn't I?

Of course I didn't spoil which kind of romance it was... ≪( ᐅ )≫

As per usual you can find me on tumblr and stuff!
This one summer

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Uraraka i fucked up”

Ochako was just about to finally take the first bite of her delicious -yeah, sure- economical instant ramen, tired but happy after the day at the amusement park, when her phone buzzed with a text from Todoroki.

She sighed, looking at it.

“Todoroki, you are always so dramatic. What happened, now?”

“no i really fucked up”

“i seriously messed up”

“fucking damnit”

She blinked, perplexed. By the frantic way the texts were coming in, it was clear that Todoroki was actually pretty rattled.

“Dude, calm down, tell me what happened.”

“i kissed him”

Oh— That certainly explained the panic.

“Todoroki you can’t just… Go from 0 to 100 like that!”
“i know i fucking messed up he was just standing there being all nice and soft and i don’t know
there was this weird atmosphere and he was so close and i just leaned in and went for it FUCK”

“and he seemed to be totally into it at first like we kissed for a bit but then he suddenly pushed me
away so hard i hit the door and then he just had this shocked expression i don’t know URARAKA
I MADE A MESS WHAT DO I DO”

“Ok, first of all, calm down. Are you still at Midoriya’s place?”

“fuck no i ran away you should’ve seen his face i wasn’t staying there!!!”

Ochako’s hand slaps on her face in desperation.

“You ran away?! Dude! Communication! Is the most important thing!”

“fuck communication he looked like i tried to stab him, you communicate with that”

“Todoroki I’m sure you’re blowing this out of proportion. Now calm down, I’ll speak with Midoriya,
ok?”

“NO DONT”

“Todoroki just… Let me take care of it. It’s fine.”

“i’m going to jump from the first bridge i find on the way.”

“No jumping from anywhere. Just go home, make yourself a tea or something. Or idk you can come
to my place if you prefer.”

“no thanks i’d rather you not see the face of absolute failure. i’m going home.”
“Todoroki please. Just go, I don’t know, take a shower, read a book, CHILL. Send me a message when you’re home, I’ll talk with Midoriya in the meantime.”

“alright fine”

She sighs, her forehead hitting the table. She knows her ramen will go cold, this evening.

She switches the window on her private conversation with Midoriya, and then she hesitates. How do you even start a conversation of this kind? *Hey, so I heard that our mutual friend stuck his tongue in your mouth and then ran?*

A bit too blunt. She might scare Midoriya away like a little bunny.

“**Hey Midoriya, you got home in one piece? Today was fun, right?**”

Yes, perfect. Generic enough, but still giving him an opening to panic-text-scream at her.

“**He told you.**”

…Maybe not as generic as she thought.

“**Uraraka, I’m so confused.**”

“Midoriya, what happened? Todoroki wasn’t making a lick of sense and was being super dramatic. I’m hoping you will be the reliable source in this whole debacle.”

“I don’t know. I really don’t know, I can’t even make sense of my own feelings right now. Uraraka, I’m afraid my quirk might’ve done something weird between me and Todoroki.”

“What??? What does your quirk have to do with anything, now?”
“It just… When he kissed me it was like. I was overwhelmed by what I’m pretty sure were his feelings and thoughts like they were my own. But at the same time, what if they weren’t his feelings? What if they were mine and I never realized and I accidentally influenced him into kissing me? I mean, I don’t think Todoroki could possibly like me in that way. I might’ve done something horrible and not even realize.”

Ochako is so done with these two idiots.

“Midoriya. You are a dumbass. Todoroki has been smitten with you for ages.”

“What???”

“You’re unbelievable. He’s been crushing on you since after the festival. Did you really not notice?”

“No.”

Well, guess that answers her question of whenever Midoriya had noticed or not her own - thankfully now gone, praise god, what even possessed her into getting the hots for this disaster of a guy-embarrassing crush.

“Midoriya, Todoroki REALLY likes you. A lot. So calm down, and don’t go off with your wild theories as usual. He kissed you because he really wanted to.”

“Ok… I guess. But I’m still confused.”

“That’s ok. You can take some time to think about your own feelings.”

“I reacted really badly. I probably hurt him. I didn’t mean to.”

“I know you didn’t mean to. You should at least send him a message to let him know that, and that you need time to think about things.”
“Yeah, you are right.”

“Thank you for talking me down, I’ll think about everything. For now I just know that I don’t want to lose him.”

“No problem. If you want to discuss anything at all you know where to find me.”

“And, Midoriya… This is not the end of the world, ok? I’m sure you will both find a way to don’t destroy your relationship, as long as you keep calm and level headed.”

“Yeah. Thank you, Uraraka, you are the best.”

“Oh, I know.”

---

Izuku melted on the bench he was sitting on, massaging his eyes tiredly.

He felt empty, like he ran a marathon. He had finally managed to compose a message that wasn’t a stammered, garbled mess and sent it to Todoroki (“Hey. I’m sorry I reacted badly, earlier, I just didn’t expect that and I’m very confused. I need some time to think. I hope to see you soon.”) and he was now just sitting there, holding his silent phone between both hands, a chilly night breeze gently caressing him.

He hears steps, and his ever useful quirk doesn’t leave him any doubt about who it could be approaching from behind.

“Hey.” All Might says gently, sliding to sit by Izuku’s side on the bench. “Did you… and young Todoroki had a disagreement?”
“…You could say that.” Izuku answers slowly after long seconds of silence. “Sorry. I know we both agreed on starting fresh and being honest, but this is kind of very personal.” Izuku adds with a sigh.

All Might hums. “Well, being honest doesn’t mean you have to tell me everything. It just means that if you want to tell me something, you can be honest with me.”

Izuku doesn’t answer, idly playing with the phone in his hands.

“We should probably go back, your mother’s dinner is surely getting cold.”

“Right—“ Another sighs makes it out of his lips. “Did you stop by for a particular reason?”

“Not really. I think your mother just wanted to make sure I was well-fed. Apparently, she got it in her head that the hospital meals weren’t good enough. Although there’s something I’d like to discuss with you two, since I’m here.”

That drags a little giggle-snort out of Izuku. “Yeah, I bet she did.” He stands from the bench, pocketing the phone. All Might followed him, as they turned to cover the rather short distance between Izuku’s home and the little park he’s seeked refuge in.

“Hey, All Might—“ Izuku starts, a little hesitant.

“Toshinori.”

“T-t— Look, I’m not going to be able to do that, just give up.” All Might snickers at that reply. “Anyway, have you…”

Ever been in love? Izuku wants to ask, but that’s pretty on the nose, considering the circumstances. Seems kind of disrespectful toward Todoroki, too, to just give him away to All Might like that.

But the man is kindly waiting for him to go on, as they walk.

“Nothing, sorry, just— Stupid thoughts.”
All Might doesn’t say anything, and yet Izuku has the distinct impression he just saw right through him.

—

Despite everything that has happened, the people still seems to have some measure of trust in UA. Or at least, the parents of their students.

Not all of them, though. Hagakure parents had been pretty hard to convince and required quite a bit to get around the idea for a boarding school, but in so far, they’ve been successful.

The next one is what really worried Aizawa. He sighs, fingers drumming on the steering wheel, as Toshinori sitting at his side, still half bandaged and with an arm in a cast, looked out the window.

“You are worried.” He says as the drive goes, breaking the silence.

“Aren’t you?” Aizawa replies. “We’ve let that boy get kidnapped. I don’t think his parents will be so receptive about the idea of having him away from home, now.” A sigh. “I think I’m honestly less worried about convincing Midoriya’s mother, with everything that has happened to him, than I am about Bakugou’s family.”

“Oh, we can skip Midoriya—“ Toshinori says, turning around to him with a distracted blink. “I had the chance to speak with them already. Can’t say Inko was exactly happy about the idea, but we had quite the open heart to heart, the three of us, so it’s ok.”

Well, that’s a small measure of relief, at least. One problem taken off Aizawa’s apparently infinite list of problems.

“Did you knew that young Midoriya received letters? Both from the girl he saved from Shigaraki and Mandalay’s nephew. It was quite touching, how proud of them he was.”

A lopsided smile pulls at Aizawa’s lips. “Bet he was. Oh— Here’s the address.”
They slowly braked in front the nice-looking home, the name-plate outside definitely confirming to them that they were in the right place. They both steeled themselves, before ringing.

In the end, all the worries turned out to be unneeded, as the Bakugou family seemed more than onboard with the idea.

“I was very impressed with what you’ve said during that press conference, Mr. Aizawa.” Bakugou’s mother said. “In that moment I truly knew that this school really understood Katsuki. I trust him in your hands, I’m sure you will be able to make a real hero out of him.”

Bakugou himself had been silent, if ever frowning, whenever his mother would push his head down in a bow.

They both took a deep, relieved sigh once outside the Bakugous’ residence. That surely was a weight off their shoulders. There’s a click of a door opening and they turn, Bakugou walking outside after them with a pensive frown.

“All Might.” He says without any preambles, looking up at Toshinori. “…What really is Deku to you?”

Toshinori does not takes his gaze away, Aizawa silently observing them from the corner of his eyes. There’s a moment of tense silence.

“He’s a student, like you are, of course.” Toshinori replies, evenly. “Someone with potential to grow into a fine hero, just like you.”

Bakugou’s eyes are imperscrutable as he stares at Toshinori for long seconds. Then they break contact, sliding down on a side.

“You don’t want to tell me.” He says, voice low. “That’s ok, I guess.”

Toshinori blinks, as the boy turns around to get back into his home.

“And… Thanks. For everything.” He finally adds, before opening the door, getting back inside.
Aizawa doesn’t say anything, sliding into the car, and Toshinori joins him a few seconds later just as silent.

“. . . He’s quite perceptive.” Aizawa finally says a good minute after they’ve started to make their way to the next house.

Toshinori releases a deep sigh. “He is very smart.” He replies. “I do not know if we will be able to keep this secret from him.”

_Maybe if you toned down the dad-ness._ Aizawa thinks, but does not say. It seems cruel, to point a disrupting finger at Toshinori’s and Midoriya’s relationship, especially now that they seemed to be closer to one another than they’ve ever been.

And good lord knew if Toshinori needed someone that made him want to hang on this green heart a bit longer.

“Do you remember how it was?” Toshinori asks in a soft, pensive voice after a while.

“What?”

“Being at their age. Figuring life out.” There’s a far-away look into his eyes. “I can’t really recall anymore how it was for me.”

Aizawa hums non-committal. “I remember some things.” He finally replies. “I definitely remember how stupid I was. Makes me wish to go back in time and slap some sense into myself.”

Toshinori chuckles, shaking his head. “Taking that out on the students, instead, huh?”

“Sssshhh— Don’t give away my secret.”

Aizawa smiles to himself, when Toshinori laughs heartily.
“Well, look who decided to finally show his face around! Hadn’t it been for your mother’s frequent visits, I would have no idea what you were up to, young man.”

Izuku smiled, letting himself being guided into a tight hug.

“I’ve been keeping up with your training, Izuku?” Ichiko-san asks, after letting him go, her hands heavy and reassuring on his shoulders.

“Mom, just **look** at him—“ Miki intervened, almost bored. “My god, you two meat-heads.” She added in a mutter, making the both of them laugh.

“I’m sorry I haven’t be able to visit anymore since the start of high-school.” Izuku finally says, scratching the back of his head. “Life turned out to be pretty crazy, huh?”

There’s a lot of unspoken things in that single sentence, but Ichiko-san did not comment, just gave him another friendly pat.

“It’s good to see you, Izuku.” She simply says, her voice low. “You’re always welcome to come around whenever you want, remember that, ok?”

Izuku smiles at her one last time, before she turns to Miki.

“Well, I’ve got some errands to run, so I’ll leave you two to it.” She says, cheerful, approaching the door of her house and putting on her shoes. “I’ll be back for lunch— You’re invited to stay, Izuku, of course.”

“I will be happy to stay for lunch, Ichiko-san.” He says, because he at least owes her that much, waving at her before she closes the door.

“Ok, why are you here.” Miki says, blunt as usual, fiddling with something around the sink. “I mean, I’m sure you wanted to come by and say hi to mom, too— But you have something to ask, I can see it on your face.”
Izuku sighs, sitting at the kitchen table he had been so familiar with only a bunch of months prior. He knows he’s about to dig his own grave, but he honestly doesn’t know who else to ask about this.

“Miki… How did you figure out you liked your boyfriend?”

Miki stops whatever she’s doing, and Izuku can feel the unholy glee in her light — *self, meet your own grave* — as she turns around.

“Ooooh—“ She exhales, a giant grin in her voice. “Could this be it? Has the spring of adolescence finally come for Midoriya Izuku as well?”

“Miki, please.” He sighs, desperate, melting on the table. “I’m in deep shit, here.”

“Oh, in deep shit— My oh my, what a terrible situation.“ She says, purposefully dramatic. “And, pray tell, who could it be that is making you feel such sweet feelings?”

“I hate you.” Izuku mutters, making her laugh. “I don’t even know what these feelings are. I can’t make sense of anything, that why I asked.”

She finally seems to sober up as she softly puts a glass of something in front of him. It smells like mint.

“Why don’t you explain from the start?” She says, sitting at the other side of the table.

And so Izuku did as they sipped their drinks, carefully omitting names and dates and locations and any detail that could possibly lead back to Todoroki. *he could at least try to protect his privacy, if nothing else.*

“And my quirk is not helping.” Izuku says at the end of the tale, frustrated. “I can’t figure out if what I feel is really mine, or the results of this person’s feelings for me. I’ve never felt like this before, and I don’t know what to think, I don’t know how to recognize if I really like this person back or not, it’s just all so confusing—“
“Mmmh, I see—“ Miki says, pensive, when he trails off. “Well, first of all, there’s no love for dummies guide, out there. Only you can recognize if what you feel for them is something more than friendship.”

“That’s not really helpful—“ Izuku mutters, hanging his head down.

“But—“ Miki continues, playing around with the ice in her glass. “I might have an idea that could help you figure it out.”

He looks back up, hopeful.

“Go on a date with them without your quirk.” She says. “If you don’t have it on, you can be sure you are not feeling anyone else’s feelings if not your own, right?”

Izuku weighs the idea in his mind. In that sense, she’s certainly right—

But Todoroki had never answered to the text he sent just a couple of days prior, and doesn’t even talk in the group chat anymore. It’s clear he’s avoiding Izuku. He’s probably very embarrassed by what has happened.

Izuku doubts he would be up to go anywhere alone with him, let alone a proper date.

“… I don’t think they will be very receptive to the idea.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it, I’m sure Ochako will talk him into it.” Miki replies, distracted, taking both their now empty glasses away to put them in the sink.

Izuku’s eyes go a little wide, and when she turns around she sighs, long suffering.

“Izuku, I love you, and it’s nice of you that you tried to protect Todoroki’s privacy.” She says. “But I assure you: the fact that he has a crush on you the size of this city is obvious to anyone who is not blind. I knew who you were talking about from the start.”
“…Oh.” Izuku says, blushing.

“He’s a bit awkward, but cute.” She adds. “You’d make a nice couple.”

When he crosses his arms on the table, hiding his burning face into them, Miki laughs heartily giving him a pat just as strong as Ichiko-san’s.

In the end, Izuku procrastinated.

He was moving to UA as it has now turned into a boarding school, and there were just so many things to do in the last couple of days that he really didn’t had the chance to think much about his newfound set of interpersonal problems. —As if he needed those, too, on top of trying to get out of his first year of high-school alive and in one piece.—

He was definitely not hesitating because he was scared to confront these new, scary feelings that had crashed into him like a train going full speed out of apparently nowhere. Nu-uh.

(He was. He was terrified. He had no idea his entire being was even supposed to feel things so confusing and messy and clashing into one another and how do people even function with this stuff. Could he not just go back to feeling like a guy with great friends and no “I have no idea if I like you romantically or not and this point I’m too afraid to ask” problems? No?)

His phone stayed stubbornly silent. They were all probably very busy with their own matters, and Izuku felt especially bad at the idea of bothering Uraraka with his whining, considering she had to deal with having to literally move entirely out of her rented apartment now that UA implemented dormitories.

So he bid his time, feeling increasingly nervous at the idea of having to face Todoroki soon, whenever he wanted it or not.

Mom gave him a long, long hug on the day they were to be officially moved in before the start of the new trimester.
“You be careful, ok?” She said, softly, caressing his cheek. “And be obedient, since Mr. Aizawa has been so gracious as to give you another chance to earn his trust, despite everything.”

“I know, mom.” He replied with a little embarrassed sigh. “I will be nice, promise.”

“And remember to call me.”

“—’course.” They hugged again, silent. “I’ll visit in the weekend, you know that. Bye, mom.”

And now here he was, in the midst of his classmates as they all grouped up in front of their new home and Aizawa-sensei, waiting for them there.

Izuku forces himself to stay neutral and calm, despite feeling Todoroki’s silent presence behind him like a living, burning fire.

“Class 1-A.” Aizawa-sensei says as a welcome of sort. “Glad to see you are all here on time.”

“Glad to see you too, sensei.” Asui says with a little croak. “After seeing that interview I was afraid you might not teach us anymore, I was really sad.”

There’s a murmur of agreement going through the class, and Aizawa-sensei seems to take a second, before continuing.

“Do not worry about that.” He finally says, evenly. “I will be giving you a little tour and briefing of the facilities, but first, there’s something I need to say.”

There’s a little shiver going through a certain set of lights as they wait for what is inevitably to come, and Izuku is not surprised in the slightest when Aizawa-sensei calls out to him.

“Todoroki, Kirishima, Yaoyorozu, Iida, Uraraka, and Midoriya.” He says, voice low. “You have taken upon yourself to act in a way you knew perfectly well was against the rules, by interfering that night during the operation to retrieve Bakugou.”
Shock goes through almost all of Izuku’s classmates, as he feels eyes boring into them.

“Considering the circumstances, and the fact you have avoided direct combat, you’ve been granted a pardon.” Aizawa-sensei continues. “Count yourself lucky. Had things been different, I would have all of you expelled.”

Izuku flinches. “Sensei…”

A long suffering sigh. “What is it, Midoriya.”

“I— It’s my fault.” Izuku admits in a low voice. “I convinced them to come with me—“

“Midoriya.” Yaoyorozu suddenly intervenes, her voice firm. “It was our own choice to come. We must take responsibility of our actions.”

Izuku bites down on his lower lip, guilt gnawing at him. He still feels like it’s his responsibility if Aizawa-sensei’s trust in his friends has come to lack, now—

“Yeah.” Kirishima adds, sounding regretful, but sincere. “I wanted to come, too. It’s not just your fault.”

There’s a tense feeling in the air. Aizawa-sensei sighs.

“Whoever responsibility it is, you have all acted fully aware of the risks. As I said, count yourself lucky this one time, because you won’t get another chance so easily. From now on, I expect all of you to abide by proper procedures and follow the rules that are set in place for a reason. Am I clear?”

There’s a small, depressed chorus of “Yes, sensei…” before Aizawa-sensei turns toward the facility.

“Ok, now that that is out of the way, let’s go. I’m sure you are all very eager to see your new home.”

But there’s definitely a tense hesitation in all of them, after that, until Kacchan takes it in his own hands to cheer up the atmosphere a bit in his own very Kacchan way.
Izuku smiles to himself as poor Kaminari mumbles and gurgles, making his classmates splutter and laugh. Kacchan might’ve not changed much, apparently, and yet Izuku is pretty sure he changed plenty.

—

It was already evening by the time all of them finished unpacking and settling in their respective rooms. Izuku finished pretty early -not much to do in terms of decorating when you can’t see- and spent the rest of the time exploring the first floor communal facilities, familiarising himself with the space and appliances -which almost all had braille implemented, he noted- as bit by bit his classmates trickled in after setting up their own rooms, chatting with one another.

Izuku was happy to be back, meet with all of them again, but there was still this lingering tenseness in his heart. When everyone seemed to have regrouped on the first floor, sitting around the couches and chatting, Izuku had took a deep breath, standing up and clearing his throat to attract his classmates’ attention.

“Guys, I just want to say something.” He finally says when the silence has fallen on them, a bit tense. “I had the chance to speak with some of you already, but the majority— Last time we met I parted ways from all of you in a way I’m not proud of. I wanted to apologize for that.”

The only person confused by this seems to be Kacchan, as the others could probably recall pretty well how he had snapped at all of them and stormed off his own hospital room when they had all come by to visit, attempting to cheer him up.

There’s a chorus of “Don’t worry about it.” and “It’s cool.” and gentle pats on the shoulders, as the tenseness finally leaves him when he sighs and finally smiles at them.

One more step to making things better.

“Ok, Mr. Serious Face—“ Ashido jokes, elbowing Izuku gently, making him laugh. “Now that all the due apologizing is done, let’s do something fun! Us girls were talking, and we thought it could be cool to have a room showcasing competition!”

There’s a mixed bag of reactions in everyone’s light, ranging from absolute indifference to badly hidden embarrassment. Izuku snickers at that.
“Let’s start with you, Midoriya, since you clearly find the idea so funny.” Kaminari interjects, mischief in his voice, as they all have already started to move to the second floor before he could even say anything. He trails after them, silent, tilting his eyebrow when Ashido comments, almost disappointed “Not much going for decoration here, huh?” after they entered his room.

“You do realize that I’m blind, right.” Izuku deadpans, amused, causing a chain reaction of snickers.

“Well, it’s not completely empty—“ Yaoyorozu says, surprise in her voice when she notices the little clutter of knick-knacks sitting on the small dresser. “Aren’t these the gifts we sent you when you were unwell?”

Unwell, what a kind way to put it. Izuku shrugs, a little blush rising to his cheek. “Huh— yeah.”

“Aren’t you a darling.” Kirishima teases, elbowing him. “Wait, is that—?”

That’s when Izuku remembers, and blushes for real.

When he packed everything in the boxes the school sent them, he was left with a lot of unused ones, not really having much besides the bare necessities. That’s when he remembered a certain plush that a certain someone won for him during a certain day, and well—

“It’s very soft—“ Izuku mutters as a way to justify himself, red to the roots of his hair while Kirishima laughed.

Izuku is pretty sure that Todoroki is trying to open a hole in him, for how hard he can feel his staring.

—

Shouto groans when his phone buzzes.

He finally managed to get back to his room after the class had been through with that –admittedly rather entertaining- room showcasing business. Shouto had been ignoring Uraraka’s pointed looks
the whole evening, keeping to himself, but he knew he couldn’t run forever.

With a sigh, he took his phone, unlocking it with a lazy thumb slide, and then blinked at the picture with absolute no text the girl sent to him.

“…Uraraka, is there a particular reason why you sent me a picture of a chicken?”

“Oh, was it? I thought it was a picture of you.”

…Alright, point taken.

“Why did you not talk to him at all? You had, like, all the chances.”

“He didn’t talk to me, either.”

“Todoroki Shouto, you do not try to sway me, now. I know that Midoriya tried to contact you and you ignored him. You big chicken.”

She was right. He was a big chicken. With a groan he let his face fall down against his pillow.

He just… Had no clue what to do. The mere idea of talking to Midoriya sent him spiralling into a silent panic.

“Maybe it’s better this way. We can just let it go, forget it all. It’s not that important.”

“I know you haven’t stopped thinking about him at all, the face you made when we met this morning and you looked at him was embarrassing, so don’t give me that crap. I don’t believe even for a second that you really want to forget your feelings for Midoriya.”

And she’s right again. But what is Shouto supposed to even reply?
Oh yeah I can’t stop thinking about that kiss and about the fact that despite how badly it ended it was pretty much one of the best things that has ever happened to me in my entire life.

It was so goddamn pathetic. He was pathetic.

And yet he couldn’t just stop thinking about it, about the sensation, he still felt it as if it had happened a minute ago. The way Midoriya had tensed against him at first to then relax, his soft lips gentle against Shouto’s, the way he had opened his mouth to him with that little groan, pliant and inviting, the way he pushed up against Shouto, hungry for more, his tongue invading Shouto’s mouth—

“Stop thinking about it—“ He hisses to himself, angrily stuffing his head under his pillow.

He lies there, stewing in his own unhappiness, not even bothering to reply to Uraraka. It was bad enough that their training was to start the next day, and then he’d have to spend most of his time around Midoriya whenever he wanted it or not, not to mention how awkward it surely was going to be around lunchtime, since their usual, easy friendship routine pretty much blew up after Shouto had the brilliant idea of throwing a live grenade right in the middle of that—

A knock on his door. Shouto groans yet again. He can’t believe Uraraka would bother to come all the way to his room to scold him some more since he was ignoring her text, now.

Another knock. With a sigh, Shouto climbed on his feet, giving up to the fact she was not going away until he answered.

He almost had a heart attack when he opened the door, finding himself face to face with Midoriya, his hand in mid-air like he was just about to knock again, the other holding his cane.

“Hi.” Midoriya says after a long second of tense silence, a small, strained smile on his lips. His eyes were paler than usual. “Can we talk?”

If Todoroki had anything to say regarding the fact that Izuku was clearly keeping his quirk turned off as they silently made their way to the first floor and then outside to sit side by side on the stairs leading up to their dormitories, he surely did not vocalise it.
Izuku carefully sat on the first step, folding his cane and putting it down at his right side, Todoroki silently sitting by his left.

“So…” He forces himself to say, because at this point it’s pretty clear Todoroki will not open his mouth unless he’s strictly required to. “I had time to think.”

More silence. Izuku sighs. This is hard.

“And… To be honest I’m still confused.” He admits in a low voice, collecting his knees against his chest and resting his head on top of them. “I never felt like this before, and I don’t know what to do with all of it.”

He can hear Todoroki shift a bit near him, uncomfortable.

“And— Well, I still don’t understand if what I felt when you—“ He trails off a bit, coughing. “In that moment I— I mean, my quirk is usually pretty strong but in that moment to me it felt like the dial brutally got turned up to eleven and I’m pretty sure I felt your thoughts.”

That finally gets a word out of Todoroki, as he blurts a weak, shocked “What?”

“I know, right?” Izuku laughs, nervously. “It was so weird— That’s why I reacted like that— I’m sorry about it— And I still have no idea what that was, it confused me so much, and I don’t know what to think.”

The silence stretches, and Izuku has to resist the temptation to turn his quirk back on, just to try feel what Todoroki might be thinking, now.

“So, I had an idea—“ Well, technically not his idea, but there’s no need to linger on details. “If you are willing to give me another chance— I would like to go out with you, just the two of us, with my quirk turned off and try to figure out if what I feel is really all mine.”

There’s a long silence, and Izuku is bracing for the “No.” for the “I don’t want to talk to you anymore”, for anything, really, until Todoroki finally speaks, his voice rough, incredulous.
“Are you… Asking me on a date?”

Izuku blinks and clears his suddenly very dry throat. “I… Yes, I guess I am.” And before he can chicken out and take it all back he adds. “This weekend? I know you usually take a day to go visit your mother, so I’ll leave that up to you, really—“

There’s yet another long moment of silence, as Izuku waits, tense, his heart beating madly in his chest.

“…Ok.” Todoroki says, careful, like he’s afraid he might break in hundreds of pieces if he speaks a little faster. “Saturday.”

Something inside him releases as Izuku sighs deeply, turning a bit toward Todoroki with a tiny smile.

“Saturday.” He whispers back, and when Todoroki tentatively grazes Izuku’s fingers with his, Izuku does not take his hand back, their fingers barely interlacing.

They sat like that for a long time, in silence, with that little contact linking them, their only companion the singing of cicadas in the summer night.
Chapter End Notes

Can you believe the art for this chapter is the fourth thing I drew for this story?

No, seriously. Lol.

The title of this chapter is straight up lifted from this graphic novel. If you've never read it and get the chance to do so, please do yourself a favor and read it, it's a good.

As usual, you can come find me on tumblr!

Edit: I'm a dumbass and forgot: I drew the kiss scene from last chapter after the chapter
was posted lol, if you wanna see it click here : D
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Ochako was pretty sure she accidentally entered a parallel universe, that morning, and hadn’t realized.

Really, which other conclusion could she come to? She got downstairs in the communal area to go get some breakfast. She found some of her classmates already there, in various states of sleepiness and bed-heads, sitting at the kitchenette counter and tables munching on their different kind of breakfasts— And then she noticed them.

Midoriya and Todoroki were not only not completely awkward around one another as she had expected to see happen, but they were also amicably chatting, sharing the same breakfast sitting in front of one another at the counter, their knees bumping.

Ochako rubbed at her eyes, and looked again. Yep, still the perfect image of disgustingly morning people lovingly speaking and smiling to one another as others around them were still half asleep zombies.

“Uuuuuuh—”

“Oh—“ Midoriya says, turning to her with a smile, his eyes pale in a way that suggests he has his quirk turned off. “Good morning, Uraraka!”

“Good… Morning?” She replies, tilting an eyebrow. Todoroki is looking at her with an expression halfway between amusement and defiance, as if he’s challenging her to say anything at all.

“I think me and Todoroki might’ve finished the last of the rice—“ Midoriya says, pensive, completely oblivious to the silent look-banter happening between her and Todoroki. “I’m sorry, I’ll go put on some more!”

He gets up from his seat, his right hand not breaking contact with the counter as he walks down toward the kitchenette to go fiddle with the rice cooker.
Ochako immediately takes his place, her voice barely a whisper. “Ok, what the heck—“

Todoroki’s lips do a strange thing, as if he’s trying not to grin at her, while he shrugs.

“No, no shrugging—“ Ochako immediately replies pointing her finger at him. “Yesterday night you were Angsty McAngst and now you two are sharing breakfast like a lovey-dovey couple? How does that work?“

“He asked me on a date.” Todoroki replies in a low voice, hiding his smile behind his hands as he crosses his fingers under his chin. “Saturday. “

Ochako blinks, her mouth hanging open, and she turns to look at Midoriya that’s palming at the rice cooker with a perplexed expression.

“That little— Where does he even keep all those guts?” She asks, more to herself than anything else, making Todoroki giggle-snort. “You’re still a chicken. You know that, right?“

“Yeah, I guess I am.” Todoroki replies, placid. “But I’m the luckiest chicken on the planet. “

He gets up after that, approaching Midoriya to help him out with the rice cooker. Midoriya turns to him with a big smile, and Todoroki kind of leans way too into Midoriya’s personal space as they go through the necessary steps to make the thing work.

“Wow, who glued those two together, this morning?” Hagakure snickers by her side in her pink pajamas, when she leans over the counter to grab the sugar. Ochako is still staring. “They almost look like a couple—“

“They might be one by the end of the week.” Ochako replies, her voice faint with amazement.

“…What!?“
Izuku is definitely glad that he decided to bite the bullet and speak with Todoroki directly the prior evening, because he could not imagine how much more awkward his second day back on school grounds might’ve been had he not done so.

Instead he got to share breakfast with him, both of them much more relaxed around one another, back into that comforting, easy relationship they shared before. Spending his day with Todoroki, Uraraka and Iida had been great after so long he’d been missing from school. He felt back in his element, with this added twist of being able to spend literally the entire day with all his beloved friends, now that they shared living space in the dormitories.

He had taken a new decision, too, after finally being able to take an hour to sit down and speak with Aizawa-sensei regarding his quirk. They’ve come to the mutual agreement that Izuku should try to keep his quirk off whenever there was no need to use it, when it was safe to do so. That would inevitably make some things harder -like trying to work the rice cooker, one time hadn't been enough to memorize all the steps needed, clearly- but it was worth it to try keep his mental state more balanced. It was pretty clear at this point that having his radar on at all times and only turning it off for the night was not the way to go if he wanted to keep level-headed and calm.

Still, he would need some time to get used to this, going by how much more relaxed he felt when he turned it back on at the start of their training session. It was kind of inevitable that he’d feel vulnerable without his quirk, but he was surrounded by trusted friends and teachers. He needed to put some more faith in them, they deserved that much at least.

They were supposed to be getting ready for the hero provisional license exam, training to create their own special move— Izuku ended up dilly-dally-ing a bit as he pondered on what could that be for him. All Might had his punches, but he already found out those were not his forte, not to mention he usually applied One For All to his knowledge of hand-to-hand combat, so he never really thought he could have a move that could be designed as special… Should he focus on his radar, instead? But even then he had doubts— Maybe a mix of the two? But how?

“Midoriya, I can see that your head is about to catch fire from here.” Aizawa-sensei’s amused voice snapped him out of his musings. “What are you thinking so hard for?”

“Ah, sensei—“ Izuku turns, embarrassed. “I was trying to figure out what could be a special move for me— Not sure how to proceed, to be honest.”

His classmates were already giving it all in trying different stuff, while he was just standing there like an idiot. Aizawa-sensei hummed, thoughtful.
“You have experience with hand-to-hand, Midoriya, don’t you?”

Izuku blinks, curious about the question. “A little bit, yes.”

Aizawa-sensei stays silent for a few seconds, before turning away from Izuku. “Cementoss.” He calls, his voice a little louder. “Can you make a space for me and Midoriya to spar?”

“W-what?” Izuku stammers, surprised, as he feels Cementoss-sensei’s quirk in action, creating a little ring for them. “He’s all yours.” Cementoss says, amused, once he’s done.

“Sometimes you don’t need to think, as much as you need to act.” Aizawa-sensei says as he steps up on the flat surface. “So, come up here, and act.”

“…That’s quite funny coming from you, sensei.” Izuku can’t help but say, a lopsided smile on his face as he climbs up after him.

“The cheekiness, Midoriya. Keep it at bay.” Aizawa-sensei replies, not without a tinge of amusement in his voice. “Now turn off that overworking brain for a bit and get into the flow. The solution will come to you.”

Izuku takes a deep breath, steeling himself, and forces his mind to empty as he focuses only on Aizawa-sensei, shifting to a combat position. It has been quite a while since he had the chance for a nice, old sparring session and he probably needs it. Hopefully, sensei will be right, and an idea will come up to him.

—

Toshinori was standing at the entrance, watching.

All the kids seemed to be very into their special move training, and Toshinori definitely wanted to become a better teacher, especially now that he hadn’t much more to offer to the world other than preparing the new generation of heroes. So he observed closely, making mental notes about every each one of his students with the intention to make the rounds and give some tips to all of them.
Young Uraraka catches his eyes at some point, floating upside down, giving him a bright smile and a wave—despite her vaguely green face—that he answers to in kind after a couple of seconds. He was gladly surprised to see that his student didn’t seem to be offended by the fact he lied to her multiple times, in the past. He approaches her, not without a bit of tenseness.

“What are you thinking for your special move, young Uraraka?” He asks, tilting his head on a side as she keeps floating.

“I’m not sure—” She says, pensive, slowly making a little somersault mid-air. “I was thinking— If I can make myself levitate, I could use the increased mobility to apply what I’ve learned during my work experience week, but my endurance isn’t the best—“

“Mmmh, that’s certainly interesting— If you could make it work, it will surely be quite the surprise move.” Toshinori considers, pensive. “I’m sure you will be able to strengthen your quirk more and more as you go on, so don’t give up!”

She flashes him another big smile. “Yes, sensei!”

Toshinori kind of wanted to hug her and thank her for being so understanding, but this is not the place nor the time. Hopefully he will have the chance in a less formal setting.

His thoughts are interrupted when he hears an excited “Whoa dude, look at that!” and both he and young Uraraka—releasing her quirk and landing with a little oof—ends up shuffling to the other side of one of Cementoss’s concrete pillars, curiosity picked.

“Oh—” Young Uraraka gasps, surprised.

There’s a sort of ring made of concrete, Aizawa and young Midoriya sparring on it. They are really going at it, both of them wearing focused expressions as they dance around each other, hitting and dodging, quick on their feet.

Aizawa is holding back, Toshinori can tell. It’s understandable, in a real fight young Midoriya would be destroyed by Aizawa, he simply lacks the combat experience his teacher has in spades. It’s clear that Aizawa’s objective is to give Midoriya a chance to figure something out.
Young Midoriya on the other hand is both totally focused and giving it all, and also clearly having fun if the little grin on his face is anything to come by.

Some of the other kids are getting increasingly distracted by the intense sparring session, young Ashido and Kaminari are even standing nearby the ring, cheering as if they are spectating a boxing competition. Toshinori chuckles to himself at that, remembering how much young Ashido likes hand-to-hand techniques.

Aizawa and young Midoriya seems deaf to it all, too focused in their own little training. At some point Midoriya seems to call a pause, holding his hand up.

“In a real fight your enemies won’t give you pauses, you know that.” Aizawa says, amused, but stopping as requested. Young Midoriya chuckles.

“I know, sorry, I just—” He drags his forearm across his forehead, drying away some sweat. “It’s way too hot in here, I’m cooking myself.”

And with that he sheds the upper piece of the school gym uniform and the white t-shirt he’s wearing, casually launching them in a ball of cloth outside the ring. There’s a moment of absolute glacial silence as both he and Aizawa start sparring again, apparently oblivious to it all. Young Ashido and Kaminari definitely look less like they want to cheer, now.

Toshinori can only imagine it’s the first time young Midoriya’s classmates have seen the web of scarred skin covering his back, going by their reactions.

Toshinori approaches the two clearly distressed students, distracting them with a pat on their back and a casual “So, why don’t you two show me what you’ve got?”

He can’t help but think of his own scars, as he walks away with Ashido and Kaminari. Marks on a weathered body, marks that shows that despite everything he is still alive, just as young Midoriya is. But painful marks, nonetheless. Chances are all these kids will gain marks of their own in the future, big ones, too, if they hadn’t already like young Midoriya and Todoroki did. It is the inevitability that comes with a work where injuries and near-death-experiences are always around the corner.

But for now, he can let them dream a bit longer, as he listens to their ideas for a special move, giving pointers whenever he can.
Izuku might be coming up with something.

Sparring with Aizawa-sensei is fun. The man is clearly experienced—and holding back. Izuku is not stupid, he figured that, if Aizawa-sensei was to fight seriously, Izuku would probably get his ass handed back to him in ten seconds flat—and it has been way too long since he had the chance to just forget One For All and rely only on the strength of his own body instead.

He should probably find a way to fit in some more sparring sessions in his days, if he can find someone willing to work out with him. He feels a bit rusty, and that’s no good. Ichiko-san would probably twist him into a pretzel as a punishment if she was to see the way he was fighting.

An idea was forming in his mind, as the sparring continued, especially thanks to the little discussion about his quirk he had with Aizawa-sensei himself. Something that could definitely be considered a special move, something that wasn’t meant to be abused but used only when strictly needed.

Izuku decides to try on a whim. He lowers his guard for a second, Aizawa-sensei already on him to take advantage of it—He probably wants to flip Izuku over going by the hand that closes around his wrist. Izuku focuses, sending a signal that seems to spark through the physical connection between them like electricity, and Aizawa-sensei’s focus is broken by that, allowing Izuku to overturn the situation and send sensei flying and hitting the ring with his back.

There’s a moment of stunned silence, Aizawa-sensei not moving from the floor, and then asking “…What was that?” in a tone that-thankfully- did not suggest he was mad at all.

Izuku grins.

It’s clear that sensei has had enough for the moment, since he’s sitting but not making a move to stand back up as they both catch their breath. Either that, or he doesn’t want to push Izuku around too much. Admittedly, he’s grateful for the pause, since the usual manageable ache of his back started to get a bit more pronounced in the last couple of minutes. Izuku let himself re-open the scope of his radar as he stretches to relieve soreness, jumping a bit when he feels the familiar presence of All Might right outside the ring.

“Oh, hi—“ He says, breathless, turning to him with a smile. “For how long you’ve been watching?”
“A bit.” All Might replies, his tone light. “Have you figured something out?”

“Maybe—“ Izuku replies distractedly, drying some more sweat away from his face. He can feel droplets running down his body and mentally curses himself for not bringing a towel with him as he takes in more of his surrounding. All Might wasn’t the only one watching, clearly, going by the focus a lot of his classmates are giving him. Izuku blushes a little, surprised, hoping the reaction would not be obvious since he’s already pretty flushed.

“Yo, dude, catch.” Kirishima says as he approaches the ring, throwing something at him. Izuku’s hands clasp around it, feeling water slosh. A bottle. He gratefully smiles at Kirishima as he opens it and drinks generously. “That was pretty dope. Also, said between us—“ Kirishima continues, lowering his voice. “You should probably put your shirt back on.”

Izuku blinks, before realizing. Right, his back.

“Ah— Sorry about that—“ He stammers, flustered, trying to pin-point where he had thrown his clothing. “I imagine it mustn’t be a nice sight—“

“What? No—“ Kirishima sounds perplexed, before snickering. “I mean, it’s not what you think— You are just distracting about half the class.”

Izuku frowns, confused, only making Kirishima laugh more.

“Bro, you’re packed. I don’t know how it works in blind-people land, but for us with sight that’s generally pretty hot.”

Izuku splutters, blushing furiously, and searches for his clothes with a bit more urgency. That’s definitely something that he hadn’t thought about at all. Kirishima is laughing almost hysterically, now, while Izuku finally manages to find his shirt and hurriedly puts it back on. —And that’s definitely Todoroki’s light turning disappointed he can feel in his radar oh my god—

“Speaking of which, one of these days you should try to bench-press me. I want to see if you can.” Kirishima adds cheerfully, because apparently trying to embarrass Izuku is the funny game of the day.

“Can you two stop being teenagers for like, a minute.” Aizawa-sensei mutters from his spot on the
ground, unamused, and yeah. Izuku is definitely about done with this conversation for the day.

It probably shows on his face, because Kirishima starts to laugh again.

—

“Hey guys, can I ask you a favor?”

Their lunch went just fine, like nothing happened, really, just as Shouto hoped. They chatted, relaxed, the way they did back then, in what now felt like ages ago, before the Kiyashi-ward incident and the summer camp, though Midoriya seemed distracted every now and then, clearly deep in thought. Shouto hadn’t asked, some lingering awkwardness still making him feel like he should not pry. That, and the fact he’s been opening ogling at Midoriya as he sparred with Aizawa-sensei during the morning training, without realizing that Midoriya probably felt all of it, at first. But as they were pretty much about to finish eating Midoriya blurted that question.

Iida adjusts his glasses with a little, questioning hum.

“There are some things I want to try out—“ Midoriya continues at that. “I spoke with Aizawa-sensei, about the ways I can apply my quirk— But the problem is that I need some test subjects to do so, and well…” There’s a moment of silence, Midoriya rushing to add. “It’s nothing dangerous, I promise! But I thought I should ask permission, first.”

“What did you had in mind?” Uraraka asks, curious.

“There’s this thing— Remember how I could feel Kacchan’s direction before Kamino Ward? It was like— I pinned him down on my mental map. It just sort of went away on its own, that feeling, so I would like to try do that again, see if I can, and for how long it lasts. If I can control it in some way, you know?” Midoriya sniffs, moving his food around distractedly. “Of course if you give me permission— If you feel something weird, or out of place, just, anything— Let me know right away, ok? I don’t— I don’t want to hurt any of you, or something—”

They all frown, confused. “Why would that hurt us?” Shouto asks, perplexed. Midoriya purses his lips, a little scowl appearing on his face.

“Nothing, just… You know. To be sure.” He says, flat, before sighing. “So, that’s ok with you? I’ll be careful, I promise.”
“Of course. You can proceed, I have no issue with that.” Iida replies, placid, rapidly joined by Shouto and Uraraka also giving their consent. “You can always come to us if you need anything, you know that.”

Midoriya’s smile was a little tense, as he said. “Ok, thank you. Just promise me that if you feel something strange you’ll tell me right away.”

Shouto rolled his eyes, incapable of stopping his hand from patting Midoriya’s head and muss his soft hair. “You worry too much. It’ll be fine.”

Midoriya’s smile was still a bit strained, but he didn’t add anything else.

—

A couple of days passed in a blur of training, preparing for the upcoming exam, and in some cases even visits to the development studio. Izuku himself had been one between many of his classmates paying a visit, interested in upgrading their costumes. Hatsume Mei had been there when Izuku went, sounding very interested in his quirk, for some reason. At his protest that there was probably very little that could be done in terms of support gear for a quirk like his she waved him off, pretty much forcing him to take some tests for almost an entire afternoon. Izuku doubted much could be done with those, but Mei had been adamant, and very, very pushy, so Izuku just gave in. As long as he got the arm and leg guards he asked for, he was good with letting Mei have some fun with whatever crazy project she had in mind.

“The provisional license exam—” Uraraka mutters, pensive. “Wonder how it’ll work…”

Izuku stops typing on his braille keyboard, thinking. They were sitting at a table in the communal area. It was just him and her, at first, but bit by bit Izuku heard other people joining them at the table, mostly silent as they all focused on their own works. Then Uraraka said that aloud, despite the fact she mostly sounded like she was talking to herself. Yaoyorozu hummed, tapping her pen against her finger distractedly.

“Who knows— I looked it up, and the test changes every year. They presented all sorts of scenario to work with, in the past, from villain battling to rescue operations in a disaster zone—” She says after a couple of seconds of silence.
“Rescue operations, huh?” Iida interjects. “Wouldn’t be surprised if they opt with something of that kind, this year, considering what happened recently…”

“If they do, we are lucky.” Uraraka says with a smile in her voice. “We have Midoriya with us. The guy that can find a needle in a haystack.”

They all chuckle at that, but Izuku is frowning to himself, pensive. It’s true that his radar would be useful in a situation were people needed to be found and rescued, but recent happenings have certainly shown to him a glaring flaw in himself that made his radar not nearly as useful as it could be.

“Whoa, that’s your serious thinking face there, Midoriya. What’s on your mind?”

“It’s just…” He slowly answers after a beat of silence, pulling at his lower lip. “It’s true that my radar is very useful, in that sense, but I have a problem.”


“…I don’t know how to properly relay informations to others.” Izuku admits, frowning. “I don’t have a real sense of distance, I was too young when I lost my sight— I can feel where people are, and how distant I perceive them to be from me, but trying to explain that feeling to others is a whole other bag of issues. In a emergency situation we couldn’t afford that kind of time-wasting, and I am only one person so even if I can feel where everyone is, what am I supposed to do in a situation were multiple people are in need of help at the same time?”

A long silence follows his declaration. Izuku sighs, relaxing back against his chair. “It’s a pretty big flaw.” He mutters to himself, pensive. What could he do to correct it?

“I hadn’t realized that.” Iida finally says after a while, shifting on his chair. “But I understand what you mean. It’s certainly something that need to be addressed.”

“Right?” Izuku replies, throwing his right hand up a bit. “I’m not quite sure what to do about it, though. I can’t base my sense of distance on yours, and you cannot understand how distance feels to me. It’s kind of a mess.”

“Well—” Yaoyorozu intervenes. “I’m sure there must be a way to solve that— It will be like
learning another language. We just have to find the right way to translate the information from your language to ours.”

Izuku hums, pensive— Translating the information—

An idea pops in his mind and he blinks, his hand stopping in mid air.

“I think I might have something—“ He says. “If I can’t perceive distance the way you guys do, then it’ll means I will have to learn how to read it in my own way— Just like learning a language, as you said, Yaoyorozu… But I will need your help. If you guys are willing, I think I might have an idea…”

—

Aizawa almost wanted to say “No.” when Midoriya approached him during the morning with a proposition. The boy was a trouble magnet, and when he asked Aizawa if he and his friends could have permission to use a training ground during the evenings his first instinct had been to reply “Absolutely not.”

But he listened, instead, the boy explaining his predicament and how he wanted to correct it. And Aizawa had to admit that it was definitely a good idea, for once, and surely something that Midoriya needed in order to grow and better himself as a future hero. —What has happened during the camp, when Midoriya had been unable to explain where Kouta was, certainly came to mind. Had he been able to, back then, things would’ve probably gone very differently.—

So, he gave in, in the end. Nedzu asked him to be present at all times to make sure the students would not accidentally hurt themselves, when Aizawa had brought the idea up in the chain of command, which was understandable.

That’s why he now was sitting on the skirts of training ground delta, sipping on a soda while listening in to the students helping Midoriya out with his special training session.

“Ok, ok, here’s another one. Did you hear about the guy that invented the knock-knock jokes?”

“Kaminari, please, spare us—“
“He won the NO-BELL prize. AH!”

“…For the love of—“

“Guys, ssshhh! He’s focusing! If you keep chatting his ear off it’s going to take twice the time!”

“You should have brought something to read with you, like I did.”

“Oh, shut up, class president.”

Toshinori snickered, sitting near him. The man joined them during that evening for the first time, curious to know what was up with his pupil.

“So, what it is that they are doing, exactly?” He asks when the silence falls back on the radio channel.

“Yaoyorozu made some sort of distance trackers, kids are wearing them and hiding in various places in the training ground, Midoriya is supposed to try translate the distance in meters and the position relative to him on a clock face based system.” Aizawa gives him the abridged version, taking another sip of his soda out the straw.

“And is it working?”

“He was a disaster, at first, but he’s learning pretty fast.” Aizawa says, distractedly taking his phone out of his pocket. “Hopefully he’ll be ready for the provisional license exam.”

“…Iida, one hundred and two meters, at my five. Uraraka, thirty four, eleven. Todoroki—twenty seven horizontally, ten vertically, at my twelve?” Comes Midoriya voice, quiet and focused, after a long beat of silence.

“Almost.” Yaoyorozu hums in the radio. “Seventeen vertically, the others you are off by a small margin of some meters each, but the position relative to you is right.”
“The vertical plane is more confusing, somehow—“ Midoriya mutters distractedly. “Ok— Kaminari — Um— forty three, and two underground— three— No, four. Mineta, two hundred and seven, at eight— Tsuyu— Whoa you are up there— It’s— Sixty six vertically, fifty two horizontally, at nine—“

They silently listen in while the boy rattles the information out like a little machine, Yaoyorozu not intervening anymore.

“You tend to overestimate the distances a bit in general, but you are definitely getting there.” She says, satisfied, once he’s done. “Ok, shuffle positions, everyone, let’s do it another couple of times before we call it a day.”

Midoriya huffs into the the radio. “I think my brain is trying to leak out of my ears, right now.” He says, sounding tired but happy. “Thank you for your patience, everyone.”

“Midoriya, if you don’t stop thanking us I might get an allergic reaction. For real.”

The boy snickers. “Alright, sorry, Kirishima. I’ll find another way to make it up to you all.”

“You can make it up to us all by applying what you are learning now in situations that requires so.” Iida intervenes, serious as usual.

“Alright, alright, I get it—“ Midoriya laughs. “Everyone ready? I’ll try to be faster, this time—“

Aizawa puts down his now empty can and stretches a bit, yawning. At his side Toshinori has relaxed in his chair with a smile and that proud-dad expression he cannot seem to shake off whenever Midoriya does something smart.

“Sometimes it’s easy being a teacher, especially when the students seems to be doing all the work for us, don’t you think?” Aizawa asks, making him laugh.

—

Inko cannot remember when it had been the last time her kitchen felt so crowded. To be fair, it really wasn’t that long ago, since before the start of high school she, Izuku, Ichiko and Miki had plenty of
meals sitting at her kitchen table, but the three men that were currently there had a much more imposing presence with their considerable heights and physiques, making the room feel smaller than it really was.

They arrived not long ago, perfectly mannered and thanking her for her invitation to dinner. Toshinori was not new to this, of course, having turned into a frequent peruser of her cooking, but agent Tsukauchi and Mr. Aizawa were new entries, and she was definitely doing her best to make a great dinner. She felt it was right, to give these people a evening to relax. A little thank you for everything they’ve done to help and care for Izuku.

“Oh, speaking of which—“ Tsukauchi said at some point. “With everything that has happened we could never find the right moment— But, Miss Midoriya, do you think it could be possible to have some of you and your son’s time on Sunday afternoon? There’s still that medal waiting for him. It would be best to have the ceremony before the start of the new trimester, probably.”

Inko had turned, blinking. “Oh, my, you are right—“ She sighed. “It feels like we didn’t had a minute to catch our breath lately. He doesn’t even have a suit, yet—“

“We could go pick one up on Saturday.” Toshinori intervened with a small smile. “Kind of unfortunate we have to make do with so little time, but young Midoriya will probably be too busy once lessons starts again…”

“Yes, I agree.” She replied, putting her phone on the table near Toshinori. “Could you please call him for me on speakers? I can’t take my hands off this, right now, or it’ll burn—“ She added, pointing at the pot on her stove.

The man complied, and Izuku picked up at the third ring.

“Hi, mom.” His voice sounds a bit distorted through the speaker. “What’s up?”

“Hey, sweetie, just wanted to tell you—“ She says, carefully stirring the sauce she was making. “This Sunday there will be the ceremony at the police station. We should go pick up a suit for you on Saturday.”

“The ceremony? What— Oh!” Izuku sounds surprised, and then he chuckles, embarrassed. “I completely forgot about that. Ok— Wait, did you say you wanted to get a suit on Saturday?”
“Yes, we should meet up at—“

“No!” Izuku says, urgent. He coughs. “I mean, sorry— I— I can’t on saturday—“

Inko blinks, perplexed, turning to the phone on the table. “What do you mean you can’t?”

“I— Um— Got something to do.”

“Like what?”

At that he mutters something completely incomprehensible.

“Honey, I didn’t get that.” She sighs, patient.

“I said— I got. Um. A date.” He stammers, clearly embarrassed.

Inko looks at the phone with eyes wide, like it’s an alien object.

“So, huh—“ Izuku continues, clearing his throat. “Sorry, but it’s really important. Do you think we can go pick up a suit on sunday morning, instead?”

“I… Guess.” She carefully says, tilting an eyebrow. “But we will have to meet up pretty early, if we want to make sure we have time.”

“Ok, mom, that’s no problem.” Izuku replies, much more cheerful. “Text me the details when you can, ok? I have to go, now, we are making dinner and it’s almost ready. Oh, and say hi to All Might, Aizawa-sensei and Mr. Tsukauchi from me, when they get there!”

“Ok, sweety, have… Fun.”

The calls closes with one last bye. She hasn’t moved from her shocked position yet, a surprised
silence stretching in the room.

“Well, that’s— new.” Aizawa says, deadpan, before adding. “…Is something burning?”

Inko snaps out of her stupor, turning to the stove to frantically stir the sauce again, as Toshinori starts to laugh heartily.

Izuku is a bundle of nerves as he waits on a couch downstairs, nervously fiddling with his cane.

He has no idea what the day has in store for him. Todoroki told him that he found a place he’d like to go, and that it was a surprise. Izuku hadn’t thought much of it, at first, kind of grateful for the fact that Todoroki took that problem straight off his hands, especially with how busy they’ve all been in the past few days with their trainings and their visits to the development studio to get updated costumes. But now it was saturday, and the realization that he actually asked Todoroki on a date and they were definitely going on a date, just the two of them, finally crashed into him full force.

*I’m going on a date with Todoroki oh my god what was I thinking —

“Midoriya.”

Izuku jumps, before releasing a little tense laugh.

“Hey.” He forces himself to say, getting up. “Good morning.”

“ ‘Morning.” Todoroki replies, easily. “Ready?”

Izuku nods, not trusting his voice not to crack as Todoroki gently guides his free hand to rest in the crook of his right elbow, the way he usually does whenever Izuku had his quirk turned off and needed some more guidance.

*He does this all the time, stop being nervous about things he does all the time, it’s just your friend*
Todoroki, this isn’t any different, you idiot— Izuku thinks, giving himself a little pep-talk to calm down his nerves. If Todoroki had noticed his tenseness, he did not comment as they made their way out of school grounds in casual clothing, the august sun beating on them mercilessly.

“So… Where are we going?” Izuku finally asks once he calmed down a bit, his hand still vaguely sweaty on the handle of his cane.

“Told you, it’s a surprise.” Todoroki replies, apparently calm. But Izuku felt a note of tenseness in his voice. It was consoling, to realize he was not the only nervous one.

That definitely manages to relax him more, as he turns to Todoroki with a small smile. “Thank you—I—I know it must’ve not been easy to find something to do, when I’m like this.” He says, gentle.

“Like… What?” Todoroki replies, perplexed, and Izuku vaguely gestures with his cane.

“You know… Blind?” He adds when Todoroki doesn’t say anything.

Todoroki scoffs. “Give me a break.” He mutters, making Izuku laugh. “There’s plenty of stuff to do, Midoriya, it wasn’t as difficult as you think.”

Alright, if you say so.” Izuku snickers as they reached the subway station. Izuku let himself being guided, trusting, but when they entered in one of the carriages and he could feel how crowded it was even without his quirk, Izuku tensed a bit. He has to admit he did not like too much the idea of being out in public with his quirk turned off.

“Don’t worry.” Todoroki murmurs, a steadying arm circling around Izuku’s shoulders. “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

Izuku blinks, feeling his eyes sting a bit and his cheeks burning. Todoroki immediately picked up on his nervousness without needing a single word, and his voice had been so warm and reassuring that Izuku can’t help but feel a little moved, as his heart beats madly in his chest. He takes a deep breath, relaxing against Todoroki’s firm presence with a little smile.

He knows he can trust him.
“Ok, so—” Shouto hesitates. It seemed such a good idea, at first, but now that they are in front of the museum he feels dumb and unsure, in that way only Midoriya’s presence manages to bring out of him. “There’s this art installation—The pieces are actually meant to be touched and not just being looked at, so I thought that it would be— fun—“

He trails off, Midoriya blinking at him, pale eyes a little wide in surprise, before a big smile opens on his face.

“That sounds great!” He says, happily, his fingers tightening a bit on Shouto’s arm. “Thank you for finding this, I don’t think I’ve ever been to an art installation, before!”

Shouto manages the win over the need to take a giant relieved sigh as he guides an obviously excited Midoriya up the stairs to the museum. Midoriya decided to fold his cane and put it in his pocket after they got off the subway, silently putting his trust one hundred percent in Shouto’s hands, which made him feel both honoured and a bit scared, so he was being extra careful to make sure he won’t accidentally make him stumble, or something.

The lady behind the counter, going by the look on her face, probably recognized him and maybe Midoriya, too, when they entered and approached the counter to purchase their tickets. Still, she didn’t say anything as she printed the tickets out for them, Midoriya fiddling with his wallet.

“Let me.” Shouto says, putting a hand on Midoriya’s. He turns to him with a little blush.

“There’s no need—“

“Just let me treat you, ok?” Shouto insists, softly. “It was my idea to come here, after all.”

“But it was me that asked you to go on a d—” He clears his throat, blushing even further. “I mean —“

Shouto chuckles, silently paying for the both of them. The lady it’s still looking at them with kind of dreamy eyes.
He guides Midoriya, that’s still a bit red as he puts his hand back on Shouto’s elbow, to the exhibition, smiling to himself.

The art installation turns to be the perfect choice. The sculptures are mostly abstract pieces that don’t seem to be representing anything in particular, with all their weird shapes and colors. Midoriya asks Shouto to describe them to him as he happily palms at the different textures of the materials used, ranging from synthetic fur in bright neon colors to plastic shaped in geometric patterns, laughing at Shouto’s outrageously bad descriptions. He’s clearly having fun, and so is Shouto, as they take their sweet time going through the pieces, all nervousness and embarrassment completely forgotten.

They stop in front of a dark box, with two holes barely big enough to fit a hand in. It’s dark inside, too, for what little Shouto can see, unable to make out the content. The title of this one seems to be ‘Try put your hands in, if you dare.’, and Midoriya laughs when he reads it aloud to him.

“A challenge.” He says, smiling, palming at the outside surface of the box. “Should we?”

“…I have no idea what’s in there.” Shouto admits, careful. “Maybe we can cheat a bit, with your quirk?”

Midoriya laughs. “But that would ruin the fun!”

“It might be full of cockroaches, for all we know.”

“Ok, let’s put one hand each at the same time, no backsies.” Midoriya proposes after a couple of seconds of silence. “This way if we have to get a handful of ‘roaches, at least we’ll do it together.”

“…Seems fair.” Shouto concedes, guiding Midoriya’s right hand near the hole, Shouto’s left lingering on the other as they faced one another. “At my three— One… Two… Three!”

They both slip their hands in, Midoriya squeezing his eyes shut as he waits for the inevitable horror that they both expect.

But Shouto can’t feel anything, apparently, and tries to wiggle his fingers a bit, something brushing his palm—
“UHA—!” Midoriya makes a surprised noise, his eyes opening again. Then he starts to laugh. “Oh my god, that scared me— There’s nothing in here, it’s just your hand!”

Shouto relaxes with a relieved sigh at not having his hand immersed in bugs. Midoriya is right, the box is empty. Looks like they got made fun of by the artist.

Midoriya it’s still snickering, his fingers grazing against Shouto’s, and Shouto, hit by a sudden inspiration, interlaces them, his palm connecting with Midoriya’s.

Midoriya stops laughing, his eyes widening a bit in surprise, and a blush rises to his ears and cheeks. His face turns down to a side as a small, timid smile opens on his lips, his hand in the box gently squeezing back.

Shouto really has to call to all his self control to don’t lean down and kiss him again right there and then.

—

This might be one of the best days of Izuku’s entire life. And yes, he’s ranking it around the day he met All Might, too. It’s that good.

He just feels like he’s walking ten meters off the ground. The art installation had been so much fun, and after their little moment with the mystery box a soft, gentle atmosphere seemed to have fallen on them like a hug for the rest of the visit. They made their way out of the museum, Izuku’s hand not resting anymore in the crook of Todoroki’s elbow, but gently being held by him, their fingers entwined. Izuku was still a bit confused by some things, but he could definitely say that he’d like to spend more time holding Todoroki’s hand in the future, thank you very much.

They quietly walked down the busy streets, feeling no need to fill the relaxed silence with words. The smell of freshly cut grass reached his nostrils, picking his attention.

“There’s a park nearby.” Todoroki says, with his uncanny ability to understand exactly what Izuku was thinking without him having to speak a word. “Want to stop for a bit?”

Izuku nods, smiling, letting himself get guided faithfully. They stop to sit on a bench in the shade, away from the sun that’s really beating down on them, now, the sounds of birds chirping above their
heads. Todoroki sits at his left, easily—smoothly—circling Izuku’s shoulders with his arm. His right side is pleasantly chilly in the summer heat and after a moment of hesitation Izuku gladly leans into him, head resting on Todoroki’s shoulder.

“Human air conditioning…” He murmurs, making Todoroki chuckle. “So convenient…”

“I knew you only kept me around for that.” Todoroki replies, a smile in his voice. They sit like this for a bit, relaxed, the only sounds around them the very distant voices of other people in the park, and the birds above them. Then Todoroki shifts gently, leaning a bit into Izuku, warm fingers gently moving a strand of curly hair away from Izuku’s forehead. Izuku blinks, his heart beating in his throat as he turns his face up a bit. He can feel Todoroki’s soft breathing very close—

His phone cheerfully announces he got a text from mom, making him jump.

“Oh, sorry—“ He stammers, embarrassed, not having noticed how tense he was. “Let me just—“

He takes the phone out of his pocket, Todoroki’s arm still around him. The voice-over reads the text to him in the usual robotic voice, letting him know that the ceremony tomorrow was going to take place at five in the afternoon ad that Izuku was to be ready in front of the school gates at eight in the morning.

“Ceremony?” Todoroki asks, curious.

“Oh, yeah, it’s just—“ Izuku hesitates, and Todoroki nudges him a bit, a silent invitation to go on. “The police wants to— um— give me a medal.” Izuku finally adds, embarrassed. “For what I did at the Kiyahsi-ward shopping mall.”

There’s a long moment of silence, and then Todoroki snaps in a low, tired voice. “Midoriya.”

Izuku blinks, perplexed. “What?”

“Why didn’t you tell anyone?” Todoroki asks, exasperated. “That’s a pretty big thing.”

“It’s not—“ Izuku hesitates, remembering what both Tsukauchi and All Might said to him way back
when he was still in the hospital, about how this wasn’t meant for just him, but it was meant to be a symbol, important for many people.

He does not finish the sentence.

“You’re impossible—“ Todoroki mutters, and then Izuku hears the tip-tap of him composing a message on his own phone.

“…What are you doing?” Izuku asks, after a few seconds.

“Sending a message to your mother for details, and then forwarding it to Iida so he can forward it to everybody.” Todoroki replies, flatly. “You idiot.”

“Wha— No, there’s no need—“ Izuku stammers, trying and failing miserably to take the phone away from Todoroki’s hands, his fingers only grasping the air. “And why do you have my mom’s number?!”

“Uraraka.” Todoroki replies, matter-of-factly. Of course. He’s still fiddling with his phone, easily dodging Izuku’s pitiful attempts to stop him. “You can’t stop me, Midoriya, I’m coming to this ceremony, and so are our classmates. I can’t believe you’d be so incredibly stupid to think this is not an important thing we’d want to be a part of.”

“Todorokiiiii—“ Izuku whines, childish. “You’re being so meeeeeaaan—“

“You deserve it.” Todoroki doesn’t miss a beat, merciless. “Here. It’s sent. Your destiny is in motion, now, so sit tight and enjoy the ride. Dumbass.”

“Stop insulting me—“ Izuku replies, still trying to sound whiny but failing as his voice turns into a chuckle. He puts his forehead back on Todoroki’s shoulder with a sigh. “Besides, aren’t you going to visit your mom, tomorrow?”

“I can visit her in the morning, there’s plenty of time.”

Izuku sighs again. “I guess there’s nothing I can say to stop you, now, isn’t it?”
“Exactly. You big idiot.” There’s fondness in Todoroki’s voice as he circles him in a hug, putting his chin on Izuku’s head. “You’re the worst.”

“Well, you like this worst, so—“ Izuku replies slightly muffled against Todoroki’s chilly shoulder, the words out of his mouth before he can really think about them. He blushes furiously, realizing how blunt he just was, but Todoroki is laughing.

“That’s true.” He admits, relaxing the hug to put a hand under Izuku’s chin and tilt his face up. “I have terrible tastes.”

Izuku flashes his tongue at him, childish, making him laugh again. Then Todoroki leans in more, his forehead softly connecting with Izuku’s, and Izuku gulps around a knot in his throat, tilting his head a bit on the side—

“Oh, c’mon—“ Todoroki suddenly says, exasperated, and Izuku is confused for all of two seconds before he hears a yell in the distance.

“Wha—“ Izuku stammers, immediately turning his quirk on full force. Doing it so suddenly gives him a sensation like whiplash, as he shakes his head a bit and tries to put everything around him in focus.

“That guy just robbed an old lady and is running toward us with her bag.” Todoroki mutters. “What is this, a movie?”

Izuku could feel it, now, a frantic light running right toward them. Todoroki must catch his expression, severity in his voice.

“Midoriya, we don’t have our provisional licenses yet, may I remind you—“

“Who said I needed to use my quirk? I’m just a concerned citizen—” Izuku replies, a shit eating grin on his face. “Watch this.”

Izuku stands, taking his cane out of his pocket and unfolding it with a sharp wrist snap. He launches it in the air to grab it by the thinner part at the very end. The robber turns the corner, distracted as he...
looks behind him, and Izuku goes for his ankles with the cane in a single swift motion, sending the man tumbling down ungracefully.

“Goddamnit—“ Todoroki hisses from behind him as Izuku literally sits on the spluttering robber to restrain him while two more frantic lights come their way, presumably the old lady that searched for help. There’s something undefinable in his voice. “You’re so goddamn hot—“

Izuku’s eyes widen in surprise and then he laughs loudly, holding his belly, as the old lady with a police agent reach them, surprise colouring their lights.
They ended up getting back to school just in time to don’t get in trouble by breaking the evening curfew.

It seemed that neither of them really wanted the day to end, stretching their time as much as possible. After speaking with the concerned police officer and entrusting him the robber that Midoriya had managed to down with his cane (giving him some bullshit story about how Midoriya just happened to stumble into the robber and fall on him, he’s blind you see, no acts of unauthorized heroism, here), they went to grab lunch. Shouto had been delighted in splurging his money on Midoriya, insisting they went for sushi, and it had been definitely worth to fight the battle to convince him just to see Midoriya’s expression of pure food-joy as they ate.

After all, Shouto wasn’t used to spend his money on frivolous things, so he had plenty in his wallet to pamper his date as much as he wanted.

His date. It was still strange to think that, but they spent pretty much the rest of the day holding hands like a real couple, happy to sit close to one another as they spoke, the conversation coming to them easily without any need of external distraction, and even if Shouto hadn’t tried to kiss him anymore it still had been pretty damn good.

I’m so desperately in love with this guy that even just holding hands would be enough.
And Midoriya definitely looked like he wasn’t as confused about his feelings as he had been the night he asked Shouto out on a date. Shouto was being very careful, avoiding hasty conclusion, not really wanting to set himself up for disappointment, but considering Midoriya seemed to be more than happy to hold his hand and definitely looked like he wanted those kisses that never happened thanks to rude interruptions, Shouto was tentatively thinking that the date had been a success, and that it had been just the first step to turn their relationship in something more.

He walked Midoriya to the door of his room, not having met any of their classmates when they had gotten back in the dormitories. Midoriya hesitated, his back against the door, his hand still connected with Shouto’s.

“I had fun, today.” Shouto says, gently letting Midoriya’s hand go. “I will see you tomorrow at the ceremony, then. Goodnight, Midoriya.”

“Yeah— I— Goodnight.” Midoriya replies, a lopsided smile finding its way on his face. Shouto turns to walk back to the elevator and go up in his room—

“Todoroki, wait.” Midoriya calls him, his voice soft. When Shouto turns back to him, he’s blushing. “Can you— Um—“

His pale eyes slide away as he nervously fidgets with his hands, back pushed against the still closed door of his room.

Heart beating in his throat, Shouto shortens the distance between them again, tentatively putting his hands on Midoriya’s hips. Midoriya’s hands rises to Shouto’s shoulders and then slide down to his chest, as Shouto gently holds him, arms circling his waist.

Midoriya doesn’t add anything, silently turning his face up a bit, his nose gently bumping against Shouto’s chin. Shouto leans down, closing the distance between them, closing his eyes as he presses his lips against Midoriya’s.

*Finally.*

Midoriya let out a tiny hum, hands sliding back up Shouto’s shoulders, arms circling his neck, lips parting a bit in a silent invitation.
Shouto doesn’t wait for a second request, meeting Midoriya’s tongue with his, hungrily. It’s ten times better than the messy first kiss they shared, both of them relaxed and very into it, and this time it doesn’t end with anyone being pushed anywhere, they only stop to catch their breath, softly panting against each other’s lips.

Midoriya’s eyes slowly open again, his cheeks flushed. “I… Really like you.” He murmurs with a sigh. “I— Well, that’s pretty obvious at this point, but— I thought it was right, to say it out loud.” He adds, a bit indecisive. Shouto smiles, gently bumping his nose against Midoriya’s.

“I really like you, too.” He murmurs back, happily, watching Midoriya smile. “Thank you for today.”

Midoriya chuckles, pushing another little kiss on Shouto’s lips. “I’ll see you tomorrow, then. Good night.” He finally whispers with a soft smile, gently disentangling himself from the hug to turn and open the door of his room, turning one last smile to Shouto before softly closing it with a click.

Shouto goes back to the elevator feeling as if he’s kind of a stuck in a dream state. When the sliding doors close in front of him and he starts to go up he has to recall all of his self-control, pushing both hands closed in fists against his mouth, to don’t wake the entire dormitory with the scream of pure joy that’s trying to find a way out of his chest.

Chapter End Notes

The silently freaking out corner 3: happily in love edition!
As usual, you can find me on my tumblr and also I have a twitter? If you care to read my rambling about whatever? Idk
When Shouto woke up, the realization really crashed into him.

He and Midoriya went on a date. They had fun, they held hands, they hugged and even kissed. Midoriya said that he really likes him—

Shouto slowly sits on his futon, blinking. Midoriya said that he likes him.

Something’s weird is going on in his chest. There’s the unabashed joy, the same he felt the the prior night after they parted ways— But there’s something else, too. Something darker.

*How could someone as wonderful as Midoriya really love you?* A little, malicious part of him whispers in his ear. *He probably said that just because he took pity on you. Poor, little unloved Shouto. He knows who you really are, after all— He probably felt sad for a poor excuse of a broken person such as yourself—*

Shouto slaps both hands on his cheeks, angry. Ever since the sport festival —*ever since Midoriya literally saved his life*— it had been easier to silence this bitter voice inside him, but that doesn’t mean it has entirely stopped. It still creeps up to him, surprising him with dark thoughts that cuts through the fog of contentness he feels whenever he’s around Midoriya, Uraraka, Iida and Yaoyorozu. (And slowly, this happiness is extending to the whole class, bit by bit—)

And— He knows it’s not true, what the voice malignantly murmurs. Midoriya would never lead him on just because he took pity on him. Midoriya has always been very open and honest. —*For the most part, but then again, Shouto does not blame him at all for keeping the secret about All Might.*—

Midoriya would never lie to him about something like this. Shouto has to believe that Midoriya really returns his feelings— Or at least, returns them a bit. Shouto doesn’t pretend to believe Midoriya would be as deeply in love as Shouto is with him, at this stage, but even if the feelings inside him are only blossoming now, it’s still a step forward. If Shouto is right about this, maybe one day he will be able to say “I love you.” to Midoriya, and hear him say it back.

Hopefully.
Squashing the darkness inside him, Shouto let himself take a minute to just bask into the joy he feels. He already can’t wait to see Midoriya again, spend some time with him, talk to him—

Speaking of which— It’s just barely over seven in the morning, he notices looking at his phone. Maybe he could catch him in the kitchen for breakfast.

Shouto immediately rises to his feet to go downstairs. He doesn’t bother to change out of his pajamas, it’s not like Midoriya would -or could- care about it, anyway. When he rounds the corner to the little kitchenette from the elevator, Midoriya is standing there, frowning as he rummages in the kitchen cabinets, his hair messier than usual and the faded All Might shirt and soft pants he was wearing suggesting he had just got out of bed as well.

“—Where the heck—“

There’s no one else around, which is not surprising. No one would be up at this time, especially on a sunday, unless they had specific programs for the day like he and Midoriya.

“What is the problem?” Shouto asks gently, approaching his… Well, he was not sure yet what he should call Midoriya in his mind, at this point.

Midoriya jumps a bit, turning to him with wide eyes before relaxing, a small smile appearing on his face. “Oh, Todoroki— I didn’t hear you come in, good morning!!”

Shouto approaches him, close enough to feel the warmth of Midoriya’s body. He carefully puts a hand on the nape of his neck, and any doubt he could possibly still have about what Midoriya really feels for him is immediately quelled when Midoriya relaxes into the touch with a little content hum, an elated smile appearing on his face.

*Thank you god for early mornings.*

“I was searching for the tea box— Have no idea were it is.” Midoriya says, answering to his first question. “Everyone keeps moving things around, so sometimes it takes me a while to find what I need.”
Shouto blinks. Of course— How many things they all take for granted, that end up becoming a challenge for Midoriya, instead.

“You should tell the class.” He says after a beat of relaxed silence, his thumb gently stroking the curly hair. “So they’ll stop moving things.”

Midoriya shuffles on his feet, a little embarrassed. “I don’t want to inconvenience anyone—“ He says in a low voice. “I can’t demand to have nineteen people cater to every small whim of mine—“

“Midoriya.” Shouto sighs, a little exasperated. “This is not a whim. You live here like everyone else, you have the right to be able to fix yourself a cup of tea without wasting time because someone moved the box in a different place.”

When Midoriya doesn’t answer, fiddling with the counter his hand was resting on, Shouto rolls his eyes. He sees how it’s going to be, caring for this one. “Alright, I’ll tell them.”

Midoriya turns to him a bit more, a small frown on his face. “Todoroki, really, it’s not—“ He doesn’t finish the sentence, when Shouto puts his other hand on his arm, caressing him.

“Let me do this for you, ok?” Shouto says in a low voice. “It’s no problem.”

Midoriya sighs, his eyes casted low, and then he leans on Shouto, head resting on his shoulder, his arms circling Shouto’s waist in a relaxed hug. Shouto gladly takes him in, one arm around him, his other hand raising to Midoriya’s head in a gentle pat. Midoriya let out a little, content sigh, rubbing his cheek against Shouto’s shoulder as the relaxed silence stretches.

“Todoroki.” He murmurs after a while, Shouto’s fingers carding through the soft curls as he holds him. “What… Are we?”

Shouto blinks.

“I don’t know.” He says, slowly. “I’d say— We’re not just friends anymore, but…”

“Boyfriends seems kind of too… Official?” Midoriya finishes for him when he hesitates. “I don’t
know—“He adds in a little huff, pushing his forehead against Shouto’s neck.

Shouto takes his time as they both stand in the relaxed hug.

“I won’t mind making it a little official.” He finally admits, tilting his head to rest his cheek against Midoriya’s soft hair. “I… I want to tell everyone— what I feel for you. I don’t want to hide.”

The realization surprises even him— The sentence unconsciously came out, but… It’s the truth. He doesn’t want to treat his relationship with Midoriya as something shameful, that needs to be hidden away. How could something that made him so happy ever be shameful?

Midoriya seems to tense a bit in his arms, but relaxes right away. “Are you… Sure?” He asks, hesitant. There’s a lot crammed in his voice, and Shouto doesn’t need to ask why.

Shouto looks down, his left hand sliding from Midoriya’s hair to go rest on his cheek. His thumb brushes against the little scar under Midoriya’s right eye.

“I’ve spent my entire life hiding from my thoughts and feelings.” Shouto says, almost a whisper. “What I feel for you it’s not something I’m ashamed of, nor something I think should be hidden. I want everyone to know that I lo—“ Shouto manages to stop himself just in time, his heart shooting up in his throat after that almost slip. He does love Midoriya, but maybe it’s a bit too soon to drop that on him. “I want everyone to know that I like you, and that I want to be with you.”

Midoriya hums and sighs, leaning into Shouto’s hand with his eyes closed.

“If… That is ok with you, of course.” Shouto adds in a low voice. He honestly wouldn’t mind shouting his feelings for Midoriya from the rooftops —actually, he’d like to. Just to make clear to everyone that Midoriya was taken, now— but that didn’t mean that Midoriya felt the same—

“Yes. It is.” Midoriya says, softly, immediately chasing away the clouds of doubt. He shifts a bit, turning his face up to Shouto with a little smile as he cracks his pale eyes open. “I don’t want to hide, either.” His thumb strokes Shouto’s back, gently, as a bit of red dusts his freckled cheeks. “Morning kiss?”

Shouto really doesn’t need another invitation.
Izuku relaxes against the car seat with a little, soft sigh.

He cannot remember when was the last time he felt so content and serene. His heart seemed to have
grown ten times the usual size in his chest, filling him with calmness and warmth and everything good in the world.

Todoroki just made him so… Happy. Even only thinking about him — And his soft kisses and his gentle hands and his warm voice — made Izuku feel like he was flying ten meters off the ground.

*Man, holy shit, I got it bad. How did I not realize sooner that I felt this strongly for him? It’s so obvious, in retrospect— How happy I felt every time I was around him— I’m really dense—*

“So—” Mom casually says from the driving seat, snapping him out of his musings. “How did yesterday go?”

Izuku hesitates. If it was just him and mom in the car it wouldn’t be a problem, but a certain someone else seemed to have decided to accompany them in their little suit-searching that morning, and for how much he had accepted to be honest about things, Izuku still needs a bit of time to settle his racing thoughts, before he could admit to him that he and Todoroki were together, now—

“What do you mean?” Izuku asks, hoping to derail the topic on something else.

“Oh, I think she’s referring to your date.” All Might says, distracted. Izuku makes a little choked a noise, and there’s a moment of silence, All Might asking with a perplexed tone. “…Was I supposed not to know? Granted, I just so happened to accidentally hear you due to the fact you were on speakerphone, but still— You don’t need to be embarrassed, my boy. You are at that age, after all.”

Izuku hides his face in his hands, feeling his cheeks burn. “What do you mean, speakerphone? Wait—” He then asks, realizing what All Might just said, and paling a bit. “You mean…?”

“I’m sorry, honey.” Mom replies, a laugh in her voice, not sounding sorry at all. “I was cooking so I put the call on speaker, so, um— Everyone heard that, yeah.”

Izuku let out a loud groan, his head falling back on the headrest in desperation. All Might chuckles.

“It’s really not the end of the world, young Midoriya. Relationships are an important part of life, you shouldn’t be afraid or ashamed of them.”
Izuku takes a deep breath, trying to will away the blush on his cheeks. What All Might said reminded him of what Todoroki also said just that morning— About how he was not ashamed, how he wanted to be open and honest about their relationship.

And Izuku accepted that.

They were both right, there really was no need to hide. Izuku sat a bit straighter, forcing himself to be calm and mature about this.

“It went— Very well.” He admits, slowly. He’s thankful that he’s keeping his quirk turned off still, because he’s not sure he could deal with whatever that little knowing, smug, simultaneous hum mom and All Might released had been.

“So, should I expect to gain a daughter in law soon?” Mom teases gently, her voice amused, making him blush again and fidget with his hands as he tenses a bit.

He never kept secrets from mom— And he definitely doesn’t want to start keeping them now. Nor he wants to lie to All Might, as well.

“I—“ He clears his throat. “Um. Maybe— Son in law, actually.” He manages to add in a low mutter, a knot of nervousness in his throat.

There’s a moment of silence, and then mom releases a soft, unreadable “Oh.”

Izuku bites down on his lower lip, his heart beating painfully in his chest. This is the moment of truth. After steeling himself with a couple of deep breaths, he asks “Is that a bad thing?”

“…Should it be?” All Might asks, easily, and Izuku can hear the tilted eyebrow in his perplexed voice.

“You love who you love, sweetheart.” Mom adds, gentle and honest. “As long as you are happy, I cannot ask for nothing more.”

Izuku melts on his seat with a little “Thank god you guys are so cool—“, making both of them laugh.
Finding a suit, in the end, seemed to take more than they had estimated. It took quite a bit for the desperate woman working that morning to find a piece that could fit young Midoriya. The boy was still rather short, only a bit taller than his mother, but his fit body seemed to fill the suits that were the perfect length a little too much. It took quite the amount of trials to finally find something that seemed to fit properly, a dark grey three pieces, and even if the buttons on the waistcoat seemed to be a little taut on his chest it was probably the most successful attempt they had all morning.

The boy stood with a bored expression, as the clerk —with the face of someone finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel—and his mother turned him around, patting and pulling to test how tight the clothing hugged him.

“I think this might be it.” Inko finally sighed, relieved. “Izuku, you better treat this suit well because I don’t have any intention to go get another one for at least a year after this. So no villain fighting in it, please.”

The boy chuckles, relaxing. He stretches his arms a bit, testing the suit himself and nods. The clerk seems overjoyed, the poor thing.

“Toshinori, dear, can you pick up a tie for him?” Inko says, distractedly, as she starts to help collecting all the suits that ended up being an ill-fit. At that the clerk, that hadn’t reacted to his presence at all when they first entered the shop—probably due to the baseball hat low on his face and the baggy wind jacket he was wearing, concealing his features as much as possible—gives him a long, curious look, recognition dawning in her features.

Toshinori really misses the privacy he had to unwillingly give up.

“Let’s go, my boy.” He says, putting a hand on young Midoriya’s shoulder, dutifully guiding him a bit away before the clerk could start to ask questions.

“…Did she just call you dear?” Midoriya asks in a low voice once they stepped away, something charged in his tone. Toshinori chuckles, amused.

“She started doing that a bit ago.” He replies, easily, picking up some ties and testing them against the boy’s chest, trying to see which color and texture would be a better fit. Young Midoriya’s
eyebrow tilts, his pale eyes pointed at him. “Don’t make that face, it just means she’s more comfortable around me. Aren’t we friends, at this point?”

“I guess—“ The boy concedes, red dusting his freckled cheeks. Toshinori blinks at that, before a little grin opens on his mouth.

“I understand that you are in a very… Romantic mood, at the moment, my boy. But not everything has to be that, you know?”

“Oh my god—“ The boy exhales, the blush extending on his face, and he playfully swats at Toshinori’s hand when he tests another tie under his neck. “Don’t— Just don’t—“

Toshinori snickers “Are you going to tell me who it is? I mean, I have hypothesis—“

“Please stop—“

“—Assuming it’s one of your classmates, I have a couple of candidates in mind.” Toshinori continues, merciless.

Young Midoriya hides his face in his hand, releasing a loud muffled groan against his palms. “You’re worse than mom, I swear.” He finally mutters, making him laugh.

“Can you blame me for being curious?” Toshinori asks, smiling to himself as he finally starts to put a pastel green striped tie around the boy’s neck, gently shifting away the hands covering his face. The tie goes perfectly with the color of his eyes.

“A little bit, actually—“ Midoriya mutters, still red. “I mean it’s not like you’re actually my—“ He flinches, looking like he bit his tongue to stop himself from finishing that sentence, a guilty expression finding way on his face. Toshinori hands stills under his chin, mid-way through the familiar gesture of knotting a tie. “…I’m sorry. I was about to say something really mean. I’m just stupid.”

Carefully, Toshinori resumes his work. “You’re not stupid.” He says, softly. “And I enjoy being a part of your life.”
Young Midoriya nods, tense, his eyebrows twisted in a little frown. They remain in silence as Toshinori adjust the tie, gently putting it under the waistcoat.

“It’s ok if you don’t feel ready to tell me, for now— There, all done.” Toshinori says, giving him a little pat. “Very dashing. I’m sure your sweetheart will be enchanted.”

“Oh my god you are the worst—” Midoriya mutters, but a little smile opens on his face. Toshinori can’t resist the temptation to ruffle his hair a bit, making him laugh.

It’s quite a complicated relationship he’s finding himself wading with this boy. They always seems to be a step away from falling somewhere neither of them want to be quite yet, cut off words and interrupted gestures hanging over them like a trap ready to snap at any moment. But at least they are walking this path, together, even if with small, small steps.

“Oh, what a nice tie—“ Inko intervenes, breathless, surprising the both of them by appearing apparently out of thin air. “Ok, let’s go pay— And then we have to grab some shoes, too, before lunch— Actually, Izuku, it’s better if you change for now, don’t want to risk staining the suit before the ceremony—“

“‘kay, mom.” The boy sighs, clearly exasperated as he makes his way to the changing room once more.

Toshinori and Inko go back to the counter, and the clerk can’t help but shoot him some curious looks during the transaction.

Toshinori wonders how they look from the perspective of a perfect stranger, if he really gives the vibe of being part of this little family rather than looking like an outsider, a late addiction—

It surprises him, but only a bit, to realize that after all he won’t mind, if people think that.

—

Iida stumbles on his feet when they meet in the communal area.
“How do I look?” Ochako asks, as she turns around. She’s wearing an emerald green dress with half sleeves and a folded skirt going way down her knees. It’s very simple, not much at all, but it’s the most elegant thing she had on hand, and she didn’t want to go with the school uniform—

“You…” Iida finally seems to find words. “It looks really good— I mean, you look really good—“ He’s blushing a bit in his navy blue suit, pulling at his tie.

She can’t help but gently laugh at the awkwardness. “Thanks. You look good, too, Iida!”

That seems to relax him a bit, the tense lines of his shoulders releasing, and he composes himself back by clearing his throat, adjusting the glasses on his nose.

“Once the others get downstairs we’ll go—” Iida says, looking at the time on the traditional wrist-watch he’s wearing. “Yaoyorozu told me she’d met us there directly— Todoroki too—“ He seems to turn pensive after that, idly playing with the sleeve of his shirt poking out from under the jacket.

“What is it?” She asks, because it’s clear he has something to say. “I thought we were done with the Midoriya-bitching-fest, yesterday.”

That surprises a snicker out of him. “That is very inappropriate.” He replies, but he’s smiling. “I don’t think I will be done with… That, for a while. Midoriya still needs a good scolding for keeping this from us— But no, that’s not what I was thinking about, at this moment.”

“Then what?” Ochako pushes, both of them moving to sit on one of the couches while they wait for their classmates to get ready.

“It’s…” Iida hesitates, his nervous fingers moving from the sleeve to his watch. “I saw something yesterday I’m not quite sure I was meant to see— And I do not think this is any of my business, but they are both my friends—“ He’s starting to mutter like Midoriya. Ochako sighs. “Just spit, Iida.”
“They were kissing.” Iida blurts out, after a beat, tense. “Midoriya and Todoroki, I mean— It just— Surprised me.”

Ochako blinks. Then she splutters, covering her mouth with a hand as Iida turns to her with a perplexed expression.

“Did you know?” He says, realization dawning in his eyes.

“Iida, I love you, but you are kind of clueless.” She answers, laughing. “Admittedly, them kissing it’s a rather new development, but Todoroki had been smitten with Midoriya since pretty much after the festival. They went on a date, yesterday.”

Iida frowns, his hand rising to his chin. “I— I really had no idea—“ He mutters to himself.

Silence falls on them, and Ochako eyes the frown on his face warily.

“…Is that a problem?” She asks carefully, after a while.

“Wha— Oh!” Iida says, snapping out of his deep thoughts, the frown disappearing. “No, of course not. If they are happy, so am I. I was just thinking— That I— I might be kind of clueless, I guess.” He admits, embarrassed.

Ochako smiles, patting his arm. “It’s ok, this kind of stuff comes with experience.”

Iida sniffs and hums, just as more of their classmates starts to trickle in, excitedly chatting. They are distracted from the topic as they start to group up outside, and Ochako can’t help but grin to herself. Since Midoriya and Todoroki came back so late yesterday and disappeared early in the morning today she didn’t had the chance to really talk with either of them— But if they’ve been kissing, it meant the date must’ve gone well.

She’s really happy for them— And she also can’t wait to tease them. She deserves a bit of fun, after having to deal with both of their whining. —mostly Todoroki’s, though. As much as she cares for him, she has to admit the guy is an absolute disaster.—
For now, she looks at their little group as Iida dutifully guides them out of school grounds, taking his class president role seriously even during their off days. Everyone seems relaxed and happy, all of them dressed in what she guesses could count as elegant clothing (some of them barely managing, like Kirishima, that had put on a dark pair of jeans and a white shirt with the school uniform tie, and called it a day), and Ochako let herself bask in this feeling of closeness surrounding all of them. It’s true that they’ve all been through some really bad stuff since the start of school, but that seems to have cemented their bond even more.

She’s so, so happy she found the courage to try the entrance exam for UA.

—

When they get to the elegant, official looking building, they are not surprised to find the familiar faces of their teachers and principal Nedzu waiting outside. Aizawa-sensei blinks at them, back in the same suit he wore during the press conference, hair slicked back. He tilts an eyebrow.

“Did Midoriya tell you?” He asks. “Knowing him, I thought he would’ve kept the whole affair on the down-low—“

“Oh, he tried to.” Iida replies, reproaching. “But Todoroki found out, and told us. Actually, sensei— Why did you not tell us?”

Aizawa-sensei shrugs. “Technically speaking, this has nothing to do with your studies. It was Midoriya’s decision.”

Iida purses his lips, clearly not satisfied. “And yet you knew he wouldn’t tell us— That was very unfair of you, sensei.”

Aizawa-sensei groans, tired. “I can’t believe Midoriya’s cheekiness is rubbing off on you, too, now—“ He mutters, making Ochako snicker a bit. Iida’s expression suggests he feels a bit bad for ‘talking back’ to their teacher, but at the same time he clearly doesn’t regret it at all.

“Guys!” Yaoyorozu accidentally interrupts by approaching them, cheerful. Todoroki is by her side, too, the both of them very elegant in their deep red dress and pure black suit.

Todoroki makes a bee-line for Ochako, a serious expression on his face. “Can I talk to you for a
second?” He asks in a low voice, surprising her.

She nods and follows, silent, perplexed. He guides her a bit far, to have some measure of privacy, and then he takes a deep breath before turning around.

“I—“ He starts, but then hesitates. “Um— Uraraka, I just— I just wanted to make sure you are ok.”

Ochako blinks and frowns. “What do you mean?”

Todoroki’s eyes subtly shifts away from her, the tiniest hint of a blush rising to his cheeks. “Me and Midoriya, we— I guess you could say we are together, now.” He says, carefully. “And— So far it has always felt like a vague concept, but it’s real, now, and I— You are my friend, too, and I care about you, and I don’t want to hurt you—”

Ochako makes a little surprised noise, catching up. To be fair, she never went around to tell Todoroki that her crush on Midoriya was pretty much over, despite having directly and indirectly given him her blessings multiple times.

She smiles to herself, a warm feeling taking place in her chest as she puts a gentle hand on Todoroki’s shoulder.

“Thank you.” She says, smiling. Todoroki’s mismatched eyes turning back to hers. “You are very kind, Todoroki, but you mustn’t worry— I still care for Midoriya, of course, just not romantically anymore. I’m actually really happy for you both.”

Todoroki takes a little hitching breath, looking like a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

“I— I’m glad.” He finally says, a tiny smile pulling at his lips. “The thought of hurting you was unbearable—” Then he blinks. “Wait— Did you knew already?”

“Well—“ She let out a tiny laugh. “You guys haven’t been exactly subtle. Iida saw you kissing, yesterday.”

“Oh—“ Todoroki says, a hand rising to his face to cover his mouth as he looks to a side,
embarrassed. “I guess we haven’t been very careful—“

“Iida can keep a secret, if you are worried about that.”

“No, I know he can— But I’m not worried.” The hand slides away, as a fond expression rises to his face. “Me and Midoriya— We spoke about it. We don’t want to hide. So it’s really no problem.”

Ochako blinks, surprised at that. “Oh— Ok, that’s good, then! I hope you are ready for some merciless teasing as soon as the rest of the class catches up, though.” She snickers.

Todoroki let out a small chuckle. “As ready as I can be.” He replies, before smiling to her. Ochako finds herself holding her breath. Todoroki had got increasingly more open and relaxed with them as time went by, but it’s the first time he ever gave her a smile like that.

“Thank you, for everything.” He says, the words loaded with much more than they could possibly contain. “And, um— You look really good, today.”

Ochako grins back, graciously accepting the arm he was offering her like a true gentleman, even giving her a proper little bow to which she answered in kind, and together they walk back to their class, laughing about their silliness between themselves, like old friends.
The whole ceremony is over before Izuku can even really register what is going on. He goes through it, tense, clutching his cane against his chest, resisting the temptation to lose the tie around his neck a bit. He doesn’t really have time to take a breath, after, as he’s whisked away for some pictures. All Might is a solid presence near him, guiding him with a hand on his shoulder. He hadn’t asked why Izuku was keeping his quirk turned off, at first, but before the start of the ceremony, as they stood in the backstage, he leaned down, his voice low.

“Young Midoriya, are you sure you want to go through this with your cane?” He asked, gentle. “If
you do, it will be clear to everyone that you are blind. I do not mean to imply you should hide it, of course, but you should be aware that our enemies will undoubtedly try to take advantage of that.”

Izuku gulped around a knot in his throat, taking a deep shuddering breath.

“I know.” He answered, voice low. “I thought about the possibility, but—I can’t keep it hidden forever. And—Both you and agent Tsukauchi said that this ceremony was meant to be a symbol for many people, right? So I thought—I thought it’d be nice, to show that even someone like me can be of help to others—“

All Might’s hand tightened a bit on his shoulder, after that. His voice had a strangled note in it when he spoke.

“I see. That is very brave.” The hand slid over to Izuku’s other shoulder, giving him a short, half hug. “I’m very proud of you.”

Izuku smiled up to him, a warm feeling blossoming in his chest as it usually happened whenever All Might would praise him. He was still unsure, but at least it was nice to know that All Might approved of his decision.

“They will probably ask you some questions.” Agent Tsukauchi is saying as he guides him outside the building, snapping him out of his musings. “If you feel you don’t want to answer, just give me a sign and I’ll intervene, ok?”

“Ok—“ Izuku replies, tense. He’s not exactly happy at the idea of having to speak with reporters, but then again he is studying to become a hero, and public presence is part of the job. He will have to start to deal with that at some point, anyway.

All Might gave him one last reassuring squeeze. “I’ll stay back, better not give them more reasons to ask questions. I’ll see you later, young Midoriya.”

Izuku nods, following agent Tsukauchi’s hand that had found his shoulder after All Might separated from them.

“Stairs—“ Tsukauchi murmurs, and Izuku carefully starts climbing down. “The reporters are just down there, I’ll make sure they won’t go overboard, ok?”
“Thank you, agent.” Izuku replies, taking a deep breath to relax a bit, flashing him a little smile. He could already hear the sound of cameras going off.

When he finally stood in front of them, Izuku forced himself to held his head high, his fingers tight on the handle of his cane as he willed them to stop trembling.

A woman spoke, introducing herself and saying the name of the paper she worked for— It all went over Izuku’s head, too nervous to really pay much attention to details, but then the inevitable question came. “—Midoriya, can I ask what the cane is for? Are you—“

“I’m blind.” Izuku replies, honest, and he didn’t even need his quirk to feel the surprise going through the little group in front of him. “I’ve been since I was four.”

The cameras went off again, as the reporters spoke over one another to ask more questions, and Izuku felt a bit more sure, steeled in his resolve, as he patiently answered anything he could.

—

The rapid fire questioning seemed to last forever, far more than the actual ceremony did. Agent Tsukauchi intervened on his own at some point, kindly taking him away after firmly telling the reporters that their time was over. Izuku took a deep breath, his shoulders drooping forward as he relaxed after they finally went back inside.

“You did good.” Agent Tsukauchi says, a smile in his voice. “You’ve given clear answers without giving important details away— You might be a natural at dealing with the press, Midoriya.”

“I… Literally have no idea what I just said.” Izuku admits, a bit hysterical. “I was too nervous— I guess I only managed thanks to the fact I speak to myself way too much.”

Tsukauchi laughs. “I’m sure they are all already going wild at the idea of writing moving and inspiring think pieces about you.” He says, amused, giving Izuku a short pat. “Welcome to the world of heroes, Midoriya.”

Izuku scoffs, making him laugh again.
“Let’s go, your friends are waiting for you in the hall.” Tsukauchi says, gently guiding him away. Izuku blinks, and then sighs. Right. Todoroki did tell everyone. Izuku wonders if the entire class actually came, but he does not dare turn his quirk back on yet— It kind of gives him a measure of peace, the idea of not being subjected to everyone’s emotions in a day as delicate as this.

When they get back into the hall Izuku is immediately hugged tight, wondering who it could be for a whole second before he hears a familiar sniff.

“Mom—“ He smiles, exasperated, hugging her back. “C’mon, stop crying—“

“I’m j-just—“ She sniffles, placing a wet kiss on his cheek. “I’m so proud of you.”

“I know, mom.” He replies, voice low, his chest tight as he relaxes in her arms. “ ‘Love you.” He adds, making her give a little trembly chuckle as she releases him to card her fingers through his hair.

“Midoriya!” Izuku can hear the ticking of heels on the floor as Uraraka approaches, and he blinks, trying—and failing—to imagine how she must look. She’s probably very elegant, right now. Mom let him go, stepping aside, and then he feels the familiar hand on his shoulder.

“You are in so much trouble, mister.” Uraraka mutters, poking his forehead. “You better get ready for some scolding, because I can’t believe you’d keep this from us—“

“…Would it help if I told you I’m sure you look very great, right now?” Izuku says, tentatively. She sniffs.

“Your flattering words mean nothing to me, Midoriya.” She replies, forcefully flat, but he can hear a smile in her voice. “But I guess I can post-pone the scolding to a later time, for now—“ Then she leans a bit to him, he can feel her hair brushing his cheek. “On another note, Todoroki told me the nice news. Congratulations.” She adds in a whisper.

Izuku has to fight the blush he feels rising to his cheeks. “… You know, suddenly I have the feeling you and Todoroki have been conspiring behind my back this whole time.” He replies in a mutter.
“It’s not my fault he needed a shoulder to whine on while you were completely oblivious to his feelings.” Uraraka replies, cheekily, making Izuku laugh. He had a hard time imagining Todoroki whining.

Speaking of which, a very familiar cold hand found his after he felt someone else approaching, and Izuku’s heart happily skips a beat as he turns with a small smile.

“Did you really tell everyone?” He asks, because he can hear more steps, now, and it’s clear there’s a rather large group approaching.

“I told you I would, I don’t know why you are surprised.” Todoroki replies, matter-of-factly, as his fingers entwines with Izuku’s. “And yes, before you can ask: everyone is here. Even Bakugou.”

Izuku splutters, and Todoroki adds in lower voice as their classmates are grouping around them. “Although he looks ready to murder someone and there’s a woman that I’m pretty sure it’s his mother keeping him in check, so I’m not quite sure he came on his own volition.”

That gets another laugh out of him, as another familiar hand gives him a short pat. Iida sniffs.

“Midoriya, we will have to talk about why you thought it was proper not to inform us of this ceremony, at a later time.” He says, severe, and Izuku knows he’s not getting out of this scolding unless a miracle happens. “But for now, congratulations.”

“Um, thanks—“ He replies, embarrassed, idly picking at his cane he’s holding in his one free hand. “And also— Thanks for coming, everyone? Even if it was kind of last moment?”

“Yeah, about that—“ Kirishima says, unimpressed -but there’s a note of fondness in his voice-. “You’re an idiot.”

Izuku can’t help but snicker at that. “Ok, ok, I deserve it, this time—“

“You deserve it all the time.” Kirishima replies, not missing a beat, and Izuku can hear Kacchan grumbling a small “Yeah. Stupid.” from somewhere in the group. Izuku grins.
“Oooh—“ Hagakure suddenly says, surprised, before letting out a little delighted giggle. “I thought
you were kidding about them being a couple, Ochako!”

Izuku blinks, wholeheartedly confused by that non sequitur, before he feels Todoroki’s grip on his
hand tighten a bit and oh, shit, right, they are holding hands, it just felt so natural Izuku did not think
about it in the slightest—

“Wait, what?!” Ashido intervenes, excited. “You guys got together?! About damn time!”

“Wait, what do you mean with about damn time?!“ Izuku can’t help but exclaim, scandalized. “Just
how many of you have been gossiping behind my back—“

He can’t finish the question, feeling Todoroki’s warm hand under his chin, tilting his face up a bit as
Todoroki presses a small, chaste kiss on his lips, quelling the questioning noises most of their
classmates were making at the exchange between him and Ashido.

“If this is a problem for any of you—“ Todoroki then says, his voice even, Izuku still frozen after the
gesture. “—I frankly won’t care.”

There’s a long of moment of silence before Kirishima exclaims, earnest surprise coloring his voice.
“Well, fuck me sideways! I did not see that coming at all—“

Izuku starts laughing, resting his forehead against Todoroki’s shoulder, unable to stop.

—

Inko blinks, surprised, as she watches the little scene from afar.

“Well, I guess that answers my question.” She hears Toshinori murmurs to himself, amused. A bit
further, Aizawa sighs loudly, his shoulders drooping forward, attracting Toshinori’s attention.

“I was kind of hoping he’d been going out with someone outside of class.” Aizawa says to
Toshinori’s unasked question. “I knew the chances were slim, but still— Now I got to deal with the
teenage drama—“
Toshinori snickers, clearly not sympathetic to his colleague’s plight. “I’m sure you will be fine.”

“You say that just because you’re new to teaching—“

Inko grins to herself, watching her son happily chatting with his surprised classmates, leaning easily against Todoroki— She has to admit that he wasn’t exactly the first person she thought of when Izuku told them about his date, but by the way Todoroki was looking at her son it was clear that there was a deep connection there. His mismatched eyes were full of love and wonder, as if he couldn’t quite believe himself that he had the luck to be holding Izuku in his arms right at that moment.

She turns when she hears a soft snicker at her side. Miki looks at her, grinning. “He looks like he thinks Izuku hung the moon in the sky.” She comments, amused.

“That he does—“ Inko laughs, putting a hand on her shoulder. “Aren’t you going to scold Izuku, too?”

“In a bit—“ Miki replies with a huff. “I can’t believe he didn’t tell anyone.”

“Imagine my surprise when I got a message from Todoroki about it.” Inko sighs, shaking her head. “I didn’t even know he had my number— I was sure Izuku told his friends, at least. I really don’t know what to do with that boy anymore—“

“He’s just that dumb, I’m afraid.” Miki replies, rolling her eyes. “You know I love you, but I think I have to disclose to you that you got a terminal case of stupid son, Miss Midoriya.”

That drags a hearty laugh out of her, as she gently pushes Miki forward. “C’mon, go say hi, I’m sure he’ll be happy to know you are here, too.”

“No, he won’t, after I’m done with him.” Miki replies, cracking her knuckles. She flashes another little grin at her, before strolling up to Izuku, cutting through the little group of his classmates to grab him in a chokehold under Todoroki’s surprised eyes and give him the noogie of a lifetime, Izuku uselessly trying to squirm away from her arm with a whine.
“Mikiiii—“

“Shut up and take it, Midoriya. Maybe it’ll teach you something—“

Toshinori is openly laughing, now. That is until someone pokes his shoulder and he turns around, finding himself face to face with Ichiko. She smiles, tilting an eyebrow.

“Hello, Mr. Shimura.” She says, stressing the word, and Toshinori releases a small, panicked yip before clearing his throat.

“Well— Hello.” He finally says, shooting a pleading look to Inko. She shrugs at him, amused. “It’s… Nice to see you again, Ms. Kobayakwa.”

Ichiko grins, hands on her hips. “Why don’t we all go grab a coffee? I’m really curious to hear what Izuku’s been up to, lately.”
Izuku emerges back in the communal space with his hair still slightly wet after the shower he took, already in his pajamas. It has been a long day, and he’d like to go to bed, but Sato invited all of them to share a cake once they’d get back to the dormitories and, well— Izuku wasn’t going to say no to
that. Sato’s cakes were heavenly.

A sweet smell immediately attracted him, as he padded toward the kitchen, sniffing. Sato laughs when he notices him doing that.

“It’s almost done.” He says, a smile in his voice. “The girls already made some tea, if you want to go sit at the table—“

“Oh, speaking of which—“ Ojiro’s voice intervenes from somewhere behind Sato. “Why didn’t you tell us to stop shuffling things around, Midoriya? I mean, we should’ve thought of that on our own, to be fair, sorry about that— But still.”

Izuku sighs, hanging his head a bit down. “He told you, huh?” He says, scratching the back of his head. “It’s not that big of a deal, I don’t want to inconvenience you guys—“

“Of course I told them.” Todoroki’s voice surprises him from behind, and a couple of very familiar arms circle his shoulders loosely, Todoroki’s chest pressing against his back. Izuku has to admit he hadn’t expected Todoroki would be so openly affectionate in front of everyone, but the fact doesn’t unsettle him. Quite the contrary, actually. “Seriously, why do you keep getting surprised by the fact I actually do the things I say, Midoriya?”

Ojiro chuckles, at that. “Tomorrow we’ll make a little inventory together, ok? And no one is going to move things around anymore, so you should be good.”

Izuku shuffles a bit, embarrassed, but a small smile opens on his lip. “…Ok. Thank you.” He finally says, voice low.

“No problem.” Ojiro replies calmly. And there’s something in his voice, how easily casual it is, that suddenly makes Izuku’s chest feel tight, like he can’t properly breathe anymore— He gives a little stiff nod, gulping around a knot in his throat, before patting one of Todoroki’s arms and sliding out of the loose embrace. Izuku turns, tracing the now familiar steps toward the main doors of the dormitories, and he walks out, barefooted. He takes a deep breath, taking in the chilly night air.

It really feels like summer is about to end.

He can hear soft steps following him after a few seconds, and Izuku doesn’t turn as Todoroki stands
a bit behind him, silent.

“Midoriya.” He softly says after a long silence. “Why are you crying?”

Izuku let out a trembly sigh, drying the tears away from his cheeks with his wrist.

“I don’t know—“ He admits, sniffing. “It’s just… Everyone in class just— They— They just accept me for who I am a-and— And you are here, and I’m so happy I’m here, too, and everything is just too much—“

“Your quirk—“ Todoroki says, carefully, but Izuku shakes his head.

“It’s off.” He replies, letting out a little wet laugh. “I’m just stupid and emotive like that—“

Todoroki sighs, fondly, his arms circling Izuku’s waist from behind. He puts his chin on Izuku’s shoulder, soft hair tickling at his cheek.

“You are not stupid.” He murmurs, squeezing gently. “It’s ok to cry if you are happy, too.”

Izuku hums, leaning back. “You better get used to me crying, because I do that. A lot.”

Todoroki chuckles, turning a bit to place a gentle kiss on his cheek. Izuku smiles a bit at that, feeling his heart beating painfully in his chest at the tenderness of that gesture. “Let’s get back inside, Sato says his cake tastes better when warm.”

Izuku takes a moment, turning around in the embrace. His hand rises to search Todoroki’s face, his fingers gently meeting the hard line of his jaw —and Izuku is surprised by the sudden, almost overwhelming need to put both his hands on him, touch him, explore his features and try to imagine what Todoroki looks like—and he gently follows it down to his chin, fingertips rising a bit to graze on Todoroki’s lips.

He can hear Todoroki’s breath hitch in his throat, before he leans down to catch Izuku’s mouth with his, almost frantic. Which is exactly what Izuku wanted, so he melts in the embrace, letting himself get lost in the kiss.
When they separate — *after what felt like ages, and yet too soon at the same time* — they hear giggling from the still open door, both of them jumping a bit.

“You know, I just realized something.” Ashido says, pragmatic. “One the best looking guys in school hooked up with someone who’s blind. I think some heads are going to explode at the karmic injustice of it all, when the gossip gets out there. Which is soon, since you guys clearly have no shame.”

Izuku thinks that he should be offended by that, and maybe he would’ve have been just a few months prior, but instead he ends up laughing loudly, amused, and so happy his heart feels like it might just explode, as Todoroki grumbles something that sounds like an embarrassed “*Y’all mind your own damn business.*”

Chapter End Notes

Extra art: The TodoThirst
Also you can pry Ochako and Shouto being the cutest friends away from my cold dead hands

As usual you can find me on tumblr and on twitter!

Also click here to see some bnha charms I've made for a con I while table at this summer. Why? Because I wanna show you >:c
“Let me just— Here we go!”

Izuku curiously pokes at the objects hanging on his ears with careful fingers, afraid he might jostle them too much, after Mei is done fixing them.

“The power button is here—“ She says, enthusiastically, guiding his fingers down the hard, sleek plastic, until he can feel something round protruding from it. “Just press them once to turn them on, keep them pressed for a couple of seconds to turn them off. C’mon, try!”

Izuku obeys, smiling at the excitement that’s shaking Mei’s light. He presses the buttons on both, and for a second nothing happens, and then—

“WHOA!”

Mei’s laugh is almost hysterical as she jumps up and down.

“It works! It works!” She says, over excited. “I’m so glad you came to me for this, Midoriya, this has been one of the most interesting projects I’ve worked on in ages— How does it feel? Any delay in the signal? It took me so long to finally find the right materials— The testing phase was a nightmare, not going to lie, but I’m sure we’ve nailed down the basic at least, given time we may be able to add more features and—“

Izuku is half-tuning her out, blinking in shock. He presses the buttons for a couple of seconds, as Mei said, and the objects turns off with a little hum— His radar goes back to normal range. Feeling his heart beating in his throat, Izuku excitedly presses the buttons again— The range of his radar immediately increased once more, but Izuku doesn’t feel the usual sting of pain that comes with the exertion of doing that, nor the now way too familiar sensation of blood running down his nose.

“How—“ He says, choked. “How did you—“

“Man of little faith.” Mei scoffs, proudness surrounding her light. “There’s nothing my babies can’t
do! Nothing! Admittedly, it’s the first time I’ve worked with a quirk such as yours, it was very interesting. The range of signals you are capable of emitting and perceiving is astounding—There’s still a lot I want to try to do, but for now, thanks to these little adorable babies—“ And she pats the objects she fixed to his ears. “—You should be able to extend the scope of your quirk a whole lot, without putting as much stress on your brain as you did before.”

“Yeah, I— It increased immediately as soon as I turned them on—“ Izuku replies, amazed. “And it doesn’t feel taxing at all— It feels natural, the way it normally does when I’m not focusing too much —“

Mei giggles, probably doing a little happy dance going going by the way her light moves.

Izuku is speechless. Who would’ve thought that the entire afternoon he spent the last week, feeling like a lab rat, with some kind of sensor attached to his head while Mei barked orders at him to test the range of the signals his quirk could emit, would actually produce some results?

*He really is of little faith, Mei is right.*

“The battery is rechargeable with a simple usb chord and has a twelve-eight hours capacity depending on the intensity of the signal— But then again if you get in the red zone they’ll start beeping to annoy you, so you should be able to maximise battery life—“

“The… Red-what, now?” Izuku blinks, shaking his head to focus back to what Mei is saying.

“Your homeroom teacher requested some features of his own.” Mei says, distracted, as she takes Izuku’s head to turn it around, probably to examine the objects she made, making sure they are firmly attached to him. “There are three led lights— You are currently in green, which is the basic one. Then there’s yellow, if the strength of your signal gets over a certain threshold— It’s still acceptable when in yellow, but you could experience the usual symptoms like bleeding and head pains after prolonged use. And then there’s the red, which is pretty much a no-no. If you stay in red for too long, the amplifiers will start to beep to remind you to don’t be a reckless idiot.”

Izuku sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Of course. Ok, I get it—“

“I’m sure you’ll get well accustomed with that beeping, if the expression on Eraserhead’s face as he requested this feature was anything to come by.” Mei says, cheerful. “Speaking of being a reckless idiot, since your fighting style seems to be rather… Wild, I took the liberty of reinforcing the limb
supports that you wanted, too. The models you asked for wouldn’t suit you much— Didn’t change
the basic design of your costume, as you requested, though. I have to make some last minute
adjustments, so I wanted to ask— What does your style favours? Kick, punches?”

Izuku blinks. She sure went all out. “Oh, ok— Thanks, Mei. I— I guess I go for kicks more—”

“No problem.” She replies, easily. “I think that should be all—Your costume will be ready for the
provisional license exam, in the meantime take the amplifiers, test them out a bit— They are one
hundred percent ready. They are very easy to put on, just fix them to your ears, and they’ll stay there.
They won’t fall off unless someone forcefully rips them away, and there’s a little latch behind here
—“ She guides his hand again, behind his ear. “Just pull it a bit to take them off—“

The object comes off when he does, easily falling in his palm. Izuku carefully explores the amplifier
with his fingertips, feeling the smooth surface of plastic and little ridges there and then. Kind of a
shame he cannot see them, they surely feel like they’ve been masterfully and lovingly crafted—

“Mei, I—“ He says, a little moved. “These are amazing. I don’t know what to say—“

“Just use them, and make sure to tell everyone who made them!” She replies, a grin in her voice. “If
there’s any problem with them or you need some adjustments, feel free to come by any time— Oh,
also— I’m pretty sure I’ve solved that issue, but if you notice that they are overheating, take them off
before they explode.”

Izuku makes a little choked noise, hurrying to take the other one off as Mei laughs.

—

Shouto was definitely not going to the development studio hoping to catch Midoriya still there after
he got called by Hatsume Mei regarding his support gear. He just happened to pass by, is all.

—Accept it, Shouto Todoroki, you are acting like a lovesick twelve years old. Just admit you want to
spend more time with Midoriya and move on with your life, dumbass.—

He sighs, embarrassed by his own eagerness. He just wants to spend as much time with his boyfriend
as he can, especially now that the exam is just a handful of days away and with it, the new trimester.
Surely they won’t have nearly as much time to spend together, once they’ll get their provisional
licenses— Is it *really* so bad that he wants to get his fill of Midoriya-time while he can?

He walks by the teachers’ office on his way to the studio, distracted, and almost gets a door in the face when someone exits out of it.

All Might turns and looks down to Shouto, blinking.

Shouto’s brain goes blank for a handful of seconds as he looks up in the sunken blue eyes, a sassy little voice in the back of his mind sounding suspiciously like Uraraka whispering at him ‘*adoptive daaaad—*’

This is the man that Midoriya openly admitted being something more than a teacher for him. The man that looked at Midoriya with clear pride all over his face. The man that seemed to be *really* close with both Midoriya and his mother— And on top of that he was *All Might*. The man that indirectly ended up being the reason for most of Shouto’s life being rather shitty. Granted, that wasn’t his fault and Shouto did not hold it against him in the slightest, but still— He thinks he’s allowed to feel a bit conflicted about all of this.

“Oh, hello.” All Might smiles, easily. And yet, Shouto has the impression there’s a bit of tenseness behind that smile.

“…Hello.” He replies, giving a short, tense bow.

“Did you need something?” All Might asks kindly, and Shouto blinks, confused, then realizing he froze in front of the teachers’ office.

“Oh, no— I was on the way to the development studio.” Shouto replies, breaking the eye contact as if he’s scared All Might might see right through him if he doesn’t. “I just got startled, is all.”

“I see—“ All Might hums, pensive, closing the office door behind him. “Would you mind if we walked together for a bit? I have to go in that direction, after all—”

Yes. “No.”
So they do, walking side by side. Shouto felt like a bundle of nerves, wondering if he should say something to All Might, anything at all— But his head didn’t seem up to the job. Shouto was definitely not going to ask All Might for permission to marry his totally-not-adopted-son, thank you for nothing, brain.

“So—“ All Might starts with a casual tone that’s not casual at all. “You and young Midoriya.”

Shouto hangs his head a bit lower, feeling his cheeks warm up. He nervously calls to his right side, forcing the traitorous blood to go back to where it came from. If All Might noticed the bit of frost forming on his cheek, he doesn’t comment on it.

“Uh. Yeah.” Shouto finally replies, curtly.

The silence feels definitely more tense, now, as their steps echoes down the corridor.

“…Did I do something that offended you?” All Might slowly asks in a quiet, gentle voice. Shouto tenses as if a zap run down his spine, turning to meet his eyes. There’s a world inside the blue—Kindness, and worry, a pinch of sadness, the need to be helpful— Shouto had seen that kind of look in Midoriya’s unseeing eyes many times, at this point.

“I— No.” He forces himself to say, turning his face away once more. He’s not sure he quite wants to show the kind of look he knows must be emerging in his own eyes to All Might. “You didn’t do anything, it’s just—“

It’s just that my shithead of a father unloaded on me a baggage I never wanted ever since I have memories and you are the reason of all that— And you are also someone that means a lot for the person I’m in love with and this is all very scary and confusing and I don’t know what I’m supposed to do—

“I’m— Just a bit tense. I guess.” Shouto finally adds, lamely, sounding weak to his own ears. It’s such a poor excuse, it can mean literally anything— But All Might hums, understanding.

“No need to be.” He then says, a smile in his voice. “I don’t mean to butt my nose in your business — so if I’m stepping over the line just let me know, I won’t be offended.”

He probably thinks Shouto is tense about he and Midoriya being together. Which he is, a bit, but it’s
really not that, and it’s not like All Might can possibly imagine what Endeavor had done to Shouto for years, because of him.

If Shouto can help it, it’ll stay that way for the rest of the eternity. He doesn’t know All Might nearly as well as Midoriya does, but he still has the suspicion that the man would get absolutely crushed by guilt if he was to discover Shouto’s past, even if he had no real responsibility in that.

All Might is a good man — and would probably be a great father, adoptive or not — unlike a certain someone else. Shouto certainly didn’t want him to suffer for no reason.

“Ok.” He forces himself to say, trying to calm down, release a bit of tenseness in his shoulders. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

All Might chuckles, and his fingers ghost on Shouto’s shoulder for a second, before he seems to gather enough courage to give him a gentle, brief squeeze. “You’ve positively changed quite a lot since the sport festival, my boy. I hope you will keep doing so.”

And at that, Shouto finally manages to flash him a tiny smile, despite how rattled he still feels. “I hope so, too.”

The rest of the short walk is spent in a much more relaxed silence. Shouto can’t help but wonder if All Might might’ve had something to ask and refrained after seeing how tense Shouto turned, but Shouto is not going to poke the sleeping dog, for sure. He’s aware he will inevitably meet the man more and more, now that he’s in a relationship with Midoriya, so there will be time for them to try tentatively build a connection of sort.

Hopefully, Shouto thinks as he watches All Might walk away after wishing him a good day once they stopped in front of the development studio, by the time they will start to do that, Shouto would be free of the conflicting feelings regarding All Might storming inside him.

He takes a few instants to calm down after All Might disappeared behind a corner, to push those thoughts aside for the moment.

Just think of Midoriya. There, much better already—

And as he rises a hand to knock on the closed door of the studio, the metal slides open and Midoriya
appears in front of him as if Shouto managed to summon him by mere thought.

Midoriya has a huge smile on his face and he laughs, jumping and throwing his arms around Shouto’s shoulders with enough energy to make them spin around as Shouto tries not to lose his balance. He smacks a loud kiss against the corner of Shouto’s mouth, making his heart do a little happy somersault.

“Well, aren’t you cheerful.” He says, a little laugh escaping his lips despite everything.

Midoriya snickers, arms still tight around Shouto’s shoulder. He’s bouncing on his feet, excited. “Mei made something amazing for me! I can’t wait to show you!”

Shouto hums, carding his right hand through Midoriya’s hair, that happily leans into the touch. He blinks, and then in a fraction of a instant the smile is off his face as he looks up to Shouto with a worried little frown.

“…Are you ok?”

*Your boyfriend is an empath. Congratulations. You will never be able to hide anything from him ever* —

“I—“ No point in lying to Midoriya. Shouto sighs. “I met All Might on the way here.”

Midoriya blinks once more, his pale eyes boring into Shouto so deeply it makes him feel as if Midoriya is turning his soul inside out with his mind. Midoriya’s expression darkens a bit, and Shouto is not sure if he should be grateful for the fact he really doesn’t need to say a single word for Midoriya to understand what the problem is, or not. On one hand, maybe talking about his issues could be helpful. On the other, he doesn’t want to talk about his issues, so this is just fine with him.

Still not letting him go, Midoriya sighs, rising up on the tip of his feet to push his cheek against Shouto’s, like an affectionate cat.

“I’m sorry. I know it must be difficult, for you.” Midoriya murmurs, sadness and kindness mixed in his voice in equal parts.
“…I will live.” Shouto murmurs back, circling Midoriya with his arms, carefully putting his hands on his back.

“If—I don’t know if it can help, to think about him in another way—“ Midoriya continues after a second of silence, relaxing the hug a bit and turning his face back up to him. “I know that All Might is the reason for— Well—“ A moment of hesitation, as he bites down his lower lip. “But think of him this way: If I never met All Might, I probably would’ve never met you as well. So, in a sense, it’s thanks to him if we—“

Midoriya trails off, as the mere thought of a possible permutation of his life in which he never met Midoriya made Shouto feel like someone was stabbing his back with a knife. Midoriya tenses a bit, his hands tightening on Shouto’s clothes.

“I— I’m sorry, that was incredibly conceited of me—“ He says, frantic. “I didn’t mean to minimize what happened to you, I— I shouldn’t have said that, that was stupid—“

He stops when Shouto puts his fingers on his lips. “Midoriya, it’s ok. I know what you meant to say. And I’m definitely grateful for the fact we’ve met.”

A lopsided, sad smile flashes on Midoriya’s lips, under Shouto’s fingers. “…I completely lack tact.” He says with a sigh, nervous hands picking at Shouto’s shirt. “I’m sorry.”

“There’s no need to feel sorry.” Shouto replies in a low voice, taking his fingers away. “And it’ll make me feel much better to see you smile the way you did when you came out of that door.” A moment of silence. “Also going to sit somewhere, just you and me, and make out a bit would help.”

Midoriya blushes but snickers. “I have to admit, I would’ve never imagined you would be so openly physical and… Blunt.” He says, amused. The red on his cheeks makes him look even more adorable. “Not that I’m complaining, just to be clear.”

“Good. Because I’ve spent a great deal of time thinking about making out with you.” Shouto replies matter-of-factly. “And considering the nature of your quirk it’s not like I can really hide anything from you, so I might as well be honest about it.”

Midoriya hums, a little mischievous smile appearing on his face. —And isn’t that new. Shouto could definitely get used to that smile, yes sir he could.— “I think I know a nice place we can go sit for a bit, just you and me…“
“Guys, have you seen Midoriya?” Ochako asks, stepping into the communal area with a confused frown. “I thought he went to the development studio, but he’s not back yet—“

“He’s in the back garden, making out with Todoroki.” Tokoyami answers, distracted as he fiddles with his phone sprawled on one of the couches. Something in his tone of voice makes Ochako snicker, amused.

It’s kind of adorable how the entire class just took the news in stride and went with it, not making a fuss about Midoriya and Todoroki getting together, really.

“Mmh, I see— Well, I guess I’ll wait.”

“Did you need something?” Mina asks, looking up from the console she was playing with.

“I just wanted to ask him a favor, but I don’t want to interrupt them—“

“They looked like they could go at it for a long time.” Tokoyami intervenes again with the same distracted tone. “A long time.”

“…Are you telling me I should just barge into Midoriya and Todoroki kissing.”

Tokoyami shrugs. “I’m just saying, if whatever you wanted to ask to Midoriya was urgent, you might want to throw cautions to the wind and go for it.”

Ochako sighs. It wasn’t urgent, per se— But at the same time it was kinda urgent, considering the exam was only a few days away…

“Take a picture for me!” Mina yells after her in a cheery tone, as she walks out the dorms.
Ochako still tried to give them a measure of privacy. For how much she feels she’s due some teasing, she still doesn’t want to just straight up walk in on them, especially considering that after the provisional license exam surely the chances for Midoriya and Todoroki to spend some alone time will drastically decrease.

So she watches them from afar: sitting under a tree, Todoroki’s back pressed against the bark, Midoriya nested between his legs, relaxed in Todoroki’s embrace. She waits for them to stop and catch their breath for a minute, not wanting to literally interrupt.

And then she waits. And she waits.

*Holy crap, I understand what Tokoyami meant, now. Do they not need to breathe?!!*

Surrendering to the fact that her two friends are clearly hell bent on setting a new world record of ‘two people spending time with their lips firmly sealed to one another’ she walks forward, casually clearing her throat.

Midoriya jumps, making a high pitched noise, which cues her in the fact he was keeping his quirk off.

Todoroki is definitely glaring at her, pursing his lips, vaguely flushed. She tilts an eyebrow, as if challenging him to complain at all, and he looks away releasing a little huff.

“Sorry to interrupt, lovebirds, but there was something I wanted to ask, Midoriya.” She teases, cheerful, closing the remaining distance and crouching down on her knees to get at their eye level. Midoriya turns in Todoroki’s embrace, his face utterly red, eyes vaguely wet.

“Ahh— You scared me, Uraraka—“ He stammers, an embarrassed smile appearing on his face. “What is it?”

“Could you *really* not wait.” Todoroki grumbles, not quite a question.
“Clearly, I could not. *Any more than I already did.*” She replies without missing a beat, watching Midoriya go even more red, for how impossible that seemed. “Besides, I’m sure you will be interested in this, too, Todoroki.”

That certainly picks his curiosity, as his obvious annoyance shifts into a calmer interest.

“I was thinking— You know, how I learned a bit of martial arts from Gunhead during my work experience week— Which was great, but it was *only* a week.” She starts, Midoriya calming down a bit, the blush disappearing from his face as he blinks at her. “And well— You are pretty experienced with hand-to-hand combat, aren’t you, Midoriya?”

“Ah—“ He replies, understanding dawning on his face. “Well— I mean, I won’t say I’m really *that* experienced, but I did start studying hand-to-hand techniques around the end of my first year in middle school—“

That makes Todoroki do a sort of double take, as he looks down on Midoriya with vaguely wide eyes.

“Wait— You started training before you discovered your quirk?” He asks, faintly. “Without your radar?”

“Huh— yes?”

There’s a long moment of silence as both Todoroki and Ochako stare at him.

“Can you stop being so incredibly awesome for, I don’t know, five minutes.” Todoroki suddenly says in a strange, flat voice. “My heart can only take so much—“

Midoriya splutters, going beet red again, and then starts to laugh loudly, covering his face. Ochako can’t help but join him, amused, and silently feeling very happy at seeing Todoroki being so openly blunt in front of her.

It’s nice to realize once more that he *really* does consider her a friend.
“Todoroki’s fanboy-ing aside—“ She snickers, ignoring his pointed look that seems to say ‘I know you also think he’s awesome, don’t mess with me.’ “Could you teach me a bit? I’ve been thinking about it ever since I saw you spar with Aizawa-sensei, last week— I definitely want to get much better at martial arts!”

“Mmh—“ Midoriya says, pensive, turning a bit more toward her and relaxing against Todoroki as if he’s his personal pillow. “I guess we could try— But I have no idea how good of a teacher I can be. And I’d definitely recommend you speak with Ichiko-san, too, if you get the chance— She’s the one that taught me, after all— Maybe we could have some sessions with her during the weekend? I’ll have to speak with her—“

He’s starting to mutter. Over his head, Todoroki scrunches his eyebrows a bit and opens his mouth, as if he wants to ask Ochako why she thought he would also be interested in taking lessons from Midoriya—

Ochako raises her hands palms up, pointing at the entirety of Midoriya chilling against Todoroki, and mouths ‘Sweaty Midoriya sparring with no shirt’.

A blush rises to Todoroki’s cheeks as he closes his mouth. He glares at her once more, without any real heat in his gaze. She grins, knowing she just won.

Oblivious to it all, Midoriya it’s still muttering. Todoroki pats his shoulder with a sigh, and Midoriya seems to snap out of his mutter-trance, blinking.

“—Right, sorry, back on planet earth.” He says with an apologetic smile. “Anyhow— I guess yeah, we could try. I also wanted to get back in shape with some sparring, I’ve really hadn’t the time to do that at all, since the start of school.”

And with that, he gets back up on his feet with a huff, both Ochako and Todoroki —with his arms mid-air where Midoriya had been an instant prior— blinking up at him.

“Ok, let’s go.”

“Wait, you mean— Now?”

“Of course?” Midoriya frowns, as if it’s obvious. “The exam is only a few days away. Or you got
anything better to do?”

“Well… I guess you have a point.” Ochako concedes, getting up herself. Todoroki follows a few instants later.

“Awesome.” Midoriya grins, happily. “Let’s go get changed in something more comfortable and meet here in ten minutes, ok?”

They watch him go, blinking, before exchanging a little look.

Ochako bites down on her lower lip, a bit of guilt slipping on her face. “…Sorry. I didn’t think he’d go for it straight away.”

Todoroki sighs, with the expression of someone that has long given up to a fact of life they cannot change. “It’s ok. I already know that I will always be second place in his heart, right after his need to train obsessively until he can’t move anymore.” He deadpans, before adding after a moment of silence. “…Actually, let’s make it third place. All Might exists, too, you know—“

Ochako laughs, ungracefully snorting.

—

Tenya just so happened to glance outside a window on the way to his room, casually. He stops, frowning, and takes a couple of steps back to look again.

Uraraka, Midoriya and Todoroki are in the back garden, wearing their school gym uniforms. Midoriya seems to be talking animatedly, keeping Uraraka’s arm stretched forward with a hand, pointing with his other to her shoulder as if he’s explaining something. Uraraka nods, and all of a sudden Midoriya grabs her with a swift motion and throws her on the ground.

Panic overcomes Tenya for a second, before realizing that Uraraka did not hit the ground but is instead floating a few centimetres above it. She’s laughing.

What the heck are they doing?
Perplexed, he turns on his heels and goes back to the first floor, walks outside, circling around the building.

“—You got that? Ok, now you try.” Midoriya is saying, offering his arm, when Tenya turns a corner and reaches them in the little grassy clearing between the trees.

“…What is going on, here?” He asks, perplexed.

Uraraka turns to him with a big smile. “Midoriya is teaching me some hand to hand techniques!”

Tenya launches a little look at Todoroki. He looks relaxed, leaning casually back against one of the trees, arms crossed on his chest. He catches Tenya’s gaze with his mismatched eyes, giving the tiniest shrug.

“You know, it’s kind of irresponsible to train with no supervision—“ Tenya tries to say, unconvinced.

“Todoroki is supervising us.” Midoriya replies without missing a beat, a little shit-eating grin appearing on his face. “Besides, your light is pretty much screaming ‘I want in’, right now, Iida.”

“Midoriya, that’s cheating—“ Tenya splutters, embarrassed as he adjusts the glasses on his nose. Still, he can’t help feeling a bit pleased when he hears Uraraka laughs. “…Alright, fine, I do want to join.” He admits.

“Well, the more, the merrier— Come here, We were starting on a very basic throwing technique. I’ll explain to you, too.”

As Midoriya explains, patient, Yaoyorozu appears with a confused expression on her face.

“What are you guys doing?”

At that Midoriya stops, and sighs. “You know what? I might just wait for the entire class to join us,
so at least I’d have to explain only once—“

Yaoyorozu tilts an eyebrow at that, but Ashido appears right behind her, curious and eager. And then Asui follows as well.

In the end, the whole class joins them.
“Are you aware that there’s a fighting club going right in the back garden of class 1-A dormitories?”

Aizawa looks up from his laptop, as Toshinori, from a couch, does the same by finally peeling his focused gaze away from the book titled ‘Teaching for dummies’ he was reading attentively, only stopping to underline or bookmark something specific. Hizashi shrugs at their confused frowns. “I happened to pass by, and saw the entirety of class 1-A sparring. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, but I guessed you’ll probably want to know.”

Aizawa sighs, massaging his forehead. “I’m going to take a wild guess and say that Midoriya is responsible for this.” He mutters, making Toshinori laugh as he gets up from his couch, pocketing the book.

“Let’s go take a look.” He says, amused, tilting his hand toward the exit. Aizawa follows, and they soon reach the building assigned to class 1-A, circling it.

The definition ‘fighting club’ wasn’t far from the truth. The whole place looks like an entire gym on
grass. All the kids are wearing protective gears, —*and Aizawa wonders where they could’ve possibly got all the equipments before remembering that, right*— Yaoyorozu is in this class. — and there are soft mats everywhere. They are sparring, split in couples, except for Midoriya and Ojiro, that are walking around side by side, stopping to offer suggestions and explanations whenever it was needed, discussing between each other which kind of techniques would better work for every each one of their classmates. They seems very enthusiastic, and their classmates are clearly listening to what they are saying, focused and happy. —*For the most part. Bakugou looks grumpy, as usual, but he does not complain, sparring with Kirishima.*—

Both Aizawa and Toshinori observe, silent, for a long time. Then Toshinori let out a little whine.

“This is not fair.” He mutters, a tone uncharacteristic on him. “Both young Midoriya and Ojiro are better teachers than me—”

Aizawa giggle-snorts for a second, surprised.

Midoriya turns to them at some point, blinking like he only now realized they were there. He says something to Ojiro in a low voice, that also looks at them with a little surprised expression. Then Ojiro nods and turns back to his classmates, as Midoriya walks away from the group, toward them, smiling like the sun.

“Hello.” He says, cheerful. “In how much trouble are we?”

Aizawa scoffs. “I would ask you to keep the cheekiness to a minimum, Midoriya, but I’m starting to think it’s pretty much a useless effort.” Midoriya grins, and Aizawa continues. “So, what is this, now?”

“Well, Uraraka asked me to teach her some hand to hand techniques, right?” Midoriya says with a shrug. “And then Iida joined us, and then Yaoyorozu and Ashido did, and then pretty much the whole class trickled in, so here we are. But hey, I’m not doing it all on my own, Ojiro knows a lot of martial arts! He’s great, much better than me, really— And Yaoyorozu made us the equipments, so we are going at it responsibly and safely, see?”

Toshinori chuckles, amused. “Looks like you covered every corner, huh?”

“I’ve gotten in enough trouble to know better, at this point.” Midoriya replies, and Aizawa scoffs again. “Aw, sensei, don’t be like that—”
You and ‘knowing better’ are not concepts that go well together, Midoriya.” Aizawa cannot help but reply, making Toshinori hide a little snicker behind his hand. “…But I have to admit this is not a bad idea.”

At that, Midoriya grins full force. “So, it’s ok if we keep going? We’ll keep being real careful, I swear—”

“Even if I wanted to stop you all, I don’t think I would be capable to.” Aizawa replies with a little shake of his head. It’s clear by looking at the entire class that they are clearly enjoying themselves, and well… This is admittedly good exercise, both physically and for bonding. “Still, I think you should be supervised by a teacher… Toshinori?”

At that, Toshinori blinks, jumping a bit in his skin. “Me?”

“You can just sit under a tree and keep reading your… Book.” Aizawa continues with a little grin. “Also, considering what you said earlier, I think you should observe Midoriya and Ojiro, don’t you?”

A bit of red dusts Toshinori pointed cheekbones, as Midoriya frowns, clearly confused.

“What?”

“Nothing—” Toshinori hastily says, launching a little glare at Aizawa. But then he sighs. “— You do have a point, though.”

“Fantastic. I’ll leave you to it, then.” Aizawa says, turning to leave without giving the man time to protest.

Toshinori looks at Aizawa’s retreating back, bewildered. His friend surely cornered him real good…

Young Midoriya has his pale eyes pointed at him, now, blinking.
“Well, I guess I will join you and your classmates, then.” Toshinori says with a little embarrassed cough. Midoriya smiles brightly.

“This is great!” He says, cheerful. “We only started today so there’s not much to show yet— but we can keep training until the exam— When lessons start we’ll surely have to slow down, but I think it’d be good to continue— I have to send a mail to Ichiko-san, ask for some pointers—“

He’s starting to mutter, and Toshinori looks at him with a fond little smile as the boy pulls on his lower lip in a familiar gesture.

“I really want to make this a thing.” Midoriya says in a lower voice, suddenly snapping out of his musings. “I— It’s a great way to spend time with the whole class. And everyone seems to be having fun—”

“…I think you are right, it would be good for you and your classmates to keep sparring together.” Toshinori says gently after a second of silence. “I’ll ask principal Nedzu if he’s ok with this. I could supervise in the future, too, if he asks me to do so.”

Stars seems to shine in the pale green eyes when young Midoriya turns his face back up to him with a big smile. “You would?”

“Of course.” Toshinori chuckles, his eyes widening a bit in surprised when young Midoriya tackles him in a short hug. He gently pats the soft, curly hair, before Midoriya releases him, excitedly bouncing on his feet.

“Let’s go, then! I’m sure everyone will be thrilled to have you here!” He says, happily, grabbing Toshinori’s arm and dragging him forward. Everyone reacts with shy surprise once they realize Toshinori is here, but young Midoriya is enthusiastically explaining what he and Ojiro had in mind for everyone, and that’s enough to make all the boy’s classmates relax again soon enough.

Toshinori is too distracted to notice a couple of bright red, suspicious eyes boring into him, and on the hand that young Midoriya has still firmly set on his forearm.
Tenya, Uraraka and Todoroki watch Midoriya get out the door, cheerful, with equally amused expressions.
“I don’t know how does he have the energy to keep going like that after today—“ Uraraka whines, but she’s smiling. “My everything hurts, but he looks like he’d be ready to start right again at any second, if you’d ask him.”

They are all dressed in comfortable clothes, relaxing in Tenya’s room after dinner. The topic of Midoriya’s new support gear came up, and he immediately jumped up with enthusiasm, saying he was going to go get them in his room to show them.

“I cannot deny I’m glad to see him so enthusiastic— With everything that has happened lately—“ Tenya says, pensive. He is truly glad to see Midoriya doing so much better. The last couple of months have been a stressful time for everyone, but Midoriya had been through pretty much a meat grinder, compared to them, both physically and mentally.

They sigh in unison, for a nice change, probably sharing the same thought Tenya just had. Todoroki shifts a bit, putting an elbow Tenya’s bed and resting his head into his palm with a distracted expression. Uraraka launches a little look at him, a small, sly grin opening on her face.

“Actually, I do know where he finds the energy to be so chipper—“ She says, amused. “With that intense make-out session you guys were having, and all…”

Todoroki splutters, his face sliding away from his hand. He blushes furiously, glaring at Uraraka as the blush seems to recede right away, a bit of frost forming on his cheek.

“Must you?” He asks, grumpy.

She openly laughs, and Tenya can’t help but follow her suit. There’s something that’s equally heartwarming and amusing, in seeing Todoroki being so expressive, considering the kind of indifferent look he usually wears. —Then again, Tenya has long realized that Todoroki is not nearly as cold and detached as he might look from the outside, so it’s not much of a surprise.—

The door opens again, Midoriya, panting like he run through the flight of stairs between their bedrooms, enthusiastically entering. Tenya doesn’t have the time to scold him for running up the stairs, as Midoriya immediately kneels near Todoroki, opening his hands palm up with a big smile.

They all lean in to look. Midoriya is holding two objects a bit bigger than his hands in length. They start with a ear-shaped frame that makes Tenya think of a pair of hearing aids. Attached to this base there’s a round, flat black sensor, that would make contact with Midoriya’s temples if he wore them.
on his ears, and a long piece of plastic that goes a bit thinner going upward to the tip. There’s a red plate right in the middle cutting the object in two distinct halves, and on the gray upper part there are three led lights that are currently turned off.

“They are amplifiers—“ Midoriya cheerfully explains. He fidgets with them a bit, putting one on his ear as Tenya had imagined, and then the other. “They strengthen the signal of my quirk without putting as much stress on me.”

He presses a little buttons located where his earlobes would be under the plastic frame, and the amplifiers seems turn on, one of the led lights —green— lighting up.

“If I use them like this, without too much effort, they add about, I’d say, one hundred-something meters to my normal scope!” He says, a big, excited smile on his face. “I haven’t tried to reach out more, yet—“

He sniffs, and seems to focus for a bit. After a couple of seconds, the second led lights up, shining yellow.

“Mh.” He says, pensive. “This is quite… Something.”

“How far does it go?” Todoroki asks, curiously leaning in a bit closer to examine the objects. Midoriya huffs, and the yellow light turns off.

“That didn’t feel bad, but— Mei said that after prolonged use I’d probably get the usual symptoms —“ He mutters. “I’d say it about triplicated the size of my basic scope. It was… A lot to take in, I have to say.”

Todoroki is leaning even closer now, inspecting Midoriya’s nose with a little frown, as if he’s expecting blood to come out of it at any second. “Are you ok?”

Midoriya laughs. “It’s fine, I shouldn’t bleed unless I overuse them.” He replies, smiling.

“…What’s the last led for?” Uraraka asks, tilting her head on a side.
“Oh, uhh, that—” Midoriya hesitates, scratching the back of his head. “Mei said the red one it’s—I’m not really supposed to use it. Well, she also said that if I stay in red for too long the amplifiers will beep to make me stop, so…”

There’s a long moment of silence, and then Uraraka slaps her palms together, tipping her face to the ceiling. “Oh, Mei Hatsume of the support department, you may be a bit of a self-adsorbed jerk at times, but thank you for this amazing feature. Now, maybe, we can be serene in our knowledge that we’ll literally see and hear when Midoriya is being a self-sacrificing dumbass—“ She say with passion.

“Ah-ah, very funny.” Midoriya deadpans, unamused, making Todoroki hide a snicker behind a hand. “Apparently, Aizawa-sensei himself asked for this feature—“

Tenya follows her example, also slapping his palms together. “Aizawa-sensei, thank you for existing, then—“

Midoriya’s scowl deepens, and Todoroki pokes his cheek pointedly.

“Don’t make that face, we have a right to be relieved.” He says, amused.

“Yeah, whatever—“ Midoriya grumbles, childishly, letting himself get guided into an embrace by Todoroki, despite the grumpy expression on his face.

“They are pretty cool, though.” Todoroki says, placing a little kiss on Midoriya’s cheek. “Mei did a good job.”

“Right? They are so amazing—“ Midoriya’s mood immediately picks up and, yeah— Tenya can kind of see what Uraraka meant earlier, when she teased Todoroki. His presence sure does seem to make Midoriya much more chipper.

“They are pretty amazing, I agree.” Uraraka says, cheerful. “I also like that she kept the bunny ears aesthetic going.”

Midoriya blinks, his expression completely blank, and Todoroki hides his face against Midoriya’s shoulder, shook by a silent laugh, when Midoriya says “The… What aesthetic, now?”
“Mom, why does everyone thinks the hood you made for my costume has bunny ears???”

Inko looks down at the text on her phone and can’t help but laugh and laugh, that night.

Chapter End Notes

Extra arttttt
As usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
Painful words

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I don’t like this—“

Shouto blinks and turns, to look at Midoriya walking by his side as they all made way down the steel gray corridor, as they’ve been told to do after changing in their costumes. Midoriya is wearing his improved costume, with the new arm and leg guards and the amplifiers on his ears, although he’s keeping them turned off, for now.

“I don’t like this much either—“ Mineta says, pale and tense, trailing after them. “But we’ll have to take this exam, if we want our provisionals—“

“It’s not that.” Midoriya replies, shaking his head. He’s frowning, his pale eyes moving the way they usually do when he’s deep in thought. “I— I’m pretty sure all the other students will target us.”

Iida, walking in front of all of them, turns a bit, as does Uraraka right behind him. “What do you mean?” He says. “Those students from Ketsubutsu seemed so polite! Even Inasa from Shiketsu was so… Enthusiast.”

“Their words didn’t match the way I felt them.” Midoriya says, flat. “Think about it— Due to the sport festival, everyone already knows how our quirks work, and had all the time to study a possible counter-measure, we are the only one that lost the advantage of our quirks being unknown. Everyone feels very antagonistic, and it’s all directed to us.”

Shouto doesn’t even need an emphatic quirk like Midoriya’s, to feel the little ripple of surprise and worry going through his classmates as Midoriya’s words fully sunk in. A little heavy silence falls on them, and Shouto takes a small look at the entire class, before carefully speaking.

“It’s true.” He says, measured. “It’s clear they will target us— But that doesn’t mean anything. We all have what we need to succeed.”

He sees out of the corner of his eye Kaminari blinking at him, surprised, and then exchange a little happy look with Sero. Shouto frowns, a bit perplexed by that reaction, before realizing that his classmate have a right to be surprised by what he just said, after all.
The person he was only a couple months prior would’ve never said something like that. He was the one that said that he wasn’t in school to make friends, after all— And now here he is, not only incredibly fond of all his classmates, but also walking side by side with someone he ended up falling for—

Midoriya is smiling at him, too, looking satisfied.

“Alright!” Iida exclaims, voice high and strong as he raises an arm to the sky. “Todoroki is right! Class 1-A, let’s all come out of this victorious!”

There’s an enthusiastic chorus of “Aye-aye, class president!” as the entire class imitates Iida, enthusiastic. Well, almost all. Bakugou looks positively grumpy, but that’s nothing new, so Shouto doesn’t comment on it, leaning a bit closer to Midoriya.

“Is there something else worrying you?” He asks in a low voice, noticing the little crease that appeared between his eyebrows.

“…Maybe I’m being paranoid.” Midoriya replies just as low, after a couple of seconds. “But… One of the students from Shiketsu. I have the feeling I’ve met them, before. I just can’t remember when—“

Shouto blinks, as Midoriya raises his hand to go pull at his lower lip in a familiar gesture. “Well, you might have met them before, that wouldn’t be surprising—“ Shouto says, shrugging.

“It’s… Not like that.” Midoriya replies. “I don’t commit to memory people I happen to pass by, much like you couldn’t possibly memorize the faces of everyone you casually meet— But this feeling of familiarity makes me think I must’ve felt them in a specific situation that was important enough to leave an impression on me, and I just can’t recall where—“

“Midoriya.” Shouto sighs, gentle, putting a casual hand on his elbow. “Don’t torture yourself with this, now. You need to focus.”

“Right—“ Midoriya releases a huff, his right hand finally letting his lip go. “I just… I don’t know, I feel like I should tell Aizawa-sensei. Just in case.”
“I’m afraid you won’t be able to do that.” Shouto replies, squeezing Midoriya’s elbow a bit more. “I doubt they’ll let us see sensei until the exam is over—“

Midoriya hums, seeming a bit upset, just as Iida opens the big double doors and they enter in the giant room that’s already chokefull of students from various schools.

“It’ll be alright.” Shouto murmurs, leaning in a bit more to press a small, quick kiss on Midoriya’s cheek. “We are surrounded by pros, and there are literally thousands of heroes in the making with us, I doubt any villain would be stupid enough to try something. So, don’t worry too much, ok?”

At that, the expression on Midoriya’s face lightens a bit, and he smiles at Shouto with a little nod. He shifts just a little, finding Shouto’s arm with his hand and sliding down gently to grab Shouto’s own.

Shouto can’t feel the warmth of Midoriya’s hand due to the thick gloves of the new arm guards he’s wearing, but he still entwines their fingers together, as the tired, sleepy man from the public safety in heroics committee starts explaining to them how the first phase of the provisional license exam will work.

—

Izuku doesn’t have the time to try stop Kacchan from running away once the walls around them fall down —*goddamnit, why does he always have to be so stubborn*—, giving the chance to put some distance between them and all the other students. Kirishima and Kaminari trailed after him, trying to call him back, and ended up getting separated from the main group as well. Izuku half-assed attempt to stop them is blocked by Todoroki, closing a hand on his wrist.

“Midoriya, let got, we can’t— Here they come!” Todoroki exclaims as soon as the start is declared from the loud speakers above.

All the lights hone in on them, just as Izuku imagined it would happen. The spheres are already flying on them from all directions, and Izuku calls to One For All, kicking some away, just as Todoroki rose a small ice wall, the spheres bouncing helplessly off of it.

They are not the only ones that sprung into action. Everyone reacted immediately in a tight defense, quickly deflecting the attack, aiding one another. Izuku feels surprise ripple through the lights of their adversaries, in front of their quick reactions.
“We have to stay close, move as one!” Izuku exclaims over the cacophony. The determination he can feel from all his classmates is almost inebriating, and he steps back when a second wave of attacks comes from underground, Jirou easily interrupting it with her Heartbeat Fuzz.

“Tsk—” Todoroki goes in a low voice near him, rising another small ice-wall to bounce back other spheres. “My movements are limited if we are close together like this—“

Izuku doesn’t have the time to say anything, as one of the students from Ketsubutsu, Shindou, springs into action. He can feel his light slam on the ground and widen in waves, as the concrete under them suddenly starts to shake violently, breaking into big rubbles. Izuku helplessly rolls back, losing his balance, just as his classmates did the same.

“NO—“ He tries to yell, the thick dust that rose from the attack making him cough, and all he can do is trying to don’t get himself hurt in the violent shake, as he helplessly feels all the familiar lights around him scatter around.

—

When the shaking finally stops, he doesn’t really have the time to catch his breath. All his classmates are far from him, now, and someone is rapidly closing in.

His breath itches in his throat when he realizes who it is, and he manages to dodge the incredibly quick attack just in time, one of the spheres almost brushing against the target on his shoulder.

“…You’re fast.” A female voice says, quietly surprised, and Izuku’s mind searches his memories, trying to connect it to someone he knows— But he can’t.

*So why does she feel so familiar?*

She let out a little chuckle. “I really wanted to know more about you UA’s students before you’ll end up getting eliminated, since everyone will gang up on you, before focusing on each other.”

Izuku doesn’t answer, defensive. She gives out a strange vibe that makes him feel slightly sick to his stomach.
“Aaaw, don’t make that face—“ She says, casual. And then moves, quick as a lighting bolt. She launches one of the spheres at him and immediately follows up by darting in his direction. Izuku dodges both attacks, clutching at one of his own spheres to try counter-attack. But she’s incredibly fast, and in a second she’s on his back, sending him belly down on the floor with her entire body-weight pressing on him.

“You’re following my movements— This is interesting.” She says, her voice low, breath caressing his ear.

“Why shouldn’t I?” Izuku replies, and she seems to take a moment to think, before replying with a weird tone.

“You’re so interesting— I want to know more about you— How does your quirk work? Why do you want to become a hero, little Izuku?”

That sends a little chill crawl down Izuku’s spine and he grits his teeth, irritated by this perfect stranger using his name as if they are old friends. But he cannot reply, as other lights have closed in, an attack incoming from above. Izuku activates One For All, shaking her off of him and jumping away before he can get hit. A barrage of attacks comes his way, and all he can do is staying on the defense, dodging all of them.

She’s still onto him, too, and Izuku can’t deny he’s starting to feel a bit creeped out by how obsessed she seems to be. So obsessed, in fact, that she keeps making a beeline for him, ignoring the piece of rubble that’s flying straight onto her at high speed.

And despite how weird the whole situation is, Izuku can’t help but dash for her, grabbing her mid-air as surprise ripples in her light. He turns in the jump, kicking the ground away from under the little group of people attacking them, before making a run for it in the dust that he rose with his kick, shaking them off their tail.

When he lands in a little safe spot she let her go, putting some distance between them. There’s a second of silence, before she asks, curious. “Did you just… Save me?”

“You could’ve gotten seriously hurt. This is just an exam, there’s no need for someone to risk so much.” Izuku replies, flatly.

“So you will just… Save everyone? Where do you draw the line?” She asks, her voice sounding a
little manic as she makes a sprint for him. Izuku steps back, accidentally losing his balance on the uneven ground, and feels a little sting of pain on his cheek when her sharp fingernail made contact with his skin, opening a cut.

“What the heck is wrong with you?!” Izuku can’t help but ask, finding back his balance to jump away from her. She’s already onto him once more, but a familiar light has appeared above them. Sero’s tape form a wall between Izuku and her, forcing her to stop in her tracks.

“Oy, Midoriya, what are you doing hanging out with a hot chick?!” Sero exclaims, sounding almost jealous, and then he adds. “Uraraka!”

Izuku already felt the familiar light, relieved, as Uraraka lands in front of him and attacks the strange girl, forcing her to jump away from them.

“Tsk, such a shame—“ She mumbles. “I wanted to chat more with you— Now that it was getting good—“

Uraraka annoyance seems to mirror Izuku’s own, as she steels herself ready to fight, but the strange girl gets up and leaves, quick.

“Hey, wait a sec—“ Sero tries to say, but Izuku stops him.

“Let her go.” He says, feeling a bit relieved as she puts distance between them. “That girl— Was she the one from Shiketsu?”


“She was… Weird.” Izuku sighs, shaking his head. Now that he can finally catch his breath, he can focus on his surrounding a bit more. There is a large group of other students around them, it’s only a matter of time until they find them. most of his classmates are scattered around, too far from them to effectively group up once more. Izuku blinks, a little worried, when he notices he doesn’t feel Todoroki’s light in his range anymore.

Ugh. This isn’t the time to worry, I need to focus— He sighs once more, thinking. Todoroki is strong. He can handle himself.
“Fifty-eight examinees have passed! The exam will end when the next forty-two will pass!” A voice announces from the speakers, loud, making he, Uraraka and Sero flinch.

“Tsk, it keeps going and going.” Sero mutters. “What do we do?”

“We can’t stay here for much longer.” Izuku says, pensive. “There’s a large group of people closing in on us, we have to act now and counter-attack, if we want to pass this phase.”

“Wasn’t you that said we should stick together? Shouldn’t we search for the others?” Sero interjects, perplexed.

“They are too far from us—” He replies, honest. “We can’t group up effectively, they are too scattered and surrounded by enemies. But there’s still something we can do to help out, I think.”

“What did you had in mind?” Uraraka asks, faithful.

“Ok, listen, here’s what we do—“

—

Shouto thought of heading back, worried, once that earthquake-like attack finally stopped. But the terrain was pure chaos and Shouto couldn’t see any of his classmates after he finally managed to gain his balance back in the middle of the rubble, when the thick cloud of dust cleared up.

He heard Midoriya trying to yell “NO—” over the chaos at the start of Shindou’s attack, and then immediately lost sight of him. As he tries to decide what he should do, now, if staying put hoping Midoriya would find him with his quirk or moving, searching himself, he got ambushed by a group of other students. He immediately sprung into action, both his sides flaring with energy at the same time, the fire pulverising the spheres that were flying his way, and his ice quickly crawling on the floor, rapidly encasing his attackers.

“What are you waiting for?!” One of them snapped at him, angry, as Shouto stood there, distracted. “Just hit our targets and get it over with. Do you find it funny to goad like this?”
Shouto blinks, confused. He wasn’t goading—He was just worried for his classmates.

For Midoriya.

*If he passed the exam right away, he couldn’t help him—*

And as he observed the furious expression of the guy that just yelled at him, he suddenly felt a sting of shame in his chest.

*Midoriya doesn’t need me holding his hand.* He thinks, irritated by his own train of thought. *He’s plenty strong and smart to pass the exam on his own. If he’d knew I hesitated just because I was worried for him, he’d be furious—*

He silently closes the distance between himself and the group of frozen students, claiming his targets. The sensor on his chest beeps, a voice declaring, “You’ve passed, please head to the anteroom!” and he obeys, silently, annoyed with himself.

His thoughts are steered away when he enters the anteroom, noticing how many students have passed already. He seems to be the first of his class to do so, and he distractedly goes for a chair, noticing that the loud guy from Shiketsu is already there, too.

*If he was a recommended student I should’ve met him at the exam—So why don’t I remember him at all? He’s not the kind of guy that goes unnoticed—* He thinks to himself, perplexed. And in that exact moment Inasa turns around, meeting his eyes.

The smile that seemed to be permanently plastered on his face slides away, a deep frown rising, staring at Shouto for a few seconds with a cold look, before he deliberately turned away.

Shouto blinks, confused.
They meet Kacchan, Kaminari and Kirishima on their way to the anteroom after their plan worked, and they’ve effectively immobilized a big group of other students, claiming their targets and leaving them there so they won’t be an obstacle to their other classmates. Izuku chuckles as Uraraka and Sero start to dance with Kaminari and Kirishima, singing “Yatta!” over and over. Kacchan silently walks by, as unreadable as usual.

“You made it, huh.” He says, flat.

Izuku blinks.

“I guess it’s not surprising, with a strength like that.” He adds, not stopping. “Isn’t it, Deku?”

There’s something in his tone of voice Izuku can’t quite pinpoint. He stays silent and still, as Kacchan’s light lingers in front of him, before he lets out a little ‘tsk’, starting to walk away once more. Izuku stood there, only moving once the little dancer-group came closer, Kirishima patting his shoulder with a cheerful “Hey, man, congrats!”

He follows in the anteroom with them. When they enter, a good chunk of their classmates are already there, but not all of them. Yaoyorozu welcomes them warmly and relieved, as Tsuyu helps them take the targets off their bodies.

“Iida is not here, huh—” Uraraka notices, sounding a bit worried. Todoroki came closer in the meantime, his light giving out a feeling of relief.

“Eleven of us have passed.” He says, stopping near Izuku. “There are still eighteen spots, so the other nine don’t have much room anymore—“

Izuku hums, his right hand rising to his lips.

“Everything ok?” Todoroki asks in a lower voice, and Izuku frowns, wary about the light of the weird girl from Shiketsu, standing a bit further.

“…She came for me.” He whispers, feeling the surprise in Todoroki’s light. “The girl from Shiketsu.”
There’s a moment of silence, and then Todoroki asks, also whispering. “Do you remember when you met her, now?”

“No.” Izuku sighs, frustrated. “She’s… Kind of odd. Just… Keep an eye out for her, please?”

“…Ok.” Todoroki says, gentle, taking his hand. “I will.”

It was a definite relief, to see the entire class reunited in the room.

Iida and the others managed to pass just barely, but they were there. Their entire class passed the first phase, and Shouto can’t deny the bit of proudness he felt in his chest. They all worked to the best of their abilities, and supported each other, claiming their victory. It was a good feeling, even if Shouto ended up making it out by his lonesome self.

They attentively listens as the voice from the speakers explain to them what the second phase will consist into, with the focus on search and rescue, and there’s a definite look of relief on everyone’s faces, as they turn to Midoriya.

“You know, I’m suddenly very, very relieved for all those evenings we spent helping you training —“ Kaminari says, grinning.

“I’m definitely not grateful for your horrible jokes, Kaminari—“ Ashido grumbles, before smiling. “But yeah, I’m so glad! We are in your hands, Midoriya!”

Midoriya blushes a little, embarrassed. “I—I’ll try my best!” He says, stammering a bit, but smiling as he pumps his fist in front of him. “Let’s work together, everyone!”

Shouto smiles at him, before noticing out the corner of his eye the little group of students from Shiketsu approaching. He focuses on them, observing the silent girl. She doesn’t look particularly weird, especially compared to the guy completely covered in hair near her, but her eyes shifts subtly, pointing at Midoriya.
Shouto shuffles a bit closer to him, without even realizing.

“Bakugou, one of our companions confronted you, didn’t he?” The haired one says, and Bakugou grunts. “I knew it— I’m sure he must’ve been very rude to you, he has the tendency on pushing his own value on other people. I would like to build a good relationship with UA’s students— So, we apologize.”

Bakugou mutters “Whatever—“ as Midoriya, near Shouto, frowns a little at the sentence. Since he said that girl targeted him, it’s not surprising he’s not very receptive to the idea. Shouto himself feels a bit unsure, especially considering the ice-cold look Inasa launched at him, earlier.

In a spur-of-the-moment idea, unable to hold his curiosity, Shouto steps forward, as the Shiketsu students turn away.

“Wait, you, the tall one—“ He says. “Did I do something to you?”

Inasa stops for a second, his broad shoulders tensing. When he turns around, the cold look is back on his face.

“I’m sorry, Endeavor’s son—“ He says, flat, looking down at Shouto. “But I don’t like either of you. Even if you might’ve changed, since then, those cold eyes of yours— Are just like his.”

Shouto freezes on the spot, heart painfully beating in his throat. He watches Inasa turn away once more, catching up to his classmates, loud and excessively cheerful once more.

Shouto did not realize his hands were trembling until Midoriya’s glowed one gently closed around his.

“Todoroki?” He says, low and worried. “Are you ok?”

Izuku waits, concerned, as Todoroki fails to answer. He hadn’t missed what Inasa said, close enough to hear the exchange even over the noise of the other students chatting. He felt the sudden mix of
panic, anger and disgust clutching at Todoroki’s light the instant Inasa answered, letting out those hurtful words. Izuku’s first instinct had been to react with anger himself, but Inasa stepped away right after, and it’s not like he had any idea what saying something like that would mean for Todoroki—

“Hey.” Izuku insists, worry clawing at his heart at the lack of response from Todoroki, voice lowering. He let Todoroki’s hand go, putting his palm on his shoulder, his other hand going to sit on Todoroki’s chest as he stepped closer. “Todoroki, don’t mind what he said, you’re not—“

He doesn’t have the time to finish his sentence, as a voice from the speakers loudly covered any other noise.

“A terrorist attack by villains has unfolded! The scope of the damage encompasses the entire city, and many have are injured under the collapsed buildings!”

“It’s starting.” Asui comments, impassive.

Oh, no— This is bad, this is really bad—

Todoroki steps away from him, silent, and Izuku clutches at the air for a second, a deep sting of pain in his chest.

Todoroki feels so closed off and far, like he suddenly rose a wall around his heart. But Izuku gets no time to try get through him and calm him down, the voice from the speakers calling the start of the second phase.

“Midoriya!” Iida calls after him when he hesitates, after Todoroki run into the field without him. Izuku forces himself to gulp down the sting he feels in his eyes, catching up with Iida as he turns on the amplifiers Mei made for him.

Almost the entire class groups up with them, and Izuku can only stifle the worry and anger he feels, pushing them to the back of his mind, as they all run into the disaster zone. He has to focus, this is too important to blow up—

He can only hope and pray that Todoroki’s mind won’t be clouded enough to make him lose sight on the objective.
Aizawa silently observes from his seat, Emi at his side just as focused as he is.

He’s not surprised to see Bakugou leave the group, go on his own once more, but still he feels a sigh coming up to him. Bakugou might’ve done just fine during the first phase, but now he will have a much bigger obstacle, considering his complete lack of bedside manners. Aizawa could only hope and pray for his hot-headed student, at this point.

But he is surprised to notice Todoroki going off alone, as well. Considering how he stuck with the group, during the first phase, despite the fact that it would inevitably stifle the range of his quirk, it seemed logical that he would do the same, now. Especially considering how handy Midoriya’s quirk was going to be for this phase, and especially now that he got at least partially over the obstacle that had been his inability to relay informations to his peers.

Speaking of which, Midoriya seemed already to be at work. They couldn’t hear a thing, from up there, but by the way he was animatedly speaking and gesticulating, his classmates shooting in different directions after nodding at him, it was clear that he was pretty much directing the operations. After everyone left he started to move again, disappearing from Aizawa’s sight for a bit under some rubble, and emerging once more with a kid in his arms, directed to the safe place.

They are kind of sloppy, compared to the other, more experienced students taking the exam, but they are working as tight knit unit and it’s proving effective, as they run back and forth from Midoriya to whatever place he would point to, emerging with more ‘injured’ to bring to the safe zone. They are doing fairly well, considering they hardly had the time to practice all the basics needed for rescue operations. Their chances of gaining their provisionals seems to be pretty high.

“Here comes the big guy.” Emi murmurs, shifting her weight a bit forward. “They sure went all out with this exam, huh—“

Right on cue, a wall explodes near the safe area, opening a big passage. Gang Orca steps into the fray, surrounded by the members of his team.

“This is a scenario that would be difficult even for pro heroes.” Aizawa replies. “They are not holding back at all. Not that I blame them, considering what happened recently—”
Emi sniffs, not finding anything that she could turn into a joke in his sentence. They both fall silent once more, observing.

—

This is a disaster—

Izuku hesitated near the safe area, after bringing another injured man to it. He trusted in Shindou’s incredibly strong quirk, first, but Gang Orca took his attack like he barely flickered at him, immobilizing Shindou with one of his sonic waves. And then he felt Todoroki and Inasa approach the villains, and for a moment he hoped that they’d be able to work together— But the animosity between them was coming out in waves, clutching at Izuku’s stomach.

“Midoriya! Is there someone nearby that needs to be rescued?” Shoji called from behind him. Izuku shook himself out of his stupor, turning back to the safe zone.

“Not here— but we need to evacuate—“ He forced himself to say, snapping back into focus as Ojiro, Ashido and Tokoyami also caught up to them. “The villains are too close, it’s too risky! Help get the victims out of here!”

His classmates immediately sprung into action, and Izuku couldn’t help but get distracted once more. Shindou is frozen on the ground, helpless, after taking that attack from Gang Orca, and Todoroki and Inasa are completely unfocused—

Izuku’s heart stops beating for a second when he feels Todoroki’s fire being swept away by Inasa’s wind, out of control, heading straight for Shindou—

He can only blindly, ungracefully grab Shindou’s costume, managing to get him out of the fire trajectory barely in time after he dashed with One For All. Anger is rising in his throat, making his heart beating loudly and painfully in his temples as he turns around, roaring a furious “WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?!”

He doesn’t have the time to stop and reflect upon the little shocked ripple that seems to go through Todoroki’s light. He adjusts his grip on Shindou, turning to run back toward the safe zone, taking him away from the villains since he’s still paralyzed.
But Gang Orca’s team is on their tail, Inasa and Todoroki unable to provide defense as they get hit by Gang Orca one right after the other.

“Wait, stop!” Shindou calls, jerkily getting out of Izuku’s grip to release a little earthquake that manages to stop the villains in their tracks. “I can still move a bit! I’ll help evacuate, you go stop ‘em!” He yells over the chaos, and Izuku nods, letting him go as he turns with One For All activated, jumping into the group of villains with a single minded focus. He manages to kick down some of them, dodging their attacks, as he notices the lights of his classmates and other students approaching once more, to help out with the crowd control.

“Ojiro!” Izuku calls out. “Are the victims evacuated?”

“‘S what I heard!” Ojiro yells back. “Reinforcements are coming in!"

They take a moment to dodge an attack, and Izuku kicks one of the minion toward Ojiro, that grounds him with a tail-whip with no hesitation in a smooth little combo.

Something is definitely going on with Gang Orca, not far from them. In a second, a column of fire suddenly rose high to the sky, trapping him, and Izuku feels a mix of worry and anger claw at his throat.

“Go!” Ojiro yells at him, as if he knew what he was thinking. “We can take care of this!”

Izuku nods, grateful, before leaping and soaring over the heads of the minions. Gang Orca seems to be paralyzed, but only briefly, managing to disperse the fire with one of his sonic waves. He steps forward, toward both Todoroki and Inasa that seems to be still frozen on the ground.

“So.” Izuku can hear Gang Orca taunt, voice deep. “What now?”

That’s the moment anger overcomes Izuku. Anger for his failure and inability of realizing that Todoroki still had to carry such a heavy weight on his shoulders, for having failed him— Angry at how unfair everything was, at how Todoroki couldn’t help but fall victim once more of his terrible past— Anger at Gang Orca that for an instant stopped being a beloved hero in Izuku’s mind, and became an actual enemy that was threatening to hurt the person Izuku cared for—

The kick connects with Gang Orca’s forearm with enough strength to break his guard and make him
take a step back, as Izuku hissed “Don’t touch him—“

—

Shouto was an absolute idiot, and the failure burned in his chest more than his own fire ever could. He completely lost sight of what was important, falling back into old mental landmines, closing himself once more into his shell of rage. Blinded enough to ignore Midoriya’s attempt to placate his tumultuous feelings, to openly antagonize Inasa right in the middle of a supposed rescue mission, in the middle of an important exam.

Midoriya’s furious yell as he saved Shindou from the out of control fire managed to snap him out of his enraged daze, but it had been too late. Even when he and Inasa silently found a way to momentarily forget their rancor and work together, it still hadn’t been enough to stop Gang Orca, that easily got out their trap of fire, dousing himself with a bottle of water.

They simply were done for, Gang Orca taking a step forward, and then Midoriya appeared once more. A green lighting bolt from the sky, hitting Gang Orca with a loud clang of metal on metal as his iron soles clashed against the metallic arm guards Gang Orca was wearing. Shouto’s breath hitched in his throat, when he heard Midoriya hiss. “Don’t touch him—“

I’m sorry— So sorry I let you down— But you— You will always be here when I need you—

The kick was strong enough to send Gang Orca stumbling back, and Midoriya did not wast time after he landed. He was so tiny compared to the towering man in front of him, and yet Midoriya didn’t hesitate even for an instant as he dashed, frightfully fast, hitting Gang Orca’s knee with a rolling kick and making him stumble once more, dodging his big hand by rolling between his legs and jumping from behind, kicking Gang Orca to the side of his head, relentless—

A siren blared above their heads, surprising Midoriya mid-air and clearly breaking his focus.

“The exam is over!” The voice announced, loud, as Gang Orca gently caught Midoriya by the scruff of his costume, like a cat transporting their kitten, before he could fall on the ground. He put him down, chuckling, as Midoriya blinks.

“That’s it?” He says, surprised, his eyes clearing like there was a fog in them. “It’s over?”
Gang Orca chuckles again, gently patting one of his shoulders. “You can relax, young one.”

Midoriya releases a deep sigh, his shoulders slumping forward. The expression on his face smoothes over in a quiet, contemplative calm, as he turns and slowly makes his way toward Shouto.

Shouto find himself looking away, ashamed. And the depth of his shame goes even further, once his traitorous minds whispers to him that Midoriya must be feeling all of it—

Despite that, Midoriya kneels near him, silent, and gently helps him kneel. The attack Shouto took directly from Gang Orca was strong enough that he still can’t move properly, but he’s starting to feel his limbs a bit more. Midoriya’s arms circles his torso, and he seems to give a fast, gentle hug for a couple of seconds, before he hauls Shouto on his feet, putting one of Shouto’s arms around his own shoulders.

Shouto is not surprised when Midoriya turns and cover the distance between them and Inasa. He seems to take an instant to make sure Shouto won’t fall back down, before gently leaving him standing there for a second to kneel near the bigger student.

“Are you ok?” He asks, softly, and Inasa blinks at him, surprised. Midoriya doesn’t really need a response, and immediately proceeds in also helping Inasa stand back on his feet with a little difficulty, considering the size difference between them. Then he takes Shouto’s arm back, and guides the both of them toward the exit, easily supporting their weights. Neither Shouto nor Inasa say anything, their arms brushing over Midoriya’s shoulders, silently following his lead.
Izuku still hasn’t said a word to Todoroki even after they’ve changed back in their school uniforms and stepped once more into the stadium, to go look at the exam results. Not for lack of wanting to, but because he could feel that Todoroki needed some time. He feels contemplative at his side, as they step in front of the little stage that has appeared while they changed. The storm of shame and rage in his light has quieted down to a small puddle. He must be reflecting upon his own actions, and Izuku
felt that just throwing words at him, now, won’t do any good, so he stays silent.

The tired man from the safety committee explains to them how they were graded, and then invites them to look at the list on screen, to see if their names were up there. Izuku quickly starts to feel and hear the happiness in his classmates’ lights and voices as they find their names on the list, and silently waits. He would normally ask Todoroki to read for him, but now—

“Your name is listed.” Todoroki says, quietly, as if he just read Izuku’s mind. Izuku can’t help the little relieved sigh that escapes his lips, but he’s unable to feel the pure joy so many around them were feeling right now.

When Todoroki doesn’t add anything for a while, a quiet sense of disappointment seeping in him, Izuku’s heart falls down to his feet. He takes a steps closer, finding Todoroki’s shoulder with his hand, indecisive on whenever he should say something or not, when Inasa suddenly approaches.

“Todoroki!” There’s a moment of tense silence, Izuku’s other hand also rising to grab at Todoroki’s arm as they both look up toward Inasa, that feels pensive, before he speaks again, loudly. “I apologize! My petty action have led you to failing, please forgive me!”

Izuku blinks, relieved. He was sure Inasa wasn’t a bad person, his enthusiasm when they met before the exam felt completely genuine— and it’s nice for him to recognize his mistakes and apologize so clearly. Todoroki at his side seems to be a bit rattled, before he takes a deep breath.

“...I should apologize, too.” He says, quietly. “Your actions were the results of my past mistakes. And what happened today has led me to realize some things, so please, stand up.”

Inasa’s light definitely feels a bit relieved, if also rattled. A little silence falls on them, as Izuku gently squeezes Todoroki’s arm and slides his right hand down, to tentatively take Todoroki’s. Silent, Todoroki entwines their fingers in the usual, familiar way, relaxing just a tiny bit.

They stay like this as the men from the committee distributed the paper with their grades. Izuku grudgingly has to let Todoroki’s hand go to accept his when they approach them, and then stands there with an exasperated, tired sigh.

“Give it to me.” Todoroki says, gentle, in a low voice, taking the paper away from Izuku’s hand. “...You got eighty-two. It says that you got some points docked for your lack of tact in some situations and the fact that you seemed distracted at times.”
Izuku hums in understanding, accepting his paper back, and falls silent as he gives Todoroki time to read his own, even if he’s pretty sure he doesn’t really need it. He already knows what went wrong, after all.

“This man of the safety committee is now saying over the speakers, definitely catching everyone’s attention. “You don’t have time to pity yourself over your grades, as you will be given another chance. After attending an extra course will be able to re-take the exam in three months. We fully plan on making sure you will be ready, and to issue to you your provisional licenses if you will prove yourself worthy.”

The sudden surge of hope he can feel from both Todoroki and Inasa makes Izuku’s head spin of a second, overcoming his own sense of relief. He feels a smile pull at his lips, as he grabs Todoroki’s arm once more, bouncing a bit on his feet in a mixture of nervousness and excitement.

“I… I’ll catch up to you.” Todoroki says, softly, as he turns to Izuku, putting a hand on his cheek.

“I know you will.” Izuku smiles, leaning into the touch, basking into the relief and determination he can feel in Todoroki’s light.

Everyone is surrounding them, just as relieved, Iida patting Todoroki’s shoulder enthusiastically. Izuku takes a deep breath, noticing how hyper-focused on Todoroki he had been in his worry and relaxing his radar a bit, suddenly feeling a certain light shivering with rage.

“…Did Kacchan fail?” He asks, surprised. Near him, Uraraka hisses.

“So it seems.” She says in a low voice. “Looks pretty pissed.”

“Ouch.”

“Yeah.” She sighs. “Congrats, Midoriya, you did great back there!” She adds, cheerful, gently patting his shoulder, but then she falls silent. “Todoroki, you better blow it out the park with the reparative lessons, ok?” She says, apparently severe, although they all can hear the little note of worry in her sentence.
“I will.” There’s a small smile in Todoroki’s voice when he answers. “I will catch up with you all, don’t worry.”

“Oh, I’m not worrying.” She says, her voice much steadier, now. “I know you can do it.”

—

Shouto relaxes on the seat of the bus as they traveled back to the UA dormitories, Midoriya, leaning against his shoulder, a firm, warm presence.

This day has certainly be… something.

He was so sure he finally got out of the deep end, that the negative influence his father had on him was no more— So sure he was finally free. How naive.

All that was needed to send him down and break him into one thousand tiny, angry pieces had been a cold look and a sentence. To be compared to his father. Only that.

How stupid had he been, to believe he could be freed of all the resentment and anger, just like that? He let his guard down, and Inasa’s words hit right where they hurt the most.

And his failure hurts, too. This feeling of having fallen, of being forced to look at his friends’ backs as they run forward, without him.

He had to catch up. He couldn’t let himself wallow in self pity, especially after he promised Midoriya that he will catch up to him, walk side by side with him once more. And— He will never let himself fall trap of the old, familiar rage anymore. He won’t let the old man ruin his life some more, not anymore.

Midoriya hums, rubbing his cheek against Shouto’s shoulder, and Shouto looks down at him, meeting his pale eyes. He has his quirk turned off, going by the aquamarine shade of his irises, and he looks tired.

“Have you told your mom and All Might that you passed the exam?” Shouto asks softly, sure he hadn’t seen Midoriya dictating any text as they made their way out the bus.
“Oh, right—“ Midoriya replies, blinking, looking a bit more awake. “I was so distracted—“ He r ummages in his pocket, fishing his phone out. Shouto takes it from his hand, a little perplexed expression emerging on Midoriya’s face.

“Take out your license, I’ll snap a picture—“ Shouto says, swiping the phone open to go to the camera app. Midoriya seems embarrassed at that, a little blush rising to his cheeks.

“There’s no need—“

“Don’t be silly, I’m sure they’ll be happy to see with their own eyes.” Shouto interrupts him. Midoriya hums, before rummaging in his other pocket to take his wallet out and carefully searching inside with his fingertips, sliding the hard plastic card out of a sleeve.

“Keep it up, like this—“

“Wait, are you taking a picture of me or my license?” Midoriya asks, puzzled, making Shouto smile a bit.

“Both. Now smile.” He scoffs when Midoriya’s mouth does a pale imitation of a smile. “C’mon, what is that, do you want to make your mother worry? I’d fully expect to find her waiting for us at UA’s gates, if I send her a picture with a face like that—“

That finally drags a genuine little laugh out of Midoriya, and Shouto snaps a candid with perfect timing. He hums, satisfied, and he rapidly sends the picture both to Midoriya’s mother an All Might, writing ‘I did it!’ on his behalf. He blinks and also sends it to Midoriya’s friend, Miki, for good measure.

After a second of hesitation he silently sends it to himself, as well. Just because. It’s a cute picture.

“All done?” Midoriya asks with a lopsided smile, keeping his hand palm up. Shouto gives the phone back, and Midoriya pockets it once more, before relaxing again against Shouto’s shoulder. There’s a long moment of silence only filled by the soft rumble of the bus engine and the quiet, tired voices of their classmates in the background.
“…Later, after dinner, can you come to my room for a bit?” Midoriya suddenly asks, subdued. “There’s something I’d like to talk with you about.”

Shouto blinks, taking a second. That sounds vaguely ominous, but then again considering what happened today it’s not hard to imagine what does Midoriya wants to talk about.

Part of him kind of want to say no, to push those broken pieces inside him back in the darkest corner of his heart— But that clearly wasn’t doing him any service, and Midoriya— Well. Was Midoriya.

Shouto knew he could be honest with him.

“Ok.” He replies, quietly, and Midoriya sighs, before taking his hand in a gentle hold.
It’s Izuku’s turn to wash the dishes, that night, and he does so immersed in a pensive silence.
Todoroki would usually help him even if it wasn’t his chore to take care of — ignoring Izuku’s protests every time — but tonight he went upstairs, telling him he was going to take a shower and wait for him in Izuku’s room.

Mom, Miki and All Might sent congratulatory messages to him, earlier, which picked his mood up a bit. But it still hurts, what happened today, having to feel how easily Todoroki went down in pieces, and the pain that exploded inside him. It hurts and it sucks, and it made Izuku angry and resentful toward the man that was now occupying the number one hero spot. If Endeavor stepped through the door right in that moment, Izuku would probably have no qualms punching his family jewels. Hard. With One For All.

He’s finishing drying up the last plate before putting it up in the cupboards, when he hears someone step into the kitchen.

“Deku.”

Izuku blinks, surprised. Kacchan’s voice has a weird, quiet note to it, almost distraught, and Izuku turns a bit toward him, tilting his head on a side.

“Come outside with me.” Kacchan says, not quite a question, but at the same time not a order barked out with promises of violence if not followed.

Izuku blinks again. He can hear laughters in the distance, as some of their classmates are watching something on the tv. “Uhh— I can’t.”

Kacchan sighs, long-suffering. “You’re done washing the dishes—“

“It’s not that. Todoroki is waiting for me, I have something to discuss with him.”

Kacchan groans, annoyed. “Alright, fucking fine. Then come out later, at eleven.”

“Kacchan, wait—“ Izuku tries to protest, and doesn’t even have the time to remind him that their curfew starts at ten. Kacchan’s steps move away, and Izuku is left there, holding onto a humid dish rag and gaping.
Shouto is sitting on Midoriya’s bed, a bit nervous, his hair still slightly wet, when the door opens. Midoriya enters with a little frown, silently propping his cane by the side of the door, as he closes it behind himself.

“...Everything ok?” Shouto asks, confused by his expression. Midoriya sighs.

“Yeah, it’s just— Kacchan was being weird.” He mutters. “It doesn’t matter—“ When he steps near the bed he gently bumps into Shouto’s legs, and Shouto takes his arm as he shuffles over a bit to give Midoriya space, guiding him to sit down.

“...What is it between you and Bakugou, anyway?” Shouto can’t help but ask, as Midoriya turns toward him and crosses his legs on the covers, pale eyes not quite pointed at Shouto. It’s a question that’s been quietly nagging at him for a while, now, the clearly troubled relationship between the two of them.

“It’s— complicated.” Midoriya says, pensive. “We were friends as kids but then— Well, then we weren’t friends anymore.”

Shouto frowns, waiting for more, but Midoriya shakes his head as if snapping himself out of some thoughts.

“It’s not important, now!” He exclaims, patting Shouto’s calf. “Don’t worry about it! We have other things to talk about.“

Shouto doesn’t answer, waiting as Midoriya frowns in silence. He releases a deep sigh all of a sudden.

“I think I owe you an apology.” Midoriya finally says, quietly.
Shouto’s frown deepens, as he confusedly blinks at Midoriya. “…What? Why?”

“I—“ A moment of hesitation. “Ever since we became friends, you’ve been supporting me in all possible ways, and I’m sure I must’ve worried you sick many times, by now— You’ve endured pretty much my absolute worst without a single complaint, and I’m definitely grateful for that— But I also feel like I’ve not been able to do the same for you.”

“Midoriya—“ Shouto starts, exasperated, but Midoriya holds his hand up.

“Let me finish— You’ve been there for me when I needed it and helped me pick myself up many times already and I— I forgot.” A pause. “I forgot just which kind of heavy burden you have to carry on your shoulders, I simply let myself enjoy your kindness and affection, and I forgot— I forgot that, for how much you’ve changed since the festival, there’s still so much you have to deal with. And I failed you when you needed me.”

Silence falls on them. Shouto finds himself having to gulp around a knot in his throat.

“Midoriya—“ He starts, tentatively. “You can’t hold yourself responsible for what happened today. I got blindsided by it myself. I thought— I really thought I was over it, that I stepped over that part of my life, now, but—“

When he hesitates, Midoriya softly intervenes in a low voice. “But the wounds inside you are still open. They’ve only recently started to heal, and even a simple touch is enough to make them bleed, isn’t it?”

Shouto let out a trembly sigh, dragging a hand on his face. “I don’t want to worry you—“

“I will worry regardless.” Midoriya replies, shaking his head. “So, I wanted to apologize for forgetting your pain, and for failing to be a proper support to you. I promise it will not happen again, and I promise that I will always be here for you.”

His voice is kind, and steadfast, pale eyes pointed right at him.

Shouto let out a little broken laugh. “Midoriya, you’ve already done more than enough for me. Hell,
you’ve done more than anyone else has ever done for me in my entire life— You don’t have to take this burden on your shoulders, too— I can deal with it.”

Midoriya scoffs. “You know, you remind me of someone—“ he says, sarcastic. In front of Shouto’s confused hum, he continues, pointing at himself with both hands. “Me? The guy that almost killed himself, because he was too stubborn to ask for help?”

In the silence that follows he mutters. “Maybe, actually, almost died two times because of that? I don’t even know what should count in that list anymore—“

Shouto let out another little, almost hysterical laugh. His heart was doing a weird thing in his chest, and this whole situation was utterly ridiculous—

“They are really not comparable situations—“ He protests, affectionately exasperated. “You don’t have to apologize, I will be fine, given time.“

Suddenly Midoriya shifts forward, pressing a kiss right under Shouto’s left eye. When he moves back, his cheeks are red and there’s a little pout on his face.

“Missed the mark by a landslide, go figure—“ He mutters, before adding in a louder voice. “My point is: stop trying to get over this all by yourself. I understand if you’d rather not let others know, but I know, and I’m here for you. So, please, from now on, remember that you can lean on me, that I’ll help carrying that weight, ok?”

In front of Shouto’s silence, he palms forward, finding his hands, before dealing the final blow. “What would be the point of us being together, if you don’t feel like you can share your troubles with me?“ He murmurs, a little sad. “I want to make you happy as much as you want to make me, Shouto.”

That almost stops Shouto’s heart in his chest, as he gapes. Midoriya’s hands are warm around his, and his cheeks are slightly pink, but there’s a determined look on his face.

“…That too much?” He then asks, his determination faltering a bit in front of Shouto’s silence. Shouto’s shakes his head, and then groans when his brain helpfully reminds him that Midoriya is blind.
“No, it’s fine—“ He forces himself to say, voice coming out a little rough. “I… I liked that. Um—“

Midoriya smiles, softly, as Shouto adds. “I— I would like it. If you kept calling me by name.”

“Good. I would like you doing the same with me, as well.” Midoriya replies, voice low. Shouto’s feels a little shiver run down his spine, heart beating in his throat at the mere thought.

“…Izuku.” He finally manages to let out, voice trembling, and the smile on Midoriya— No, on Izuku’s face gets bigger as he shuffles forward, not letting his hands go. Shouto sighs, trembly, leaning in a bit, but before he can brush his lips against Izuku’s, he finds himself stopped by his fingertips.

“Just a second.” Izuku says, serious. “Promise me you will come to me whenever you’ll need it.” The silence stretches a bit, and a little scowl appears on Izuku’s face. “Promise me.”

“Ok, ok—“ Shouto finally gives in, exasperated. “I promise.”

Izuku purses his lips, squinting, but then takes his hand away from Shouto’s mouth. “We are in this together.” He murmurs, his expression softening. “And from now on we will walk side by side, through happy times and hardships in equal measure, ok?”

Shouto snorts, hiding how touched he really feels. “Sounds like we are about to get married, Izuku—“

Izuku snickers, amused, his cheeks dusting with red once more. Then he licks his lips, and Shouto can’t help but following the little movement, gently pressing his forehead against Izuku’s, feeling his breath tickle against his own lips.

“This ok?” He murmurs, seeing himself reflected into the pale aquamarine. Izuku hums, affirmative, and Shouto closes his eyes as he tilts his head on a side and presses a gentle kiss on Izuku’s mouth. Their hands shifts, palm against palm, fingers interlacing, as they kiss softly for a long minute. When they separate, just barely, Izuku let out a little happy sigh.

“Would like to sleep with me, tonight?” He asks in a relaxed murmur, and Shouto’s brain kind of crashes for a second, before Izuku continues. “I can lend you a pajama, if you need it.”
Right— Just sleeping, not that kind of sleeping— Oh, thank god, I’m definitely not quite ready for that—

“Yes, it’s fine— If— It’s ok with you— I can go grab my own pajama in my room and be right back, so don’t worry about it.” Shouto replies, mentally thanking all the deities above for the fact that Izuku was keeping his quirk turned off for the moment. Izuku grins and nods, the image of pure, innocent happiness.
Oh, this is irritating.

Izuku grunts softly into the night as he squirms faintly in search of a comfortable position once more. Shouto’s breath is steady near him, their legs entwined under the covers. The bed is big enough for the two of them, but still small enough to force them close. Not that Izuku minded, of course.

He’s tired, and he wishes nothing more than going to sleep into Shouto’s pleasing embrace, especially considering the new trimester will start tomorrow, and he’s absolutely exhausted after the exam.

But he can’t sleep. And he knows exactly the reason why.

His mind kept going back to Kacchan’s request. The way he presented it. What he said to him earlier that day, after the first phase of the exam.

Why should I listen to him, anyway? Going out after curfew and risking getting in trouble—

But… He did ask, in a way, didn’t he? The Kacchan of only a couple of months prior wouldn’t have asked, he would’ve pretended. Hell, he would’ve probably just grabbed Izuku by his shirt and dragged him outside, regardless of Izuku’s wishes.

“Goddamnit”—Izuku hisses, low and frustrated. He knows he’s not going to be able to sleep, unless he hears whatever Kacchan had to say to him. He carefully turns belly up and palms at his nightstand, finding his clock. He lowers the volume as much as he can, to avoid waking Shouto up, before pressing the button.

“It’s 10:56!” The automated voice informs him in a whisper.

Izuku takes a deep breath, cursing internally, before carefully sliding out of bed. He traces familiar steps toward the door and grabs his cane, stepping outside.
As usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
Katsuki is half-sure Deku will not show up, as he nervously bobs his leg in front of him, sitting on the stairs outside the dorms. He’s probably cuddling with his boyfriend, or some other mushy bullshit. Considering half-face failed the exam as well—and didn’t that came as a surprise. Katsuki distantly wondered what has gotten into him, but just barely. - he must be feeling pretty shitty about himself, and since Deku is Deku, he will probably staple himself to Todoroki’s side a bit more, after this. As if that was even possible. Those two have pretty much been glued to one another ever since the sport festival—

He huffs, fishing his phone out of his pocket. He looks down at it, noticing it’s just one minute before the clock strikes eleven, when the door opens behind him.

Deku comes out, expression blank, cane tight in hand as he closes the door behind him softly. He’s wearing a washed out All Might shirt and soft pajama pants. He’s wearing flip-flops, too, clearly having slipped in bed before rethinking his choice and coming out as Katsuki asked him to do.

“…Kacchan?” He asks, softly, for confirmation.

“I’m here.” Katsuki replies flatly, standing. Deku doesn’t move, both hands curling around the handle of his cane. “Follow me.”

“Kacchan, wait—“ But Katsuki is already walking away, the sounds of his steps echoing in the silence of the night. Deku follows after some seconds, carefully prodding in front of him with his cane. “Where are we going? Can’t you just—“

“Shut up.” Katsuki hisses, and Deku falls silent. He keeps walking forward, hearing the sound of the cane tip-tapping behind him. But then it stops, just as they are leaving the stone-paved path that leads to the dormitories. Katsuki turns around, looking at Deku’s frown as he stands still, clutching his cane with both hands.

“What are you waiting for?” He prods, irritated.

“You can’t— I’m not getting further than this, it’s bad enough that we are out after curfew.” Deku answers, flat. Katsuki scoffs. “Kacchan, can’t you just tell me what the problem is?
Something snaps in Katsuki’s chest, as he takes a little trembly breath in. “For starters, why are you keeping your quirk off?” He snarled. “Or should I say, both of your quirks off.”

He doesn’t miss it, the way Deku tenses a bit. But his expression is blank, impenetrable, fingers tight around his cane.

“…What are you talking about?”

“You think I’m stupid?” Katsuki replies, covering back the distance between them. “You think I would fall for that little shitty line you feed to whoever asks how come you can punch holes into concrete?”

Deku doesn’t answer, his mouth a thin line, eyebrows scrunched.

“I couldn’t really believe it myself, this idea— Seemed insane. But I saw what that guy could do, the one All Might fought— He could take quirks away from people. Give them to others. And suddenly the idea didn’t seem insane anymore.” Katsuki continues, voice shivering with rage. “So, how did you get that? Who gave it to you?”

There’s a long moment of silence, and when Deku speaks his voice is low, controlled. “Even supposing what you are saying it’s true— How would knowing that help you, anyway? What would change, for you?”

“A lot would change, for me.” Katsuki hisses, closing the distance between them. “A lot.”

“How?”

Katsuki let out a little mirthless laugh. “You are the one that can feel what other people feel, yeah? Turn on your quirk and you’ll know.”

“…That won’t help.” Deku replies, voice lowering even further.
“Why not?”

“It just won’t.”

They are at a stalemate, standing in front of one another. Both refusing to answer, both refusing to move away. Katsuki can feel the rage inside him boil some more, as he stares into the pale eyes and sees the refusal, the color of Deku’s irises not changing in that way they do when he turns his radar on—

It only takes a second. Katsuki grabs the cane and rips it away from Deku’s hands, launching it in the grass at his right. Deku stumbles and clutches at the air with a little surprised gasp, the cane hitting the ground with a soft rustle of grass.

“Did you just— What the fuck is wrong with you?!” He exclaims, sounding hurt. “I’m fucking blind, you jerk!”

“Oh, please, spare me the little helpless act.” Katsuki replies, sarcastic. “As if you need that shit to move. Now turn on your quirk, and stop fooling around.”

Deku’s fists are tight at his side, knuckles white, a furious expressions on his face. He stays like this, silent, for a few seconds before turning away from Katsuki and stepping in the grass, kneeling down and patting in front of him, searching for his cane.

Katsuki gapes at him. “You— You’d go to this length, just to be a contrary asshole?!” He snaps.

“Oh, yeah, look who’s talking about being a contrary asshole—“ Deku replies, sarcasm dripping from his voice as he keeps searching.

“You fucking, little— Just turn it on, damnit!” Katsuki exclaims, exasperated. “Just turn it on, and it’ll be all clear—“

“No, it won’t.“

“You are the one that can dissect people with his goddamn brain, c’mon, you are being ridiculous—“
“I can’t!” Deku snaps, turning back to him with wet eyes. “It won’t help! I can’t feel you!”

That stops Katsuki cold in his track. “…What?”

“I can’t— I can feel what other people feel. But I can’t feel you, the only thing I can feel from you is the rage—” Deku says, voice trembling. “You are the only person I can’t ever connect with, it’s like there’s a wall between us and I— I don’t know if it’s you, or me, or the both of us— and I just have no idea what I’m supposed to do around you— I just can’t feel you the way I do pretty much the rest of the entire goddamn planet!”

It’s like all the nervous energy he felt boiling in him suddenly seeps out of Katsuki. “You can’t—“

“I can’t.” Deku repeats, frowning up to him. His voice breaks a bit, when he adds. “So, if there’s something you need to say to me, just fucking use your voice like a normal person!”

A long silence stretches, as the information fully sinks into Katsuki.

Just how bad things between them truly are, if Deku could even connect with people like Shigaraki, but not him?

Deku sniffs, turning his back to Katsuki once more as he keeps moving on all fours in the grass, searching.

“…If it’s true that you have two quirks—“ Katsuki finally starts in a low voice, fists tight at his sides. “If what I suspect it’s true… And the person I suspect could’ve given you a power like that— If it’s really him, I— I just want to understand.”

Deku stops, but still doesn’t turn.

“I want to understand what’s so special about you, that he’d choose you over anyone else.” Katsuki continues, looking at the back of Deku’s head. “I want to understand why you got that— And what I got, instead, was to be the weak idiot that managed to get himself kidnapped, managed to be the reason for him losing his powers—“
Deku flinches violently, turning to him with wide eyes and an anguished expression on his face. The silence stretches once more, Deku shifting on a kneeling position and then standing, fully turning toward Katsuki as his heart beat painfully in his throat.

“…It wasn’t your fault.” Deku finally says, measured. “Kacchan, it— It wasn’t your fault.”

“Wasn’t it?!” Katsuki yells back, furious. “I was the one that got his ass taken away by that league of idiots, that stood in front of that man and watched All Might hold back because he didn’t want me to get caught in the battle— It was me that put that entire train wreck in motion, and All Might lost his powers because of that!”

Deku doesn’t move, a serious frown on his face.

“It was happening anyway.” He says, adamant, effectively shutting Katsuki up. “Look, Kacchan— I cannot confirm any of your theories. But I can tell you for sure that it All Might had been losing his powers for a while. It would’ve happened sooner or later, regardless of the battle that happened at Kamino Ward.”

“How can you be so sure—“

“I’m the one that can dissect people with his brain, aren’t I?” He replies with a mirthless smile, throwing Katsuki’s own words back at him. “I saw it happen. All Might had been steadily losing his strength for a while, now— I— I saw a piece of his powers disappear, back at the U.S.J.”

Katsuki searches his pale eyes, and finds no lie in it. His heart it’s still going madly in his throat, the rage always threatening to rise and overcome him.

“Kacchan, I’m sorry I couldn’t feel your distress, and help you earlier—“ Deku says, softly, a little worried frown appearing on his face.

“Save me your pity.” Katsuki snaps, angered. “Goddamnit, haven’t you learned yet?! I don’t want your pity, I don’t need your help! You’re always standing there, looking down at me with those eyes of yours, as if I’m beneath you, and that I can’t fucking stand!”
Deku recoils, his eyes widening a bit. “I’m not… I’ve never done that—“ He stammers, before closing his eyes with a deep sigh. “I— I’ve always admired you.” He adds in a whisper.

Katsuki flinches a bit, surprised.

“I’ve always admired you.” Deku continues in a low voice, eyes cracking open. “You’ve always been smart, and strong, and got such an amazing quirk— I’ve always thought of you with admiration, even when you hurt me. I’ve never, not even once, thought of you as someone that’s beneath me. I’ve always wanted to chase your back so desperately—” He takes a pause, eyes filling with tears, but they don’t spill. “And even at our worst, even when I wanted to hate you from the depths of my soul— Even then, part of me kept admiring you. Part of me still hoped that we could be friends once more.”

“…We’ve never been friends.” Katsuki replies, at a loss. “We were fucking four. You can’t possibly be stupid enough to still hold to that—“

Deku chuckles, humorless, drying his eyes on his wrist. “I guess I’m stupid enough, then.” He says, voice trembling. He sighs, carding his hand through his messy hair. “Was there something else you wanted to ask?” He adds, sounding tired and wary.

“…No. But you haven’t answered my questions.”

“I can’t answer them.” Deku replies, shaking his head. “I can’t. I’m sorry.”

“So, what, you just gonna stand there, dangling the truth in front of me, and have a good laugh?”

“Goddamnit, Kacchan— Are you deaf? I just told you that I don’t want to taunt you, or laugh at you, or whatever the fuck else you think I do in my spare time—“ Deku snaps, exasperated. “I literally just told you that I want to be friends again, are you actually listening?! Are we sure I’m the only person with a disability, in this class?”

“…You are a cheeky little shit, you know that?” Katsuki can’t help but reply, as Deku scoffs.

“Yeah, well, I had a good example to follow, growing up.” He quips back, sarcastic. “Now, are the words I’m saying actually sinking in, or do I have to repeat myself?”
“Fucking fine, I heard you—“

“Good. So I hope you understood the fact that I don’t have an answer to your theories, and the fact that you probably should go speak about what’s been eating you lately with the person that can give you a proper explanation.”

A heavy silence falls on them, after that. Katsuki hesitates, suddenly feeling out of place.

“I’m serious.” Deku adds in a low voice. “Go speak to him. He’s the only person that can give you the peace of mind you’re searching for.”

“I can’t—“

“Yes, you can.” Deku interrupts him with an eye-roll, annoyed. “He’s not gonna bite you.”

“Oh, because you know him so well—“

“Yeah, I do, because I actually bother talking with others. You know, the thing that normal people usually do to to relate with one another?”

“Fucking save me the sarcasm—“

“Oh, I’m sorry, it seemed to me that’s the only language you are capable of understanding!”

Katsuki mouth tenses in a thin line, as they silently stand in front of one another with equally annoyed frowns.

“I have one last question.” Katsuki finds himself saying, before he can stop his mouth. “Do you hate me, now?”

Deku sighs, massaging his forehead with an unamused frown. “I don’t even know why I bother—
Listen. You’ve been an absolute shitstain to me for more than ten years at this point, and, you know, I feel it would be justified if I hated your guts more than anything else— But at the end of the day, no. I don’t hate you. I never did. You’ve angered me, and made me cry countless times, and pushed me to do things I’m not proud of, but even then, I never hated you.” In front of Katsuki’s silence, he continues. “Hate is a strong feeling. And I hate people like the man that All Might fought. People that turn hurting others, killing, exploiting, ruining lives— People that make things like those their creed and their only purpose in life. Those, I hate. But you? I never will.”

A strong wind rises, making leaves and grass rustle around them, and Deku hugs himself, shivering in the sudden cold. Katsuki looks at him, at this enigma that’s been a permanent, unwanted attachment to his life ever since he had memories, and wonders just which kind of cruel destiny is forcing them to stick together despite how broken everything is—

“I know you used up all your quota of ‘speaking like an actual human being’ for the day, so I don’t pretend you will tell me what you think of that—“ Deku says with a little sigh, interrupting his train of thought. “Now, can we go back? I just want to go sleep, dude.”

“…Ok.” Katsuki concedes, feeling tired himself. He had a frankly shitty day, utterly failed an important exam, and now somehow got a plate of fresh sarcasm served right to him by Deku, of all people.

He still doesn’t have the answers he yearns for. He’s still confused as fuck and doesn’t know what to do with himself. He’s still supposed to just waltz up to All Might and ask him ‘Hey, am I the reason why you lost your powers?’, as if that’s something anyone can just do, fucking crazy Deku—

“Kacchan.”

“Mh.”

“Can you get my cane back, please?”

Katsuki sighs, carding a hand through his hair as he steps in the grass and goes fishing the object back up from where it landed. Deku waits, unmoving, and silently accepts the cane when Katsuki thrusts it in his hands with gentle fingers, pale eyes pointed at him like he’s waiting for something.

Sorry.
The word is just on the tip of Katsuki’s tongue, but it doesn’t make it out.

“Thank you.” Deku says, quietly, and the moment is gone. They don’t add anything else, walking back to the dormitories side by side, the only sound their steps and the tip-tap of Deku’s cane.
Toshinori finally managed to doze off, when three little knocks on his door shook him awake once more. Groaning, he gets out of bed and opens the door of his on-campus apartment, finding himself face to face with Aizawa. He blinks, silently sidestepping to give him space, as he enters with a laptop under one arm.

“…Is something the matter?” Toshinori asks, while Aizawa walks up to the desk in a corner and opens the laptop on it.

“Just watch.” He says, waiting for Toshinori to sit down in front of the object before pressing play on a video. Toshinori observes, confused, as young Bakugou silently sits on the stairs leading up to class 1-A dormitories, elbows resting on his knees, fingers crossed under his chin.

“One of the patrolling bots spotted him out after curfew.” Aizawa explains in front of his tilted eyebrow. “Keep watching.”

Toshinori obeys, as Aizawa fast forwards the footage a bit, and he blinks when he sees young Midoriya also stepping out, clearly in a pajama and wearing flip-flops, holding his cane. He turns to Aizawa, who points at the screen once more.

The footage is a bit grainy and the audio isn’t perfect, but he can hear young Midoriya softly say “…Kacchan?” just fine. Toshinori keeps watching, confused, as young Bakugou stands, the little exchange they have, before they start to walk away from the dormitory, young Midoriya trailing with clear indecisiveness after his classmate. The patrolling bot follows them, until they stop just as they
are about to enter the main road that leads to school, and Toshinori listens, flinching when young Bakugou angrily rips the cane away from young Midoriya’s hands at his refusal to use his quirk, launching it in the lawn. He observes, aghast, young Midoriya admitting his inability to connect with young Bakugou the way he can do with others. Young Bakugou’s confession about the doubts and remorse that must’ve plagued him ever since Kamino Ward. How close he is to knowing the truth, even in front of Midoriya’s refusal to confirm it for him.

The clearly personal exchange that spoke of that broken something between them that ran much deeper than Toshinori could possibly have ever imagined.

The video ends after they silently walk back to the dormitory, the main door closing behind them.

“Just so you know, this is the only copy of this video, and I’m nuking it right away.” Aizawa says into the silence, turning the laptop toward himself as he leans on Toshinori’s desk. “Now, what are we supposed to do about this?”

Toshinori sighs deeply, carding a hand through his hair. “I will talk with young Bakugou, of course. I had no idea he felt that way, but—“ Another sigh. “It’s reasonable that he’s affected by what has happened, despite his cocky attitude.”

Aizawa sniffs. “I should probably punish them for being out after curfew—“ He mutters, tired. “But at the same time the idea feels like beating someone that’s already down. Still, you should tell Bakugou that next time he breaks curfew he’s getting punished, when you’ll speak with him.”

“I will.” Toshinori replies. In the silence that follows, Aizawa looks at him with a pensive expression.

“You don’t plan on telling him the truth, right?”

“Of course not. We still need to protect this secret, for young Midoriya’s sake.” Toshinori shakes his head. “I’ll… I’ll think of a way to make him figure out that he has to keep his suspicions on the down-low. He’s a smart boy, he will understand.”

“So, what about Midoriya and… Whatever it is that’s going on between them?” Aizawa asks, putting his hands on his hips. “I mean, we knew that Bakugou had a problem with Midoriya, even if we never knew exactly why… I’ve always pin-pointed that to Bakugou’s prideful, competitive nature and how attacked he must’ve felt, watching Midoriya grow stronger at such a fast rate. But
“I knew they were familiar with each other from a young age, but young Midoriya never spoke to me about Bakugou, and I had no reason to believe anything was amiss. I— Pretty much thought the same as you.” Toshinori mutters, pensive. “I’ve always thought they just drifted away from each other with time— But It’s— clear that this goes deeper than we imagined.”

Aizawa groans, tiredly massaging his eyes. “Those two have the character and attitude that can raise them to the top, and bring the entire class with them, if only they started to work together. I’ve always hoped that giving them time to grow and learn would smooth their relationship over— But I’m not so sure just time will be enough, anymore.”

“I’ll speak with young Midoriya, too.” Toshinori rises from the chair, padding in the small kitchenette to put up a tea. He doubts he’s going to sleep anytime soon, tonight. “Or do you want to do it?”

“No, I— It’s clear this is a touchy subject, for him.” Aizawa replies, tiredly pensive. “If he never let out a single peep regarding his relationship with Bakugou so far, I can only assume it’s because there’s a personal reason. It’s probably better if you are the one to approach him about this.” A pause. “Sorry. I’m pretty much unloading the whole baggage on you.”

“It’s fine.” Toshinori replies, honest. “You know I like to help whenever I can.”

“…Please tell him not to break curfew again, as well.”

Toshinori chuckles, fishing the last tea bag —he better write that down in his grocery list, too— from the box. “Duly noted. I’ll let you know how it’ll go.”

—

“Midor— Izuku.” Something warm on his face. “Wake up. Your alarm is going off but like, really softly?”

Izuku grumbled, emerging back from the daze of sleep. It took him a while to connect back to the real world, confusedly realizing that there was the firm weight of a body near him, and the beep of an alarm going very softly in the background—
Oh, right. Shouto slept with him. And Izuku forgot to turn the volume of his clock back up, after he came back from his night chat with Kacchan, too exhausted to even remotely remember he turned the volume down in the first place as he gratefully slid back in bed and snuggled closer to Shouto, falling asleep right away.

“C’mon, how do I turn it off?” Shouto was saying, sounding quite sleepy himself, leaning over Izuku. “How does this thing even work—“

“I’m awake, I’m awake—“ Izuku grumbles, yawning. He palmed at his nightstand, bumping into Shouto’s cold hand on the way, and finally found the button to stop the clock. Shouto let out a relieved sigh, flopping back on the bed. Or, better, on Izuku.

“Were you confused by an alarm clock?” Izuku asks, amused.

“I’ve never used one. I usually set an alarm on my phone.” Shouto replies from somewhere around his chest, muffled. “Good morning.”

Definitely more awake already, Izuku grins happily. “Good morning. Slept well?”

Shouto answers with a loud yawn and a relaxed hum, not moving away from him. It’s quite pleasing, the chilly-warm weight pressing down on him, Izuku had to admit.

Could get used to this—

“Where did you go, last night?” Shouto suddenly asks, sleepy.

Oh. Oops.

“Don’t worry about it.” Izuku sighs, carefully palming around his chest to find Shouto’s head. His fingers made contact with Shouto’s ear, and they crawl up from there, carding through Shouto’s sleep-mussed hair.
“Was it about Bakugou?” Shouto continues, impassive. Izuku sighs.

“Sometimes I think you can read my mind—“ He replies, making Shouto chuckle. “Yeah. But seriously, don’t worry about it. Kacchan wanted to ask me some things and you know how he is—Just couldn’t do it while anyone else was around, like a normal human being.”

That wins him another little laugh, before Shouto asks. “So, are you going to tell me what’s between the two of you?”

“There’s isn’t much, really—“

“You call him Kacchan.”

“I told you, we were friends as kids. The nickname kind of stuck and I just can’t shake it off.” Izuku shrugs, still softly running his fingers through Shouto’s hair. When Shouto sighs, his warm breath tickles over the shirt covering Izuku’s chest.

“It’s not that I don’t want to tell you.” Izuku says after that, quietly. “But you’d get angry, and we have enough on our plates as is.”

“…I could never get angry at you.” Shouto murmurs, curling a bit more against Izuku, his hand picking at Izuku’s sleeve.

“You’d get angry. Just not at me.” Izuku replies, careful.

There’s a long moment of silence, before Shouto replies with a little annoyed tone. “What did he do?”

“Last night? Nothing.” Well, not counting the fact he launched his cane in the middle of a lawn, but that’s neither here nor there— “It’s… All stuff from the past, haunting us. We’re working through it. I think.”
Shouto shifts away from his chest, and Izuku feels the mattress tip down a bit. Shouto’s voice suddenly much closer. “Like what?”

Izuku takes his time to think. The words are just on the tip of his tongue, that need to finally unload this old pain off of himself, to admit how much Kacchan made him suffer in the past—

But he doesn’t. “If I told you, it would change how you perceive Kacchan, and I don’t think that’s fair.”

“Izuku, to be honest…” Shouto starts, careful. “I don’t exactly have a very high opinion of him, already.”

“But you still respect his ability. Even if you don’t like him personally, you can still manage to maintain a ‘professional’ relationship with him, in a sense, don’t you?” In front of Shouto’s silence, Izuku continues. “But if I told you, I’m sure that would change, and I don’t think that’s fair for anyone involved. Kacchan may be a jerk, but he’s got the brains and talent to become a great hero, one day. I don’t want to do anything to ruin that.”

“…You are far too kind for your own good.” Shouto murmurs, after a long silence. He sighs. “Alright. I’ll let the matter drop. But if things escalate you will tell me, are we clear?”

Izuku smiles, his heart beating lightly inside him at the protective tone. “Ok.”

When Shouto’s soft breathing came closer, he tilted his head up, meeting the soft kiss Shouto pushed on Izuku’s mouth half-way. Shouto hummed at that, leaning in again to kiss him once more, slower.

“I could get used to this…” Izuku murmurs after the languid kiss broke, making Shouto chuckle.

“Same here. But I should go back to my room and get dressed, before we go downstairs for breakfast.” He added, gentle.

“Right.” Izuku replied, blinking. It felt weird, a sensation akin to whiplash, realizing that they won’t get to spend the rest of eternity cuddling in bed. It was the first day of the new trimester, after all. Shouto pushed one last, quick kiss against his mouth, before gently climbing over Izuku to get off the
“See you downstairs in fifteen?” Izuku asks, stretching. Shouto hums affirmatively from the door, before the soft click of it opening and closing leaves Izuku alone. Izuku turns on the bed, chasing the warmth that Shouto left behind.

The other side of his pillow smelled nicely, like Shouto’s hair. Izuku hums, appreciative, feeling a bit of warmth on his cheeks and a smile pulling at his lips.

Maybe they could make this whole ‘sleeping together’ thing a stable occurrence. He surely would like that a lot.
Their summer break seemed already far away, now that they had to get back to their school routine.
And yet, things were so much different. Shouto was used to wake up with the sun, silently pad around in his home and fixing a quick breakfast for all his siblings, being the first one up, before leaving, hoping he won’t meet his father coming back from his night patrols. He was used to take his time walking toward school, enjoying the placid silence and the few people in the streets getting ready for work. Sometimes he would stop and sit at his favorite park along the way, maybe reading or finishing his homework, or just silently observing the people passing by, office workers walking with intent, mothers or fathers accompanying their young children to school. It always felt a bit lonely, watching these snippets of a life he never got to enjoy, and sometimes he would be ok with that. Sometimes it would be too much, a heavy weight on his heart, and arriving at school, were he now had friends, was always a relief.

But things were so much different. He still woke up early, and so did Izuku, if the alarm he set on his clock was anything to come by. But he didn’t need to walk silently like a ghost in his own home, hoping to don’t cross ways with his father. He could bid his time washing and putting the school uniform, he got to meet with Izuku downstairs, both of them already familiar with each other breakfast preferences, fixing it side by side with ease. He didn’t had to wolf down the food in a hurry in order not to linger around, he got to eat calmly and relaxed, enjoying Izuku’s excited chatter about the new trimester and what they were going to learn next.

He got to observe Iida, even more hyper than usual, scold the lazy latecomers that wobbled in like half-asleep zombies, still in their pajamas, reprimanding them for the fact they risked to run late for the opening ceremony, despite the fact there was still plenty of time. He got to say good morning with at smile to Uraraka, that sit by their side and put her head down on her arms, yawning, clearly still sleepy despite the fact she was already in her uniform. He got to gratefully accept the cup of expensive tea that Yaoyorozu offered them, as she also sat near them and started to chat with Izuku about some math problems, of all things.

They both seemed to like math a whole lot more than most of their classmates. Shouto didn’t had any particular feelings about the subject so he rarely joined in their discussions, but it was nice to see two people he cared for sharing a common interest.

Izuku was sitting by his side, head leaning against Shouto’s shoulder as he kept debating a particularly hard problem with Yaoyorozu. There was something about how casual the gesture was that warmed Shouto’s heart. Izuku seemed always torn between the need of having a point of contact with the people near him, and wanting to give others space, Shouto noticed that long before they got together. The way his hands moved, as if he was constantly searching for some kind of physical connection— and the cautious way in which he would scuffle toward someone sitting near him, toward a hand on his shoulder, or any kind of touch— All these gestures were subtle enough that most people that won’t observe Izuku the way Shouto did wouldn’t notice, but to him they were pretty telling.

Shouto couldn’t help but think he would feel more inclined to search for contacts as well, if he couldn’t see the people around him. That’s why he opted for being pretty physical with him, despite the fact he felt a little self-conscious whenever he openly displayed his affection in front of others. If
a bit of discomfort was the price to pay for Izuku’s peace of mind, he would silently pay it, no
questions asked.

When they moved out in a group it felt somewhat disconcerting, at first, but also strangely
comforting.

“You’re being very silent, this morning.” Izuku says softly as they walk hand in hand, his other
grabbing at his cane, pale eyes turned to him. “Is everything ok?”

“…Yes.” Shouto replies, low and honest. “I was just thinking about how different it is, going to class
with everyone. It’s nice.”

Izuku’s mouth opened in a little grin, a bit of pink on his cheek. “It is, isn’t it?” He says, clearly
happy. “It’s like having our own little family nearby, all the time.”

Shouto blinks at that. Izuku had a point— It did feel like they were a family of sort. He felt his chest
a bit tight at the thought, but in a pleasant way, a smile pulling at his lips as he squeezes Izuku’s hand
gently. Izuku leans into him, like he knew what Shouto was thinking— And he probably was, despite the fact that he was keeping his quirk off.

Granted, this little family still needed a lot of work, going by the little eye-roll Bakugou does when
Shouto just so happens to meet his eyes, but Izuku said they were working on whatever it was
between them, so he was going to give him the benefit of the doubt—

Iida was trying to keep everyone in line, and mostly failing. When they pass by him he opens his
mouth but then says nothing. He sighs, as if he just realized how pointless his endeavour was, and
just gestured at them to keep walking with a little smile, making Shouto snicker softly behind a hand.
Izuku blinks at that, clearly having no idea what just happened, but does not ask as they step into the
entrance, going for their lockers. Class B seems to follow them suit, Monoma immediately stepping
forward with that kind-of-crazy grin he usually showed whenever he’d try to antagonize them.

“Class A! I heard the news— You guys got two people failing the provisional license exam?!”

Shouto really didn’t had the time to react to that, Izuku at his side pursing his lips in a little unamused
frown, hanging to Shouto’s arm in a vaguely protective manner, as Bakugou behind them pretty
much exploded in his usual rage.
Thankfully Kirishima intervened, putting an arm on Bakugou’s chest, that miraculously stops in his tracks, still not looking any less like he might skin Monoma alive.

“Just ignore him, dude.” He sighs, exasperated, just as Kendo takes a step forward and literally drags Monoma away from an ear.

“I’m sorry.” She says, tired. “Please, don’t mind him.”

“Two people failed! All of us passed, so we’re ahead, now!” Monoma was still rambling as he got dragged away.

“What’s his damage?” Kaminari asks, perplexed, taking his shoes out of his locker.

“…Sorry, guys.” Shouto can’t help but mumble, Kirishima releasing another little sigh while he pushes a still fuming Bakugou toward his locker.

“Don’t mind what he says, you know that Monoma’s got some kind of one sided beef with us, don’t let him get to you.” He adds, waving Shouto’s apology away with a lopsided smile. Izuku hums, clearly agreeing, still hanging onto his arm with an upset little pout. That’s enough to make Shouto feel a bit better already, as he leans in to place a quick kiss against his soft hair.

“I’m ok.” He whispers, and Izuku visibly relaxes, smiling at him gently.

They really don’t have time to linger on what just happened, Iida urging them out for the opening ceremony. They dutifully follow, Uraraka falling by their side as they made way through the crowd that was rapidly grouping in front of the little stage, most of their teachers and principal Nedzu already there. She chuckles, at some point, Shouto confusedly frowning at her.

“Don’t mind me.” She replies, despite the amused little grin on her face. He doesn’t really have time to ask, Izuku pulling him down just slightly to place a little kiss on his cheek -that’s a bit off mark, landing mostly near Shouto’s temple- before letting his hand go.
“Better get in line before Iida comes scolding us.” He says, amused, gratefully following Mineta that guides him to stand behind Bakugou. Shouto falls into position by Yaoyorozu’s side, noticing her expression that pretty much mirrors Uraraka’s. It looks a bit out of place on her, considering how serious and composed she usually is, but then again some of Uraraka’s mannerism seemed to have rubbed off on Yaoyorozu ever since she’s started hanging out with them more.

“What’s so funny?” He asks, perplexed.

“Oh, nothing—” She replies, casual. Yet again Shouto doesn’t have a chance to try coax more info out of her, as principal Nedzu steps in front of the mic, enthusiastically greeting them.

The speech he gives is not long, but heartfelt. Shouto sees the same curiosity he feels passing through his classmates, when the principal mentions the hero internships. Soon enough they are free to go, and Shouto takes place by Izuku’s side yet again as they make way to their class. Izuku’s expression has turned into a pensive little frown, clearly distracted, not paying attention to Iida, Uraraka and Yaoyorozu that are curiously discussing this whole hero internship business.

“Guys?” He says after a minute, making them quiet down instantly as they look at him. “…Why did principal Nedzu say ‘tiny mammalian principal’? What am I missing, here?”

Shouto blinks, vaguely shaking his head the way he usually does whenever he’s abruptly reminded that, right. Izuku is blind. Uraraka snorts and muffles a laughs against her hand, Iida and Yaoyorozu’s mouth curling a bit as if they are trying to not laugh as well.

“It’s— mh.” Shouto replies, quite unsure how to put it. “Principal Nedzu is… not exactly human?”

“What do you mean?” Izuku blinks, perplexed.

“Oh, that’s interesting.” Iida intervenes, genuinely curious. “Doesn’t he feel odd, with your quirk?”

“No?” Izuku tilts his head on a side, clearly more confused by the question.

“Can you tell the difference between a person and an animal, Midoriya?” Yaoyorozu also asks, interested.
“Yes, animals feels like… Less complex? If that makes sense?” He replies. “But what does that have to do with… Oh.” A pause..”Is… principal Nedzu an animal?”

“Looks like some kind of mouse, to me.” Shouto comments, as Izuku gapes at them, disbelieving.

“I always thought he was like, a small bear.” Uraraka adds, cheerful

“Have you seen his tail? Definitely looks like a mouse to me, too.” Iida weighs in, serious.

“...You guys are making fun of me.” Izuku says, voice low. “There’s no way—”

“Oh, no, we would never!” Yaoyorozu says, earnest and worried. She probably thinks he’s actually offended. “I know it’s strange, but we are serious.”

Shouto can’t help but splutter a little laugh at Izuku’s completely flabbergasted expression.

“What even is my life—” He exhales, putting a hand on his forehead, making all of them laugh out loudly.
“Bro, geez, what’s with that face?”

Katsuki doesn’t dignify that with an answer. He’s pretty sure his face really isn’t making an expression any different than usual—
In front of his silence, Kirishima bumps an elbow against his arm. Katsuki groans.

“I’m trying to do my homework, shitty hair.”

“Yeah, while also looking like someone pissed in your tea.” Kirishima replies, not missing a beat. “So? What’s the deal? You’ve been extra grumpy, today.”

Katsuki’s eyes, traitorous, moves on their own. Three tables over, Deku is sitting with his little squad of friends, all of them hunched over their english homework clearly engrossed in a low-voiced discussion about Mic’s lesson of the day. Kirishima -the perceptive bastard he is- follows his line of sight, blinking.

“Did something happen between you and Midoriya?” He immediately asks. Katsuki kind of wants to bite back, ask why the fuck would Kirishima think that, but he knows it would be a useless bluff. Kirishima’s just observant like that.

“Nothing happened.” Katsuki mumbles, grabbing his eraser and attacking his homework with it with more energy than really needed.

“Huh-huh.” Kirishima replies, tilting an eyebrow, clearly unconvinced. “C’mon, dude. You know you can tell me things.”

_Ugh. Why is he surrounded by people that want to talk about feelings._

“Nothing happened.” Katsuki says, more firm this time. Kirishima purses his lips, squinting a bit.

“Well, that’s too bad.” He says, forcefully casual. “I was kind of hoping you’d finally be able to patch things up with him.”

That stops Katsuki in his tracks, pencil hovering on his notes. “What?”

“You know—“ Kirishima continues, shrugging. “It’d be cool if you guys could make peace.”
“…What are you trying to get at?” Katsuki asks, frowning.

“I’m not trying to get at anything. I’m just saying it would be nice if you could be friends again.”

Katsuki looks at him, unconvinced and confused by the sudden turn this conversation took. “…Why do you care?”

Kirishima turns his hands palms up, frowning a bit. “Because you are both my friends? Is that really so strange?”

When Katsuki doesn’t answers, he adds. “Seriously. You know I don’t want to pry so, like, I never asked what’s the deal between you two. But Midoriya cares about you, at least give him a chance—“

Katsuki kind of wanted to snap back that no, he doesn’t. Why would he? He’d have no reason to care, none at all, and it’s not like Katsuki wants him to, why can’t they just drop the matter altogether and just leave him be—

But he does, doesn’t he? Deku does care. Stupid, stubborn Deku, that keeps trudging forward, not matter what Katsuki says or does. Adamant, and persistent, and clearly not wanting to let go, even if things between them are pretty much akin to a collapsed bridge that’s constantly on fire.

Kirishima stayed silent for a while, maybe giving him time to think, before slowly looking down, nervously playing with a corner of his english book.

“Look— It’s probably not right of me, but knowing Midoriya he will never say anything, so I’m just gonna.” He quietly says, voice low and serious. “When the League of Villains took you, he— He was pretty broken. He looked like he could barely keep it together, and I said something idiotic that ended up pushing him over a line I hadn’t realized he’d been toeing.”

Katsuki barely turns to him, as Kirishima bites down on his lower lips nervously. “He— He got himself seriously hurt, trying to find you. He was that desperate.” Kirishima turns just slightly, looking at him with a little crease between his eyebrows, guilt pooled in his eyes. “I know you don’t believe he could possibly care, but— He does. And I think I at least owe him something, even if he doesn’t blame me for what I said to him— I at least owe him to do something— So, please, even if you don’t feel like giving the relationship between you two one last shot, for his sake— Do it for me? Please?”
There’s a long moment of silence, only interrupted by soft laughters coming from the other side of the room. Katsuki shoots a little look in that direction, before looking back at Kirishima that’s eagerly waiting for a response, a little hopeful light in his eyes—

“Fine, whatever.” Katsuki concedes with a grumble, if only to put a stop to this uncomfortable discussion. Kirishima beams, all pointy teeth and happiness, and gladly turns back to his homework, clearly satisfied with himself. They fall in silence as they both keep working, until Kaminari and Sero joins them, Kaminari moaning about today’s english lessons and how difficult it was.

“You’re a fucking moron—“ Katsuki sighs, exasperated. “It’s really not that hard, come here, I’ll explain.“

He can see Kirishima grinning out of the corner of his eyes. He ignores it, stifling deep down the need to ask what he’s so happy about.

Chapter End Notes

This is the moment you will remember all the times I casually mentioned how Kacchan's light is totally unreadable to our fav green bean and go "Ooooh right..." lol ; D

As usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
“We’ve already talked about the internship, but today we will have some visitors that have found time for you to explain in more details what an internship is, so please listen to them carefully.” Aizawa-sensei says after the morning routine is done, finally quelling Izuku’s curiosity. He’s been dying to ask about the three, new lights he felt waiting outside the door for a while, now. “These third years are amongst the top students at UA, at the moment. Please, come in.”

He hears the door slid open, the newcomers stepping in, standing in front of the class as little whispered comments ripple among his classmates.

“Please, give a brief introduction of yourself, to start off. Amajiki?” Aizawa-sensei says, in his usual monotone tone. What follow is a long moment of silence, as Izuku feels most of his classmates’ lights filled with intimidation. He’s not quite sure what to make of it, seeing as one of the third years’ light, Amajiki’s, feels completely paralyzed by fear to him. Izuku blinks, a little confused frown on his face as Amajiki finally speaks.

“This is no good, Mirio, Hadou…” He mutters, voice vaguely trembly. “Even if I try to imagine them all as potatoes… They still have human bodies… I don’t know what to say…” A pause. “I want to go home…”

Another one of the third years speaks up at that, her voice joyful and bubbly. “Don’t mind this guy too much! He’s Tamaki Amajiki! He’s a bit of a chicken— I’m Nejire Hadou, and today we are here to talk to you a bit about the internship— But—“ She hums, pensive. “Why do you have a mask? Is it a fashion thing?”

Shoji doesn’t really have the time to answer, as she continues. “And you are Todoroki, right? Why do you have that scar on your face?” Izuku feels Shouto jump a bit in surprise, as he mutter an indecisive “Um, that’s—”, but yet again she’s moving on.

“Ashido! Your horns are cute, do they grow back if they break? And you’re Midoriya, is it true that you’re blind? Well, yeah, I can see it, now— And you, Mineta— Like, is that your hair? Does it grow? Asui, which kind of frog are you? It’s like, whenever I look there’s something interesting to observe, in this class!”

She’s like a whirlwind, leaving everyone unable to really answer as she excitedly approaches Ojiro,
asking something about his tail— Aizawa-sensei’s light is pretty much the embodiment of exasperation, as he let out a low, irritated “…I thought you guys would be more rational than this.”

“Ah, do not worry, Eraserhead!” The third student says, his voice loud and enthusiastic. “I’ll take care of this! I’m Togata Mirio! You first years already got your provisional license, huh? Seems like a very energetic class— But you all look so confused right now, I bet you don’t understand why you suddenly got these third years coming in to speak to you about the internships, huh?”

There’s a moment of silence, everyone more than a bit perplexed by the rather unique approach of these older students. Mirio’s light feels just as energetic as his voice does, pretty much like a little sun shining bright. He continues, unfazed. “I was thinking— It would be much better to speak with actions rather than words. Why don’t you all team up and fight against me?”

A chorus of confused “Huuh?” breaks through the entire class, as Mirio turns toward Aizawa-sensei. “I think that would be a clearer explanation of the kind of things they’ll be able to learn during their internships, don’t you agree, Eraserhead?”

Aizawa-sensei sighs, and yet gives in. “Do whatever you want.”

—

They all stand a bit awkwardly and unsure in their gym uniforms as Mirio stretches, whistling, in the same gymnasion they used for their special moves training.

“Um— Like, do you really want to do this?” Sero asks, perplexed.

“Yup!” Mirio replies, cheerful, not a sign of doubt in him. Amajiki, standing close a wall, mutters. “Mirio… You shouldn’t do this… At least don’t go too hard on them, or you’ll make them lose hope…”

“…Aren’t you underestimating us a bit too much?” Kirishima asks, cautious. “We already got our fair share of experience with villains— The way you talk, it’s as if you see us all like small fries.”

“Yeah!” Mirio replies immediately. “That’s exactly it! Feel free to attack me all at once, in whichever way you consider fit! Or does someone want to go first?”
“This guy’s really grating on my nerves—” Izuku turns at the growl, as Kacchan steps forward, cracking his knuckles. “I’ll go.”

A series of things happens in rapid succession. Mirio laughs, amused, as Kacchan wastes no time darting toward him, readying an explosion in both hands. Izuku feels Mirio’s light shift, clearly activating his quirk, although Izuku has no idea of the nature of it yet— Jirou let out a high-pitched yell, thoroughly embarrassed, and Izuku feels not without surprise Mirio’s light go straight trough Kacchan’s, making him release a little choked noise as he tumbles down the floor, shocked.

“Ah, sorry about that—” Mirio says, after. “Sometimes I forget to keep mind to all the fine adjustments—“

“What the shit—“ Kacchan wheezed painfully from the floor, before slowly standing once more.

“As I said, feel free to come at me all at the same time! I really don’t mind!” Mirio says, energetic. There’s a moment of hesitation, before everyone steels themselves, ready to attack. Most close range attackers charged forward, but Izuku lagged behind, just a bit— He needed to try understand what Mirio’s quirk is, first—

His decision to observe rather than attack pays off. Mirio’s light goes straight through the floor, before shooting out diagonally as if he’s being ejected in the direction of the little group of long range attackers that kept their distance, surprising them from behind. It’s only a matter of seconds before he takes them down, hitting them just like he did with Kacchan, straight through the stomach. Must be pretty painful, since they all go crumble down instantly. Even Kacchan seems to be still rattled, breathing heavily, and Izuku knows for a fact that he can take a beating pretty well—

“Well, that’s it for the long ranged!” Mirio comments, huffing. “Now, for the others…”

“Damn, that’s unfair—“ Kirishima comments, a mix of tenseness and interest in his voice. “Not only he seems to be able to phase through things, but teleportation, too?”

“He’s not teleporting.” Izuku says, voice low. “I— I’m not sure how, yet, but the way he moves— It’s all part of his quirk.”

He can feel the surprise shake the classmates around him, as they turn. “Huh?”
“You shouldn’t get distracted through a battle!” Mirio is charging toward them, now. He’s fast, and in an instant he goes through the floor again. Izuku feels him, right under their feet, and then shooting up behind him. He manages to roll away from his attack just in the nick of time by activating One For All, making Mirio release a little interested hum. Everyone else was completely taken by surprise by his incredibly fast movements, and Izuku doesn’t really have the time to try attack as he helplessly feels the rest of his classmates go down under Mirio’s onslaught. He’s astonishingly quick, not losing time in trying to charge against Izuku once more, clearly wanting to put an end to this one sided duel, seeing as Izuku is the only one left standing. But Izuku dodges once more, buying time as he tries to figure out a way to attack back.

It seems like he can activate it through his entire body or through parts of it as he pleases- Izuku thinks to itself, ungracefully dodging attack after attack, forced to call to One For All much stronger than usual in order to don’t get hit by Mirio’s assault. —If I try to just hit back he’s surely going to phase through my attack, and that’ll leave me completely open— If I can manage a feint, maybe—

In all this, Mirio’s light feels equally interested and amused by Izuku’s series of barely managed dodges. Izuku rolls backwards to avoid a hand directed to his face and in the split second he does so, Mirio phases through the floor once more. Izuku rushes to stand up, turning toward the point Mirio is about to appear already charging a right hook. Mirio makes a surprised little gasp when he emerges back with Izuku’s fist already almost upon his face, and Izuku can feel his light shift as he activates his quirk once more in that zone.

A little grin pulling at his lips, Izuku stops the punch, his leg already making contact with Mirio’s ankle in a fast kick. That wins him another, louder surprised noise as Mirio loses balance, but his reaction is still insanely quick. In his falls he kicks up, his foot phasing through Izuku’s shoulder, causing a sudden, high sting of pain in it, and as Mirio hits the ground he rolls on his belly, grabbing Izuku’s ankle and jerking him violently off his feet in the second of pain that clouded his mind. Izuku falls as well, hitting concrete with his back painfully, breath momentarily knocked out of him. That’s definitely enough to do him in, even if he managed to avoid a direct hit to his stomach. His back is protesting loudly at that and he groans, not moving, realizing only after a couple of seconds that a familiar light is kneeling by him, giving out worry in waves.

“I’m fine—“ He manages to wheeze, forcing himself to sit despite the sting of pain in his back. “I’m ok, Shouto.”

Shouto doesn’t comment, irritation seeping through the fog of anguish. “You’re an idiot.” He mutters, putting his right hand on Izuku’s back and spreading a thin sheen of ice over his clothing. That’s already enough to make the pain recede a bit. “You should be more careful.”
“I was just trying to fight back—“ Izuku sighs. He wasn’t doing so bad, he thinks, before falling on his back. Mirio is standing in front of them, now, seemingly a bit confused by their exchange.

“Mirio, Mirio, are you listening? I haven’t seen you get hit in ages—“ Hadou approached them, excitedly bouncing. “Hey, Midoriya, what’s your quirk? Like, that was pretty neat, it looked like you knew exactly where Mirio was all the time? Like, how does it work?"

“Oh, huh, I— My quirk it’s like a radar. I can always see where someone is, regardless of physical obstacles in my way.” Izuku replies, blinking, making Mirio release a little, interested hum.

“Ooooh, that’s cool! It’s, like, a natural counter to Mirio’s!” Hadou laughs, grabbing Mirio’s elbow and shaking him a bit. “Isn’t it, Mirio? Right? Right?”

“Hadou is right, seems like your quirk can counter mine perfectly!” Mirio laughs, amused. “That little feint— You surprised me, I admit! But your movements are a bit sloppy, and I forced you on defense most of the time, didn’t I?”

Izuku scratches the back of his head. “Yeah… You are incredibly quick, senpai, I could barely react in time.” He turns a bit to Shouto, gently pushing his arm away before standing. The rest of the class is also standing, now, most of his classmates still feeling a bit rattled. “I was really surprised to see the way you get shoot out the ground when you phase through it— Can you explain how does that work?”

Mirio pats his shoulder, enthusiastic, a smile in his voice. “Sure! Let’s all group up, so we can discuss what you all just learned!”

—

He already wasn’t exactly in the best of moods, as he made his way back from the bathroom during lunch break, —His stomach still hurt where that stupid smile-y third year hit with his weird-ass quirk— so when All Might seemed to appear from out of nowhere, Katsuki didn’t even consider the idea of talking to him as Deku urged him to do.

Still, the man seemed to make a beeline for him, and Katsuki could only stop and blink, confused, when he found himself being stopped by two-something meters of lanky blond teacher.
“Young Bakugou! I was hoping to catch you—“ He says, cheerful. “I wonder if you can spare some time for me? There’s a couple of things I’d like to discuss with you.”

Oh, shit, he knows.

Katsuki has to hold the urge to sigh, as he shifts his weight from foot to foot. He really can’t think of a good enough excuse to say no to All Might, and he guesses that if he somehow knows, Katsuki won’t be able to escape from this topic for long.

He shrugs, following silently with his hands in his pockets after All Might gave him a nod. He guides him down to the teachers’ offices area, walking him in his personal one before closing the door behind them with a soft click.

“Would you like a tea?” All Might asks, amicably, and when Katsuki shrugs again he seems to take it as a yes, walking toward a table where an electric kettle is sitting. Katsuki sits down the couch, hands still in his pockets, staring at All Might shoulders.

When did he start to wear clothing that actually fitted him properly?

“I won’t waste your time—“ All Might suddenly starts, not turning to him as he prepares the tea. “You are a smart boy, I’m sure you already know what I wish to discuss with you.”

“…I guess.” Katsuki concedes, sounding more petulant than he really wanted.

Still, All Might chuckles briefly, but when he speaks again his voice is serious. “I think I owe you an apology.” He says, softly, before turning with a couple of steaming cups in hand. “I think I should’ve approached this topic sooner—“ A little sigh, as he sits down in front of Katsuki. “In any case— Is there something you wish to tell me?”

Katsuki purses his lips, tense. He’s not the kind of person to just pour his heart out as if it’s nothing — He’s not goddamn Deku.

All Might sighs again as he pushes the teacup toward him. “Alright. I guess I’ll try make this a bit easier for you—“ He says. “I know that what happened at Kamino Ward must’ve been silently eating you, and I’m sorry I did not take that in consideration. That said, you should not blame yourself. None of what happened was your responsibility, and the blame lies solely on the shoulders of those that wished to harm you.” His voice is low, earnest. The sunken blue eyes never left Katsuki’s, as he spoke. “The fact that I cannot use my power anymore is not a consequence of that
battle— It’s something that was meant to happen, sooner or later.”

Katsuki frowns, holding the eye contact. So, Deku said the truth, after all—

“I just want you to be aware that I do not blame you in the slightest for what has happened.” All Might continues, kind, in front of his silence. “You are a precious student, and I will lay down my life if it meant protecting you, over and over again. The fact that I can’t use my quirk anymore is but a small price to pay to still have you here safe and sound, right now.”

That’s when Katsuki finally could not look at him anymore, turning his face away. The absolute sincerity in the sunken blue, the low, but honest affection in his voice— It made Katsuki feel open, vulnerable.

He squirms in his seat, uncomfortable. “I don’t need to hear that.” He snaps back, more aggressive than he really wants. “I’m not— I don’t need someone to feed some kind of little fairy tale to me— I don’t need hugs and reassurance. I’m not him.”

There’s a small moment of silence, before All Might asks, measured. “Who?”

“You know who.” Katsuki replies, flat. “This kind of mushy bullshit might work well with him, but save it when speaking with me. All I want from you is the truth.”

“…Very well.” All Might says, putting down his teacup and resting his hands in the middle of his knees, long fingers crossed. “Regardless of what you think, what I said so far it’s nothing but the truth. Now it’s up to you to accept it, or not—” A pause. “That said, wanting the truth and actually receiving it are very different matters, and there are things I simply cannot tell you.”

Katsuki has to stop himself from scoffing as he finally turns back to him. All Might’s expression is much more serious, now, regarding him in a way much different than just a handful of seconds prior.

“You do realize that saying that is an admission by itself?” He can’t help but reply, tilting an eyebrow. All Might holds his eyes, impassive.

“Take it as you will.” He replies with a small shrug. “You are a brilliant young man, Bakugou, and I think you can understand perfectly well why some secrets needs to remain secrets.”
A small silence falls on the both of them. At this point Katsuki is about ninety-nine percent sure that All Might gave his powers to Deku—How, or why, it’s still a mystery. And going by the look in All Might’s eyes, it will keep being a mystery for the foreseeable future.

(But he’s lying to himself, isn’t he? He knows perfectly well why All Might would choose Deku—A person that’s just like him. Irritatingly kind and idealistic and annoyingly loving—A person that would jump in to help, disregarding their own safety, if someone is in trouble. A person that just goes up to people and openly admits what they are feeling and why, someone that wears their heart on a sleeve regardless of how many time it’s been hit—)

And above all, yes—He does understand. How would the world react to knowing such a thing? That the greatest hero in the world gave his powers to a blind teenager?

Deku would probably know no peace for the rest of his life. And not only that, but anyone around him would be in danger just as much as he would.

Katsuki takes a sip of his tea, bidding time, before answering with a sigh. “Yes. I understand.”

All Might visibly relaxes, at that. “I’m glad.” He says, after a moment. “Maybe in the future things will change, but—For now I can only ask you to please do not touch this topic again.”


All Might eyes him, tilting his head on a side. “I hope that you will stop torturing yourself with guilt, now, at least.” He says, blunt. “I advise you to speak about your troubles with your friends in the future. It does wonders in helping a weary heart.”

“God, you two are like two water drops. Love to spout the same kind of corny lines.” Katsuki grumbles, rolling his eyes. Surprising him, All Might chuckles.

“Are we?” He says, amused, not pretending not to know what Katsuki is talking about, now. “Still, my advice stands. We cannot live like lone wolves all our lives, my boy.” His voice suddenly turned serious. “Trust me, I would know. I tried, for a bit. It did me no good. If I’m still here, right now, despite everything—I only owe it to those around me. To all the people I could rely on in my worst moments.”
He stands, taking both their cups casually and bringing them back toward the kettle. “We are not made to spend our lives all on our own. Take Izuku— Would he be here, if not for the help of all the people that cared for him, that helped him? Kindness goes a long way, young Bakugou— And while your ambition is certainly laudable and will push you to do better, there’s only so much you will be able to achieve only relying on that.”

He turns back to Katsuki, his expression soft and steely at the same time. “Do not be afraid to accept others in your heart. Yes, it’s scary, and sometimes it will hurt— But becoming a hero is also that. Being capable of selflessly put other people’s needs in front of ours. Learning of giving and accepting love— Learning how to rely on those around us, the only real weapon we have in the face of evil. It’s never too late to learn that, to make amends— And I do not see any reason why you shouldn’t be able to do so, no matter how disbelieving you are of my words, right now.”

Katsuki shakes his head for a second, chasing away the expression that must’ve rose on his face without him even noticing. All Might chuckles, before continuing.

“I hope you will reflect upon what I just said— And be aware that if you ever need to talk about anything, my door will always be open. If you don’t have anything else you wish to say to me, for now, then you are free to go.” He says with a small smile. “I will see you at the next lesson, my boy. Oh— And please, remember not to break curfew again. Next time, Aizawa won’t be so lenient.”

Their third school day comes to an end, the sky outside the dormitory already dark and full of stars. Shouto looks up, noticing Yaoyorozu and Uraraka emerging from the girl’s bathing facilities with their hair still slightly humid after their post-dinner bath, chatting quietly between themselves. They approach the couches where he, Izuku and Iida were sitting, and Shouto nods at them when they also sit down, looking as tired as he feels.

“Hey.” Uraraka said, sighing. “Full day, huh?”

“Mmmhyeah—“ Izuku mumbles, relaxed, slightly rousing from the little sleepy daze that seemed to have enveloped him. He was pretty much putty under Shouto’s hands, as he’s been rubbing gentle, soft massages all along Izuku’s abused back for the past ten minutes, finding little tense knots and working them patiently and carefully. It seemed to be effective, seeing how completely relaxed Izuku was. It was very relieving to see him like this, considering that Shouto could tell all day long that the hit he took in his glaring weak point definitely hurt more than Izuku was letting on.
Ashido and Asui emerged from the kitchen, the both of them comfortably taking the rest of the couch where Yaoyorozu and Uraraka were sitting.

“Mirio senpai was quite something else, huh?” Ashido comments, massaging her stomach like she could still feel the hit she took. “It’s cool that he rose to the top like that, though. His quirk surely sounds like a difficult one to use.”

“His control was incredible—” Izuku murmurs in agreement, letting out a small yawn before continuing. “He could seamlessly shift the activation points in the blink of an eye— I cannot imagine how hard he must’ve trained, to reach such a level.”

“You were doing really good, too, Midoriya!” Ashido adds, cheerful. “I mean, senpai was clearly more experienced, but it was super cool how he couldn’t hit you for a bit. I bet that if you two were at the same skill-level, it would’ve turned into an impossible stalemate of a fight.”

Izuku chuckles, amused. “I don’t know. I’m pretty sure he was holding back— He’s really strong.” He replies, sleepily.

“Well, Aizawa-sensei did say that he’s pretty much considered a possible candidate for the number one spot, in the future—” Iida comments, pensive. “He surely made a strong argument for these hero internships, didn’t he? To think about the kind of experience we can acquire by participating in one— What do you guys think?”

Shouto did not reply for obvious reasons, as Uraraka hummed, pensive.

“I think I will try.” She says, drumming her fingers on her knee. “I… I want to become much stronger, and this seems like a good occasion—”

“I’d like to try an internship, as well.” Asui follows, a finger on her mouth. “I learned a lot during the experience week, and I’d like to learn even more.”

Izuku hummed as well, sniffing.

“I definitely will try get into one—” He adds, pensive, in a low voice. “I’ll call Gran Torino. Maybe he’ll feel like taking me in once more—” His muttering turned into a little sigh as Shouto silently found another small knot in his lower back, gently working it. Izuku yawns again.
“Stop— I’m falling asleep—“ He says after a handful of seconds, a bit slurred, sounding like the exact opposite of someone that wanted the massage to stop. Shouto ignored the little snickers coming from the girls’ couch, patting Izuku’s shoulder with his free hand.

“Let’s get you to bed, then.” He says, softly, a corner of his mouth pulling up in a lopsided smile when Izuku whined. “C’mon, you’re tired. You need to sleep.”

“Fine—“ Izuku huffed, yawning once more. It was a testament to how tired he must really be, the fact he gave in so easily. Shouto carefully stood, gently taking Izuku’s elbow to guide him up and taking his weight when Izuku leaned against his shoulder with a little hum.

“ G’night, guys—“ He mutters, eyes closed as Shouto gently started to guide him toward the elevator. There’s a small chorus of fond “Goodnight!” as they walk away, Shouto waving vaguely with his free hand. When they step in the elevator Izuku lazily circles his waist with both arms, cheek pressed against Shouto’s shoulder, his breathing slow and regular.

“Hey, are you falling asleep on me?” Shouto asks, amused, and Izuku hums. “C’mon, hang in there until I get you to your bed.”

“ ‘K—“ Izuku mutters. “Senpai was super strong— Had to up the gradient—“

“Had to what?” Shouto asks, perplexed. At that, Izuku blinks blearily, his face shifting up to him with a little confused expression.

“Huh?”

“…Nevermind.” Shouto sighs, shaking his head. Izuku is pretty much sleeping on his feet. The elevator doors slide open and he has to drag him the short distance to his room. When he guides him to sit on the mattress Izuku hums appreciatively, falling on a side and nuzzling his pillow. Shouto bends on his knees, carefully dragging the covers down from under Izuku.

“Don’t you want to wear your pajama?” He asks, gentle, seeing as Izuku is still wearing one of his nondescript white shirts and a loose pair of sweatpants.
“’S fine— Comfortable—“ Izuku replies, stretching an arm out, eyes closed. “Gimme my phone—“

“What for?” Shouto asks, covering him properly.

“Have to call Gran Torino—“

At that, Shouto can’t help but chuckle. “Izuku, you can call him tomorrow. Just sleep.”

Izuku hums weakly, his arm hanging limp off the mattress. He’s breathing evenly, lips slightly parted, but when Shouto attempts to stand up he grabs at the fabric of his pants.

“Stay—“ He mutters, voice so slurred Shouto could barely make out the word. With a little sigh he sits back on the floor by the bed, collecting both legs against his chest with an arm, as he gently pets Izuku with his other hand. In the matter of a minute Izuku is already asleep, and Shouto takes a handful of seconds for himself, observing him, before shifting on his knees and leaning in to press a gentle kiss against Izuku’s hair.

“Love you.“ He murmurs, more for his own sake than anything else. It’s been real hard, keeping those words to himself, and it doesn’t look like it’s going to become any easier as time goes by. He finally stands for good, padding out the room and stealing one last glance to the mop of soft, curly hair, before turning off the light and closing the door.
Toshinori is certainly surprised, and it takes him quite a bit of self control, to don’t spit out the sip of tea he casually took just as young Midoriya asked him if he could introduce him to Nighteye. Thankfully, the computer in front of him is saved as he manages to gulp down the tea, coughing just a bit.

Young Midoriya doesn’t comment, standing in front of him, clearly determined and eager. Toshinori takes another second to take a deep breath in.

“Where did you hear that name?” He can’t help but ask, buying a bit of time.

“I… Spoke with Gran Torino this morning. About the internship.” Young Midoriya explains. “And he told me about him, so— Huh, can you please help me?”

Toshinori sighs, putting his cup down, before standing. Midoriya blinks up at him, confused.

“Let’s… Walk a bit.” Toshinori says, cautious. “There’s a couple of things we have to talk about.”

When he steps out the teachers’ office, young Midoriya dutifully falls by his side, silent. It takes Toshinori a good minute, to gather the right words.

“I understand your eagerness regarding the internships, but if I have to be honest, I do not completely agree with the idea.”

“You don’t?”

“During the meeting, when we discussed the possibility, I sided with the faction that was against them. With the recent rise of villain activity, I believe it would be better for first years to observe and postpone the internships for a later time.” Toshinori explains, voice low. “Not to mention, I think it would be better for you to just train and strengthen yourself, for the time being.”

Young Midoriya frowns, pale eyes pointed forward. “…But that’s not all that there’s to it, isn’t it.”

“No.” Toshinori sighs, carding a hand through his hair. “It’s… Me and Nighteye— Things are complicated. I cannot just waltz into his office, as if nothing happened.”
At that, young Midoriya turned his sharp gaze on him. It made Toshinori think of a particularly perceptive, pale-eyed hawk.

“I… Don’t want to push you, especially since this is clearly personal.” He says after a while, voice serious. “But… I really think working under Nighteye’s guidance will help me figure out where to go from here. Isn’t there any other way you could possibly help me out?”

Toshinori sighs, massaging his eyes. He stays silent for long seconds, as they step outside in the gardens. “…There might be.” He concedes. “I’ll— Have to speak with someone. I will let you know as soon as possible.”

“Oh, ok—” Young Midoriya replies, a bit of relief seeping in his voice. “So— Um— What did you want to talk about, then?”

A lopsided smile pulls at Toshinori’s lips, as he sits down under a tree. Young Midoriya follow suit, after tilting his head curiously at him, and he sits by Toshinori’s side, collecting his knees against his chest.

“Seeing how busy you’ve been in the past few days I could never find time to approach you about this— But I think there’s a couple of things we need to clear over.” Toshinori starts, gentle. “First of all, Aizawa has been so kind as to decide not to punish you for breaking curfew, the other night, but asked to let you know there won’t be another saving grace, if it happens again.”

At that, young Midoriya flinches visibly, dragging a hand on his face with a sigh. “Dangit—“ He murmurs. “I knew it.”

“So, regarding that— Care to tell me what was it all about?”

Toshinori observes, silent and still. He’s been thinking about how to approach this quite a bit, especially after his brief, but intense, private little chat with young Bakugou. It does not surprise him, to see young Midoriya’s expression shift into a tense, guarded one, fingers nervously picking at his school uniform pants.

“It’s— Well, it’s complicated.” He finally says after the silence dragged one second too long. “Don’t mean to parrot what you said earlier but… It is.”
Toshinori doesn’t comment, giving him a few more second, a chance to come forward on his own. When it doesn’t happen, he puts a careful hand on his shoulders.

“Toshinori doesn’t comment, giving him a few more second, a chance to come forward on his own. When it doesn’t happen, he puts a careful hand on his shoulders.

“I have half an idea about it, already. Especially after I spoke with young Bakugou.”

That seems to snap Midoriya out of the pinched expression that took place on his face, as he turns and blinks, surprised.

“You— You did?” He asks. “It’s— Did it went— Ok?”

“We spoke about what we needed to speak about.” Toshinori replies, careful. “And I hope young Bakugou took off his shoulders this weight he’s been carrying— But you, you did not. You are still carrying one, are you not?”

Young Midoriya frowns, his mouth turning into a thin line. His eyes slide away. “…How much do you really know.” He finally says, not quite a question.

“Enough to have some theories, not enough to be sure what we should do going forward.” Toshinori admits, gentle. “I hope you might be able to help me out, with that.”

“…I don’t think there’s anything to do.” Young Midoriya replies, voice low.

“Is there not?”

“No.” He insists, firm.

“Why not?”

The tenseness seemed to have slid down from young Midoriya’s expression to his body as well, shoulders stiff. “Do we really need to talk about this?” He sighs, carding a hand through his messy hair. “I don’t— I don’t want to jostle things too much. I don’t want to change the way things are, now—“
“Do you not want to, or are you afraid to?” Toshinori murmurs, gentle. His words might’ve been a whip, for how hard young Midoriya flinches. He coils on himself a bit more, fingers tight on the fabric of his pants.

“If… If I tell you—“ He starts, nervous. “Can you promise me that there won’t be any negative repercussions?”

Toshinori frowns at that, taking a second to think, before softly replying. “It… Depends on what you mean with ‘repercussions’.”

“I mean that no matter what I tell you, it stays between us. I mean that no one will suffer consequences for things that are long in the past.” Midoriya adds, his voice a bit firmer, frown deepening. “If you can’t promise me that, then I won’t tell.”

Toshinori can’t help but recall what Aizawa said. How this was clearly a touchy subject for Midoriya.

He sighs. It’s obvious he has no other choice but to give in. “Ok.” He murmurs, squeezing young Midoriya’s shoulder gently. “It stays between us.”

Midoriya nods jerkily, but stays silent for long seconds. When he finally starts to talk his voice is low, subdued. “Me and Kacchan— We were friends ever since we were pretty much babies.” He says, careful. “He always was headstrong, but things turned for the worse once his quirk manifested, he— He wasn’t very nice, let’s put it this way.” A pause. “I have this memory— I wasn’t even six years old, yet, and I remember being afraid after getting lost, I was so scared I would never find my way home— And then Kacchan brought me home but he— He treated me like—“

He takes a deep, shuddering sigh, pushing his fists against his eyes. “I stopped following him like a dog after that.” He murmurs, rough. “But we still ended up around one another all the time, all through elementary and then middle school. He would either ignore me, or treat me like shit, no in between— And I just— I wanted nothing more than to be friends again, but he would say things to me with such a carelessness sometimes he made me doubt he was even human—“ There’s a long second of silence, only filled by birds chirping above their heads, as Midoriya adds in barely a whisper. “—After the result of the entrance exams, he— He confronted me. He really thought I was lying all along, that I was just faking being blind, like— It felt— It felt as if he stabbed me, in that moment—”
Toshinori tenses at that, heart beating painfully in his throat. He closes his eyes, taking a deep, careful breath, palm cautiously sliding away from young Midoriya’s shoulder to go gently rub at his back in a silent encouragement.

“I did bad things, too.” Midoriya continues after that. “I snapped at him so violently I ended up breaking his nose.” He slowly takes his hands away from his eyes, looking a bit pale. “It’s just… It’s all so broken, and I don’t know what I should do—“

“The fact that you cannot connect with him with your quirk—” Toshinori says, voice low, still rubbing his back. Midoriya doesn’t ask how he knows, shaking his head with a little sigh.

“I think it’s me.” He says, slowly. “I’m just so scared he’ll hurt me again that I have— Like, this mental block—I can’t—“ He gestured vaguely, frustrated. “I’m like, torn— Half of me always feels like cowering whenever he’s nearby, and the other half just— Hopes that, maybe, one day things will turn ok.” After that he let his face fall down against his knees, tired. “I have so few memories of the world before I went blind— But I still remember him so clearly. And even though I rationally know the kid that was my friend is long gone, it’s just— I can’t help but remember him like that. Like a kid I loved so much, a lifetime ago.”

A heavy silence falls on them, after that. Toshinori carefully shuffles closer, and when he guides young Midoriya to lean against him he doesn’t resist, letting his head rest against Toshinori’s shoulder in a half hug. He sniffs.

“Please, keep your promise.” He says, voice broken. “I don’t want to ruin things for Kacchan. I think — He’s changed a lot already, and I know he will keep changing and growing, going forward. But if what’s between us, our pasts, emerges in front of everyone’s eyes, I’m not sure they’d be able to look at him they way they do, now.” A pause. “I love this school and the people in it, and I’m sure that deep down, in his own— Weird way, Kacchan does, too. Please, don’t ruin this for him.”

Toshinori has to gulp around a knot in his throat, undeniably moved by young Midoriya’s selflessness. He leans into the hug, one arm around young Midoriya’s shoulder, his other hand rising to gently rest on his soft hair. “I won’t.” He murmurs. “This stays between us.”

“…Thank you.” Young Midoriya replies with a little, trembly exhale. He shifts, leaning toward Toshinori a bit more as his arms rise to circle Toshinori’s chest.

The stay like that for a long time, silent. The tenseness gradually leaves young Midoriya, and when he softly shifts back a bit he looks much less ashy, if still a bit rattled. His pale eyes shift upward, meeting Toshinori’s.
“Is… There something more you wanted to talk about?” He asks, sounding tired. “Because I think I’m all out of ‘emotional discussion’ energies.”

Toshinori chuckles at that, ruffling his hair. “No, I think we are good.” He replies. “While I think we will need to talk about this more in the future, I don’t want to force you, for the moment. We can take one step at a time, regarding this, ok?”

At that, young Midoriya seems to tense a bit, and Toshinori adds. “As I promised, there won’t be consequences for anyone, nor I will betray your trust by spilling the beans to anyone else. I just wish to help you mend things with young Bakugou, if that’s what you wish.”

Midoriya visibly relaxes. “…Not even Aizawa-sensei?”

“Not even to him.” Toshinori confirms.

“I… Ok.” Midoriya murmurs, massaging his eyes. “If you’re with me, then it’ll be ok. This whole mental block thing I got going’s probably bad for me, anyway.”

Toshinori can only hum in agreement at that consideration, before carefully saying. “I hope talking about it will be the first step to heal these old wounds.”

Young Midoriya blinks, looking pensive, before a little lopsided smile pulls at his lips. But he doesn’t elaborate on that sudden expression shift, merely nodding. “I think it helped a bit. Thank you.”

“…To be frank I— I’m not quite sure how we should proceed, from here.” Toshinori admits, scratching his cheek. The difficult art of navigating interpersonal relationships has never been his strong suit, if he had to be honest. “But when you’ll feel up to it we can discuss it together— Bounce some ideas off one another.”

Young Midoriya’s smile turns into a little, tired grin. “Sounds like a plan.”
Izuku blinks when his cane bumps into something. Or, better, someone, as they make a little surprised noise at that.
“I’m sorry—“ Izuku immediately says, taking a step back. His free hand finds the wall at his left and slides to search the plate, the little bumps of braille under his fingertip confirming to him that he’s in the right place. He hears a little smacking noise and then the person he accidentally bumped into speaks, cheerful.

“Right! I was confused for a second, there, sorry about that—“ Mirio-senpai says. “I forgot that you are blind, Midoriya, forgive me.”

“Oh, senpai!” Izuku replies, surprised. “Don’t worry about it. Huh— Why are you here?”

“That’s funny, I wanted to ask you the same thing.” Mirio replies, a smile in his voice. The door opens, and Izuku waits, blinking, both hands resting on the handle of his cane.

“You are both on time, thank you.” All Might says. “Please, come in.”

Izuku hears Mirio move and he follows suit, All Might closing the door behind them. He’s familiar enough with this space that he can easily find the usual couch, sitting on it side by side with Mirio, as All Might takes place in front of them. There’s a moment of silence only filled by All Might pouring three cups of tea.

“Thank you!” Mirio exclaims, lively, accepting his. “I have to admit, I’m quite excited about being called in by you, sir! Although I have no idea why!”

“I’m— Not quite sure, either?” Izuku adds, more subdued, tilting an eyebrow. He can hear All Might take a sip.

“Young Mirio is currently working as an intern in Nighteye’s office.” He says, measured, after that.

Izuku immediately catches on, a small smile opening on his face. “Really?” He asks, turning a bit toward Mirio, that hums happily.

“I’ve had the honor to work with Sir for a year, now!” He confirms.
“I wanted to ask you— Do you think that young Midoriya would be fit to work under Nighteye’s guidance?” All Might asks, voice levelled.

Mirio seem to take a few second to think, and when he speaks there’s a smile in his voice, as one of his arm circles Izuku’s shoulders amicably, surprising him. “I see. You want me to introduce Midoriya to him, right? I think it could be a good idea— I certainly feel like Midoriya’s quirk could mesh very well with Sir’s approach to work! I already thought that Sir would probably like him.” He pats Izuku’s shoulder a couple of times. “Tell me, Midoriya, why do you want to be a hero?”

The question certainly catches Izuku by surprise. He blinks, vaguely turned toward Mirio as he gingerly plays with the handle of his cane. “I—” He takes a moment to think, after that false start.

Why does he want to be a hero? Before his life at UA started, it always felt like a distant dream. Something so vague and unattainable. All Might was his idol, but now he knew he simply couldn’t fall in his exact footsteps. All Might was All Might, and Izuku… He wasn’t All Might.

But still, all the sweat and blood and tears he shed so far— All the pain he went through— They were not for nothing. He already brought a change in people lives with his actions, just as much as others brought changes for him. And he still remembered how he felt, when All Might asked him to inherit One For All.

How much he wanted to use this power that had been offered to him, to protect others.

“I— I want to be a hero so I can protect everyone.” Izuku says, quietly. “I want to become a beacon of hope. Someone that will bring joy and relief in the hearts of people— Someone that’ll make them smile—“ A deep breath. “I want to become the best hero ever.”

A moment of silence follows his declaration, and Izuku can’t help but tighten his hands around the handle of his cane, a bit of unsureness seeping into him. He kind of spoke from deep down his heart, not really thinking how full of himself he must look, now—

“Your reasons sounds a bit vague, but—“ Mirio comments, but his voice is light, not a trace of doubt in it. “I see. Well, I have no reason to refuse you, so, sure! I’ll introduce you to Sir!”

“You will?” Izuku replies, excited and relieved. “Thank you so much!”
“No problem! But, I do have a question—“ Mirio says, pensive. “All Might, sir, why did you feel the need to ask me? After all, if you were to come and meet Sir Nighteye directly, he’d certainly be overjoyed. He’s always observing you!”

Izuku blinks, at that, staying quiet. He did say that he would not push All Might, but— He cannot deny he’s rather curious about why his light felt so tense, when he mentioned Nighteye to him.

“…I think it would be for the better if you are the one to introduce young Midoriya.” All Might replies, voice low. “Me and Nighteye do not… Agree on certain things. And, if I have to be honest — I simply cannot bring myself to meet him, at the moment.”

Mirio hums, thoughtful, before releasing a little sigh. “I understand. In any case, I hope you will come by, someday, at least. Sir would be really happy about it.”

“I will consider it.” All Might says, barely above a whisper. “Thank you for your help, my boy.”

—

Shouto’s first day off since the start of their second trimester was shaping to not being nearly as nice as the last couple of Saturdays that he got to spend with Izuku— But it couldn’t be helped. He had to attend the provisional license training course, and Izuku told him that he would go with Mirio senpai to visit the pro-hero Mirio worked with as an intern, to get introduced, hoping to score a place for his own internship. They parted ways the evening prior, wishing each other good luck with a chaste kiss in front of Izuku’s room.

His current company was much less pleasant. Bakugou looked grumpier than normal as they walked out the dormitory side by side, carrying their costumes in the usual cases. Shouto couldn’t say he was exactly happy about this, either, but since Izuku was so hellbent in being nice to Bakugou, for some reason, Shouto guessed he could at least try to be civil and work with him.

“Oy, half-’n-half, get your head back down here, on planet earth—“ Bakugou suddenly says, sounding annoyed. “I swear to god, ever since ya got with Deku you’ve turned into a total birdbrain.”

…”Be civil.
“There’s no need to speak like that.” Shouto replies, even. “I understand that you’re irritated by the fact we have to attend this course, but I don’t see the reason why you should vent your frustration on me.”

“I’m not venting.” Bakugou quips back, huffing. “Just making an observation. You’re totally distracted all the time, if you don’t focus you’re gonna fall behind.”

Shouto blinks at that, taking a moment to mull over the meaning behind Bakugou’s words.

*Is this his version of... Worrying?*

He turns a bit, launching a little look at his right. Bakugou is looking forward, the usual frown on his face, but he must feel Shouto’s gaze on him because he turns, red eyes burning as he purses his lips into a thin line.

“What.” He says, aggressive.

“...Nothing.” Shouto replies, turning his eyes away. “I will focus, no need to tell me.”

“Huh-huh.”

“Besides, why do you care about mine and Izuku’s relationship?”

“Oh god, the name calling, *gross*—” Bakugou mutters, an exaggerated disgusted expression on his face. “I don’t care.” He adds, louder.

“...You are the one that brought up the topic.”

“Oy, told you I don’t care!” Bakugou snaps. “You can do all that lovey-dove-y crap and swap spit with him all you want, half-’n-half, it’s your loss!”

Shouto sniffs, not replying, and his decision to don’t rise to the bait seems to pay off, as Bakugou deflates a bit, tsk-ing. They walk the rest of the way in silence, and Shouto figured that, all things
considered, this wasn’t too bad of a first real conversation with Bakugou. He silently filed it in the back of his mind and moved on, noticing the familiar, dark clad figure waiting for them outside the gates, in front of a car.

“‘Morning.” Aizawa-sensei greets them, monotone as usual. “You are a bit early— You can put your bags in the car, we’ll leave in five minutes.”

They do so, as Aizawa-sensei keeps sipping his coffee, clearly more asleep than awake, and Shouto leans back against the car, checking his phone.

He got a few messages so he rapidly reads them. They are mostly well wishes for his first extra lesson, and he smiles a bit to himself as he answers to them all with a ‘thank you’. Yaoyorozu sent to him one of those cat pictures she likes so much, too, and he’s looking at it with his head tilted on a side, trying to understand why she found this particular one so funny, when he hears a very familiar voice.

When he looks up from his phone, Izuku is walking outside the gate side by side with Mirio, hand firm on his cane as he chats with the older student animatedly. He doesn’t seem to react to Shouto’s presence at all, the both of them walking past along the sidewalk, until he casually folds the cane and then stops cold in his tracks.

“Ah—“ He gasps, surprised. “Mirio senpai, wait a second, please!”

He turns on his heels, literally running up to Shouto with a big smile. It happened so fast that Shouto doesn’t have time to react, Izuku stopping in front of him and rising on the tip of his feet to smack a slightly off-the-mark kiss, just a few millimetres away from the corner of Shouto’s mouth.

“Good luck, be safe, I’ll see you later!” He says, rushed, before running back to Mirio, that’s grinning cheerfully. He gives Shouto a thumb up as Izuku falls back by his side and they easily resume their animated discussion, walking away.

Shouto it’s still a bit gobsmacked by that little whirlwind of events, his fingers rising to his face, fingertips brushing on the point Izuku kissed loudly. He blinks, something warm in his chest as he smiles to himself, before letting out a little sigh and turning.

“Birdbrain—“ Bakugou mutters, rolling his eyes, before climbing in the car with an annoyed grunt. Shouto silently does the same, eyes not quite meeting Aizawa-sensei’s that are pointed at him.
But Shouto could swear that, for a split second, out the corner of his eyes, he saw sensei's mouth shift into a small smile.
Chapter End Notes

Honestly I just straight up want more excuses to draw Dad Might hugs and Tododekus being unbearably, disgustingly cute, sue me

As usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
Two things became immediately clear as soon as Izuku stepped through the door.

One: Nighteye seemed to hold some kind of resentment in his heart. For whichever reason, Izuku had no idea.

Two: Izuku wasn’t going to be able to make him laugh. Izuku was absolutely, utterly fucked.

Mirio senpai had been so helpful, cheerful and gentle as he explained that he already spoke to Nighteye about him, and gave Izuku pointers. Izuku was definitely grateful for his kindness, and he mulled over his advice, the fact that he had to make Nighteye laugh at least once, while their made way up the stairs, and— Well, Izuku wasn’t a comedian, but maybe with a bit of luck he could play on his biting, self-deprecating humor that always managed to drag a surprised laugh out the people around him, for better or worse—

Whichever little flame of hope he had went out pretty much as soon as Nighteye must’ve laid eyes on him. Izuku was pretty sure that he could try to dress like a clown and do an entire jig, and it still won’t be enough to crack through Nighteye’s clear displeasure.

“Hello! I brought you that first year I told you about, yesterday!” Mirio says, completely oblivious to the situation.

Nighteye silently approaches them, as Izuku stood there, frozen. His light was sharp, cutting, almost feeling like a needle poking at Izuku through his radar.

He forces himself to gulp around the knot of nervousness in his throat, rushing to do a little proper bow and introduce himself. “I’m— Izuku Midoriya, sir, pleased to meet you!” After that he held his hand out, nervous, wondering if Nighteye will shake it or not— Relief washes over him when Nighteye’s light moves in a way that suggests he’s about to reciprocate the handshake, and then it shifts.

Izuku tenses, rushing to take his hand back with a snappy motion before Nighteye could touch him, eyes going wide. Behind him, Mirio’s light shakes in surprise and then turns a bit nervous, as the silence stretches for a handful of seconds.
“...Where you trying to use your quirk on me?” Izuku asks, voice rasping on his dry throat. “Sir?” He adds, trying to recover a shred of politeness.

Nighteye’s light shifts in surprise, before it smooths over once more. “How do you know?” He asks, voice flat.

“I can... See certain things, with my quirk.” Izuku replies, voice low, assessing the situation. The atmosphere took a nosedive, and even the ever so optimistic Mirio feels concerned. Nighteye hums, before speaking once more, apparently unaffected.

“Mirio, leave us. Me and Midoriya have some things to discuss.”

—

“Now tell me, for whichever reason should I bother employing you?” Nighteye asks, sitting at his desk in front of the already filled form that Izuku handed him. “This office goes by just fine with two sidekicks and one intern student. What, exactly, do you have to offer me?”

Izuku gulps, trying his best to keep both hands still at his sides and don’t fidget nervously with his own fingers.

“I’ve studied your methods, Sir.” He replies, willing his voice to be steady. “You do not rush into action mindlessly— Carefully studied plans are the base of your modus operandi. My quirk allows me to observe and gather a lot of useful info— From the planimetry of a building, to the number of people present and how distant they are, to their feelings and intentions— I can even feel when someone is lying to me.” A pause. “And, as you have observed already, I can tell when someone is using their quirk, if they have an emitter or transformation type. I believe that my abilities will prove useful for your work.”

“Mh.” Nighteye doesn’t sound particularly impressed. “Are you an empath?”

“...Yes, Sir.”

“A weakness.” Nighteye immediately replies, flat. “Empathic quirks are fickle and empaths can be
very easily overwhelmed and can lose their control at the drop of a hat. A hero’s duty is to stay calm in the face of danger, to be able to take the right decisions when others might fall into panic. Such a risky, unstable quirk is not something that mesh well with said job. Doesn’t sound like something that will prove to be useful to me.”

Izuku barely manages to hold a flinch, staying silent and working his lower lip. Nighteye has a point, but Izuku is becoming increasingly better at keeping his own feelings under control, and there’s so much he can do with his quirk—

“You are not wrong, Sir.” Izuku admits, slowly. “But— I’m working hard to refine my control over my quirk, and I believe that working under your guidance will help me doing so even more. If you could be willing to give me a chance—“

“Why should I?” Nighteye stands, circling the desk. Izuku turns his face up, at the light looming over him. “Seems like you will be the only one to gain something from this internship. And—” A moment of silence. “You’ve failed to show me your willingness to make other people smile. Wasn’t that one of the things you said to Mirio? That you wanted to make other people smile? Because, let me tell you, you are doing a lousy job of it.”

Izuku frowns, fingers nervously picking at the fabric of his pants. Nighteye is a stone wall, unmoving and unaffected, and nothing Izuku could possibly say would manage to even chip through the concrete surrounding his heart—

Nighteye sighs. “As I imagined, All Might took a wrong decision. Despite the fact it was his right to choose his own successor, he has done it hastily and without really thinking in depth about it.”

At that, Izuku eyes widens a bit. He didn’t say anything about All Might so far, and yet Nighteye is the one to bring up the word ‘successor’—

All Might said that he and Nighteye did not agree about some things—

**Was one of those things me?**

“As I thought, Mirio should’ve been the one to inherit One For All.”

The silence that fell on them was so thick Izuku could feel it in his mouth, as oxygen comes to lack
for a second. His heart dropped to the floor, pain and surprise a mix in his soul. “Mirio senpai…?”

“I simply cannot understand—” Nighteye says, almost sounding as if he’s talking to himself. “I cannot fathom what All Might’s intentions are— But let me make something clear.”

The way he spoke, voice low and yet clear, clinical, not an inflection in his tone, was unnerving. Nighteye continued, uncaring. “All Might should’ve seen that there was someone much more worthy to receive his power. I do not acknowledge you in the slightest.”

That stung like a knife in his back. Izuku had years to familiarize himself with the sensation of being nothing but a blip in other people lives, something that would be easily forget the moment you’d take your eyes off said blip— But this was different.

Nighteye felt as if he completely acknowledged him as a person, and had absolutely no qualms in dismantling him piece by piece.

Izuku got so used to being surrounded by people willing to help him overcome his shortcomings that this sudden wall in his path felt jarring— And yet, something in his stomach boiled. The need to show Nighteye wrong, that All Might’s decision wasn’t rushed or not thought out. The need to show him he will be worthy of All Might’s trust.

The need to show him his assessment of Izuku was completely misplaced.

“You say this—“ Izuku started, slowly and controlled. “You say you think my quirk is a weakness. That you cannot understand All Might’s intentions— But that is not the truth, isn’t it?”

Nighteye feels surprised, for a single second. Izuku continues. “I think you are just testing me. And I think you are lying to yourself. I think you are grasping for something to shield yourself with— And that you understand why All Might took the decision he took perfectly well—“ A pause, Izuku’s voice lowering. “I think that, at the end of the day, you just don’t want to admit to yourself just how much you truly miss him.”

Nighteye’s light is completely still, a soup of conflicting emotions suddenly rising in him like a wave during a storm. The moment lasts but a handful of seconds, before the calmness smoothes him over once more as he takes a deep breath.
“Mirio, come back in.” He says, voice louder, surprising Izuku. The door opens, Mirio senpai’s indecisive light entering once more. “He’s hired.”

Izuku gapes, shocked, as relief washes over Mirio’s light, that exclaims a cheerful. “Ah, that’s great! Congratulations, Midoriya!”

Nighteye has moved back to his desk, and Izuku heard the thump of the stamp being pressed on the document, before it’s being handed back to him.

“Let’s make something clear.” Nighteye says, voice low. “I still do not acknowledge you. But you have demonstrated that you can be of use to this office, even though you do not have a single ounce of humor in you—“

“That’s not true—“ Izuku replies, his traitorous mouth moving before he can stop it. “It’s not like I lack humor, but a lot of people don’t like my blind jokes. They don’t see the point.”

There’s a long second of silence, before Nighteye releases the tiniest little chuckle, Mirio laughing heartily from the door.

—

Mirio senpai’s good mood about Izuku’s successful attempt at getting hired seems to last well into the day. Even as they went for their first patrol together in the afternoon, after Nighteye gave him a briefing about the current case his office was investigating, regarding the yakuza group that called themselves ‘The eight precepts of death’ and the man that was the head of the group, Chisaki.

Mirio had been more than happy to introduce Izuku to the basics, after he admitted to him that during his week with Gran Torino he ended up not having a chance to go for a real patrol. He was much more experienced, and Izuku drank it all up as they walked in the streets side by side in their costumes.

That was until something picked Izuku’s attention. A small light, completely drenched in fear and despair and pain, not far in the distance. When he stopped, Mirio turned to him.

“Deku?” He asked, perplexed, using his hero name since they technically were on the job. “Is everything alright?”
“No.” Izuku replied, voice low. “Follow me—“

He didn’t wait for Mirio’s answer, turning to take a left, and Mirio followed him, confused.

“Someone’s in trouble.” Izuku explained to Mirio’s unasked question in a low voice. “I can feel someone’s light completely plunged in fear— I think they might be very young? They are coming this way—”

He took another turn just after putting a finger on his lips, signing to Mirio to keep silent. Mirio hummed his understanding, following closely as Izuku took another turn and then stopped at an intersection, leaning down on his knees just in time to catch the little light that was running desperately right toward them.

Mirio’s light was shook by a surprised ripple at that, immediately turning worried. The little light hiccuped and sobbed in Izuku’s arms, astonished by their sudden appearance, but not any less terrified and suffering. It stung at Izuku’s heart, the depth of this pain and fear, coming from someone that was clearly just a child, as small fingers immediately closed on Izuku’s costume, frantic—

“Don’t be afraid.” Izuku said, soothing, putting a gentle hand on the child’s head, tentatively releasing a sense of calmness with his quirk, hoping to help them a bit. “I’m Deku, and this is my friend, Lemillion. We are both heroes. We can help you, I promise— What’s your name?”

“E-Eri—“ The child replied, her voice tiny. Izuku’s attempt to soothe her seemed to be working, even if just barely. “I— Please take me away— Please—“

Another light was approaching, and Izuku wasted no time in grabbing her and rising back to his feet, Eri held firmly in his arms. She circled his shoulders with little hands, trustful, a shred of relief washing into her.

“We have to go.” Izuku whispered, and in front of Mirio’s faint indecisiveness he added. “Now.”

Mirio turned resolute at that, putting a hand on his shoulder, firm, guiding him away. For every each step they took, Eri’s light seemed more and more relieved as she hang onto Izuku for dear life, making Izuku feel both a sense of dread and reassurance in noticing he definitely took the right decision in wanting to remove this child from whichever situation she was running away from—
“It’s ok, it will be ok.” Izuku kept whispering to her, gently rubbing her back. “Me and Lemillion are here with you, now, nothing bad will happen to you, I promise, I promise—“

It was heartbreaking how, despite the small smudge of hope and relief, her light was still plunged in a darkness so deep Izuku could not believe it was even possible to feel.

*Just what happened to this poor girl, to make her feel like this?*

“Excuse me.” Came a male voice from all the way down the alley, after the light they attempted to get away from closed in much faster, turning the corner. “Where are you going with my daughter?”

—

Mirio launches a tiny look to Midoriya at his side.

The little girl was hanging so tight on his costume her knuckles were white. She paled as soon as the man called for them, if that was even possible, curling against Midoriya even more. She was already pale to begin with, her long, silver hair making her look like a ghost.

A terrified, clearly hurt ghost.

Midoriya’s face turns a bit ashen, too, at the voice, his gloved hands tightening a bit around Eri’s small frame, as if he’d rather die than let her go. A frown immediately took place on his face, his pale eyes turning just a bit toward Mirio as if he was trying to convey something.

*Danger,* they seem to say.

Midoriya’s expression smooths over in a forcefully blank one as they both turned. Mirio could only thank the year of experience he had under his belt, working for Sir, for the fact he manages to keep his composure despite the fact they were face to face with none other than Chisaki himself.

*He said his ‘daughter’. This young girl is Chisaki’s daughter—*
“I’m sorry, sir, we mean no harm.” Midoriya says, voice firm. “We just so happened to stumble into Eri and she seemed troubled— And, well— It’s a hero’s duty to help those in need, isn’t it?”

“Mh.” Chisaki sniffs from under his mask. “You two are heroes, huh— I never saw you before, are you rookies? Which office are you affiliated with?”

“We are just students on a field training!” Mirio intervenes, plastering a smile on his face. “Sir, you have quite an awesome mask, could you possibly be a member of the Eight precepts? You guys are quite famous around these parts, I heard!”

Midoriya seems to go a bit tense for a second, and Mirio saw out of the corner of his eyes his tiny, jerky nod. *Message received.*

“Do not pay any mind to the mask, I’m quite sensitive to dust.” Chisaki replies, amicably. “Thank you for trying to help my daughter, but I assure you there’s no need. You know how kids are, she just ran because I scolded her. You can let her go, now, young hero.”

There’s a long, tense moment as Midoriya hesitates. His hands are firm around Eri, and she’s still hanging to him desperately, her face pressed against Midoriya’s shoulder. Mirio saw it, the tears pooling in her wide, terrified red eyes through the strands of long hair.

“Seems like she’s really upset—“ Midoriya says when the silence is reaching it’s breaking point, forcing a smile on his face. “Maybe I can soothe her a bit, if you won’t mind, sir? I’m quite good with kids—“

“A very generous offer, but I won’t want to waste your time. I’m sure such young heroes as you must be very busy.” Chisaki takes a step forward. “Come on, Eri, you don’t want to *trouble* these kind, young men, now, don’t you?”

There’s something Mirio cannot pinpoint in Chisaki’s voice, but that still manages to freeze the blood in his veins. And he knows it’s not just an impression, because Eri goes absolutely still in Midoriya’s embrace for a second, before she forcefully pushes against him to get down on the floor. Midoriya stumbles forward, forced to lean down as to don’t drop her on concrete, and she turns away from them, running toward Chisaki.

Midoriya clutches at the air, looking as if someone ripped a piece of his soul out of his body.
“She’s always like this—” Chisaki sighs, taking her hand with his gloved one. “Thank you for your help, heroes. Good day.”

And with that, he disappears into the dark alley with Eri, her little shoulders slumped as if she’s carrying the weight of the world on them.

Midoriya doesn’t speak the whole way back, only asking Mirio if the man they met was Chisaki, his tone of voice suggesting that he knew already and only wanted confirmation. When they met with Sir and Bubblegirl at a corner near the office, it has started to rain, the thin but insistent drops rapidly
making their hair droopy. Sir listened to the recounter of their meeting with Chisaki and the girl he called his daughter, silent.

“We had no other choice but to let her go.” When Midoriya speaks, his voice is low and bitter. “Chisaki— He went completely murderous— He would’ve killed us. Eri must’ve known, that’s why she run back to him. She did it to protect us, even if she was absolutely terrified—“

A heavy silence falls on them, as Midoriya angrily swipes his wrist against his eyes. Sir doesn’t comment, looking just barely on a side as if giving him a moment of privacy.

“I understand your frustration.” Sir says in a low voice. “But this information is another piece of the puzzle we can snap into place. Hopefully, our investigation will soon bear some fruits.”

“I don’t know if this can help, but I pinned her—“ Midoriya says, rough, and he must feel their confusion because he quickly adds. “It’s— A thing I’ve been practicing recently. I can leave a trace of energy on people, like a pin on a map, and that allows me to ‘feel’ them in my radar at all times. When they get out of my range I can still feel in which direction they are.”

They all blink at him, the three of them. Bubblegirl looks thoroughly impressed, and even Sir’s eyes seem to regard Midoriya with a certain amount of curiosity.

Despite how terrible the whole situation is, Mirio cannot help but feel a tinge of proudness in himself. He knew Midoriya was going to be a good match, with Sir Nighteye.

“I understand. Mirio, you go with Bubblegirl and finish your round. Midoriya, come with me, let’s see where this ‘pin’ in your radar leads.” Sir says, practical, adjusting his glasses. “You must follow my orders at all times, as this might be very risky, are we clear?”

“Yes, sir.” Midoriya replies immediately, determined. Mirio gives him a brief shoulder squeeze, a silent encouragement, that Midoriya seems to pick up as he nods back, and then they part ways.

——

Toshinori gave up any pretense of being casual and has straight up decided to sit down by the stairs leading to class 1-A dormitories. The sun has long disappeared into the horizon, only a deep red tint hanging on as the last rays leave place to the dark blue of the night.
He suspected young Midoriya might stay the whole day out, in case Nighteye accepted him into his office, which is already a reassurance. He would’ve surely come back sooner, had he been rejected.

But still, he can’t help but be worried by the fact the boy is running so late already on his first day. If Toshinori has learned something in the months he spent with young Midoriya, is that his young pupil is pretty much a trouble magnet. Once he’d graduate and go pro he’d surely be one of the most efficient heroes out there, if only for the fact that he didn’t had to search for problems: the problems just went straight for him.

It takes another good twenty minutes, the evening fully enveloping them, before young Midoriya finally comes back, cane in a hand, the suitcase with his costume in the other. His expression is pinched, clearly troubled. It doesn’t seem to bode well.

Toshinori stands, walking to meet him halfway. “Young Midoriya.”

The boy blinks, surprised, and the ghost of a smile passes on his lips for a second, before leaving space back to the worried little frown. “Hey— Did I accidentally turn toward the teachers’ accommodations?”

“No, no, I was just waiting for you—“ Toshinori chuckles as the boy stops in front of him when he gently pokes his foot with the cane. “I wanted to know how your day went.”

Midoriya props the cane against his own body, before dragging a tired hand on his face. “It was… Intense.” He says, voice carefully measured. “Actually, I’d like to ask you something, since you are here— Can you give me a minute to put down this stuff, first?”

“Of course.” Toshinori concedes, and the boy only nods, walking past him to disappear in the dormitories. He comes back a mere three minutes later, sans costume, still clutching at his cane. Toshinori puts a hand on his shoulder, a quiet sign he’s near him, and they walk side by side down the stone pawed road, silent.

Young Midoriya looks pensive, his mouth a thin line. Toshinori gives him time, as he’s clearly mulling over his words.

“Mirio senpai.” He finally says, voice low. “Was he the person meant to receive One For All, at first?”
Toshinori blinks, holding the sigh he feels rising from his chest. “Did Nighteye tell you?”

“It… Came up at some point.” A pause. “As we were... Discussing the details of my possible employment.”

A lot seems to be crammed into that sentence, and Toshinori suddenly feels like he’s playing a game of word-jenga. He hums, thoughtful, bidding a few seconds as he mulls over the way young Midoriya worded his response.

“…He was a possible candidate, yes.” Toshinori admits, slowly. “I contacted principal Nedzu, with the intention to search for a successor between UA’s students, and between all, young Mirio seemed to be a promising one. But that was before I met you.”

He steals a glance at the boy. His expression is blank, pale eyes pointed forward, but the tight grip on his cane betrays his nervousness.

“Mirio senpai is strong, and smart— He would probably be able to do a lot of good with One For All.” He murmurs. “You… You fought with Nighteye over this, didn’t you.”

It’s not quite a question. Toshinori hums, confirming his suspicion.

“Why?” Young Midoriya asks, pained. “If both principal Nedzu and Nighteye considered senpai a good candidate, why did you—“

“When my master choose me, She—“ Toshinori sighs. “She told me something that stayed with me. She told me that she saw something in me— And she couldn’t put this feeling into words, it wasn’t something logical, nor rooted in a calculated decision. She just saw something that made her think I was the right choice.” Toshinori nervously licks his lips, before adding. “And the same happened to me. When I met you, I just knew— Nighteye is a grounded, rational person. He could not understand this gut feeling I had.”

The boy frowns, pale eyes moving as he’s deep in thought. Softly, Toshinori adds. “I never, not even once, regretted my decision. I just know that you are the best person to handle One For All— And I have no doubt you will be able to prove it, as you grow more and more.”
At that, the boy’s shoulders slump forward with a sigh, and he drags a tired hand on his face. His
gesture made Toshinori think he might be drying tears, but when the boy takes his hand away his
eyes are dry, if glinting with a strange, intense light.

“That’s not the only reason you fought with Nighteye, though, didn’t you?” He asks, softly.

This part, at least, is something they already went through. Toshinori doesn’t like to linger on the
memory of young Midoriya’s shutdown, before they even knew about the empathic side of his quirk — But at least, this time, he should be prepared.

Not that touching upon this topic will make things any less painful.

“No.” Toshinori admits, careful. “You know of Nighteye’s quirk.” The boy nods, so he continues.
“He… After my fight with All For One, six years ago, Nighteye urged me to retire, but I refused.
The wound I sustained was severe, as you know, and he— He saw my future. He saw that if I kept
going down the path of heroism, I… He said that I would clash with a villain, and that I would not
come out of it alive.”

Young Midoriya stopped cold in his tracks, eyes going wide. Toshinori turned to him, slowly, as the
boy’s mouth tensed in a thin line.

“That’s why you told me you didn’t know if—“ He says, voice rough, but trailing off, unable to
complete the sentence.

“Yes.”

“How… How long?”

“Nighteye’s visions aren’t clear the more in the future they go.” A sigh. “He estimated six or seven
years.”

Young Midoriya flinches, both hand nervously clutching at his cane as his face points downward.
His expression twisted as he clearly tries to reign in the tears that are pooling in his eyes. Toshinori
covers the short distance between them, putting a gentle hand on his soft hair.
“When he told me that, I accepted it.” Toshinori says, carefully. “Because I knew, it was easy to just… Run forward. And then, the battle at Kamino Ward happened and I— I could not use One For All anymore, and All For One was standing there, gloating, before dealing the killing blow, and I thought ‘this is it’. I was in peace, because I knew that I left my power in good hands, and that you kids would be taken care of—“ A beat of silence. “But then you were there.”

The boy blinks, turning anguished eyes up to him.

“You changed my fate.” Toshinori adds, voice lowering. “You challenged Nighteye’s visions, which have always been infallible— And in that moment, I knew I wanted to keep on living. And then what you mother said to me, I— You changed everything.” A little sad smile pulls at Toshinori’s lips when the tears spills down the boy’s cheeks. “Now, I don’t want to run toward that fate anymore. I want to grab it in my own hands, and destroy the future Nighteye saw for me. I want to keep living, for you, and all your classmates.”

Young Midoriya sobs, stepping forward as he let his cane drop on the floor, both arms circling around Toshinori’s waist firmly. Toshinori takes him in, gentle, a small sigh shaking his frame as he leans down a bit to envelope the boy in a hug.

“Nighteye was right about many things, and that’s why, after our fight, I cannot bring myself to face him, out of shame—“ Toshinori whispers. “But what he saw in my future, and his rejecting my decision to entrust One For All to you— They are things that I know he’s wrong about.”

Young Midoriya nods against his chest, sniffing. Toshinori doesn’t add anything else, just standing in the embrace, carding his long fingers through the soft curls, consoling. When he seems to have calmed down a bit young Midoriya takes a small step back, looking up at Toshinori with still wet, pale eyes.

“So Nighteye wanted you to retire to avoid this fate, and you two fought when you refused—“ He says, voice rough. “That’s… I think I definitely understand some things, now.”

Toshinori blinks. “Like what?”

The boy seems to take some seconds to think, frowning. “You and I are more alike than I thought.” He says, only adding to Toshinori confusion, but then he adds. “It’s like looking in a mirror— I’m scared of confronting Kacchan and our shared past, just as much as you are scared of doing the same with Nighteye.”
Toshinori groans at just how spot on the sentence seems to be, which drags a little, raw chuckle out of Midoriya, but then his expression smoothes over.

“I— I won’t pretend to tell you what to do, nor to know what the right choice is—“ He says, careful. “I’m just a kid, but— If I have to be honest, I think you should speak with Nighteye, he—“

The pause seems to endlessly stretch, before young Midoriya adds in a low voice. “He just misses you a lot.”
There were many things that Izuku felt, upon waking up Sunday morning.

The dread and weight on his heart at the fresh memories of Eri’s light, just how pained and terrified she was. Nighteye’s rough, deep melancholy that emerged in him whenever the topic came close to All Might. The other half of a truth that he already knew, and that never stopped to hurt.

When they came back, the evening prior, Mirio senpai’s hand had been gentle on his shoulder.

“This was certainly a rough first day, but you did all you could.” He said, kind. “Sir will find a way to save her, I promise. And you will be right there, when the day will come.”

Izuku thanked him, grateful for the honesty in his words. They parted ways, setting an appointment for the next morning to meet up and go back to their now shared office, feeling just slightly more hopeful.

All Might added to that hope, too. Their little discussion had been painful, but All Might admitting his decision to challenge fate had been so uplifting— To know the man wasn’t just willingly and knowingly walking toward a certain death anymore, but wishing to fight and live.
When Shouto came back, almost close to the curfew, they didn’t really had time to talk. Izuku was bound to secrecy anyway, not having the permission to speak of the investigation Nighteye was pushing forward, and Shouto was absolutely exhausted by the training course, so they pretty much fell asleep in each other’s arms right away, sharing Izuku’s bed once more. When he woke, Shouto’s presence by his side was enough to lift a bit of the wariness Izuku felt, as he took the liberty to gently brush his fingertips along the rough texture of Shouto’s scar. Shouto groaned himself awake as his own alarm rung from Izuku’s nightstand, where his phone was sitting. They shared a silent but comfortable breakfast, and, if they spent some minutes just cuddling and kissing before parting ways for the day once again, no one really had to know.

There were a lot of things plaguing Izuku’s mind, that Sunday, but the idea that what was happening to him might actually happen, was not one of them.

They went for another patrol, he and Mirio senpai, much like the day prior. And much like the day prior something went wrong, like a chain of events neither of them could’ve predicted.

A series of yells and screams went off in the distance, Mirio immediately snapping into action, urging Izuku to follow him. Izuku did, and would’ve kept following, if it wasn’t for the fact that a light nearby, in his radar, suddenly spiked with terror. Izuku stopped at that, and didn’t had the time to warn senpai as he kept running forward, quick, getting lost in the noises of the city and the panic far from them.

The light Izuku felt was absolutely terrified, surrounded by a small group, and Izuku hesitated for all of two seconds before taking a turn. Mirio could take care of what was happening in the distance, Izuku would catch up later, he couldn’t just leave when he knew someone was in trouble—

He approached carefully. Something was off. The group was murmuring in voices too low for Izuku to hear, and none of them seemed to release outright aggression, but despite that the terrified light just kept being terrified. As Izuku tried to asses the situation from behind a corner, a woman sobbed.

“P-Please… Let me go… I have a s-son…” She pleads.

“Nothing against you, m’aaam—” A male voice replies, slurred. “We gotta do a job for ‘da boss— Now just follow us and be niiceeee and I promise nuthin’ will happen to you—”

Izuku focuses. It wasn’t easy to tell, but it seemed that the terrified woman was kept at knife point. Gritting his teeth, Izuku steeled himself, silently activating One For All.
The group surrounding the woman was small, just three people. If he intervened quickly enough he might be able to take them down before they had time to react. He took in a deep breath, before springing into action.

But something went wrong. He felt the surprise in the lights as soon as he made a dash for them, and he was so close to hit one of them before Izuku’s head spun violently and he felt like the ground was suddenly made of jelly. His balance went completely out of whack and he ended up rolling on the sidewalk, his senses going haywire.

“Ah-ah! Got ‘em! Lil’ fish came riiiiight to us before we could even cast the net—” The slurred voice says, with a little laugh. “Shin!”

Izuku tries to stand and mostly fails, his head still spinning, absolutely confused as one of the lights steps forward.

“Your name is Izuku Midoriya, and yesterday you met Overhaul and his daughter, Eri. Am I right?” Another voice asks, flatly.

“Yes—” Izuku replies, the word out of his mouth on its own volition. It took him a second, through the confused haze of his spinning head, to realize that both men were using their quirks on him.

“It’s him.” The second voice adds. “Let him go, Sakaki.”

As sudden as it came, the lack of balance disappears, allowing Izuku to finally climb back on his feet.

“Let’s make something clear.” The second man, presumably Shin, says. “If you try to attack us again, this woman dies.”

The terror in the woman’s light and her whimper is enough to convince Izuku they are serious.

“So, if you follow us silently and don’t try to do anything funny, we’ll spare her. Do you understand?”
“Yes.” Izuku replies once more, feeling like he had no real control over his mouth. Shin used his quirk again, as he posed the question.

*Must be some kind of truth-forcing quirk.* Izuku realizes, silent, as the third light that had no voice nor name yet shoved him rudely forward when they start to move. As they walk, Izuku shifts his hand ever so slowly, stopping whenever it felt as if any of the three enemy lights were observing him. It took him far longer than it should, but Izuku manages to slip his hand into his pocket and, with memorized, practiced gestures, activate the recording app on it. He had no idea what these men’s intentions are, and hopefully his phone signal would pin-point his position to both senpai and Sir Nighteye. If Izuku managed to collect some info in the meantime, it’d be all the better.

—

They walk for what feels like an eternity, the still terrified woman letting out little broken sobs every now and then. Izuku is extending his quirk as much as he can without drawing attention to himself with the beeping red light, completely focused, memorizing every single details he could of the path they were taking and the surrounding area.

He’s already fairly familiar with the district, having made a point of studying it, yesterday, as he and Nighteye went on their little reconnaissance mission. But now he’s literally burning it into his mind. If these men were leading him to Chisaki, Izuku might be able to gather some really useful information.

It comes to no surprise when Chisaki’s now familiar light blips into his radar, and even less so when they finally stop in front of him.

“Got ‘ya the boy, boss!” The slurred man says, sounding almost drunk.

“Young hero.” Chisaki greets him, almost amicably. “You are quite an interesting one, and also a whole lot of trouble. You see, after my daughter met you, yesterday, she started throwing even more tantrums. As you can imagine, I cannot have this.”

Izuku does not reply, standing still, hands closed into fists at his side.

“I’ve decided to look up some info about you— So, are you really blind?”
When Izuku refuses to reply once more, Chisaki sighs. “Shin, if you please.”

“Are you blind?” Shin asks, and as Izuku imagined the “Yes.” came out of his unwilling mouth yet again.

_Truth forcing quirk— This is bad, this is really bad— I have to twist the truth, somehow—_

“They get infected younger and younger, these days.” Chisaki sighs again. “I wonder how you move so easily, especially considering your quirk seems to be some kind of strength enhancement— That’s your quirk, isn’t it?”

Izuku refuses to reply, thinking feverishly. Technically, it is, so if he hangs on this, on the thought that a quirk he has it’s some kind of strength enhancement, he—

“Is your quirk strength augmentation?” Shin asks, without the need to be ordered, and Izuku feels relief wash over him as he answers “Yes.” once more.

_Yes, good brain, keep them on a info diet—_

“So, how do you move, since you are blind?” Chisaki sounds almost interested and Izuku fakes a little, resigned sigh, hopeful to lull them into a sense of security, before answering.

“My support items.” He says, sounding forlorn, poking at one of his amplifiers. “They help me orientate myself.”

“Silly boy, hanging to the ideal of ‘heroes’ to the point of challenging your own limits so brazenly.” Chisaki says. “Toya, take them away. Let’s remind the kid why he was born the way he was.”

The third man, that hasn’t spoke a single word so far, seems to activate his quirk, and Izuku hisses when suddenly his scope abruptly tightens around him, as both his amplifiers seems to disappear off of him in the time of a blink.

Despite being involuntary, the hiss seems to help Izuku’s case, as they must all think he’s completely blind, now.
“This is why you should’ve stayed put, and not butt in your nose in other people’s affairs.” Chisaki adds. “Now, fully blinded once more… Tell me, Midoriya Izuku, do you still want to play hero? Do you still want to ‘save’ Eri?”

Izuku doesn’t need Shin intervention to growl a sincere. “Yes. Absolutely.”

The men around him chuckles, as if they find the concept funny. Chisaki seems to take a moment, his hum muffled behind the mask.

“Well, it’s your lucky day, then, because I’m bringing you to her.”

“What?” Izuku exhales, unable to contain his shock.

“you see, hero, you left such an impression on her that she’s been unmanageable since yesterday—“ Chisaki says, sarcastic. “So I promised her I would bring her a new toy, to keep her calm. See, I’m not a thoughtless father, aren’t I? I’m going to bring my daughter a shiny, new gift to distract herself.”

A shiver run down to Izuku’s spine, as one of the man, Shin, put a rough hand on his arm, grip painful, jerking him forward.

—

They searched him, taking his phone and belt away from him, tossing them somewhere. They didn’t seem to have noticed he was recording and Izuku was hopeful the object might be recovered, with a bit of luck.

Shin kept his painful grip on Izuku’s arm for the entire trip, as Izuku pretended to stumble into things more than a couple of times, selling his presumed blindness some more. In the meantime he kept focusing, committing to memory every single road, nook and cranny.

If they are really bringing me to Eri— If I can make a fast enough escape with her— I might be able to use the surprise factor, and make a dash with One For All— If they think I have no way to orientate myself they might let their guard down—
Izuku was not surprised once they walked back into a familiar series of road. Because he knew them already, as they were clearly directed to Chisaki’s mansion, and Eri was there, too, just as she was yesterday when Izuku showed Nighteye— The mansion that he has thoroughly studied already, along with Nighteye, the day prior.

A place he knew deeply, at this point, despite everything. They stopped in front of it for a minute, some new lights taking the still sobbing, terrified woman away. Izuku could only hope that they’d keep their word and not harm her, at this point—

They guided him down, in the clearly secret floors under the main body of the mansion. They were being careful, too, forcing Izuku to take needless detours and spin him around, clearly making sure he couldn’t memorize the twist and turns properly, unaware of the fact Izuku had already pretty much memorized the place down to a t. Izuku forced a confused, lost expression on his face, playing the part of the blind lost guy. It was a challenge to keep said expression on himself, when they finally approached the room Eri was kept in.

The loud sound of a heavy, steel door being opened fills the air for a second, and Eri’s light turns shocked when they step in.

“See, Eri, I told you I would bring you your new friend.” Chisaki says, flat. “He will keep you company from now on. And as long as you keep being a good, obedient girl, nothing will happen to him. Am I clear?”

Izuku has to force himself really hard not to punch Chisaki in the teeth. Threatening the poor girl like that—

“Y-yes—“ Eri hiccups, tears clear in her voice.

Izuku is violently pushed forward, and his stumbling is not pretended, this time. He falls on his knees, incapable to stop himself from turning back toward the little group of men, angrily baring his teeth.

“This is why I can’t stand this youth, infected with the hero syndrome—“ Chisaki sighs. “Despite everything, I can tell you will be trouble, if we leave things as they are.”

Izuku hears rustling, and then Eri crying a loud “NO!” right before a bang. Something painfully
stings on Izuku’s neck, making him hiss and tense, and then in a matter of seconds his radar seems to fade off, leaving him in utter darkness, completely out of Izuku’s control.

“There, now your super-strength quirk is gone. Shin, please make sure to have some men take his costume away and to restrain him appropriately.” Chisaki says, uninterested. “Since you wanted to help Eri so much, Midoriya, I’m giving you the chance. You can be her little doll. Enjoy your stay.”

The heavy steel door closes as Izuku tries and fails to turn his radar back on, heart beating in his throat. What did Chisaki mean? What he said—

Little arms circles Izuku’s shoulders, as sobs wrecks Eri’s slim frame against him, snapping him out of his rushed train of thoughts.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry—“ She murmurs, desperate, her little voice barely understandable through the sobs. “This is all m-my fault—“

He tries to turn his radar on once more, but nothing happens. It feels like there’s nothing anymore, in him, where that distant feeling of his quirk has always taken place ever since he turned it on consciously for the first time.

Chisaki said that his quirk was gone—

*Izuku’s quirk is gone.*

And as the implications of what this means crushes on Izuku, he can’t help but gently hug the young girl back with shivering arms, while she desperately cries on his shoulder.

He gulps, as his breath becomes shorter and panic threatens to fill his head.

*An hero’s duty is to stay calm in the face of danger.* Nighteye reprimands him from a corner of his mind. Izuku takes a series of deep breaths, counting to twenty, slowly, still hanging tightly to Eri.

Having gained back a resemblance of calmness, he calls to something else, and immense relief washes over him when he realizes that, even if his radar somehow seems to be gone, he still has One
For All.

“Eri.” He murmurs, rough, barely loud enough to make sure only the girl would hear him. “This is not your fault.”

“But I— I—“ She sobs, shaking her head against him. “I’m so sorry—“

“It’s ok. You have nothing to be sorry for. This is not your fault.” Izuku whispers again, carding his fingers through her long hair. “I will get you out of here. I promise.”

Her breath itches in her chest in surprise, her little hands tightening on Izuku’s costume. Izuku grits his teeth, as the last lingering feelings of panic leaves him, giving way to a quiet sense of anger for what these men have done to Eri. For this disgusting attempt to manipulate her through Izuku—

He will not let it happen. He will save this girl, this time.

“I promise.” Izuku repeats, voice firm and unwavering.
A new ride on the pain train is starting choo choo motherfuckers

As usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
Ochako’s first day working for Ryukyu’s office had been quite something else.

Both her and Tsuyu had been extremely grateful to the woman for giving them a chance, as much as they were toward Hadou senpai, that has been so kind as to introduce them to her. The battle they ended up getting involved into was nothing quite like Ochako had experienced yet, and she felt a tiny bit proud of herself and Tsuyu for the way they fought side by side, capable of keeping calm and collected as a hero should.

They ended up coming back to the dormitories fairly late, way past their curfew, although they thankfully won’t suffer any consequences as they were excused due to their internship. Ochako yawns as they silently steps in the communal area and she blinks, surprised, when she notices Todoroki sitting on one of the couches, reading a book. His face was pretty beat up, a bruise on his cheek and some bandages on the bridge of his nose and his chin. He looked up as the door opened, hopeful, and despite the tiny flash of disappointment in his eyes as they entered, he still gave them a brief smile, welcoming them back.

“Midoriya hasn’t returned yet, I take in?” Ochako asks, not having any difficulty imagining why Todoroki looked disappointed for a second.

“No.” He sighs, scratching his head. He put down the book, rising to his feet. “Kirishima hasn’t come back, either. Do you want some tea?”

“No, thank you, I think I’ll go straight to bed. I’m beat.” Ochako replies, yawning again.

“I would like a cup, before going to sleep.” Tsuyu says instead, with a little ribbit. “Thank you, Todoroki.”

He nods at her with a tiny smile before going for the kitchen, not before wishing goodnight to Ochako. She answers in kind, waving at the both of them.
As soon as she slips in her bed she falls asleep instantly.

When she wakes she still feels a bit tired, but it can’t be helped. She probably will miss lessons in the future, due to the internship, so she really can’t afford to skip school when she’s not out there at work. She sleepily slides in her school uniform, and when she gets downstairs she sees that most of her classmates are already there, having breakfast. Kirishima is surrounded by an excited little group, chatting loudly about his first day of internship. Before Ochako could approach them to listen in, curious to know what Kirishima was up to, yesterday, Todoroki appears from behind her, a frown on his face.

“Good morning!” She says, out of habit, before adding. “…Is something wrong?”

“Izuku isn’t in his room.” Todoroki replies. “I went to bed pretty late, yesterday, but he still hadn’t come back when I did. And I can’t find him anywhere.”

“Oh…” Ochako blinks, feeling a little sting of worry in her chest. “I’m sure there’s nothing to be worrying about! I mean, if he came back so late maybe he ended up working on something big. Maybe he’s reporting to All Might or Aizawa-sensei, right?”

Todoroki sighs, carding a nervous hand through his hair. “I… Guess you are right. I’m probably just worrying too much.”

They eat breakfast side by side, some classmates excitedly showing her the articles that popped up overnight about her and Tsuyu’s fight, yesterday. But despite what she said and the distractions that came her way, she can’t help but feel something dark squirm in her stomach. A feeling of dread, biting inside.

_You’re just a bit stressed after your exciting day, yesterday, don’t be ridiculous. She tells herself. There’s nothing to be worrying about._

---

It became clear, soon, there was a lot to be worrying about.

That dread only grew stronger as the day went on, and Midoriya’s desk stayed empty. Aizawa-sensei didn’t show his face, either, and neither did All Might. Present Mic seemed to have picked up the
role of homeroom teacher for the day, during their afternoon exercise with 13 at the U.S.J., and
despite his usual, loud attitude it was clear to Ochako that he was keeping something secret.

They were sitting in the communal area, having pushed two tables together to have enough space for
the whole class to sit face to face. The only one missing, Midoriya aside, was Iida, that took onto
himself to go to the teachers’ office and see if he could gather some info about what was going on.

“Midoriya’s doing his internship with Nighteye, right?” Sero asked, as he kept sliding a finger on his
phone. “I can’t find anything in the latest news regarding that area— Doesn’t seem like anything
happened, yesterday, just a little accident that involved some cars, but—“

Todoroki, sitting at her side, is looking down at the table, head resting on a nervous fist. He’s clearly
tense, strained, his shoulders a harsh line, fingers drumming restlessly against the wood. Ochako
really can’t find in herself any word to try comfort him. The both of them are very aware of the way
Midoriya seems to attract trouble to himself like a magnet.

When the entrance door opens, they all turn, holding their breaths. Iida enters, Aizawa-sensei by his
side. Iida looks pale, eyes casted downward under the lens of his glasses, a crease between his
eyebrows.

Aizawa-sensei doesn’t look any better. He’s pale as well, the dark circles under his eyes, more deep
than usual, suggesting he didn’t get a lick of sleep, the past night.

“Midoriya has currently been declared missing in action.” Aizawa-sensei says with a low, tense
voice, not bothering with preambles.

Shouto is pretty sure he either couldn’t remember how to breathe anymore, or that a hole has opened
in his heart.

The whole day he had this unpleasant sensation somewhere in his chest. This feeling of uneasiness,
that he tried and failed to stifle. It only grew and grew as the day went by, as Izuku’s phone did not
ring when Shouto tried to call him, as his texts went unanswered.

It became so heavy, this feeling, that Shouto had to focus on breathing as the entire class sat around
the tables, discussing and trying to guess what could’ve possible happened. He had to focus, because if he didn’t he just felt like his lungs stopped working.

After Aizawa-sensei’s declaration some of his classmates shoot up from their chairs, voices and questions raising with them. Aizawa-sensei holds a hand up, immediately gaining back silence.

“As this is an open case that’s being investigated, there’s much I cannot tell you.” He says, deadly serious. “So listen me well: We have reasons to believe Midoriya is alive, and that those responsible for his disappearance want to keep him as such. For the time being we are sure no harm will come to him, and various pro offices are collaborating with the police to find and rescue him as quickly as we can.” Aizawa-sensei takes a moment, his voice turning a bit softer. “I know it is frustrating, but this is all I’m allowed to tell you. I am personally involved in the investigation, and I promise you everything possible is being done to find him. For now, I have ask you all to please keep calm and don’t do things that will put you in trouble, or even jeopardize the operation. Am I clear?”

Shouto doesn’t need to ask to whom Aizawa-sensei is talking to. He might as well have stepped right in front of Shouto and told him straight up to don’t do anything idiotic. A frustrated, general murmur of “Yes, sensei.” replies to him.

“We will keep you informed if something changes. For the time being, Present Mic will cover my duties whenever I will not be available. That’s all.” Aizawa-sensei sighs, carding a hand through his long, messy hair. “I have to go, now. You all, stick together.”

When he leaves, Iida stands in the same position for a few seconds, before moving, tense as a violin string. He steps near Shouto, that feels as if he’s frozen on his chair, looking down at the floor but not really seeing it. His heart is beating painfully in his chest, cold sweat collecting on his forehead.

*He’s missing. He’s gone. He might even not really be alive anymore—*

Iida’s hand softly lands on Shouto’s shoulder, snapping him out of the terrifying train of thought that was filling his head with a heavy, murky feeling.

“I’m sorry—“ He says, voice barely above a whisper, fingers gently squeezing.

A knot immediately form in his throat, at that. Because suddenly it’s real, Iida saying that *made* it real. And as Uraraka sat back down by his side, circling him in a tight hug, her face pressing against his shoulder, all Shouto could do was to stay there, silent, a shocked buzz filling his mind.
Izuku is gone.

——

A sort of sad acceptance seemed to have taken place into Toshinori’s heart, as he climbs the stairs. Maybe it was the fact he was supposed to go to the office in the first place, although for very different reasons.

Young Midoriya gave him a lot to think of. And what he said regarding Toshinori’s fear of facing his and Nighteye’s past had been nothing but the simple truth.

Toshinori was supposed to be a role model for his young pupil—Or, at least, it was the way he felt. He wanted to be a role model for him, and his refusal to face his shame, especially after he kind of pushed Midoriya toward the idea of reconciling with young Bakugou, felt more than a bit hypocritical. That’s why during the morning, after watching Midoriya and Mirio walk away side by side, the both of them directed to Nighteye’s office, he forced himself to found the courage to pick up his phone and send a message.

(He was still a giant chicken at heart, in the end. He could’ve called, but at least sending a text was a small step forward—Much better than nothing.)

Nighteye answers had been clinical, as usual, but he accepted Toshinori’s offer to come by his office the day to follow. He spent most of Sunday squaring himself at the thought, and by evening he felt almost ready to face Nighteye the day to come. And then the call came in.

When he knocked on the door, a young woman opened to him, her face grim. Toshinori knew her, although they’ve never met before. She was Bubblegirl, one of Nighteye’s sidekicks.

“Mr. All Might!” She rushes to say, her eyes widening in recognition. “Oh—Welcome—Please, come this way, Sir is in his office—” She adds, sounding halfway between tenseness at having met him and sadness for what was happening.

“Thank you.” He replies in a low voice, following the woman down a corridor. When he enters, the first thing he notices is young Mirio still in his costume sitting at a desk, elbows resting on it, fingers crossed. His expression had nothing of the sunny, joyful vibe he seemed to usual emanate, eyebrows scrunched, eyes dark. For what little he’s been told on the phone, it’s not hard to imagine why the young man looks so upset.
It stings at Toshinori’s heart, to see such an expression on him.

Right after, Toshinori’s eyes found Nighteye’s other sidekick, Centipeder, also looking contrite, although it’s not very easy to recognize emotions on his bug-like features— And then Nighteye himself, standing near Centipeder.

He looks up when Toshinori enters, and despite the fact that his serious features haven’t changed a bit since he last saw him, the pain is clear in his eyes. He walks up to him as Bubblegirl steps away, giving them space.

“All Might.” He says, voice low. “I— I’m truly sorry for what happened, I should’ve looked at him before sending him for the patrol, I—”

He immediately falls silent when Toshinori puts a careful hand on his shoulder, meeting his eyes.

“Nighteye— You don’t have to justify yourself. This is not your fault.” Toshinori murmurs. “We all know the risks of this job. Young Midoriya, he— He’s accustomed already to the sort of dangers that this life offers. He’s, by all means and purposes, a semi-pro, right now. You aren’t meant to hold his hand all the time. Do not blame yourself.”

Nighteye releases a little, shuddering breath, closing his eyes for a moment. He seems to compose himself back, squaring his shoulders. With a nod, the both of them move silently toward the desk where young Mirio is sitting.

The young man looks up, his mouth a thin, unhappy line, eyes slightly wet. He opens his mouth, as if he wants to apologize, but then says nothing, shaking his head to himself as he shuffles a bit to give them space to sit in front of the computer.

“Thanks to Midoriya’s phone signals, we managed to pinpoint his last position and recover it, along with his belt and support items, from down the sewers—“ Nighteye explains, practical, opening a folder on his laptop. “For what I gather, Midoriya must’ve activated the vocal recording app. The phone was busted, but we managed to salvage most of the files. The only file with today’s date is the audio he recorded.”

He clicked play, and they silently listened in. The audio was scratchy and unclear, at times too muffled to make out proper words, but the gist of it was pretty clear: Young Midoriya was
purposefully taken away.

It was unsettling, having to listen in to the cold words of the yakuza gang surrounding the boy, having to listen as he lied through his teeth regarding his support items -*smart, smart boy, doing anything he could to keep his enemies in the dark as much as possible* -. The recording stopped with a loud crash, after the kidnappers must’ve thrown the phone away.

“Mirio recognized one of the voices.” Nighteye says after the audio stops. “It was Chisaki, the head of the clan that calls themselves ‘Eight precepts of death’. I have reason to believe the others might’ve been some of the men that he closely works with.”

“This ‘Eri’ they spoke about—“ Toshinori asks, careful, and Nighteye immediately fills in him into the details of the case, Mirio silent and still by his side.

“It is… Quite a curious reason.” Nighteye comments after a moment of silence, as Toshinori let all the info fully sink into him. “To kidnap the boy, I mean— But at the same time, I can understand. What Midoriya told me yesterday, about that little girl— He said that the pain she carries goes beyond anything he’s ever felt. If she’s so desperate, it’s not hard to imagine meeting someone that immediately picked up on her terror and tried his best to help might’ve left a strong impression on her, strong enough to make her want to rebel.”

“…And if we add this to what these men might perceive as a weakness—“ Toshinori murmurs, a hand on his chin. “They know he’s just a young student, and If— If they think Midoriya is completely blind and thus defenseless— They probably assumed it’d be relatively risk-free to take him away and bring him to her, as a mean to keep the girl calm. But still— Why go to such lengths to keep Eri under control? Why purposefully antagonize us? They must be aware we’d do anything to find him—”

“I guess this is what we’ll have to find out.” Nighteye replies, massaging his forehead. “It’s clear that the girl is an important piece of some sort, to them. I don’t want to delude ourselves, but I have hopes this means that Midoriya will be safe, for the time being. If their intention is to use him as a mean to keep the child calm, they’d have no reason to kill him.”

“…That is unless the boy tries to rebel.” Centipeder says, quiet and forlorn.

“He won’t.” Young Mirio suddenly intervenes, rough. “Midoriya is smart. He won’t act recklessly. I’m sure he’s thinking of a way to free both himself and Eri, as we speak. But still—“ His voice breaks a bit, as his adam’s apple bobs. “We can’t just sit on our hands and wait for him to rescue himself. We have to do *something*—“
It’s almost moving, how much trust he has in young Midoriya after having known him for such a short time. Toshinori searches his face, the clear frustration in his eyes, and then Mirio turns, meeting Toshinori’s.

“I’m sorry.” He murmurs, pained. “This is my fault. I couldn’t do anything to help Eri, yesterday, and today I failed to notice in time that Midoriya wasn’t with me anymore. The responsibility falls square on my shoulders—“

“Don’t say that.” Toshinori replies, gentle. “Things happens, my boy. We can try out best, but there’s only so much we can control. Please, do not let this break your spirit, I’m sure young Midoriya wouldn’t blame you, either—“

Mirio sighs, taking his eyes away. He looks unconvinced, but he does not protest. Nighteye squeezes his shoulder once, before talking again.

“I was already working with Ryukyu and Fatgum on this case, along with the police. They’ve already been informed about this situation. We will group up tomorrow morning first thing, and discuss how to move from now on.”

“We should probably get Aizawa into this, too.” Toshinori replies, pensive. “His talents will be of great help, and young Midoriya is a student of his. He will need to be informed, either way.”

Nighteye nods, rising from his seat. “I’m truly sorry I had to call you in so late, but I thought you needed to be informed straight away.” He says, voice low, adjusting his glasses. “I can have you escorted back, if you need it. Or you can stay the night, if you prefer.”

“I’ll think about it— In the meantime can we… Talk privately?” Toshinori asks, careful. Nighteye seems to take a moment, before nodding.

“Centipeder, could you please drive Mirio back to UA, for today?” He says, turning toward him. Centipeder nods, silent, before putting a gentle hand on Mirio’s shoulder. The young man rose back to his feet, head hanging low, still wearing a contrite expression. He follows without protest, a testament to the kind of discipline Nighteye must’ve instilled in him. Bubblegirl makes herself scarce, too, clearly giving them some privacy.

“…It’s truly unfortunate we had to meet earlier than scheduled, because of this.” Nighteye
comments, voice low, after a long silence. He adjusted his glasses again. A familiar, nervous gesture. “I was pleasantly surprised when you contacted me, this morning. If I can ask, why this sudden change of mind?”

“…Young Midoriya might’ve scolded me a bit.” Toshinori confesses, softly. “And he had a point, so I thought— That, as his mentor, I should set the example. I think you can understand.”

“Of course.” A little, sad smile flashes on Nighteye’s lips. “He is quite surprising, I have to admit. I might’ve been excessively cruel to him, in my need to test him.”

“He’s pretty strong willed. He can take some hits.” Toshinori says, distractedly dragging away a tuft of blond hair from his face. “He seemed to be quite impressed by you, too. I’m glad you accepted to take him under your wing.”

At that, Nighteye’s expression shifted into a darker one, as he shook his head. “And yet, I failed him— Much like I failed you.”

Toshinori flinches at that, a sting of pain in his chest. *He shouldn’t have let so much time pass, he should’ve tried to reach out much sooner—*

“Please, don’t say that. You didn’t do anything wrong.” He replies. “If only, it was me that made mistakes. I should’ve listened to you more, I should’ve been less stubborn—“

They look at each other, a heavy silence falling on them, that gets dispersed when they both sigh in unison.

“Maybe I should go brew some coffee.” Nighteye says, and there’s a small note of affection in his serious tone. “I have the feeling we might talk for a long time.”

—

Ochako stopped mid-way through the stairwell, surprised.

She followed Todoroki when she saw him take the stairs in the dormitories, reflecting about how she
she should approach him— She didn’t want him to be alone, but Todoroki was trying his best to distance himself from everyone. He went through a sort of involution, the past couple of days, reverting back to his old, cold self. The reason was obvious, but Ochako didn’t want to give up— Todoroki needed support, now more than ever, and she wanted to do anything she could to be there for him.

When she kept climbing the stairs, noticing that suddenly Todoroki’s back disappeared from her line of sight, she frowned. She turned back, confused, to climb back down, and then when she got back to the second floor she stopped, taken aback.

Todoroki is standing with his back against the door of Midoriya’s room, head hanging low, hands pressing against the wood behind him. The scene was enough to send a painful jolt through her chest, as if an arrow just pierced her heart. She approaches, careful, stopping a couple of steps away from him. She tries to say something, but words fail her, as she nervously fidget with her own fingers.

“I forgot my literature book in there.” Todoroki says, voice rough and tone flat, not turning to her.

The ‘I don’t have the courage to enter myself’ goes unspoken.

“…I can get it for you, if you want.” Ochako says back after a long silence, low. Todoroki nods, still not looking at her, stepping aside to stand near the little plaque with Midoriya’s name on the wall.

She enters so carefully one might think she’s stepping into a morgue. Midoriya’s room is silent, his bed untouched, and Todoroki’s book is on the nightstand near Midoriya’s clock, as if he was reading it before falling asleep with Midoriya and left it there.

The semi-closed blinds plunge the room into a strange, almost delicate lighting. Every object looks… still, as if they are waiting for their owner to return. She doesn’t linger too much on the details, —Midoriya’s recorder plugged in to recharge, a shirt messily left hanging on the backrest of his chair, a pair of flip-flops, one of which was turned upside down, at the foot of his bed— grabbing the book and then exiting the room. She takes a deep breath once out, turning toward Todoroki. He’s still standing near the plaque, palm sitting on the wall as his index finger silently traces the bumps of the braille letters on it. His eyes are distant, scarily empty, and he seems to take a second to realize that Ochako got out the room, taking his hand away from the plaque as if he was doing something shameful.

“Thank you.” He says, barely above a whisper, avoiding her eyes with his dead-looking ones as he takes the book back. When he turns and walks away, Ochako doesn’t try to stop him.
There isn’t anything, right now, that Aizawa wants to do less, if he has to be honest. Things are bad enough as is— But he has a responsibility to uphold, and so he follows, silent.

They all had to face the music, at some point.

They go down the stairs, the agent that called him and Toshinori ahead of them. Neither of them said a word during the brief walk, and when they open the door and enter after the agent nodded toward the small room, Inko Midoriya immediately turns to them.

Aizawa expected tears, which would’ve been understandable. He expected a trembly voice and despair and fear in her eyes.

What he found himself facing was definitely new.

Inko Midoriya was a short, plump woman, even despite the amount of weight she lost due to stress. The lines on her face —that became remarkably deeper in the really not so long time since the start of high-school— betrayed her age more than anything else. She was hardly an imposing presence, her meek, shy attitude usually making her look as unassuming and unthreatening as possible.

But the person that they were facing, now, was anything but. Both Aizawa and Toshinori found themselves flinching and shrinking in front of this woman that all of a sudden seemed to be made out of steel and contempt.

“I don’t want to hear any more excuses or bullshit about classified information and whatnot.” She says, voice flat. “You sit down and tell me what happened to my son down to every little detail. Now.”

They exchange a little look, the both of them looking like chastised children as they obey, sitting down at the table in front of her as she keeps a piercing gaze pointed at them.

They don’t wast time, filling her in with everything they found out, so far. She doesn’t interrupt, nor asks anything, her fingers crossed on the table, just stares as Aizawa and Toshinori give her an
almost clinical version of the facts, bouncing details on each other every now and then. After they are finally done, a heavy silence falls in the room.

It’s hard to decipher what’s going on in her dark green eyes. She finally uncurls her fingers, palms down on the steel table as she lays against the backrest of her seat with a sigh.

“I guess not much could’ve been done to prevent this from happening, huh.” She comments, voice low and forlorn. In front of their flabbergasted silence she adds. “Oh, don’t make that face, now. I’ve taken my choice the day I let Izuku keep attending UA after Kamino Ward. I accepted the consequences of that choice that same day.”

Maybe, this kind of somber acceptance was even worse than it would’ve been to see her cry and scream. That, at least, could’ve been almost easy to deal with. But this?

The pain of a mother that already reached the tipping point and fully embraced the possibility her son might not come back?

This was not something either of them was truly equipped to deal with.

Aizawa launched a little look at his left, but Toshinori looked just as lost as he felt. There’s was a not small amount of shame in his expression, too, a hint that his self-doubts regarding the choice to trust One For All in Midoriya’s hands never really left him.

“I only ask one thing, of you.” Inko adds, voice low, as a thin sheen of tears glints in her eyes. But, they do not spill. “Promise me you will do anything you can to find him— And the girl, too.” A pause. “I don’t think Izuku will ever forgive us, if we don’t do everything we can to help her.”

—

This feeling was all too familiar. Things moved so fast that, despite the fact it hasn’t technically happened so long ago, the memory felt distant— And yet painfully familiar.

Tenya remembers very well how distressing it felt, to watch Midoriya break down in pieces before their end-of-term exams. How powerless he had been, unable to help his friend, as he watched over him along with Uraraka and Todoroki.
How scary it had been to watch someone you care for become a shadow, an empty husk, under the weight of a truth they weren’t ready to deal with. How enraging his own inability to reach over and offer a helping hand to a friend that tried to do the same for him had been.

It was not the kind of experience he’d like to live once more, and yet here they were.

It was as if Todoroki surrounded himself with a wall. He barely talked anymore, distant and standoffish, much like how he had been at the start of their school year. Only, now, everyone knew it was but a façade, a way for him to try protect himself from something that was clearly cutting deep into his soul.

Things were scarily similar, only with a slight change of role. Now, along with Tenya and Uraraka, Yaoyorozu seemed to have picked up the role of watcher, as they stuck close to Todoroki, trying to make him feel better, even if just a tiny bit. Trying to let him understand that they were there for him. It wasn’t easy, and sometimes Todoroki would give in, silently leaning into the friendly touches, but most of the time it was clear he preferred to keep up his shield.

Sometimes he’d open his mouth, as if he wanted to say something, but nothing ever came out. They all tried repeatedly to coax the words out of him— It would surely help him release some stress, if he spoke about his worries to them, but that seemed something that Todoroki was adamantly keeping close to his chest. Whatever he was feeling, as the hours and then days started to trickle by, painfully slowly, and they received no news about Midoriya’s status, stayed a secret.

Sometimes he’d stare out the windows, tense, and Tenya had the distinct impression that if they didn’t make a point in calling his attention and grounding him, Todoroki might just decide to walk out and search for Midoriya himself, consequences be damned. One time Tenya even reminded him with a soft whisper of what happened with Stain, openly told him there was nothing he could really do, and the burning mix of pain and anger and reproach that flashed into Todoroki’s mismatched eyes at that stirred a deep sedated shame into Tenya’s stomach. Still, Todoroki turned away from the door, the tenseness leaving his shoulders.

Not that the helpless expression that took place on his face hurt any less.

Aizawa-sensei pretty much disappeared, and Present Mic was doing a stellar job of keeping things running smoothly. But the lack of the familiar presence of their homeroom teacher, a trusted, firm figure in their lives, became heavier and heavier as time went by. They all tried to keep their days running as normal as possible, but the weight of doubt would constantly hang over them, like a sword suspended just barely by a thread.
They were all pretty much slowly descending into a sort of frenzied need for infos that could never be found through traditional medias, and no one directly involved with the investigation would tell them anything regarding how the search for Midoriya was going. Tensions were running high, little quarrels exploding every now and then, a sign of just how tense they all were. They usually did a good job of keeping things calm, despite the vast array of colourful characters in their class, despite the fact Bakugou was a part of their class, with his innate ability to antagonize anything that had a pulse.

Mark day five of Midoriya’s disappearance, things just kept rolling downhill. They were all sitting in the communal area after dinner, some at the tables, other on the couches, silent, doing their homework. Todoroki was sitting near the armrest of one of the couches, rolled onto himself with his knees collected against his chest, pale and tired and looking like the world at large slighted him. He was reading one of their literature textbooks, or so he would appear to be doing, if it wasn’t for the fact that his eyes were fogged over and unmoving. He was clearly deep in thought, and Tenya couldn’t help but keep launching little, worried looks in his direction every now and then.

Todoroki looked like he was toeing the tipping point, and Tenya, Uraraka and Yaoyorozu more than once found themselves privately discussing in hushed tones about how worried they all were, in the past few days. About how all they could do, apparently, was wait for Todoroki to break.

How they were pretty much just waiting for the explosion, at this point, since Todoroki refused to speak to them about any topic that wasn’t schoolwork. Something had to give, sooner or later, and for how much it pained the three of them, they just sort of found themselves silently agreeing on keeping an eye out for their friend, ready to support him when he’ll finally crumble under the weight on his shoulders.

What Tenya did not expect was how that explosion came to be.

He hears the soft buzz of Todoroki’s phone in his pocket, that seems to shake him out of his deep musing. He takes the object out, swiping a thumb on the screen. And then looks. And looks.

Tenya hadn’t realized he’d been staring, holding his breath, until the expression on Todoroki’s face turned from that blank, cold one to absolute rage in the matter of a second. He let the book drop, shooting on his feet, surprising and scaring most of their classmates, and before any of them had even the time to ask what happened, Todoroki launches his phone against the wall with enough strength to make it pretty much explode with a loud, crashing noise, turning into pieces upon making contact with the wall, leaving behind a smudged dent against the pristine white. He runs out the dormitory without even bothering to put some shoes, incredibly quick just as they started to rise from their seats at the sudden gesture.

“Todoroki!” Tenya yells after him, worried, running toward the entrance that his friend left wide
open. He hastily put on his shoes, but by the time he managed to run out, Todoroki had already disappeared god only knew where. Cursing under his breath, something he only found himself doing in truly desperate times, Tenya stepped back into the dormitory. Uraraka looks up at him, pale, eyes wide as tears pooled into them. Yaoyorozu was kneeling on the floor, putting back together Todoroki’s phone the best she could. The backplate broke into two pieces and the screen had pretty much turned into a web of cracks. She snapped the battery back into place and tried to turn it on, but the screen only flashed for a second before the phone died again. Most of the class was surrounding them, all of them worriedly hoping to see what made Todoroki snap like that.

Because, in everyone’s mind, surely, there could be only one reason Todoroki would suddenly lose his composure, and Tenya forced himself not to even think about the possibility, pushed the thought back, far, into the depths of his mind, because there was no way— Midoriya was unbreakable, he went through so much and yet always managed to emerge victorious.

*Midoriya was going to be ok. He had to—*

Yaoyorozu shook her head with a sigh, finally looking up with a worried, twisted frown on her face. “The phone’s totally busted, I don’t think we’ll be able to turn it on at all.” She says, rough. “Iida—“

“I’ll go to teacher’s office right away.” Tenya replies, voice cracking a bit on the way out. “Some of you— Some of you should probably try to search for Todoroki—“

Uraraka angrily wipes the tears away from her eyes, features twisting in determination. “I’ll go.”

___

Toshinori froze, surprised.

He came back to UA upon Aizawa’s request. Toshinori had only played a minor role in the investigation, so far, almost a counselor of sort, since he had technically retired from the scenes. Aizawa asked him to accompany young Todoroki and Bakugou at their lesson, tomorrow, along with Yamada.

It was mostly an excuse to send Toshinori back to his accommodation and have him sleep, and Toshinori knew it, but he still accepted. There wasn’t much he could do to help, and the slow, slow process of info gathering was wearing him down. They had too many questions and not enough answers, and the past five days seemed to pass by in a flash and like a slow crawl at the same time,
the worry for young Midoriya eating them away from the inside.

So here he was, walking up toward the teachers’ dormitories, and freezing in surprise when he notices the familiar figure leaning against the wall near the entrance, as if he was waiting.

Young Todoroki turns his eyes up to him. He’s pale, scaringly so, eyes burning with something undefinable. They watch each other for long seconds, and his mouth opens and closes a couple of times, as if words are failing him, before his mismatched eyes fills with tears.

Toshinori’s feels something crash in his chest—Maybe, he can’t help but wonder as he watches young Todoroki’s features twist in pure despair, the tears rolling down his cheeks as his legs seems to betray him and he slides down on the floor, sobbing, this is how a heartbreak feels like.

Toshinori carefully approaches, haphazardly abandoning his little suitcase on a side as he kneels in front of the boy. He hesitates but for a single second, before enveloping him in a hug. Young Todoroki tenses for an instant, another sob wrecks him, and then his trembling arms circles Toshinori’s shoulders as he finally releases all his pain, wailing against him.

—

When he puts down the cup of steaming tea on the coffee table in front of the boy, he still doesn’t move his face away from his knees.

He looks so small, like this, coiled on himself. Like the kid he truly is, at the end of the day. Toshinori feels the need to put a gentle hand on his head, to card his fingers through the mismatched hair as he can so easily do with young Midoriya—

But Todoroki is not his young pupil. Despite the fact he clearly came to him for help, the boy hasn’t spoke a single word ever since the sobs shaking him finally subsided, nor when Toshinori gently helped him stand and guided him inside, to sit on the couch in his own apartment.

So he refrains. He has the feeling the long hug they shared as Todoroki cried his heart out was all Toshinori could ask of him, for the moment. So he sat by his side, leaving just enough space not to brush against him whilst making him feel that he was close. That he was not alone in this.

“I wish to be able to bring you good news, but I’m afraid not much has changed, so far.” Toshinori
murmurs when it became clear Todoroki will not speak on his own. “I’m truly sorry.”

The only answers he received is a little sniff. The silence ticks by, as slowly the steam stops rousing from the cup that Todoroki has yet to touch.

“I shouldn’t have come here—“ The boy finally murmurs, voice rough and muffled.

“Please, don’t say that—“ Toshinori immediately replies, concerned. “I will be glad to help in any way I can, my boy, you know that.”

“Yes.” Todoroki murmurs, finally raising his head a bit. Under his messy bangs, his eyes looks bloodshot and still wet. He looks angry. “That’s the whole point. You would immolate yourself, if it meant you could help.”

Toshinori blinks, confused. It’s clear this is a conversation he’s not fully equipped to deal with. Of course young Todoroki is extremely upset by the disappearance of Midoriya, but—

There’s something more, here. Something Toshinori is not aware of.

“It’s… I’m admittedly a bit lost, here.” He decides to opt for honesty. “Just… Anything you need, you can tell me. I’m here for all of you students.”

Slowly, the boy turns to him, his mouth turning in a way that suggest he’s just about to start crying again, but he doesn’t.

“I completely lost my control—“ He murmurs, pained. “I— I was already running thin, with Izuku being—“ His voice breaks a bit, and he closes his eyes, taking a deep, trembly breath, before continuing. “And then of course he had to have the worst timing in the world and tell me that he wants to come attend my lesson, tomorrow—“

“…Who?”

“My father.” At that, the boy’s eyes shifts away, his frown deepening. “I don’t want to face him, tomorrow, I— Things sucks enough as is. I just can’t stand the thought.”
That’s… Really not surprising at all. Toshinori already had an inkling that the relationship between Endeavor and his son was strained, at best, after what Endeavor told him during the sport festival, after witnessing how young Todoroki clearly refused to use his left side until Midoriya came and dismantled that wall.

The boy telling him this only makes him thinks that ‘strained’ is not quite the right word. It’s clear that something is deeply, severely wrong between father and son.

He will have to dig a bit deeper into this, but now it’s not the moment. Young Todoroki is already miserable as is, and doesn’t need to be put under an cross-examination by Toshinori, for now.

“I understand.” He murmurs, reassuring. “I was tasked with accompanying you and young Bakugou to your lesson, tomorrow, along with Present Mic— I can stall him, if you don’t feel like seeing him. Would that help?”

Immediate relief seems to take place over young Todoroki’s face, although it doesn’t quite manage to erase the deep pain that seems to have taken permanent residence in his eyes. “Yes, please.” He exhales.

“I will be doing that, then.” Toshinori reassures him, and when he puts a hand on his shoulder, the boy doesn’t retreat. “My boy— I’m sure you are already going through a rough time, so I will not ask— But I want you to know that if you need to talk about anything, *anything at all*, my door will always be open. Ok?”

“Ok—“ Young Todoroki whispers, eyes searching Toshinori’s face. After a long pause, he adds. “Can you really not tell me anything about Izuku…?”

Toshinori’s frown deepened, as he sighs. “There’s nothing I wish more— But I’m afraid not.” He murmurs, honest. “The investigation it’s still going, and we are gathering info, but the people responsible for young Midoriya’s disappearance are very careful. We cannot risk making any move and endanger him, until we are one hundred percent sure where to hit. I’m sorry.”

A fresh wave of tears collects in the mismatched gaze, but they don’t spill. Todoroki nods his understanding, his mouth a thin line. He turns away, hands shifting to hug himself almost childishly. He takes a long moment, before shifting again to take the cup of now lukewarm tea between his slightly shivering hands, taking a sip.
Only when he’s done drinking, he murmurs. “I should go back to the dormitories. I—I must’ve scared my friends. They are probably very worried.”

“Do you want me to walk you back?” Toshinori asks, low and gentle.

Todoroki nods, adding a tiny. “Yes, please.”
All Might ends up only having to walk him outside the teacher’s dormitory.

As soon as they get out the door, they meet Uraraka, clearly worried. She probably came here in search of help, seeing how pale and upset she looks. Her breath itches in her throat, and she runs up to them, crashing Shouto into a hug with a little sob.

“Are you ok? You scared the crap out of us—" She exhales, her voice broken, not letting him go. “What happened?"

The questions seems to be addressed to the both of them, rather than just Shouto, and in that moment he realizes just how his little freak out must’ve looked to the rest of the class.

None of them have any idea of his relationship with his father, Izuku is the only one— Izuku, that’s still missing, making Shouto feel like his soul is being torn apart. A pain that’s clear to everyone’s eyes.

And Shouto freaked the fuck out in front of them. Which kind of conclusion they must’ve reached, seeing Shouto react in that way?

“I’m sorry.” Shouto murmurs, gently pushing her a bit as to look in her eyes. “I— Um— I got some bad family news and I— I guess that was enough to push me over the edge—“

“Oh—“ Uraraka says, blinking, her eyebrows twisting in worry. “Oh, Todoroki, I’m so sorry—“ She surprises him when she put a gentle hand on his cheek. “Are you— Well, you are obviously not ok, but—“

“I’m— A bit better.” He knows that she will understand what he really means. “I’m sorry, I must’ve scared you all— You probably thought that something happened to—“ He trails off, unable to finish that sentence as a knot grabs at his throat.

“It’s ok, don’t worry about it.” She promptly replies, a little, sad smile pulling at her lip. She takes her hand away after that, and Shouto is surprise to realize how much he wanted that contact to stay where it was. She takes out her phone. “If you want to come back to the dormitory, I— I can tell the others to give you space, ok?"

“…Thank you.” He murmurs, before turning to All Might. “And— I guess I will see you tomorrow,
sir. I can go back with Uraraka.”

All Might nods, blue sunken eyes glinting with a smudge of affection through the fog of worry the man must be battling with. “Ok. I will be seeing you tomorrow.” He says, gentle, before adding a little. “Try to sleep a bit.”

Shouto can only nod back, as does Uraraka when All Might meets her eyes. She hooks an arm around Shouto’s as they turn to walk back, silent for a bit while she sends some texts.

“…Your phone is utterly destroyed. Momo tried to salvage it, but there was very little she could do.” Uraraka suddenly says, subdued. “I’m sorry.”

“I don’t know why you are apologizing, it’s my own fault—“

“Todoroki— You know what I mean.” She sighs. “I wish you could’ve confided in us, instead of bottling everything inside until you couldn’t anymore.”

Shouto doesn’t reply, hanging his head low. Uraraka’s arm, still hooked around his, drags him a bit closer.

“I’m serious.” She whispers, pained. “We are friends, aren’t we?”

“Of course.” Shouto murmurs, unable to meet her eyes.

“I know everything is horrible, right now, and I won’t offer empty platitudes.” She continues, when Shouto doesn’t add anything else. “But at least you can share this weight with us.”

The words arrive like a punch in the chest, cutting his breath off for a moment. His traitorous brain whispered to him, a pale imitation of Izuku’s voice.

*So, please, from now on, remember that you can lean on me, that I’ll help carrying that weight, ok?*

He closes his eyes when the tears stings in them, threatening to fall once more. It’s like everything
around him is dead set onto triggering the memories of his voice and his touch and his presence—
Memories that left him breathless and in pain every time.

He just wanted to crumble down and scream. He just wanted to hug Izuku once more and never let
him go ever again.

“I miss him—“ He sobs, broken, the tears winning the battle again, falling down from his eyelashes.

“I know.“ Uraraka whispers, sounding on the verge of tears herself. She turns, guiding him in a hug.

They stood a long time on the stone paved path, only the sound of rustling leaves around them as
they quietly cried in each other’s arms.
Kirishima turned, surprised, when Ochako called out to him.

“Oh— Are you out too, today?” He asks, attempting a cheerful tone and mostly failing. None of them have been able to really let go of the worry in the past five days, not even for a minute, and Ochako can see it in Kirishima’s eyes the same she can see it in everyone’s gazes. She attempts a smile and miserably fails, as they fall by his side, walking toward the main gates.

“Me and Tsuyu got called for so kind of meeting by Ryukyu— And you? On duty, today?”

“Apparently there is something Fatgum wants to discuss with me and Amajiki senpai.” He answers with a shrug. They walk in silence after that, directed to the train station. It was early enough that the last traces of the morning rush hour still showed, with late students hurrying to their respective schools and business men nervously glancing at the time on their phones. Ochako blinks, surprised, when Kirishima hops on the same train as them.
“I thought Fatgum’s office was in Kansai?” She asks, curious.

“He told me we are meeting at like, a police station? Wait, I don’t remember the address—“ He fishes his phone out of his bag, reading the address to her. Ochako turns to Tsuyu with big eyes, that tilts her head on a side.

“That’s the same place we are going.” Tsuyu says with a little croak.

“Wha— No way.” Kirishima replies, blinking. “Maybe— Could it be that Fatgum and Ryukyu are working at the same case? He told me he was collaborating with other pros on something—“

“Ryukyu told us we might be able to work at a special case—“ Tsuyu continues. “She never explained exactly what. This might be it.”

They spend the rest of the way discussing in hushed tones, trying to imagine what the case could possibly be by sharing their own experiences on the job, but by the time they arrive at the nondescript building, they still have absolutely no solid idea.

But something becomes immediately much more clear as soon as they enter in the big room that’s already full of pros. Ochako gasps, heart painfully beating in her chest when her eyes find a certain someone.

“Aizawa-sensei?”

The man turns to them, blinking. He looks rougher than usual, his already usually unkept stubble even more out of control.

“So they called you in, huh.” He says, low.

Ochako turns just slightly, meeting Kirishima and Tsuyu’s eyes. They look just as aghast as she feels, the realization of what Aizawa-sensei presence could possibly really mean crashing into them.

Aizawa-sensei’s steely gaze softens, as he nods toward another set of door down the room. “Let’s go. There’s a lot to talk about.”
The amount of info that was unloaded on them made Ochako’s head spin.

There was so much to unpack— This yakuza group, the quirk-erasing drug they seems to be producing— The fact that they might be making said drug out of a poor girl’s body—

The girl that Midoriya and Mirio senpai met, and could not manage to save.

The girl that seemed to be the reason for Midoriya’s disappearance.

It was sickening, the thought that people out there were capable of such cold, heinous acts. To torture and use a poor child for their own gain. Was it any wonder that Midoriya had been so desperate to help her that he went along with his kidnappers without even putting up a fight?

She felt like crying, as Nighteye played the recording for them. At the steel in Midoriya’s voice as he fed lies to their enemy, and the coldness in Chisaki’s.

Nighteye filled them in down to every little detail, with all the info that had been gathered so far. Sitting at the desk closer to him, Mirio senpai never looked up from it, not even once, his expression a mask of barely contained anger. It was unsettling, seeing such a controlled fury on his face, after Ochako witnessed firsthand his usually joyful attitude.

“We had reasons to believe both Eri and Midoriya are still kept in the secret dungeon under the mansion, but couldn’t confirm it for a while.” Nighteye says, putting up a detailed map on the whiteboard with the projector. “We have been closely observing every movements around it, and not even once the girl has been seen. Midoriya pin-pointed her position in this room—“ He zoomed in. “—The day before he got kidnapped. And if they wanted to take him to her, we assumed he could only be there, too.”

He takes a moment, adjusting the glasses on his nose. “With a bit of luck, I was capable of looking into the future of one of the men working for Chisaki, last evening—‘ He says, voice low. “And I witnessed him bringing some food to Eri in her room— I saw a glimpse of Midoriya, too.” A pause. “At this point, I think we have enough information to make our move. With every day that passes the risk that they might decide to get rid of Midoriya grows stronger. We must act now.”
“I agree that we cannot wait anymore.” The man that introduced himself as Rock Lock intervened, severe. “But… Is it a good idea to involve the students? For what I gather, they have personal stakes in this, don’t they?”

“Exactly because of that, we must give them a chance to fight!” Fatgum intervenes, heated. “Kirishima has shown me more than once that he has the right attitude— And for what Ryukyu told me of her two new interns, these young girls also have what it takes to help carry out a plan! Not to mention how uplifting it will be for Midoriya to have his friends there, after days of being held captive. I have no doubt these young heroes will be a great addition to the operation.”

“I do not agree, but I guess the decision is not between my hands.” Rock Lock replies much calmer, with a little sigh. “What if we—“

Whatever he’s about to say gets interrupted when a police agent barges into the room, panting.

“Midoriya was seen escaping from the mansion with the girl—“ The agents says, frantic. “He’s on the move!”

The situation is more than a little tight as they squeezed in the police van. Fatgum immediately takes the wheel, Nighteye crammed by his side, as Aizawa, Ryukyu and all the intern students sat in the backseats. Fatgum was a skilled, experienced pilot, so Aizawa left the driving in his hands as he leaned over to observe the laptop sitting on Nighteye’s legs, Togata Mirio doing the same with a dead serious expression on his face.

Communications kept cascading in as they drove well above the speed limit, getting closer to the area of interest, the agents reporting any sight of the boy. Nighteye murmurs under his breath, adding all the positions Midoriya seems to be passing by on a map.

“One of our agents tried to stop him, but Midoriya attacked immediately—“ The voice came once more through the radio. “He’s too fast!”

“He attacked?” Ryukyu wonders, worried. “Why— Could he maybe be under some sort of control? We don’t fully know the range of quirks the members of the clan have at their disposal, after all.”
There’s a moment of silence only filled by the rumble of the engine going full force in the background, before Kirishima intervenes from the back with a low voice, frowning deeply.

“I— I don’t think that’s it— Since he’s escaping with Eri—“ He says, sounding worried. “But… If you think about it— They might’ve used that quirk-suppressing drug on him. It would be a logical step— I mean, if I was a villain it’s what I would’ve done—“ A pause. “And if they did use the drug on him, this means Midoriya might be truly and fully blind, right now, in what he knows is enemy territory. He has no idea who he can trust.”

“Of course.” Nighteye agrees, distractedly, putting down other pins along the map. “Mirio, look at this.”

The young man leans in even more, frowning as he examines the series of pins, before realization seems to dawn in his eyes.

“He’s trying to get back to the office—“ He says, breathless.

“The one place he knows he will find allies. I agree with Red Riot. ” Nighteye adds, grim, picking up the radio receiver from the dashboard, to communicate to the other pros that were driving right behind them. “Right now we have to assume Midoriya is trying to get to my office— He cannot use his quirk and is fully blinded. He is desperate enough to attack anyone that tries to approach him and Eri— We’ll have to be careful!”

Fatgum took a speedy curve, jostling them rather violently. As soon as they managed to find back their balance, a new report came in.

“Chisaki and his men have been seen on the move, too, right now—“ The agent reports, voice like steel. “They seems to be chasing Midoriya and Eri.”

“Damnit—“ Aizawa hisses under his breath. “Fatgum—“

“On it.” Fatgum replies, angrily, stepping on the gas some more.
There’s the stench of burned wheels when they pour out of the vans in front of the police agent frantically waving her arms at them, stepping into the street as the last civilians are being hastily evacuated. The destruction seems to be going straight for them, little columns of smoke rising in the air like a series of signals that led right to that street.

Midoriya suddenly emerges from an intersection all the way down the road, frantic, the little girl firm in his arms, her small hands hanging onto him desperately. He’s barefooted, blood and dirt stuck to the soles of his feet. He’s wearing a nondescript pair of grey sweatpants and a faded black shirt that clings on him, drenched in sweat, countless bruises rising all along his arms and on his pale face. There are blood stains on his left thigh and right shoulder, too, the cloth ripped where he clearly took some hits. Desperation is painted all over him as he runs, weak flashes of green lighting rising along his body.

Chisaki and a large group of his men follows after a handful of seconds, impossible to mistaken with anyone else, with their masks. Chisaki is yelling something, furiously, impossible for them to hear, too far still despite the fact they all made a dash toward the boy, that’s right in the middle of the two groups— Pro heroes in front of him, villains behind him.

Suddenly, Chisaki slams his palms on the concrete, that rises under the boy’s feet. Midoriya trips and falls, losing his grip on Eri that rolls forward with a cry, away from him.

“ERI—“ Midoriya yells, anguished, rushing back up on his feet, an arm stretched toward her—

The asphalt shifted once more, turning into a deadly, pointed spike that pierces right through Midoriya’s chest, surprise passing on his face for a second, before his eyes seem to get foggy and his expression goes slack.

He doesn’t make a sound, a silence so deep it seems to be enveloping them as they watch the spike retreat, leaving behind a bloody hole in his chest. He falters a couple of steps forward, blood suddenly rolling down from his slightly parted lips, before he falls without a single noise.

His arm is still stretched forward, as if he wants nothing more than to reach the horrified girl kneeling just a couple of meters in front of him. But when she crawls up to him, sobbing, and takes his hand, he does not move.
Chapter End Notes

I'm sure a lot of you (probably most) must be confused by this chapter's title so [here you go](#). I remembered I have a [witscrib](#) profile! And as usual you can find me on [tumblr](#), and on [twitter](#).
Just as Chisaki asked, someone came back into the room soon enough, ripping Izuku away from Eri’s terrified embrace and forcing him down to strip his costume off of him — they stopped for a second when they took the upper part of the costume off, probably surprised by the scarred skin covering his back —, putting on him what felt like just a normal pair of soft pants and a t-shirt. They obviously took the shoes with the iron soles Mei made for him, too, leaving him barefooted. Not only that, cuffs were placed both on his wrists and ankles, the chains long enough to give him some freedom, but still short enough to hinder his movements.

He tried to fight back, at first, out of instincts, biting down on a hand near his face. The man cursed and slapped him strong enough to make his ears ring.

“Don’t you even fucking try—“ Another one spat out. “Unless you want us to also slap little Eri?”

After that, he could only accept his fate, pliant under the rude hands on him. The encounter couldn’t have been longer than five minutes, but after they thrown him on the floor and closed the heavy door once more, Izuku needed a moment to catch his breath, cheek stinging painfully.

It didn’t take long for the small, gentle fingers to tentatively brush on his face.

“I’m sorry—“ Eri says, her voice barely a whisper.

“Not your fault.” Izuku replied, slowly climbing back on his knees. He had the feeling he and Eri would have this kind of exchange a whole lot, in the future. But it didn’t matter, he’d repeat those words over and over and over, until he was sure that the girl understood none of this was her responsibility. “Are you ok?”

Only silence follows, and suddenly Izuku understands their first big obstacle. A girl this scared, she’ll probably rely more on body language than she would on spoken words. Izuku had to make things clear, and fast.

“Eri, I have to ask a big favor of you.” He murmurs, kindly. “I know it’s hard, but I need you to talk
to me. I— I’m blind.”

The girl makes a quizzical noise at that, before asking with a tiny voice. “What… Does that mean?”

*Oh boy—*

“It means that I can’t see— My eyes don’t work like yours.” Izuku explains, softly. “Close your eyes — When you keep them close, you can’t see anything, right? That’s how it is for me, even when I keep them open.”

“Oh—“ She exhales, surprised. “Isn’t that scary?”

“A little bit.” Izuku admits. “But it’s ok, I’m used to it, you know? So, don’t worry about it— But because of that, I can’t see you if you nod or shake your head at me, that’s why I need you to talk, ok?”

“Ok, I understand.” She replies, her voice a little steadier. “I’ll try.”

“Thank you—“ Izuku sighs, before carefully climbing back up on his feet. “Can… You tell me where we are?”

She probably stands, too, tentatively taking his hand. “It’s my room.” She says, timidly. “It’s where I live almost all the time.”

Izuku hums, letting himself get guided when she pulls him a bit. The chains rattles on him as he moves, and he carefully keeps his free hand in front of him as much as he can, the chain not allowing him to reach too far, fingers soon enough colliding gently with something soft. Probably Eri’s bed. Izuku hears rustling after she let his hand go, she must be climbing on it, and he carefully sits down on the edge of the mattress, taking a deep breath.

He has so many things to think about, right now, he feels absolutely overwhelmed. He needs to calm down and put order in his thoughts, think of a plan to get Eri and himself out of here as soon as possible—
“You shouldn’t be here.” Eri murmurs, her little voice broken, snapping him out of his daze. “It’s because I told Overhaul that I wanted to see you again— Because I misbehaved—“ Her voice trembles and she trails off with a little sob.

Izuku is pretty sure his heart just shattered.

“Oh, Eri, no—“ He murmurs, gently palming forward to find her and kindly squeeze her hand. “No, don’t ever, ever think that— None of this is your fault. You just wanted a friend, didn’t you? I understand, you know? When I was little I didn’t had friends, either, and it always felt so lonely— I will be happy to be your friend.”

“…You are not angry?” She whispers, amazed.

“Of course not.” Izuku immediately replies. “I’m glad to be here with you, Eri. I will do anything to make you happy, ok?”

She sniffs, and soon enough the familiar little weight of the girl is back on his chest as she hangs onto him in a desperate hug. Izuku gently envelops her a little awkwardly due to the chains, fingers carding through her long hair.

He has so, so much he needs to do, and he will need this girl’s help in order to get the both of them out of here alive.

But for the moment, he let her cry against his chest, murmuring little reassurances to her. She deserves that much, at least.

—

He waited for the night to come, before carefully starting to introduce his plan to Eri.

They spent a couple of hours in silence, mostly. The poor girl practically stapled herself at his side, not wanting to move away even when Izuku asked her if she wanted to do something, if she wanted to play with him, or anything of the sort— He felt her shaking her head against his own body, and then after a couple of seconds she vocalized a little “No, thank you.”, probably remembering what Izuku asked her.
She was such a kind, smart girl— Izuku promised himself he’ll make Chisaki spit his teeth with his own hands, even if it was the last thing he would be able to do.

He took the time to think, to reflect upon what he must do. First step: info gathering. He would need Eri’s help with that, ask her to tell him anything she could— If she knew how many people there were in the mansion, which kind of quirks they had, if there were specific guard times and rounds, any habit and patterns she could recognize— It was a lot, and Izuku knew it, but he was trustful that, if he explained properly, Eri would understand and be able to give him any information she could.

The lack of his radar was a huge wall in their way, and he would need to take a few days to properly prepare, at least. If they were lucky, they might be rescued by pro-heroes in that time frame, and if they weren’t— Then Izuku would at least have the time to work out a proper plan, before having to bust himself and Eri out of their prison.

Secondly, trying to understand why his radar stopped working. In retrospect, thinking back to that moment, whatever hit Izuku on his neck felt prickly, like a syringe— Maybe some kind of quirk-inhibition substance. He had no idea if the change was permanent, or not. Hopefully it wasn’t— But if it was… Izuku would still need to escape, and once out he could decide what to do.

-He could always pass One For All to Mirio senpai and leave UA— The mere thought was so painful it made his entire soul feel like crumbling down, but he guessed that could not be helped. He pushed the idea in the back of his mind, he’ll cross that bridge when the time would come.-

Third, lull their enemy in a false sense of security. It was imperative to make them think he was totally harmless, and hopefully that would make them lower their guard. He must keep One For All hidden at any cost, no matter what, until they were to make their escape.

With at least that foundation of a plan in mind, Izuku kept quiet and calm, distractedly petting Eri’s hair whenever she nuzzled against him in search of affection. Time crawled by at a snail pace, and at some point the door opened again.

“Stay there and don’t make any move, boy.” A new voice said, menacing. “I’m going to leave dinner on the table.”

Izuku obeyed, a frown on his face. He could feel the man’s eyes on him and he silently waited for the door to close again, before releasing a little sigh.
“C’mon, you should go eat.” He nudged the girl, gentle, and she moved away from him. He felt the little slap of her feet hitting the floor.

“Are you not going to eat? There’s enough for both of us.” She asked with a tiny voice.

Frankly, the mere idea made him nauseous. His stomach had pretty much turned into a knot for the past few hours— But he knew he had to save as much strength as he could, so he nodded, and slid off the bed, carefully palming forward in the unknown space. Eri seemed to catch up right away, and she took his hand, guiding him. She sat close to him and guided his fingers around the plastic chopsticks, and for how unpleasant it was, Izuku forced himself to gulp down the bland-tasting food.

Not long after, someone got back in to take the tray away and ordering them to go to bed. Eri seemed to be clearly used to this as she obeyed right away, and Izuku followed her example, not seeing any need to raise a fuss for something like this. Lying in the presumed dark, Izuku finally took the first step toward his plan.

“Eri.” He whispered. “Listen. I need you to talk really softly, ok? I have some questions for you, if you want to answer them.”

Eri hummed, so Izuku continued. “First of all, I want to ask you: Do you know if there’s something in your room? Like, cameras or microphones, or anything like that?”

She seems to take some time to think, before whispering back. “I— I don’t think there are.” She says.

Izuku hummed. He couldn’t take her answer at face value, she might not be aware if her room was bugged— It wouldn’t be surprising if the people keeping her captive watched over her in secret. “I have to ask you a big favor. Tomorrow, I will need you to take a look around your room and see if you can find anything like that. Can you do it for me, please?”

“Ok.” She immediately answers, timid.

“Thank you.” Izuku continues. “Also, I will need your help if we want to escape. I know it’s very scary, but I know that you are brave and smart, that’s why I have to ask you this. Do you think you can do it?”
“...Yes.” She says, faint. “I’d do anything for you, Deku.”

He smiles, sadly, even if he’s not sure she can see him, finding her with a gentle hand, petting her hair. “I will always be by your side from now on, so whenever you are scared remember that, ok?”

She shuffles closer to him, putting her head under his chin. Something pokes at Izuku’s cheek, and he carefully explores it with his fingers.

Feels like some kind of... Horn?

“Ok, I can be brave.” She says, softly.

“I know you can.” Izuku murmurs, affectionate. “The most important thing that I need, for now, is to know as much as I can about the people around you. I understand there are a lot of things you have to think about, but if you can tell me, here’s what I’d like to know...”

—

The days blended into one another, despite the fact Eri and, consequently, him, were subjected to strict times for anything.

Strict times to wake up and go to sleep. Strict times for meals and bathroom breaks. Izuku complied, silent, making himself as small and unthreatening as possible whenever he’d get dragged out Eri’s room. He’d force himself to walk slowly and unsure, stumble more than he needed to, to act as feeble as possible.

Just a scared, blind child.

He forced himself to shiver anytime someone touched him, as if he was absolutely terrified. He forced himself to keep his head down and his expression unhappy, as he truly focused on listening in to whatever scrap of conversation he could whenever he’d get guided down the damp corridors.
Izuku never met Chisaki again, the man not even bothering with him since he had his underlings keeping an eye on Izuku. Multiple times a day, Eri would be ordered out of her room and he’d be left behind, alone. In those moments he couldn’t be sure if someone was keeping an eye on him or not, but whenever that happened he curled up in a ball in a corner. Sometimes he faked sobs, face hidden between his knees, when he felt a presence near.

*Make them think you are nothing but a little, scared kid. Something easily crushable. Make them think they have nothing to fear from you. Make them think you are pliant, docile, that you would never even consider defying them. The more they think so, the easier it’d be to hit them where it really hurts when the time will come—*

And sometimes he’d get dragged out, too, when Eri was forced to leave. At least once a day he’d be ungracefully guided in a room just down the corridor, kept firmly pressed against a cold, steel table and injected with something. After that they would ask him questions about his quirk, his work at school, about himself, assessing him. He gave them whimpered half-truths, enough to don’t raise suspicion, not enough to give them pieces to put together. It seemed pretty much an exercise in physiological warfare more than an actual need of info, on their part, anyway. Most of the time they never even seemed to care about what he had to say, just having fun beating him up for the sake of it.

And Izuku took it without even trying to fight back, letting the tears flow freely. He did not care of showing weakness in front of them, it was pretty much his mission to make himself appear weak, so he never tried to resist the need to cry out at the hits, to cower away from them like a terrified child. More than a couple of times he lost consciousness when they hit his back strong enough to recall that old pain that never really left him.

He rapidly collected bruises along his body and, despite how uncomfortable and painful they were, Izuku never let out a single lament when he was back with Eri, even when she would notice some new signs on him, apologizing profusely for something she had no responsibility for, no matter how many times Izuku assured her that he was ok, that it was not her fault.

His mind pretty much went at full speed during every waking moment he had. He went over and over and over through the memories of the mansion’s layout he studied with his radar, along with Nighteye, of every single street surrounding the area. He planned routes in his brain, going through his internal map so many times he was sure he would never forget these streets, even in his old age.

With One For All, he could be able to quickly escape from the mansion with Eri, and if he kept it up, if he could be able to follow these routes he planned— He could reach Sir Nighteye’s office.

The idea of trying to search for a police officer as soon as they escaped crossed his mind, but he rapidly discarded it. He knew that the clan was very influential in this area, and Izuku could not exclude the possibility that some agents might be corrupted.
Without his radar, he simply did not have certainties regarding who he could trust or not. Reaching Nighteye’s office, the closest place he knew of where he was sure to find some friends, seemed their only chance. He would only get a single shot, and he would not risk to misfire. Eri’s life was on the line.

Eri, that, bless her soul, proved to be an invaluable help. She would obey anything Izuku asked her for. He searched her room, finding apparently no equipment spying on her. Izuku could only assume the only place that was kept under camera control was the corridor outside, if there were any cameras at all, but he always spoke to her with a low whisper, just to be sure. She told him anything she could, after Izuku explained to her which kind of info he needed, and she even made a point to observe and listen to those around her more closely than she ever did before, to really watch the mansion she lived in for so long. Every time she came back to him she would be trembling and crying, and it broke Izuku’s heart— But she would also whisper some new piece of information to him, a determined intent in her little, broken voice, and Izuku spared no words in letting her know how proud of her he was.

Izuku didn’t let himself linger on anything that wasn’t his mission for too long. On the reason why they kept injecting something in him. On the thought of what might be happening out there. It hurt too deeply, more than the collection of wounds on his body possibly could. Were Sir Nighteye and Mirio senpai able to recover his phone? Or did they had no idea of what happened to him? Maybe he was declared missing, not a clue where he could be— And if that was the case, Izuku knew he and Eri might be truly alone. That no one might be coming from them for a long time.

And what about Mom? She already went through so much— And now this. If she decided to pull him out of school, for good, this time, it won’t be surprising.

But then again, chances are Izuku might have to leave school regardless, if his radar doesn’t come back, so there’s that.

All Might must be worrying himself sick, too. Izuku wonders what he could be doing— Is he out there, searching for him?

And all his classmates, his friends— What could they be feeling? Izuku has put all of them through so much already by merely existing. Wasn’t all of that enough? They didn’t deserve any of this.

And above all, Shouto did not deserve any of what was happening. To have Izuku invade his heart and drag it out in the open, only to then leave him behind. The mere thought of him hurt so much that more than a couple of times Izuku did not really need to fake the sobs, whenever he was being observed by his enemies. The tears came to him naturally.
Izuku only wanted to hold him again, reassure him, let him know that he thought of him so much—That he missed him like he would miss air, and that he literally had to force himself not to think about how much he wished to be with him, in order to don’t crumble down into despair.

And yet, at the same time, the thought of Shouto brought him determination. Izuku needed to make it out of this alive, because he needed to let Shouto know how much he cared for him.

It wasn’t surprising that the thought of him came to Izuku more than anyone else. He woke up one morning in the now familiar position, lying on a side with Eri between his arms. She was playing with his hair, and she murmured a timid “Good morning.” When she realized he was awake.

Izuku hums back, still half asleep. He felt dazed, like he was still dreaming, the ghost sensation of a familiar, kind touch on him—

“Deku.” Eri says, her voice tiny. “What is Shouto?”

That shook him awake for good. He blinks, surprised.

“You kept murmuring that when asleep.” She adds.

Izuku sighs. “It’s a name. My boyfriend’s name.” He explains, voice low.

“…What’s a boyfriend?”

“That’s… A boyfriend is someone that you love a lot. A person that you want to spend the rest of your life with.” Izuku replies after some seconds of silence. “A person that you want to share everything with, someone that you always want by your side, day and night. Someone that cares for you as much as you care for them. It’s someone very special.”

When Eri says nothing, Izuku adds. “It’s… A grownup thing, so don’t worry if you don’t understand. I’m sure one day you will feel it, too.”
“So… You have a boyfriend? Someone you love a lot?” Eri inquires, curious. “Aren’t they worried for you?”

“He probably is.” Izuku sighs. “But don’t worry about that. I’ll hug him a lot, when we’ll escape, so he won’t be sad anymore.”

She hums, her little arms tightening a bit around him. “But… Is it ok if I hug you, too? Won’t your boyfriend be angry?”

“Of course you can—“ Izuku replies, smiling a bit. “You can always hug me, whenever you want. He won’t be angry, I’m sure he’d like to hug you, too.”

She sniffs. “I would like to meet your boyfriend, I think. If Deku likes him so much, he must be a special person.”

“He is. And you will meet him, soon.” Izuku whispers, closing his eyes with a trembly sigh as she snuggles closer. “Soon.”

—

Coming evening of his fifth day of captivity, Izuku is taken out Eri’s room, surprising him. This is a clear change in routine, and the girl is there, too, feebly trying to hang onto one of his arms, her breath short, clearly afraid to let him go.

“It’s ok, Eri.” Izuku whispers, soothing. “I will be fine. I’ll be back soon, ok?”

The grip on his other arm was becoming tighter, a sign that the man that came for him was rapidly growing impatient. Izuku definitely didn’t want him to retaliate, neither on her nor on him. He could not imagine how it’d made Eri feel, if she was to witness firsthand Izuku take one of the usual beatings.

Finally, the girl let him go, sniffing. Izuku could only follow, silent, as he got dragged out the room and down the corridor. But they walked past the bathrooms, past the little interrogation room he go so accustomed with. They walk for a long time, and Izuku has no doubt they must be making him do useless rounds for the sole purpose of confusing him, much like the way they did when they first brought him at the mansion. He uses the occasion to try see if he can still follows by recalling the
memory of the mental map he created of this place, and he’s pretty satisfied in noticing that, when he thought they were just about to lead him upstairs, outside the secret dungeon, he ended up being right. The air was different, up there, less stale, and the wooden flooring creaked under his naked feet.

They guided him in the inner parts of the mansion, forcing him to kneel on the tatami floor in one of the rooms. He doesn’t really have the time to wonder what is going on, as he hears the sliding doors open once more, and a soft rustling, as if someone is sitting in front of him.

“I hope your stay has been satisfactory.” Chisaki says, tone light and friendly. Izuku bit down on his tongue to avoid letting out the sarcastic response that was trying to climb its way up his throat.

*Show yourself weak and passive, don’t let him think you still have the fight in you—*

He forced a tense, frightful expression on his face, instead, retreating in his shoulders a bit as if Chisaki just hit him. A moment of silence followed, and then Chisaki sighs.

“I know this must be hard, you are still rather young, after all—“ He comments. “It’s such a shame you ended up contracting such a terrible disease. I hope this experience is teaching you something.”

Izuku still doesn’t answer, unmoving. He’s unsure of what Chisaki is referring to, and he remembers what he said when they last spoke, something about a ‘hero syndrome’—

“Tell me, Midoriya, I am quite curious… After the past few days, do you still think you have any right or capability to be *saving* anyone?”

The flinch that shook Izuku didn’t need to be faked. The coldness in Chisaki’s voice hit like a whip, and Izuku has to take in a little, trembly breath, heart beating painfully in his throat.

“You know, it’s rather rude to not answer something you’re being asked directly.”

“What am I supposed to say?” Izuku exhales, voice raw. “You use your own daughter like a lab rat, without any regard of the pain she’s feeling, and I’m the one that’s supposed to… What, See your side of the story? What do you want from me?”
After a long silence, Chisaki sighs. “She’s not my daughter, but that doesn’t really matter— I was hoping that, after spending time with her, you’d understand—“ He says. “It’s kind of a waste, your insistence in playing hero for a child you’ve basically only just met. A cursed child, that has no right to be— I am merely creating something out of her doomed existence. If only, you should be thanking me.”

“How can you say something like that?!” Izuku snaps, unable to contain his rage. “She’s just a kid!”

It’s the wrong thing to do. In a second, Chisaki’s gloved hand is on his throat, squeezing painfully, his other jerking Izuku by the collar of the shirt he’s wearing.

“You have no idea of the true nature of that child.” He hisses. “You think she’s such a pure, innocent thing, don’t you? You have no idea what kind of monster lives inside her.”

“The only monster here is you—“ Izuku hisses back, furious. The fingers on his throat squeeze even more, digging in the bruises on his skin, dragging a painful little groan out of him.

“I see that there’s no hope for you. Very well.” Chisaki says, suddenly frighteningly calm. “Let me make something clear, Midoriya. The only reason you are still alive is because Eri is cooperating without putting up a fuss, for now— But the moment she’ll start to act up again, and she will, I will personally take care of you. They won’t even be able to find a single scrap of you to bury, am I clear?”

The tears emerged on Izuku’s eyes as Chisaki spoke, due to the pain of the fingers pressing on the bruises, cutting his air off. They spill, as Izuku forces himself to gulp down the mix of anger and despair he feels.

I need to keep calm. This is what a hero does. I have to stay calm and bring Eri out of here, away from this freak—

“Am I clear?” Chisaki repeats, his voice lowering dangerously.

“Y-yes—“ Izuku sobs, choked. When Chisaki abruptly let him go he almost lost his balance, coughing. The tears kept rolling down his face as he caught his breath, painfully and loudly panting. Something stung in his noise, a strong scent of some kind of soap, maybe? And what followed was a noise, like hands repeatedly rubbing together.
“Take him away, we are done here.” Chisaki says, flat, after the noise stops. “Rest assured, next time we will see each other, it will be the last, Midoriya. Enjoy whatever time you have left playing your little hero fantasy.”

Hands dragged him back up on his feet, rudely jerking him outside. Izuku kept his head low the whole way back, fighting against the sense of impending doom and despair pressing on his shoulders, breath rattling through the painful, burning sensation in his throat.

The clock was ticking. He was running out of time. Regardless of what Chisaki said, the possibility he might just decide to kill him off at any moment is very real.

He didn’t bother trying to keep track of the road back, too tired to fight against the murkiness filling his mind. When he was pushed back in the now familiar space of Eri’s room he didn’t move from the floor after he fell down on his knees, the girl coming up to him as soon as the door closed.

“Deku?” She whispers, voice filled with tears. Izuku forced a smile on his face, although he knew it must be a pathetic one.

“I’m ok.” He lies through his teeth, voice coming out like gravel. “See, I told you I would be back right away!”

She sniffs, sitting down on the floor by his side. He takes a moment to collect himself back, trying to find the right words—

“Eri, I know I ask a lot of you—“ He starts after a while, low. “You’ve already done so good, and told me many helpful things, and I will never be able to thank you enough for that. But I must ask you one more thing, if you think you can answer me.”

“Of course.” She immediately replies, subdued.

Izuku nods at her, reassuring, before gently murmuring. “Eri, could you please tell me about your quirk?”
“Deku—Deku!”
Izuku rose from his sleep with a choked little gasp, confused. He blinks a couple of times, trying to find back his bearings. He must’ve fallen asleep again after the usual wake up call. He still feels tired, and sore.

Eri’s little hands are on his shoulders, gently shaking him. She calls him again in a frantic little whisper, and that’s the final push he needs to force himself fully out of the tired fog, sitting on the bed. Something weird is going on, it’s as if he can feel dark grey splotches somewhere, lost in his usual darkness… It’s— It’s not quite the lights in his radar, this feeling is such a confusing, fleeting sensation that leaves him dazed, and it takes him a handful of seconds to realize that Eri is still calling him.

“S-Sorry, what happened? Are you ok?” He forces himself to focus on her voice, worried.

“Deku, I think Overhaul and the others aren’t here.” Eri says, in a low whisper.

“What?” Izuku hisses back, eyes going wide.

“When I went to the bathroom I heard someone talk about a deal Overhaul has to take care of— I think most of them are gone, they all usually go with him, but they won’t be away for long—“

Izuku’s breath fails for a second, as the realization of what this means crashes on him.

This might be their only chance to escape. And Eri must’ve thought the same, too, going by her tone of voice. Izuku wastes no time, climbing off the bed as he takes a series of deep, calming breaths. The strange grey feeling it’s still with him, even if he’s definitely fully awake, now, but he ignores it, focusing on the much more pressing matter at hand.

“Ok.” He says, quietly, more to himself than anything else. “Ok. I was hoping we might have a bit more time to prepare, but— Eri, are you ready?”

“Yes.” She whispers, and her voice sounds anything but, but she still steps by his side and grabs his hand in a firm grip. Izuku kneels, searching her shoulders with his hands and squeezing gently, hoping to convey as much bravery and determination as he can.

“You know what to do.” He says, and the girl hums, before stepping away. Izuku hears rustling, and wastes no time in getting started on his part of this plan.
He calls to One For All. The cuffs around his ankles are easy to get off, the metal snapping loudly in the silence of the room when he breaks them apart. They both go absolutely still for a few seconds, and when it becomes clear no one is coming from the corridor outside, Izuku gets to work on the ones around his wrist, just as Eri starts to rip the sheets apart as Izuku instructed her to. It’s a bit more challenging to get the handcuffs off as he can only use one hand on each, and his wrists definitely throbs painfully after he’s finally done, but he’s free.

Eri approaches him, and together they secure her against his chest with a makeshift harness made out of the ripped pieces of her bed sheets, in a way that assured Izuku freedom of movements with both hands. He thought about securing her on his back, at first, but the idea of leaving her so open to possible attacks from behind immediately sent a shiver down his spine, so he discarded it. He would have more chances to protect her with his own body, at least, if she’s secured against his chest.

Once he’s certain the harness will keep her weight on him, her arms around his shoulders, Izuku rises and approaches the door. He takes a deep breath.

“Remember the plan, ok?” He murmurs, determined, cracking his knuckles. “I know it’s scary, but I can only count on you, Eri.”

“Yes.” She whispers, her grip tightening on him a bit. “I will be your eyes.”

—

Himiko expected many things from the work experience she was sharing with Twice, but boredom wasn’t one of them. This place was boring, this yakuza gang even more so.

Overhaul left to deal with some kind of business. Yakuza stuff. He ordered them to stay, and midway through their game of cards, she groaned.

“Twice, this is booooring—“

The man sighs, shrugging. “You know, we gotta follow that guy’s orders. Not much we can do.”

“Let’s do something fun!”
“Like what?” Twice asks, tilting his head on a side.

Himiko jumps on her feet, excited. “Since the bossman ain’t here we could go try see that thing he keeps all hush hush, don’t you think?”

“Himiko, you’ll make him angry—” Twice tries to protests. “Besides, we need to be careful before making any move, you know that—“

“Oh, c’mon, don’t be a party pooper. Just a a little look!” She pouts, crossing her arms. Twice hesitates for a second, before also rising to his feet.

“Man, you know I can’t resist you when you make that face— Ok, fine.”

She snickers, amused and satisfied. At least it’s a distraction from the seemingly endless amount of monotony.

No one seems to hang around much on the side of the secret lair where their room was, but as soon as they turned the corner toward the inner parts, it became more clear what a problem it would be to get anywhere close Chisaki’s mysterious secret.

“What are you two doing, here?” One of the men keeping watch asks, severe. “You can’t go any further—“

“Oh, c’mooooon—” Himiko whines, childish. She really doesn’t have the time to add anything else, though, because suddenly an extremely loud crash seemed to reverberate from way down the secret dungeon. The man that stopped them turned, surprised.

“What the—“

A series of other noises follows. More crashes, and then screams, one after the other. A man comes flying from the down the corridor, hitting his back against the wall with a loud crunch and slumping on the floor, unconscious. Right after, something shiny and green follows.
Himiko eyes go wide, as she realizes exactly whom she’s looking at. Some other men are running toward little Izuku, that turns to them with a roar, wasting no time in attacking back with a mid-air kick. The strength of his attack is enough to create a shockwave that sends two of the men flying and crashing against the walls, as the one near Himiko and Twice whips out a gun from his belt—

He goes down, gurgling, after Himiko plunged her knife into his neck.

“Himiko!” Twice yells, exasperated, just as little Izuku downs three more thugs in rapid succession, incredibly quick.

“He wanted to shoot my darling little Izuku!” She replies, angry. “Twice, you know what this means?”

“That my heart is broken?”

“No, stupid! Overhaul didn’t tell us he was keeping little Izuku captive! And he knew that Shigaraki has unfinished business with him!” She explains, slapping his arm. “These lame yakuza guys lied to us! You know what this means!”

“Oh!” Twice replies, slapping a hand on his forehead. “Damn, you are right. Well, I guess we are out of here, then.”

“We damn sure are—“ She says, turning toward the corridor once more. She jumps when she realizes that little Izuku is already in front of them, having left behind himself a trail of unconscious people. He’s gritting his teeth angrily, arms protectively circling a little girl that’s looking at them with wide eyes, secured to his chest, his body lighting up with a series of green sparkles.

“Out of my way.” He growls.

“Whoa, man, we are on your side, right now—“ Twice says, keeping his hands up as if he’s being kept at gunpoint.

Little Izuku’s frown deepens some more, as he takes a single step forward with another growl. “I said: get out of my way—“
They both step aside, silent. The little girl regards them with a small look, before murmuring. “They moved.”

At that, little Izuku wastes no time, dashing so quickly he leaves behind some cracks into concrete, displacing air once more. Himiko turns to Twice, as he does the same with her, and they blink at each other -or, at least she did, Twice is wearing his mask, as usual, so she can’t be sure- before following suit.

They are too slow to keep up with him, and along the way they keep finding the trail of unconscious thugs in various states of beating. They step in the gardens, just in time to see little Izuku land another kick that releases an ominous cracking sound as the last still standing man goes down like a puppet, and then Izuku bends down on his knees for a second, before taking a jump that makes him fly straight over the high walls surrounding the mansion as if he’s weightless.

“Damn—“ Himiko whispers, looking at him flying in the sky with a hand over her forehead to shield herself from the sun rays. “Little Izuku is soooo cool—“

“Himiko, please stop, I can’t take this anymore—“ Twice whines, grabbing at his chest. She laughs, hooking her arm under his, dragging him back toward the entrance of the mansion.

“C’mon, let’s go snoop around as much as we want and then let’s go home!” She says, cheerful.
Trying to keep tabs on everything is harder than Izuku estimated. He has to keep himself on a track so he won’t get lost, make sure they are following the mental routes he prepared— All of that while having to pay attention to Eri and her instructions, and try to work out their enemies’ position only going by what she suggests and the vague, distant feeling of presences near him— And, thankfully, these guys are really loud. It worked out, more or less, although he took some hits— A deep cut
burns in his left thigh, and something got his back, cutting out his breath for a second, but they made it out of the mansion, and Eri didn’t get hit. Now all he had to do was to keep running, and never stop, until he made it back to Sir Nighteye’s office.

But things didn’t went smoothly for long— Surely they must’ve left someone still awake behind them, that must’ve warned the rest of the gang, because as Izuku kept running, twisting and turning as he followed his mental path, stumbling into people more than once and never stopping to apologize, he heard voices menacingly calling out to them. A gunshot wheezed past them, forcing Izuku to take an unexpected turn that breaks him out of his set path, in an attempt to get away. Eri let out a little, choked gasps, as they leave behind the sudden noises of panic that exploded at the gunshot.

“Eri!” Izuku gasps, worried. “Did it hit you?!"

“N-No—“ She replies, trembling. “But it got the harness—“

Izuku realizes the sudden burning sensation in his shoulder. The bullet must’ve grazed him and with it the too thin cloth they used for the harness, that is definitely giving in, now, forcing him to close his arms around Eri more firmly, to don’t drop her.

“It’s ok—“ He says, reassuring. “It’s ok— Eri, look around you, can you tell me where we are?”

She doesn’t answers for long seconds, and Izuku is forced to slow down just a tiny bit to give her the chance to take look. She frightfully describes their surrounding to him, and Izuku takes a couple of second to recall the memories— He holds Eri up with his right arm, his left finding the wall and following it— If he’s right—

“Eri, is there an alley to our left?”

“Yes—“

He grabs at her, firmly, once more, resuming his frantic dash now that he found his bearings again. He’s forced to take a longer route, but it can’t be helped, staying on the main road where more people involved with the clan might have the chance to spot them is too risky. What he does not expect is the sudden, stabbing pain in his foot, and he chokes out a pained shout, losing his balance. He rolls on the floor, Eri gasping at being dropped so suddenly.
“S-Sorry—” He chokes out, turning on a side and pushing his weight on his elbow. His right foot is a flaming point of pain, and Eri releases a little, anguished cry. “Are you hurt?”

“N-no— But— Broken glass—” She sobs. “In your foot—”

Izuku grits his teeth and finds the sharp edges of the glass deeply stuck in his flesh with his fingertips. He does not make a sound as he takes it out with one sharp motion, as Eri cries for him.

“It’s ok—” He forces himself to grit out. “It’s ok, it’s nothing, come here, we have to go—”

She sniffs, circling his shoulders with her arms once more. Izuku ignores the pain that shot up his leg as he stood again and resumed his run, panting.

“We are close, so close, I promise—” Izuku turns, carefully taking a right. “Just a bit more—”

“Midoriya!” Someone suddenly exclaims from his left. “Boy, it’s ok, I’m a police agent, you can—”

Izuku grits his teeth, shifting the weight of Eri on his right arm and grabbing blindly with his left. He finds the collar of the man that just spoke and throws him, before dashing away without wasting a second more. He’s forced to turn once more, take the main road again, and he runs and runs, pushing the pained alarm bells of his body in the back of his mind, ignoring the voices around him, those who call out to them, apparently worried, asking if they need help—

Assume that everyone is an enemy, you can’t afford the luxury to crumble down, now, Midoriya, a bit more, just a bit more—

A loud sound, not too far, manages to cut through the heavy fog pressing on his ears, through the distance of the adrenaline-fueled daze that surrounded him as he pushed himself over his limit, with that single-minded objective to really save Eri, this time—

“No—” Eri suddenly whimpers, terrified. “It’s Rikiya— He’s coming from behind us!”

One of the men closer to Chisaki— Eri told him that he’s a hulking, towering man with some kind of strength enhancement quirk—
Goddamnit, they already found us?! Here goes my hope they were far enough to give us enough time—

Rikiya’s heavy steps are impossible to miss, as he creeps closer to them with a furious roar. Izuku focuses his working senses as much as he can, managing to dash away from an attack that seems to open a hole into concrete with a loud crash just in time.

“Come here, you little sneaky eel—“ The deep, menacing voice follows, as panic explodes around them. Izuku doesn’t stop, he simply cannot, no matter how much the exhaustion is creeping up on him, how lightheaded he feels—

“Eri, keep an eye on him, tell me when he’s coming closer—“ Izuku pants, accelerating in spite of the fatigue. With the wake of destruction they must be leaving behind, at least it should attract the closer pro-heroes— Maybe if he’s lucky, Sir Nighteye will catch wind of what is going on, too—

Time stops making sense as Izuku fights against it, running desperately as the destruction follows with every each failed attempt to stop them, Eri crying to him as she spots more of the men working for Chisaki in the distance. Chisaki himself is probably trailing after them, and at this point Izuku can only rely on prayers and fumes, as Rikiya seems to close in on them once more.

“You are slowing down, boy!” He laughs, cruel, and Izuku grits his teeth, calling to One For All at a higher gradient as he follows the sound of his voice and surprises the villain by attacking back. The kick connects with a loud crunch, the man releasing a choked grunt and falling down. Izuku doesn’t waste a single second, finally gaining back some distance, ignoring his burning, painfully throbbing legs as he takes a left when Eri warns him of the intersection coming right up.

*I’m close, so close, Nighteye’s office is just down this road, it can’t be more than six hundred meters, please, let him be there, please, I can’t do this anymore, please, oh god please, let help be right around the corner—*

He trips once more when his foot collides with something hard instead of the even, flat texture of the asphalt. He rolls down, Eri flying away from his arms, and he forces himself to find his balance back right away as he stretches his arm forward.

“*ERI—“ He yells, desperate, voice scratching painfully against his throat—
The hit comes out of nothing, catching him off guard. It takes his body a couple of seconds to catch up, and then the overbearing pain seems to widen from his chest like a ring of fire all along his entire body, completely clouding his mind.

Izuku can’t think anymore. He’s jerked a bit as something seems to retreat out of his body, and his chest burns, he can’t breathe anymore, his feet moves on their own just barely before he falls, incapable of standing. He can’t hear anymore, everything is distant and muffled, and he barely registers the familiar, little hand that grabs his, muffled sobs only just reaching his rapidly dwindling hearing.

*I’m sorry—* He tries to say, but the words simply won’t come out. *I’m sorry, Eri—I couldn’t keep my promise—I’m sorry I couldn’t save you—Please, don’t cry—*

What follows is more than a whimpering, little sob. Eri screams, the sound piercing right through the fog in Izuku’s head, her voice charged with all the pain and desperation in the world. Her little hands grabs at him as she wails and yells, and then something amazing happens.

The pain recedes. Izuku feels as if his body is being put back together, but it’s not painful, it feels nice, like a gentle energy flowing through him. His chest doesn’t hurt anymore, and then the cut on his shoulder disappears, as do the ones on his foot and thigh. Even the bruises all along his body seems to leave, no lingering soreness left behind, and Izuku blinks, climbing back on his knees hurriedly, as Eri releases a gasping little sob.

“Deku?” She whimpers, surprised. The energy keeps flowing through him, and a little sting goes through his head for a second, and then it happens.

The lights reappears around him, making his head spin. His radar opens up like a wave once more, even if only just barely, indecisive, but still filling his chest with a sudden sense of calmness, and he smiles, grabbing at Eri and crushing her in a hug.

“I knew it—“ He sobs against her hair. “I knew it. I told you, didn’t I, Eri? I told you that your quirk was nothing like what that man said. That it was something amazing, a power so kind, gentle—“

She let out a tiny, surprised wet sound, grabbing at his shirt, patting him as if searching for something. “You’re ok—“ She whispers, like she can’t quite believe it herself.

“I’m ok, and— Eri, thanks to you I can see my lights again—“ Izuku replies, choked. And what
follow this declaration is something even more incredible.

He realizes suddenly that there’s a group of lights, some of which he’s very familiar with, approaching, relief and determination in all of them, and Izuku turns to them, his smile widening, before his head stings again. He hisses, squeezing his eyes close, and when he opens them again, his senses are suddenly hit by something unexpected. An explosion of colors, different from the lights in his radar— it’s such a weird, alien feeling, that makes him instinctively squeeze his eyes shut once more as he turns his face down and shakes his head a bit, a vague sense of nausea crawling up his stomach.

He carefully opens his eyes again. And then— He realizes what that strange sensation was.

He’s seeing.

A young girl looks up at him, her red eyes wide and filled with tears. A single horn, shining with a golden light, pokes out her forehead on the right side of her face, long, silver hair falling in waves on her shoulders.

“Eri?” Izuku asks, confused. The girl’s hands tightens on him at that, confirming to Izuku that, yes, he’s definitely seeing her. “Eri— Did you make me s—“

He doesn’t really have the time to finish his question. Familiar voices calls out to him, snapping him out of his daze. It felt like forever, and yet it has been maybe a minute since Eri activated her quirk, saving him, and Izuku turns as he feels a large group of people approaching from behind, finding himself looking at a large group of men, some masked, some not, that is closing in—

He rises on his feet, holding Eri between his arms. Whatever she did to somehow make him able to see is not stable, and he feels like his vision is flickering. The familiarity of his radar, that’s still fully active, creates a juxtaposition in his mind, not used to really process images, that makes him feel unsure on his legs. He’s right in the middle between the two groups, the villains determined to get Eri back behind him, and the heroes coming to the save in front of him— He turns and takes some unsure steps toward them, of course, one of them in particular is running faster than anyone else. A young man with short, blond hair, wearing a mostly white costume with a red cape—

It takes Izuku a second to realize that he’s looking at Mirio senpai, when his vision flickers for an instant. He’s gritting his teeth angrily as he runs to meet up with Izuku and Eri, eyebrows twisted in determination. Right behind him comes a tall, thin man with a serious expression and glasses, and thanks to the radar in the back of his mind Izuku is also informed of the fact that that man is Nighteye.
A gunshot suddenly snaps behind him—He stumbles, and that is what seems to save him from the hit as a syringe wheezes past him, going straight for Mirio. Nighteye jumps in with a shout, covering his pupil just in time to take the hit in his stead.

“Sir!” Mirio yells over the chaos, as Nighteye rolls and stops on the ground, the syringe sinking in his arms. He takes it out with a grunt.

“Don’t stop! Take Midoriya and Eri and get them away!” Nighteye shouts, climbing back on his feet, as Mirio turns once more toward them. They finally meet as Izuku stumbled toward him, relief washing over Mirio’s face, but when he attempts to step closer he gasps in pain, Eri’s golden light flaring up.

She’s hanging onto Izuku for dear life, shivering, her face pushed against his neck in fear. Izuku has an inkling of what is going on, right now, based of what the girl could tell him regarding her quirk, so he stops, panting.

“Senpai, don’t come any closer, please!” He warns, before hugging her tighter. “Eri, it’s ok—He’s Lemillion, remember? He’s a friend—“

She hiccups, and Izuku hisses as a sting of pain suddenly runs up his body. He turns, the group of villains is close, too close, but all the other heroes are running right up to them, ready to stop them, forming a protective wall.

He needs to calm Eri down. Her control over her quirk is unstable, too unstable, and her emotions definitely seems to play a part in that—

“Senpai, listen, I need to get her away from the battle and calm her down—“ He explains, hastily, as Mirio stands a couple of meters away clearly nervous. “Can you cover me?”

“Of course!” Mirio exclaims, determined. “I’ll be right behind you, Midoriya, go!”

Izuku nods, trustful. There’s an army of well prepared pros covering his back along with Mirio, and he runs, away from the battle, ignoring Chisaki’s furious roar. He tries to run, but his vision is swimming, making him slow, so he just gives up and closes his eyes, relying on the much more familiar feeling of his radar. He’s finally able to go much faster, managing to gain some distance as the battle rages behind them, Mirio trailing right after, clearly focusing in watching over Izuku and
Eri. Izuku rounds a corner when another painful spams goes through his body, kneeling and putting the girl down. He opens his eyes again, tentatively, watching Eri keeping her hands pressed against her ears, eyes squeezed shut.

“Eri—” He calls, breathless. “Eri, look at me—“

She does, her eyebrows twisted in pain. Izuku blinks, realizing that, yeah, he has his quirk back, and he carefully connects with her— An abyss of pain and terror opens in him, at that, and he forces himself to ignore it, hissing.

“Eri, it’s ok—“ He focuses, pushing a sense of calmness forward. “It’s ok— All those heroes came for you, did you see them? They will protect you, just like me and Lemillion want to do— Nothing bad will happen to you anymore—“

Careful, he bridges the gap of horror inside her soul. Eri’s jittering energy calms down slowly as she seems to accept the emotional connection between them, and Izuku smiles at her, letting himself free to feel all the affection he has for this young, brave girl, knowing she will feel it, too.

“Can you feel that? That’s how happy I am that you are here with us— And I know that all the heroes out there feel the same. They are so happy to have you, Eri, and they will do anything to protect you—“ He adds, caressing her cheeks. “Is it ok if Lemillion comes closer, now?”

She nods, sniffing, and Mirio, that was standing at the entrance of the street, keeping watch over them, inches closer. When nothing bad seems to happen he kneels by them, eyes wet as he smiles to Eri, arms circling her and Izuku in a tight hug.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t save you the first time, Eri.” Mirio whispers, moved. “But you are here, now, and it’s exactly like Deku said. Nothing bad will happen to you. We will protect you.”

The energy of Eri’s quirk is running in Izuku like blood, much more stable and controlled, now, but Izuku is not sure of what will happen if he breaks the connection between them. The possibility she might lose her grip on it again is too great to risk, so Izuku carefully keeps the link up.

“We should get both of you away from the battle.” Mirio says with a little sigh, gently relaxing the hug. “We are still too close— Deku, can you move?”
Izuku nods, although he does not like the idea of leaving the others behind and fleeing from the battlefield— But Mirio is right, they need to remove Eri and get her to safety, there’s a platoon of pro-heroes out there, battling with Chisaki and his men, he has to trust them—

They don’t really have the time to act. Suddenly the concrete of the building at their side seems to move as if it became alive, snapping around them like a cage, plunging them in the dark. Eri gasps, but Izuku hurriedly calms her down once more, embracing her.

“Must be Mimic—“ Izuku comments softly, recalling what Eri said regarding Chisaki’s men and their quirk. “Well, it’s a good thing I know how to move in the dark. Senpai, you should phase out of here, but can you lend me your cape first, please?”

Aizawa couldn’t be quite sure what snapped into them, but something did. They all froze, horrified, when they watched Midoriya getting hit with a wound that left no hope he would even survive through the next few minutes— They could only watch as the poor girl, Eri, screamed desperately, hanging onto Midoriya’s lifeless arm as if it was all she had— They watched when the golden light suddenly exploded around her, enveloping the both of them, and then a few seconds later Midoriya climbed back on his knees, not only alive, but not a single wound or bruise on him anymore.

That was the moment it happened, Aizawa thinks. They sort of just— Moved as single unit, not needing to exchange a word to fall into precise roles, all sharing a single-mindedly objective, a single thought.

*This is a miracle, and we won’t get a second chance. We have to get Eri and Midoriya away from here, now.*

The boy stumbles back on unsure feet, holding the young girl between his arms protectively. The way he moves made him look almost drunk, a sign that he might not have recovered as perfectly as he looks— But he still tries to run toward them, meeting Mirio half-way.

After the hit he took to protect his pupil, that sent him crashing down, Nighteye climbed back on his feet, wasting no time. He fell back within their midst as they met the group of villains headfirst, an absolutely enraged Chisaki yelling “GIVE HER BACK!” as Midoriya and Mirio ran away with the girl.
Aizawa immediately points his eyes at him, activating his quirk, and Chisaki’s frustration only grew stronger when he slams his palms onto the road but nothing happens.

The closest man to Chisaki did not waste any time in firing the quirk-suppressing shot again, toward Aizawa this time, but Kirishima jumps in front of him protectively, the syringe ricocheting on the hardened lines of his body.

“Keep your eyes on Chisaki!” The boy yells over the cacophony. “I got you!”

Aizawa grins to himself, gladly obeying to the suggestion as he and Kirishima move through the battlefield to keep track of Chisaki, dodging attacks along the way, Kirishima acting like the perfect shield as villains attempted to stop them. Their heavy hitters were already past them, engaging the bigger group of villains, Ryukyu turned into her dragon form making a quick work of a good chunk of them. Fatgum and Suneater move like a well-oiled machine, clearly used to working with one another, jumping into the fray. The biggest of the bunch, Rikiya, suddenly detaches from the center of the battle as if trying to run after Midoriya and Mirio, but fell into a trap as Asui, popping up from apparently nowhere, tripped him with her tongue, giving Uraraka a chance to touch him and send him levitate toward the sky as he uselessly squirms.

“Nejire!” Uraraka calls, determined, and the bubbly young woman followed right up with an attack that sent the hulking man smash right back down against concrete, sinking him a good chunk into it.

Chisaki finally manages to break away from Aizawa’s eye contact by ducking behind a car on the side of the street, making him hiss a curse under his breath. He took a rapid look, assessing the situation on the battlefield, noticing that fatgum seemed to be struggling in a two-on-one-battle, Suneater not by his side.

“Go help fatgum! I’ll take care of Chisaki!” He urges Kirishima, that stuck close to him all along, and the boy nods, making a dash for Fatgum. Aizawa run toward Nighteye, launching another goon that attempted to attack him in the air with his scarf. Nighteye turns to him after knocking down yet another man with a beak mask, adjusting his glasses as if he didn’t even broke a sweat.

“Chisaki is hiding from me.” Aizawa says, going straight to the point. “Want to help me hunting him down?”

Nighteye nods, a fire burning in his eyes behind the glasses. “If he’s not attacking yet, he either doesn’t want to betray his position, waiting for a specific chance, or he’s trying to find a way to run after Eri—“ He comments, analytical as usual. “Maybe your student and Nejire could help us out.”
It took a moment for Aizawa to understand what he meant. Blinking in realization, he turns toward Uraraka, that was helping out immobilize the man she just helped stop.

“Uravity!” He calls out, attracting her attention. “Could you get up there and help us find Chisaki?”

She frowns for a second but then nods in understanding, making herself float up to reach the older student. They both look down on the battlefield. The road is a utter mess of rubbles and upturned cars, of unconscious villains lying down, as the battle keeps raging, Aizawa and Nighteye forced to take on some more enemies as the girls surveyed the area.

Hadou seems to spot something first, her eyes widening as she yells “Froppy, watch out!”

Asui manages to dodge Chisaki’s hand just in time, jumping away. The man popped up from behind a wall that suddenly seemed to move on it’s own volition, and he didn’t seem particularly rattled by the fact Asui dodged his attack, keeping his forward motion going, putting his palm against the imprisoned Rikiya. Aizawa doesn’t really have to time to activate his quirk on Chisaki once more, only catching the action out of the corner of his eyes as he’s defending himself from an attack, and Rikiya’s body seems to suddenly go in pieces and then compose back around his boss, turning him into some sort of twisted monster that immediately jumps away from them, toward the direction where Midoriya and Mirio run to.

“Damn it—” Nighteye hisses, kicking down for good another goon and then turning toward the center of the battlefield to assess the situation. The last villains still standing go down under Ryukyu and Fatgum’s hits, Kirishima at his side slowly releasing his quirk, panting. He looks bruised and battered, but he turns toward them with a determined look, gritting his pointed teeth, catching up. The rest of heroes are emerging back from the chaos of the battlefield as well, probably having noticed Chisaki run away.

“What was that thing?” One of Nighteye’s sidekicks, Bubblegirl, asks, concerned and angry as she runs up to them.

“Chisaki—” Nighteye replies through gritted teeth. “He went after them— Anyone that isn’t wounded, follow us!”

Aizawa did not wait to see who followed, pretty much sure they all would. They made a run for it, noticing another one of Chisaki’s men, strong build and spiky light hair, unconscious along the road, lying between a bunch of rubbles, blood running down his nose and chin. They don’t stop to
investigate, as a roar coming from just the next intersection makes it clear that Chisaki cannot be too far.

“WHERE IS SHE?!” He screams, furious. The scene that presents himself when they finally turn the corner is definitely quite something else.

They watch as Midoriya, sans Eri, dodges an attack and retaliates with a kick that sends Chisaki flying back. Mirio pops out from the wall right behind him, taking advantage Chisaki’s loss of balance to phase through the monstrous body and go directly for Chisaki, landing another hit on him, before disappearing into the floor. Furious, spitting blood and looking like he already took quite the number of hits, Chisaki spins on the four legs of the strange form he turned into. When he cannot find Mirio anywhere he turns to Midoriya once more, that rolls on a side to avoid the monstrous arms that shoot right for him. He keeps running, and Chisaki doesn’t seems to realize in his rage that Midoriya is clearly leading him on, guiding him right to Mirio, that pops out of a wall once more, landing another heavy hit directly on Chisaki’s face, making him spit some more blood.

“BRATS LIKE YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND—“ Chisaki screams, out of control. Midoriya doesn’t waste any time, green lighting bolts running along his body mixing with the pale golden light that seems to surround him like an aura, as he slides under Chisaki and hits him with a punch strong enough to send him flying in the air. Midoriya immediately follows by jumping, even higher than Chisaki, twisting into mid-air, and the kick that connects with Chisaki’s monstrous body is strong enough to create a shockwave as he sends him diving straight down like a bullet.

“LET’S FINISH THIS, LEMILLION!” Midoriya yells as he free-falls, and promptly, Mirio shots up from the asphalt beneath Chisaki before he could hit the ground. The mid-air punch he lands right under the man’s chin is enough to finally fully break Chisaki apart, the monstrous body disassembling from around him like a grotesque shower of confetti, only leaving the man behind.

When Chisaki and Mirio falls on the ground Midoriya is already there, on his knees, panting heavily. Mirio is the first to move, rushing to immobilize Chisaki, securing his hands to make sure he won’t be able to touch anything, keeping him on his knees on the asphalt. Midoriya turns to them, breath still heavy, and he jerkily stands to walk up to them with a little limp as Aizawa and everyone else behind him seems to snap out of the surprise, resuming their run toward the two boys.

“Is he still awake?” They hear Midoriya ask, voice rough, as Chisaki glares at him so hard that, if looks could kill, Midoriya would’ve probably dropped dead instantly. “Good. Can you keep him still for me, senpai?”

Mirio blinks, perplexed, but obeys as Midoriya stops in front of Chisaki, face turned down to him.
“I promised myself I’d have to do one thing.” Midoriya says, casual, and then charges his fist back in an instant, hitting Chisaki with a punch so strong it makes a loud, cracking noise, as some teeth flew straight out of his mouth with a trail of blood. Chisaki goes limp, clearly unconscious.

Midoriya shakes his hand with a snappy motion a couple of times, as if he’s shaking something off of it, after that, taking some wobbly steps back before falling on his behind, sitting on the road.

“*Midoriya*—“ Mirio says, his attempt to sound severe ruined by the little laugh that shook him.

Midoriya leans a bit forward, resting his elbows on his knees, a hand rising to massage his forehead tiredly. “He can probably make himself some new ones, or something. Whatever.” He replies, cold. “I really don’t fucking care—“

“MIDORIYA!”

Aizawa is suddenly jostled when three figures run forward, surpassing him, and he doesn’t even attempt to stop them, smiling to himself. He really has no reason to, walking with the other adults at a slower pace, now, as Uraraka, Kirishima and Asui ran up to Midoriya, tears in their eyes. The boy turns to them with a big grin opening on his mouth, and they pretty much pile on him, sobbing, as Midoriya does his best to hug the three of them at the same time, a hitching, loud laugh escaping from his lips.

Aizawa turns to assess the situation. Chisaki is still out like a light as Mirio holds him still, and police agents are running up to them— Nighteye is talking with his pupil in hushed voices, a hand on his shoulder, Bubblegirl and Centipeder near them looking as relieved as Mirio does. No one seems to be badly wounded, and by the time Aizawa approaches the little group of his own students, they are still hugging Midoriya as if they are afraid he’d disappear if they let him go.

Little wet tracks shines on Midoriya’s cheeks, arms hooked around his three friends. He looks up when Aizawa approaches them, and when their gazes meet Aizawa can’t help but recoil, surprised.

The color of Midoriya’s eyes is a deep, brilliant shade of emerald Aizawa never saw in them, before. But the most unsettling thing are his pupils. They are inky black, and not white anymore, as if—

“Sensei—“ Midoriya chokes out, a little rough, wet eyes crinkling with a smile. “It’s good to see you.”
And that is not a manner of speech, Aizawa realizes as he gapes, wordlessly. The boy can see.

Midoriya gently pats his friends, before relaxing the hug. They lean back a bit, equally teary-eyed smiles on their faces, and Midoriya looks absolutely mesmerized as he seems to drink into the sight of them, eyes moving as if he’s trying to commit to memory every single little detail, his hands still grabbing at them. Uraraka gasps as she notices, too.

“Midoriya—“ She whispers, amazed, putting four gentle fingers on his cheek. “Your eyes—“

That drags a small, sad smile out of him.

“Don’t get used to it.” He whispers, sounding resigned. “I’m pretty sure it’s just temporary.”

“What do you mean?” She replies, frowning. Midoriya doesn’t answer, expression turning serious. He climbs back onto his feet, quiet, and after giving them a little nod, pointing at his right, he turns, walking away. Uraraka, Kirishima and Asui turns to Aizawa, confused, and they exchange a look before they all follow silently.

Midoriya guides them behind a corner, and he kneels near a little pile of red cloth—

“Ari.” He calls, gentle. “It’s over. Chisaki and his men are being arrested, they cannot hurt you anymore. You can come out, now.”

A silver head pops out from the folds. The girl turns to look at them, scared, before her eyes shifts back to Midoriya, as if searching for comfort.

“They are my friends, you can trust them.” Midoriya explains with a smile, leaning down a bit to pick her up once more, leaving her in her comforting bundle. “You must be tired.” He adds in a subdued tone.

She hums and nods, resting her head onto his shoulder.

“I’ll help you turn your quirk off, now, ok?” Midoriya continues, still in a low voice. She hums again, and Midoriya closes his eyes, focusing. Slowly, the golden light that still surrounds him and
Eri’s horn dissipates, as she seems to fall asleep right there, bundled up against him.

When Midoriya opens his eyes again and turns to them, they are pale and unseeing once more. A sad, lopsided smile opens on his lips, as he must be feeling their disappointment.

“I told you not to get used to it.” He says, voice breaking a bit.

They don’t really have anything to reply with, as Midoriya rose back to his feet, holding a now sleeping Eri, approaching them. They close around him, soothing arms circling him protectively as they walk him back toward the now silent battlefield, just basking into the bittersweet relief of having him back with them once more.
Chapter End Notes

You lucky bunch got the chapter a bit earlier 'cause I won't be home the entire day so I can't post at my usual time, tsk tsk

This chapter's title origins (Don't look at me like that, SH3 got good music)

Also just a quick note: I've straight up forgo to answer any comment at all in like the past 2-3 chapters? I'm just-- I really don't know what to say other than "thank you for the comment" most of the time and it seems silly to copypaste that under every single comment but, I assure you, I read all the comments and they make me happy and make me think and make me cackle like a maniac, so this is your PSA: I absolutely appreciate every comment from the bottom of my heart and I'm so glad you are all enjoying the fic so much. I hope you will be all be able to keep doing so for a long time : 3

I remembered I have a witscrib profile! And as usual you can find me on tumblr, and on twitter!
Respite

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The walk is uncomfortably silent, and it’s not hard to imagine why.

Despite the fact that he felt just a tiny bit better after having shared his pain with his friends, the night prior, virtually nothing changed. Izuku was still missing, and Shouto still had no idea why or how or if he will ever see him again. He couldn’t help but drag himself outside, after getting dressed with mechanical motions, his head never quite there.

Most of the time, for the past five days, he just felt like he was walking through a thick fog, colors and noises muted around him, as if he wasn’t really standing in the same plane of existence as everyone else, and that morning was no different.

At least All Might promised to keep his father busy. Shouto honestly does not know what would happen if the old man tries to say anything to him, anything at all. It might just push Shouto down in pieces, like a broken glass.

That, or he’d finally snap and try pay his father back with all the pain that Shouto had been served through his life. He honestly does not know which one of the two options he fears the most.

“Oy.” Bakugou’s voice is low, subdued, in a way that does not suit him. It’s still enough to shake Shouto out of his distant daze and he turns, blinking at him. “If— If you don’t want to go to the lesson, today, you should just say so. I think they’ll understand.”

Shouto’s brain just goes— Blank. When he doesn’t answer, Bakugou adds. “I’m serious. They are not assholes, I don’t think they’ll hold it against you.”

“…No, it’s ok.” Shouto finally replies, low voice scratching against his dry throat. “I’d rather go.”

Bakugou hums and adds nothing else, his permanent scowl deepening a bit. He says no more, as they reach All Might and Present Mic waiting for them. They climb in the car and leave, immersed in a silence so deep one might think they are going to a funeral.
“Baldy, tone it down, not everyone is in the mood.” Bakugou snaps with his usual grace, surprising Shouto for the second time, that morning. Inasa, that loudly greeted them upon entering the changing room with his usual wide grin, blinked, surprised, eyes sliding between Shouto and Bakugou. His expression sobers significantly, and Shouto can’t help but wonder just how truly transparent he must be, if someone like Inasa, that clashed with him, at first— Someone that barely knew him, immediately recognized that something was not quite right.

Much less loud, he takes the Shiketsu hat off his head. “I’m not bald, see?”

“Whatever— I really don’t care.“ Bakugou grumbles, turning away to keep undressing. When Inasa turns to look at him once more, Shouto gives him a tiny nod. He really can’t get himself to greet him properly.

Still, Inasa doesn’t seems offended by that, as he steps forward and puts his bag down on the bench. He quietly starts to change, as well. Bakugou, brash and rushed as usual, is the first one to get in his costume but, strangely enough, sits down, arms crossing on his chest, waiting for them. Shouto doesn’t really need much time to get changed, usually, his costume much less complicated than Inasa’s, but he still takes it slowly.

He just wants to give All Might some time to intercept his father and get him out of Shouto’s way.

As he dons his cape, Inasa turns a bit toward him. “You know, if you are sick you don’t have to participate— I’m sure the guys at the committee would understand.”

What’s with today and people that don’t really like me worrying for me?

“I’m ok.” Shouto sighs, subdued.

“(…)Really doesn’t look like it.”

Shouto shrugs, but when Inasa keeps staring he sighs again. “I’m fine, physically. Some— Unpleasant things are happening in my personal life.”
He sees Bakugou turn just slightly out of the corner of his eyes, and he keeps his own gaze straight ahead. He’s not quite sure he wants to meet either Inasa nor Bakugou’s eyes. The weirdness of the possibility that they might be really, actually worrying for him is just too much for his brain to process.

“Well— You know, even heroes have to take it slowly, sometimes.” Inasa says, casual. “Mental health is just as important as the health of the body.”

Oh god, stop, this is freaking me out.

“Did you read that in a fortune cookie?” Bakugou says, sarcastic, and— Ok, at least this feels normal. Shouto never imagined he’d see the day he’d feel like internally thanking Bakugou for being a brash asshole, but here he is. “Leave him be, baldy— He took his decision.”

Inasa huffs. “I’m just trying to be considerate—“

“Look—“ Shouto finally says, interrupting Bakugou that looks like he’s just about to release some more sarcasm. “It’s ok— Truth is, I can’t help but feel even more of an idiot for having failed this exam, now.” The words kind of made it out of his mouth on their own. Both of them are looking at him, now, perplexed, so Shouto continues, voice low. “I can’t help but think that if I had gotten my provisional, maybe now— Maybe now I could be out there, doing something.”

Inasa looks wholeheartedly confused, for good reasons, but understanding immediately flashes in Bakugou’s sharp eyes.

“If I hadn’t failed the exam, I could be helping, at least—“ Shouto murmurs, nervously squeezing his own hands repeatedly. “That’s why I must do everything I can, now, to remedy to my mistakes. I can’t afford to be missing lessons.”

Bakugou doesn’t comment, looking contrite as he turns away with something akin to a pout on his face. Inasa tilts his head on a side, pensive.

“Well— I’m not quite sure what you are talking about, but if you feel that way, I guess I can understand.” A pause. “But if you need to take it easy for a bit, like, just tell us, ok? We are future colleagues, after all, we must support each other!”
Shouto looks up at him, feeling like the fog on his shoulders lifted, even if just a tiny bit. Inasa grins, earnest.

“…Ok. Thank you.” Shouto murmurs, and they finish getting dressed in silence.

—

Finding Endeavor wasn’t hard at all. The man had a towering, oppressing physique to begin with, and if you added the bright flames that he proudly shown at all times— All you had to do was to follow the faint smell of smoke, and you would probably find something orange and bright very soon.

Toshinori’s relationship with him had always been troubled to non-existent. He tried multiple times in the past to befriend the man, but since Endeavor seemed hell bent in antagonizing him, there wasn’t much Toshinori could do. He kept trying through the years whenever they’d meet, only to find himself denied.

Toshinori always wondered why Endeavor acted the way he did, although he had some theories— But the picture that was slowly being revealed in front of him was one he never expected and that he firmly wished could be just a sick joke.

“Well, if it isn’t the former number one hero.” Endeavor says once he notices Toshinori walking up to him, his voice stone cold as usual. “Walking between us mere mortals— I guess I should be thanking you for looking after my son, huh?”

“Good morning.” Toshinori replies, amicably. “Speaking of that, Enji, why don’t we go somewhere private and have a chat? There are many things I wish to discuss with you.”

Endeavor tilts an eyebrow, the movement barely shown by his perpetual mask of flame. “I’m afraid that will have to wait, I was hoping to speak with Shouto, first—“

“That won’t be necessary.” Toshinori interrupts, a bit of steel seeping in his voice. “In fact, I’m going to have to ask you to don’t speak with your son at all.”

Toshinori is not sure if it’s the coldness in his own voice, or the request, or maybe both, but Endeavor fully turns to him, his piercing azure eyes looking even colder -for how ironic that is- than
usual. “Excuse me?”

“For young Todoroki’s sake I have to ask you to leave him be, for today.” Toshinori says, keeping his voice even. “He’s going through a very rough patch, you see, and I think that your… Methods will not be beneficial to his mental state, at the moment.”

Endeavor scoffs. “Yeah, I bet he is—” A sigh. “And how, exactly, do you think you can stop me from speaking with my own son?”

There’s still a tiny spark of One For All in him, Toshinori knows. It’s too feeble, weak, to be of any real use. Even young Midoriya cannot perceive it.

But it’s still there, nonetheless, and Toshinori cradles it in himself, not forcing his body to shift, just recalling the kind of oppressing energy that he was once able to emit with One For All— Just enough, to make the air around them shift, to make something abundantly clear. And he knows it’s effective, because the expression on Endeavor’s face immediately steels.

“I might have retired, Enji, but that does not mean that I’m not still me.” Toshinori says with a smile full of promises. “Now, why don’t we go get a coffee, mh? I saw a coffee shop just a couple hundred meters from here.”

—

The coffee was bitter, but nothing quite like the company. The kind-of-terrified barista served them outside with eyes as big as plates, which was fair since the current number one and the ex-number one heroes were sitting in front of one another outside her establishment, looking positively like they might skin each other alive at any second. If anyone thought of approaching them as few people passed by, they surely must’ve rethought their choice, because not only they don’t get immediately swarmed by fans, but everyone seems to give them a wide berth.

“You know, I was never a nosy one—“ Toshinori starts casually after a long, long silence. “But having had time to observe young Todoroki, I cannot help but wonder if your decisions raising him were truly the right ones.”

Endeavor eyes him warily, mouth hidden behind the plastic cup of his coffee. He puts it down, measured. “I wonder that myself.” He says, and whereas a sentence like that might sound remorseful, his voice is anything but. “But don’t you think you are too full of yourself? You don’t have any kid,
“Hardly so.” Toshinori replies evenly, not rising to the bait. “It’s true that I do not have children of my own— But I’ve certainly had the chance to observe my students grow, and learned much from them. And there are certain… Inclinations in the way young Todoroki acts— I can’t help but wonder if he’s truly happy with his choice of school. If he hadn’t been forced into taking such a path.”

That’s a straight up lie, and Toshinori knows it. But he still thrown a bait of his own, there, and it seems to be working, as Endeavor’s fingers tightened dangerously on his cup.

“What, now—“ He says, vaguely annoyed. “Has he found a new way to throw another tantrum?”

Toshinori blinks, tilting his head on a side. “I’m not quite sure what you mean— It’s just a hunch I’ve got, observing him. Maybe you can elaborate on that a bit?”

Endeavor blinks, and he must’ve realized he fell straight into Toshinori’s trap, because his eyes turns even colder. “I don’t think that’s any of your business.”

“Is it not?” Toshinori replies, amiably. “I only wish to look after his well-being, after all. As his teacher, having an insight might help me.”

“Speak with him, then.” Endeavor snaps, crossing his legs. “Since he’s so hellbent in being all independent and rebellious.”

A little, tense silence falls on them, as Toshinori mulls over his words, before asking. “Are you not worried about him? It’s been really hard for him, the past few days—“

“Should I be?” Endeavor asks, tilting an eyebrow. “What could’ve possibly happened that I should worry so much about?”

Toshinori blinks, heart falling to his feet.

*He doesn’t know*— He thinks, flabbergasted. *—He has absolutely no idea that his son is romantically involved with someone— Someone that disappeared, on top of that— Does young
Todoroki trusts his own father so little he’d rather keep something of this magnitude from him?

More pieces of the puzzle are definitely falling into place, now. The way young Todoroki seems to only really relax around his peers, only feeling safe enough near the friends he’s grown to trust. The wariness he regards every adult with, behind the mask of respect. And even then, even despite the fact he and Toshinori had little to no interaction besides their teacher-student relationship, young Todoroki still preferred going to him in times of absolute desperation. Still preferred hanging onto Toshinori and wailing in his arms like a lost child, when he had nothing else to hang to.

Toshinori is basically a stranger, to him— And he still preferred that, to his own family. He still kept his involvement with young Midoriya, something that clearly made him truly happy, from his own father.

“Well? You look like you just saw a ghost.” Endeavor pushes, having found back his confident demeanour in front of Toshinori’s silence.

“…I guess it can’t be helped.” Toshinori sighs, shaking his head. “Very well. I will try speak with young Todoroki, if you think that will yield better results. That said, I please ask of you to give him space, today. I’m sure you will have other chances to speak with him when he’s less upset, during the next lessons.”

“Fine. As you wish.” Endeavor concedes, sarcastic. Toshinori is hopeful the man will keep his word, but he’s going to follow him the whole day, in any case. He will keep the promise he made to young Todoroki, no matter what.

They finish to drink their coffee in absolute, stone cold silence.

—

The end of the extra lesson came way too fast.

Shouto had finally been able to focus onto something else, for the first time in six days. Maybe it was thanks to his resolve, the need to do his best and get his provisional license, so he would be sure nothing like this would ever catch him unprepared ever again. And it had been a small respite, the ability to take his mind away for a short while— Not forgetting, he would never be able to forget, the thought of Izuku was always nagging at him in the back of his mind— But he’d been able to at least push it back there himself.
If Gang Orca noticed anything amiss -and he probably did, if the pointed looks Shouto often found himself subjected to during the lesson were anything to come by- he did not voice it. Even his father stayed blissfully silent from the grandstands, which helped Shouto pretty much ignore him the entire day.

The two times he let himself steal a quick glance in his direction, All Might looked positively like a zealous guard dog, sitting by his side. And Endeavor looked incredibly annoyed by it, which definitely clued Shouto into the fact that All Might must be doing everything he could to keep his word.

Bless the guy— No wonder Izuku liked him so much.

Shouto just finished putting back on the school uniform shirt, after drying himself with his quirk, when Bakugou suddenly grabs his forearm, fingers so tight the grip was bordering on painful.

Shouto turns, perplexed, mouth slightly open as he’s trying to decide how he should react— But Bakugou doesn’t give him the time, rudely pushing his phone under Shouto’s nose.

He needs to re-read the text three times for the words to fully sink in.

His head suddenly feels light, so light that the world spins for a second. He braces himself against the wall, staring at nothing as his vision swims and his heart beats painfully in his throat.

“…Are you two ok?” Inasa asks, puzzled, and clearly very confused.

“Don’t fucking faint on me, now—“ Bakugou says, jerking Shouto’s arm a bit and snapping him out of the sudden daze. “Sorry, baldy, no time to explain. We gotta run, see you tomorrow— Say bye to Ms. Illusion for us—” He adds, hastily, dragging Shouto by the arm toward the exit of the changing room.

Shouto has barely the time to grab the handle of his bag as Inasa blinks at them, flabbergasted. He let himself getting dragged forward by Bakugou, his complete lack of tact —his grip really hurt, now— somehow helping him staying grounded, instead of just melting on the floor in tears as he kind of wished to do. Words still fail him as they get out of the gymnasium, and Shouto just barely register the presence of his own father standing a few meters away and glaring at All Might as he and Present Mic turn to them with equally wide eyes.
If they look like this because of the way Bakugou was hauling him around like a angry mom, or because they know, Shouto is not sure.

Bakugou let his own bag drop unceremoniously on the ground, rather than just let Shouto go, to fish his phone out of his pocket once more and shove it in All Might’s face.

“We are going where the fucking nerd is, now, before this guy dies on us.” He snaps with a tiny nod to Shouto. Not a question, nor a request, as much as a direct order.

All Might exchanges a look with Present Mic, that nods silently, before sighing.

“Get in the car.” He simply says.

—

They leave behind the chaos and the villains to pick up to the police, getting transported toward the nearest hospital. Midoriya refused to leave Eri’s side, even if she seemed to be deeply asleep, bundled up in the red cape, and no one protested about it. Either because they all understood how he must be feeling, or because they really didn’t want to challenge Mirio, that looked like a guard dog, hovering on the both of them in the back of the ambulance. Once they arrive it takes quite a while for the doctors and nurses to convince the two boys to leave Eri in their care, and they finally manage to talk them out of her room by promising they’d be alerted as soon as she wakes up, whisking them away so they could also get checked up.

Ochako, along with Tsuyu and Hadou senpai, as they fortunately did not sustain any serious wounds aside from some bruises, were the firsts to be released, now waiting on some plastic chairs in a room. It’s a scene Ochako is far too familiar with, sadly, but at least this time no one is on their possible deathbed. They sit in silence, all of them distracted by their own thoughts.

The entirety of the rushed operation -if you could call it that-, from the moment the police saw Midoriya escape from the mansion, to the moment Midoriya and Mirio finally took Chisaki down for good, couldn’t have been longer than twenty-thirty minutes. And yet it felt like a lifetime, and Ochako definitely feels exhausted, now that the surge of adrenaline left her. Her brain is a garbled mess, too many emotions storming into her to even try to put some order into her mind.

But, above all, she feels like melting into relieved tears. Midoriya is back with them, and he’s ok—
She doesn’t even want to think back to those long seconds when they all knew they wouldn’t be able to save him, about that gaping hole in his chest— If little Eri hadn’t been there, with whatever she was able to do with her mysterious quirk, Midoriya would’ve really died, this time.

But he didn’t. He didn’t even had a scratch on himself, anymore. He was alive, and he was back, and that was all that mattered.

Ochako’s first instinct as soon as they could sit down and catch a breath, had been to immediately call Todoroki, before she remembered that he currently didn’t had a phone. So she went for the next best option, and, after he didn’t pick up, —they still must be busy with the lesson— she sent a message to Bakugou. She was fairly sure he won’t be such a jerk as to not let Todoroki know that Midoriya was back with them, and safe, as soon as he could look at his phone. Especially considering that, in the past few days, he looked as worried about the situation as the entire class did, in his own— Bakugou way.

Once that was out of the way, she messaged the entire class. Didn’t waste time with details, there would be plenty of discussing those in the future, probably, just told them that Midoriya was back with them, and safe, and finally back with them. The reactions immediately poured in, everyone expressing overwhelming relief.

**Mina**: OMG I’m so glad Ocha plz send pictures I need to see my with my own two eyes, my brain is like refusing to fully accept it

She chuckles, rapidly typing back ‘Can’t right now, they are visiting him to make sure he’s ok but I’ll do it as soon as I can’.

**Kaminari**: Honestly, seconded. Just barge into the visit Uraraka we need pics or it didn’t happen

**Iida**: b patint everone the most importnt thin is that Midoria s fine

**Uraraka**: …Iida are you ok?

**Yaomomo**: He’s crying so hard he can’t type.
Tsuyu let out a little croak-y laugh at her side, cuing her into the fact she must be reading the group conversation as well— Ochako just used the usual group chat, which means both Midoriya and Todoroki will be able to read -or well, listen- the entire log, once they’d both get a functioning phone. They’d probably have a blast, once things calmed down a bit.

**Tooru**: Wow Yaomomo, stone cold. Just giving out a guy like that.

**Tsuyu**: That is quite alright! It is true that I’m very relieved. Uraraka, please keep us posted about the situation until you are all back, if you can.

**Sero**: God, you are so pure, it’s not even fun to poke you a bit. Fine, whatever, let’s start planning out a party to welcome Midoriya back in the meantime.

**Mina**: YES

**Sato**: This is my time to shine. Baking commences NOW.

Ochako is just about to reply, a little grin on her mouth, when the door opens, Amajiki senpai poking his head in. He’s got a big bandage on his cheek but aside from that, he seems perfectly fine.

“Hadou— Mirio’s done with his visit—“ He says, as timid as usual, avoiding their eyes. “Come with me— You first years, too—“

She exchanges a rapid look with Tsuyu, before following promptly, putting her phone away. The others will have to wait, for the moment.

—

They spot Kirishima’s bright red head before anything else, especially because it clashes violently with the pale green of the hospital scrub he’s wearing. He turns to them with a toothy smile, looking a bit worse-for-wear, but aside from some bandages on his arms and a single band-aid on his nose, he’s pretty much unscathed. Still, Ochako wonders just which kind of hits he must’ve taken, for him to get even just a bit hurt, considering his quirk.
When both she and Tsuyu lean into him, closer than really necessary, he doesn’t comment, returning the gesture with a relieved sigh.

“I think they are keeping Midoriya in longer than necessary—“ He says, voice low. “For obvious reasons— But I’m pretty sure he’s ok, he was complaining loudly and at lengths about the fact the he was just fine, in there, before I was dismissed. Pretty annoyed at being poked and prodded by doctors, too—“ He adds with a snicker.

Nighteye and his two sidekicks are just a bit further, along with Mirio, also wearing a scrub. His hair is a bit droopy, but he looks perfectly fine. At Kirishima’s comment he turns, welcoming them with a big smile as both Amajiki and Hadou walks up to him.

Hadou senpai smiles, too, in her vaguely loopy way, hugging him. “Do you feel better, now, Mirio?”

It’s not hard to guess what she really means. Mirio seems to be back to his normal self, cheerful and sunny and energetic. He nods at her and grins at Amajiki that’s hovering near him worriedly, before turning his attention back to Ochako, Kirishima and Tsuyu.

“You guys ok?” He asks, eyes glinting. “I’ve been told you did pretty good, back there. Thank you so much for your help.”

Kirishima scratches the back of his head, shifting his weight foot to foot, embarrassed. “We just did what was right—“ He replies, Ochako and Tsuyu humming along in agreement. “If only, it’s you that did great, senpai! Man, that battle at the end was something else—“

“Yeah, honestly—“ Nighteye’s sidekick, Bubblegirl, intervenes. “Mirio, both you and Midoriya scare me a bit. You’ve worked side by side for what, six hours in total? And yet, your coordination back there was perfect. If I hadn’t known anything about you both I would’ve assumed you guys had been working side by side for at least a couple of years—“

Mirio snickers, bouncing on his feet. “It’s because Midoriya’s quirk complements mine so well! And he’s a pretty smart guy, to boot!“ He says, cheerful.

Nighteye sniffs, and Ochako swears she saw the ghost of a smile on his severe face, for a split second. “You both did good. I think some side-by-side training will be beneficial and develop your possible synergy even more, for the future.”
“It’s a good thing we are both being taken care of by Sir, then, isn’t it?” Mirio replies with a giant grin, just as the door opens. Aizawa-sensei appears, hands in his pockets, rapidly followed by Midoriya that is also sporting an hospital scrub, on top of an incredibly annoyed expression on his face. Expression that shifts instantly as he turns toward them, a smile opening on his lips as Ochako, Kirishima and Tsuyu immediately envelop him in a group hug once again.

“I’m so goddamn happy to see you, man!” Kirishima almost shouts, bouncing against him. “I still can’t believe it!”

“I really can’t, either—“ Midoriya laughs. “’S good to be back. I’m glad you guys came for me, you have no idea how good it felt when I realized you were there— I don’t know if I would’ve been able to go on if it wasn’t for that—“

Those words immediately seem to turn the air around them quite somber, but Midoriya didn’t seem to realize as he leans into the hug with a little, happy sigh. He only turns away when Nighteye’s hand gently lands on his shoulder.

“Midoriya.” He simply says, his low voice charged with something heavy. Midoriya’s smile turns a bit melancholic, but it’s still there, nonetheless.

“Sir.” He replies, pale eyes pointed upwards. “I must’ve worried you quite a bit. Sorry.”

Nighteye sighs, shaking his head. “I should be the one apologizing.” He says, voice low, but Midoriya groans.

“Don’t. It’s ok.” He replies, massaging his forehead. “Just… It’s ok.”

The exchange was brief and charged with far more than their words let on, but both Midoriya and Nighteye seems to understand each other perfectly. Nighteye smiles, just barely, squeezing his shoulder once before letting him go. “I know you must be pretty tired, but I think we all want to hear what happened.”

Midoriya groans again, tilting his head on a side tiredly. “I know, but can we wait a bit more? At least until everyone that needs to listen is here? I really don’t want to be repeating this story one thousand times—“
“…Fair enough.” Nighteye concedes, nodding. “I will go get you something to eat, in the meantime. Mirio, Bubblegirl, Centipeder, come with me. You too, Amajiki and Hadou, please.”

They all follow dutifully, and it takes a moment for Ochako to realize that Nighteye must’ve called them to give a chance to Aizawa-sensei, Tsuyu, Kirishima and herself to spend some time alone with Midoriya.

For someone that looks so cold and rigid, Nighteye sure is a sweetheart.

Aizawa-sensei, that must’ve come to the same conclusion, if the lopsided smile he barely hides under his usual scarf is anything to come by, pats Midoriya on the shoulder, guiding all of them away with a little nod, checking his phone distractedly. They walk out the corridor and into another, empty waiting room, Midoriya immediately making a beeline toward an open window, taking a deep breath.

“Ah, fresh air—“ He says, his voice a mix of sarcasm and sincere relief. “Nice.”

They group around him, as if they are all waiting for something. Midoriya looks distracted for long seconds, a gentle breeze coming from outside caressing his messy curl as the sunlight creates a halo around them. Then he turns, suddenly looking incredibly tired.

“I need to ask you all a favor.” He says, voice low. In front of their silence, he continues. “Please, don’t tell anyone what happened back there— About the fact I was able to see, for a bit.”

They all blink, Ochako exchanging a little look with Kirishima as Tsuyu tilts her head on a side, asking. “Why not?”

“It’s— It’s hard to explain, and it’ll make more sense later when I’ll tell you all what I know—“ He starts, indecisive. “But that happened thanks to Eri’s quirk, and I— I’m sure that, if she finds out, she’ll probably strain herself trying to help me getting my sight back, and I don’t want that.” A long, forlorn pause. “She went through enough already. She deserve to be happy and live a calm, worry-free life. If I put that weight on her shoulders— I don’t want her to think about it. I just want her to finally be able to have a real childhood, from now on.”

“Midoriya—“ Kirishima says, softly, his voice trembling. Midoriya smiles, lopsided.
“It’s ok, really. This is— This is who I am, you know?” he murmurs. “I’ve lived all my life like this, and I— I have my quirk, and I have all of you, and even if sometimes things are hard and sometimes I wish I could be able to see, I— It’s still what made me, well— Me. It’s fine, really. So, please— Keep this between us.”

The silence stretches for a bit, and Midoriya’s smile turns a bit wider. “Besides, I’m not even sure there’s any real chance Eri might be able to permanently give me my sight back, so it’s kind of a moot point— And I’m really happy I was able to see how you all look like. It’s funny, actually— Aizawa-sensei, you have a scar under you eye, like I do! I had no idea!”

Aizawa-sensei blinks, and his voice sounds vaguely strangled when he speaks. “Right— Yeah, I guess I do.”

Midoriya grins at him, cheerful, before turning back toward them. “You guys look great, nothing like I imagined you would— You have all such beautiful eyes.”

When they all hug him, again, he does not comment. Nor he does when Ochako sniffs a bit and her voice comes out trembly. ‘Ok, Midoriya, if this is what you want— We won’t tell anyone.“ She says, tears stinging in her eyes.

“Thank you.” He replies with a sigh, before humming. “I think I’m going to start carry a small mirror with me, from now on. Maybe, next time I’ll be able to see for, like, four seconds and a half due to some kind of weird-ass circumstances, at least I might be able to see my own damn face.”

That drags a surprised laugh out of them, Midoriya grinning, satisfied. “Yeah, laugh! C’mon, stop feeling so down, everything turned out ok, didn’t it?”

“I guess it did.” Kirishima mutters, his face still pressed against Midoriya shoulder. “You gotta stop getting involved in stuff, man, there’s only so much we can bear before we all explode with worry.”

“You think I enjoy this?” Midoriya asks, but he’s laughing, clearly amused. “I’m about three hundred percent done with getting in trouble, right now. If I keep going like this, next time I’ll stumble into the entirety of the League of Villains while grocery shopping, or something.”

“Don’t even joke about that—“ Tsuyu grumbles, somewhat uncharacteristic of her, making Midoriya laugh again.
“Ah—" Ochako gasps, remembering. She fishes her phone out of her pocket, turning. “Strike a pose, everyone, we are getting a ‘look, Midoriya is alive!’ selfie.”

“Can we stop with the morbid sense of humor for a minute?” Aizawa-sensei grumbles from the sidelines, as they all turn toward the camera, surrounding Midoriya. That surprises them into a laugh just as she’s snapping the pic, and when she looks at it they are all smiling like they are living the best day of their lives, despite the pale faces and the messy hair and the bruises and bandages.

It’s not far from the truth, Ochako ponders, as she immediately sends the pic into the group chat, following it with a cascade of party emojis. The reaction is immediate again, ranging from keysmashes to all-caps ‘OMG’ and some more emoji madness. She grins.

“Everyone can’t wait to have you back.” She says, almost an understatement to her own ears. “And Iida has been crying non-stop for the past ten minutes, Yaomomo reports.”

“Aaaaw—” Midoriya says, sympathetic, a hand on his chest. “Tell them I can’t wait to be back, too —”

As Ochako types, Midoriya suddenly seems to sober up quite a bit. “Guys, can you give me and Uraraka a minute?”

Kirishima and Tsuyu blinks but promptly obey with a little hum, Aizawa-sensei silently following them without protests. Ochako stands there, in front of him, and she truly looks at him for the first time since the battle. Despite the fact he’s not sporting a single wound he still looks fatigued as he leans against the window frame, eyebrow scrunched with worry.

“Is Shouto ok?” He asks, voice low and concerned.

Her heart feels like it’s shrinking in her chest— Of course… Midoriya must’ve been worried for Todoroki as much as Todoroki had been for him.

“He’s… It’s been hard.” She replies, measured. “I’m not going to lie, it’s been pretty damn hard on him. We’ve been by his side as much as we could but—“ A sigh. “We are not— He’s not as open with us as he’s with you. But you’re back, now, so it’ll be fine. He’ll probably need a bit to recover.”

“That’s ok—” Midoriya murmurs, nervously picking at the light green scrubs. “I’m glad you guys
were with him, at least. Did he say anything?”

“Oh—“ Ochako hesitates. “He’s— He had the training course, today, so I’m not quite sure he knows yet but, huh— He doesn’t have a phone, for now. There was a little— Incident, and his got destroyed. I sent a message to Bakugou, he’ll probably tell him once their lesson is over.”

“Oh, right, it’s Saturday—“ Midoriya murmurs, scratching his chin distractedly. “Wait— What happened? What kind of incident? Is he hurt?”

“No, no—“ Ochako rushes to reassure him, as Midoriya turned a distressingly shade of white. “He’s fine! It’s just— He— Dropped his phone.”

Midoriya tilts an eyebrow at that. “…Dropped it.” He repeats, flat.

“Yeah.” Ochako says, curtly, and Midoriya probably picks up on her tone of voice as he does not ask anything else, despite the clear doubtful expression on his face. He sighs.

“Man, this whole ordeal fucking sucked—“ He mutters, probably safely slipping in the curse due to sensei being far enough he won’t hear. “I can’t even imagine what you guys must’ve been through. I’m sorry.”

Ochako sighs, exasperated. Can always count on Midoriya, for him to be worried about others when he’s the one that got kidnapped, and apologizing for it, too. She pinches his cheek, making him release a little, scandalized “Ow!”

“Don’t do the martyr thing, you’ll only make things worse.” She grumbles. “Let’s just be happy that you are back.”


—

Thankfully, Nighteye came back not long after that question, with enough bags of food to feed an
army. Izuku gratefully let himself be guided sitting down and accepted the sandwich that someone pushed into his hands, as they all sat in the waiting room, that remained blissfully private, awkwardly hunched around the small plastic tables and feasting on the kombini goodness. He moaned around the first bite. It was the best goddamn food in the world, right now.

Nighteye was sitting a bit far, speaking in hushed tones with Aizawa-sensei, but Mirio immediately took place by Izuku side, playfully bumping his shoulder against Izuku’s as he opened something, the crinkle of packaging filling his ears for a second.

“You have no idea—” Izuku replies, already at the last bite. He pretty much wolfed the sandwich down. “You heard anything from the doctors?”

Mirio huffs. “Not yet. I guess it’ll take a while.” He says, a pout in his voice. He distractedly pushes a bottle of water in Izuku’s hands, that accepts it gratefully. “I hope she’ll be ok.”

“She will. She’s strong.” Izuku murmurs, after gulping down at least half the bottle in a single sitting. “Can I have another sandwich?”

“You can have anything you want, buddy.” Mirio replies with passion. “We’ve also got some bento trays, and nikuman, and dorayaki too, if you’d rather have something sweet—“

“I think I could eat all of that.” Izuku says with a laugh. “Give me a bento, please.”

As Mirio dutifully passes it over, Hadou senpai chuckles. “Look at this mess! It’s like a mini party!” She says, bubbly as usual.

It definitely feels like it. Having the room all to themselves, sitting around the table and chatting lightly as they demolish the food— It fills Izuku’s chest with such a sense of relief it almost makes his head spin. Everyone just feels so happy it’s inebriating him, and with a sigh he turns off his radar. He immediately feels less intense and wrung out, despite the fact the feelings surrounding him were positive, for the most part.

It’s probably better to lay low for a bit, until he feels calmer and more balanced than he is right now.
He spends the next few minutes attacking the bento, pleasingly sandwiched between Mirio and Uraraka, just listening in as they chat and laugh. He kind of want to sit there forever, surrounded by friendly voices —most of which he can now link to a face— and the even friendlier warmth of the people he cares about near him, keeping him grounded. There’s still a lot squirming in the depth of his stomach, and he knows he’ll feel the repercussions of this latest stunt for a while, but for now he can just bask into the relief of being back, knowing Eri is in safe hands.

He blinks, slowly munching on a bite of rice. It still feels weird, like the concept hasn’t fully sunk in yet, knowing that he’s actually safe, as is Eri. That he actually managed to help her, this time—

“You ok?” Mirio asks so softly that only Izuku hears him, his voice mostly covered by the louder chatting. Mirio’s light hasn’t stopped enveloping him with a sense of protectiveness even for a minute, even after the battle ended, and Izuku is sure that he would still feel like that, if he turned his radar back on. He smiles at him, a bit strained.

“It’s ok, just— Trying to adjust.” He replies, voice just as low. “It’s still kind of hard to believe I’ve actually managed to get Eri out of there.”

Mirio doesn’t reply for long seconds, before he circles Izuku’s neck with an arm, gently guiding him in a hug as he presses his forehead down against Izuku’s hair. “You did good.” He murmurs, voice trembling. “You did so good, Midoriya. Thank you.”

There’s something in his voice that instantly makes a knot form in Izuku’s throat. He sniffs, relaxing into the embrace.

“I’m sorry I didn’t realize we got separated—“ Mirio adds with a sigh. “If it wasn’t for that, maybe —“

“Senpai, it’s ok— It all happened so fast, don’t— None of what happened was you fault, ok?” Izuku immediately replies, serious. “Thank you for coming for us— I mean it.” He adds, when Mirio huffs.

That wins him a little chuckle, as Mirio squeezes him tighter for a couple of seconds before letting him go. “You’re very welcome. And thank you for helping Eri when I could not, Midoriya.” He says.

“You’re very welcome.” Izuku parrots, a grin on his face, making Mirio laugh. The atmosphere
around them lightens, as if a bubble suddenly burst, and they go back to their impromptu party, joining back into the light discussion.

Izuku only barely registers the sound of a door opening in the distance, and pays it no mind as he finishes polishing the plastic tray that once contained the full bento set. His attention is definitely picked by the fact that complete silence suddenly fell into the room, though. He finishes munching on the last bite, blinking, and doesn’t really have the time to ask what is going as he puts the empty tray down on the little table, before he hears and feels everyone stand around him.

“Um— Guys?” He asks, perplexed, standing as well, more than a bit confused.

“Stay here.” Uraraka says, sounding vaguely strangled. Izuku blinks again, following with his head the sounds of multiple steps getting away and a door closing. He ponders if he should turn his radar back on for all of two seconds, before he’s suddenly crushed into a tight hug that cuts his air out for a moment. He stands there, hands mid-air, a bit of panic rising in him—

“Izuku—” Shouto whispers, broken, pushing his face against Izuku’s shoulder. He’s shivering, sobs shaking him, his hands grabbing tight at the hospital scrubs as he squeezes Izuku so strongly it’s as if he wants them to melt into a single being.

Izuku exhales, trembly, relaxing so plainly his knees almost gave in. He carefully puts a hand on Shouto’s head, his other sitting between his shoulder blades.

Every little sob that shakes Shouto feels like a knife plunged into Izuku’s chest. He cards his fingers through Shouto’s soft hair, shushing him.

“It’s ok—” he murmurs, barely capable of talking around a knot in his throat. “It’s ok, Shouto, it’s ok, I’m here— Don’t cry—“

A louder sob rumbles through Shouto’s shoulders as he shakes his head against Izuku. He hiccups around his words a couple of times, before he finally speaks, voice like gravel. “It’s not ok—“ He sobs. “It’s not—“

“But it is— Look at me, I’m fine—“ Izuku tries to protest, gently relaxing the hug. “Look at me, Shouto. I’m ok, see?”
Shouto sniffs, his soft breath caressing Izuku’s cheek when he takes a tiny step back. He’s shivering under his palms, and Izuku keeps gently caressing his back, his other hand sliding down along his face and neck, to do the same on his arm.

Shouto’s hands relax, too, riding up to sit on both of Izuku’s cheeks, as Shouto presses his forehead against Izuku’s.

“Do you have any idea of how worried I was—“ He murmurs, his voice a chaotic mix of incredulity, frustration, and relief. It broke, as he added. “Izuku—“

“I’m sorry. Please, don’t cry.” Izuku murmurs back, shifting forward to nuzzle his cheek. “It’s over, Shouto. It’s over. I’m back. Don’t worry anymore.” His voice lowers, as he adds. “I missed you.”

Shouto releases a trembly sigh, fingers sliding along Izuku’s cheeks and neck. He leans in a tiny bit, just enough to press a series of little kisses on Izuku’s face.

“Shouto—“ Izuku murmurs, relaxing against him, his legs suddenly feeling like jelly. “Don’t— I haven’t showered all week, I’m like, mega-gross—“

That finally wins him a little, wet chuckle. “Stupid.” Shouto murmurs, after pressing another long kiss at the corner of Izuku’s mouth. “I don’t care—“

“But I do.” Izuku replies, petulant, but smiles when Shouto barely chuckles again. “Let me get cleaned up and then we’ll kiss as much as you want.”

Shouto sighs, enveloping him in another, silent, long hug. Izuku let himself get cradled in his arms, resting his head on Shouto’s shoulder with a little, trembly sigh.

It feels so, so good to be back into Shouto’s arms.

“Izuku, I—“ Shouto says after a long while, subdued, not letting him go. But he hesitates, sighing. “—We should probably call the others back in. I think All Might’s hands might fall clean off of his wrists if he doesn’t get to hug you, too.”
A surprised laugh shakes Izuku, as he turns his face up a bit, bumping his nose against Shouto’s warm neck. “He’s here, too?”

“Of course.” Shouto replies faintly, a smile in his voice. “He was with me at the lesson— We came here straight away.”

“Oh…” Izuku exhales. It’s— Nice, the idea that they rushed here. And he really wants to hug All Might, too. But at the same time, he just doesn’t want to leave Shouto’s arms quite yet. “Five more minutes, just us?”

“…Anything you want, Izuku.” Shouto murmurs, squeezing him, his voice trembling a bit. “Anything you want.”
They really cannot wait anymore, once Inko arrives. They’ve given young Midoriya and Todoroki a
good full ten minutes, alone in the waiting room, and Inko looks clearly relieved, if pale, as she
walks up to them, but promptly looks confused once she realizes young Midoriya isn’t between
them.

Toshinori smiles at her, lopsided, putting a finger on his lips before he push the door open just
slightly, and they both poke their heads in.

The two boys are sitting on the plastic chairs, leaning into one another. Young Todoroki is
protectively enveloping Midoriya into a one-armed hug, his other hand gently keeping Midoriya’s
against his own lips. He slowly kisses his knuckles, as Midoriya relaxes against him, eyes closed.
The gesture is so tender it immediately makes Toshinori feels like he’s intruding into something he’s
not meant to see, but young Todoroki must catch the movement out of the corner of his eyes,
because he turns toward them.

He still looks pale and exhausted, but his eyes are finally clear. He faintly smiles at them, before
leaning in a bit more and murmuring something to young Midoriya, that opens his pale eyes, almost
the same color of the hospital scrub he’s wearing, and nods, shifting away to sit upright. Todoroki
doesn’t let his hand go, as he gestures at them to enter with his other.
Inko is the first to step in, rapidly closing the distance to kneel in front of her son. She puts a hand on his cheek, and he smiles at her.

“Mom.” He says, low and gentle, and she releases a little sob before shifting forward to hug him tightly. She doesn’t say anything, just kisses his messy hair, and holds him, gently swaying. Toshinori hesitates on the door for long seconds, before also approaching, lingering by their side. Young Todoroki’s eyes widen a bit when he finds himself squeezed into a group hug, Toshinori’s long arms encircling the three of them easily. He looks up with his mismatched gaze, blinking, his cheek smushed against Toshinori’s forearm, as young Midoriya makes a muffled noise.

Toshinori laughs at his expression, although he’s not sure that’s the only reason he’s laughing. He just can’t stop as he keeps squeezing them close, even as Midoriya tries to whine that he needs oxygen, and Inko says that he’s messing her hair up, a smile in her voice.
Once the chaos of hugs and laughters fully calmed down, the waiting room felt pretty tight. Fatgum
and Ryukyu joined them, at some point, also wearing hospital clothing and sporting bandages. It takes a while, but in the end they all sit down, in a large circle, young Todoroki claiming one of Midoriya’s sides, their fingers interlaced, and Inko the other, her own fingers carding through her son’s curls even despite his protests about the fact that he’s ‘gross’.

It’s Nighteye that calls full silence, softly clearing his throat and gently putting a stop to the light chattering.

“I spoke with the police some minutes ago— All the criminals present on site have been arrested and secured away, and the police is still searching Chisaki’s mansion. They are proceeding with arrests there, as well.” A cough. “Apparently, the agents found, and I quote, ‘a trail of beaten up men’. I wonder if you’d be able to tell us more about what happened, Midoriya?”

“Huh, yeah— That.” Midoriya chuckles nervously, pulling at the neck of the hospital scrubs. “I guess it’d be better if I start from the beginning, huh?”

“If you please.” Nighteye replies, courteous. “I’m going to record this for the police, so you won’t have to repeat it again, if that is ok with you.”

Midoriya nods, and seems to gather his thought for a bit, head tilted vaguely on a side, before he starts to speak almost methodically.

He tells them of how his attention was picked during the patrol with Mirio, of how Chisaki’s men intended to try lure him in a trap in the first place and he just fell in earlier than they imagined— He tells them of the long walk toward Chisaki and their exchange, and the other long walk in which they thought him blind as they guided him to the mansion. He told them of how he made a point of trying to memorize the area, before they used the quirk-suppressing drug on him, and how that turned to be a lifesaver for his and little Eri’s escape. He told them of Eri herself, of the info he could gather about her quirk and his own conclusions regarding how it works, what kind of life she lead — and, by extension, he also lead for five days— into the mansion. That seemed to be what really got to him, his voice turning strangled more than a couple of times as he spoke of the girl’s hardships, his eyes filled with rage at the thought of what she went through. No one interrupted him, despite the fact that young Midoriya’s anger could be found mirrored in each and every one of their gazes.

He tells them of the plan he concocted, (and Toshinori could tell there was much young Midoriya was omitting, as he was sure Nighteye could also tell. It was clear that young Midoriya could count on One For All for his escape, but spun the story in a way that didn’t make it obvious to anyone that wasn’t aware of the power entrusted to him) and he told them of how he and Eri worked together toward freedom. He told them of their desperate, blind run, of how they got chased down, and how he finally managed to get his quirk back only once Eri activated her own in desperation.
“You know the rest—“ He sighs, his voice a little raw after speaking for so long. “At least, those of you that were there—Those who didn’t, please, ask them. I think I’m about done talking, for the day.” He pats forward, along the table, and young Todoroki silently slides a half-finished bottle of water toward him, letting his hand go as to give young Midoriya the chance to twist the cap open and drink generously.

Inko didn’t made a single sound for the entire duration of the tale, despite the fact that tears rolled down her cheeks multiple times. She hugs the boy with a trembly sigh, pushing a kiss against his temple. Young Midoriya doesn’t protest, tiredly leaning into the hug, idly playing with the now empty bottle.

Nighteye adjusts the glasses on his nose, turning the recorder off. “I’m sure the police will ask to speak with you directly to clear some things up at a later time, but this will suffice, for now.” He says, clinical. “Thank you, Midoriya.”

“No prob.” Midoriya replies, sounding quite tired. He rubs at his eyes, yawning. “What time is it? I’m totally lost—“

“Quarter past five.” Nighteye replies, glancing at his clock. “The doctors want you to stay the night, so you might as well get back to your room and rest a bit—“

“What? I don’t need to stay, I’m ok!” Midoriya immediately replies, frowning. “Can’t I just get back to school?”

Inko sighs. “Izuku, c’mon, just for a night—“

An expression that can only be described as a pout rises on the boy’s face, and Mirio intervenes, gentle.

“They want me to stay, too. We can have a pajama party!” He says, with a little laugh. “Besides, when Eri wakes up you’ll be right there for her, right?”

It’s a low blow, and they both know it, going by the unamused little glare that young Midoriya launches toward Mirio, that’s grinning sheepishly.
“Ok, fine, I’ll stay.” He grumbles.

“They want everyone that got involved in the fight to stay—” Kirishima intervenes, grinning. “As Mirio senpai said, we can have a pajama party!”

“…You are all supposed to rest.” Aizawa intervenes, his tone suggesting he’s already given up to the fact that any kind of resting will hardly happen.

“Sorry, sensei—” Kirishima replies, abashed. “We can have a really quiet, calm party?”

That drags a little laugh out of young Midoriya, already looking much happier at the prospect of spending the night in the hospital with his friends. Still, he shifts a bit, vaguely leaning back against Todoroki. “Can you guys stay a bit longer, though?” He asks, subdued.

“Visit hours ends at six.” Aizawa says, softly. “That’s as much as we can stretch it.”

Young Midoriya hums and sighs, relaxing into the embrace as Todoroki circles his waist with both arms. “That’ll have to do.” He murmurs.

—

The less-than-a-hour they had went by in a flash, as Izuku let himself get absolutely smothered and pampered in cuddles by both Shouto and mom, feeling like a living plushie. Not that he minded, really, although it was a bit embarrassing to have mom so close while his boyfriends openly snuggled him.

They parted ways reluctantly, the only thing finally convincing Shouto to let him go being the promise Izuku would move hell on heart if needed, to get back at school the next day. They really didn’t had the privacy nor time to sit down and talk, so Izuku really wanted to have some time with him, once he’d get back on school grounds. Shouto pushed one last, chaste kiss on his lips, before letting his hand go.

“If they don’t let you go tomorrow, I’ll make sure to come by.” He says softly, lingering near. Izuku hums.
“Told you, I’m going to get back tomorrow. Had enough of hospitals for a lifetime.” He replies with a little grumble, before adding a softer. “Goodnight, Shouto.”

Shouto hesitates, as if he wanted to say something, but then sighed. “Goodnight, Izuku. Rest well.”

Izuku lingers, leaning against the wall, listening to the the sound of Shouto’s footsteps getting far. He doesn’t move for a while, once they were long gone, just taking a minute to catch his breath.

He barely turns away with a little sigh, grabbing the cane the hospital borrowed him -it’s kind of uncomfortable, it’s probably a normal walking cane going by the shape and weight of it, but it’ll have to do, for now- when a different series of steps came closer in a hurry.

A hand closes on his wrist, dragging him away a couple of meters. Izuku splutters, trying and failing to resist, and doesn’t really have the time to turn his radar back on to try understand what is going on when a familiar voice speaks up.

“Dude, it’s me, fucking chill.”

“…Kacchan?” Izuku blinks, flabbergasted. “What are you doing here?”

“…Guess you were keeping that quirk of yours off, huh.” Kacchan replies, flatly. “I was here the entire time.”

“Oh—“ Izuku exhales, and, right— Should probably have thought of that, since Shouto told him that they came to the hospital directly after the training course. “Um, hi? But shouldn’t you go back to school?”

“I will, just—“ A groan. “Listen—“

Izuku closes his mouth, and listens.

“Fuck, why do you always have to make things so difficult.—“ Kacchan grumbles, and Izuku doesn’t have the chance to protest that he’s literally doing nothing, before he continues. “Listen, I had the time to think, ok? And maybe I thought— That it’s better to do some things, before— You know—“
He hesitates, so Izuku gently replies. “…To be honest, no, I don’t know?”

Kacchan groans. “Goddamnit. Whatever. Here goes nothing.” A pause. “I was a giant dick to you. I’m sorry.”

Time stops flowing, Izuku is sure. He’s holding his breath, completely shocked, and the shock only gets exponentially stronger when he feels two arms around him and a body pressing against his in the shortest, most stiff and awkward hug of all times.

“If you tell anyone what happened here, I will skin you alive.” Kacchan growls, after he let Izuku go as if he got burned, but his voice lacked any real bite. “Welcome back, shithead. Try not to fucking die for like a week, maybe.”

And with that, he goes, hurried steps getting away as fast as they came.

“…What the fuck.” Izuku whispers to absolutely nothing, after a full minute of just standing there, white noise buzzing in his mind.
“Where were you, you bad boy?!” Present Mic screams, loud as usual. As if he wanted to make up for being so quiet this morning as they left UA. “We almost left without you!”

“Bathroom.” Bakugou bit back, strangely red in the face, avoiding everyone’s eyes as he approaches the car.

All Might sighs. “Next time warn us, first, maybe?”
“What am I, a first grader? Do I need to ask permission to piss, now?”

All Might blinks back at him, unamused, and Bakugou grunts, climbing in the car. Shouto follows, silent, suppressing the small smile he can feel pulling at his lips at the exchange.

He honestly feels like he could laugh at every stupid little thing, almost drunk on this high of relief. His chest feels light, in a way that’s almost painful in all the best ways. It sucks that he’ll have to spend another night alone, but at least he will do so with the knowledge that Izuku is safe and secure and in good company with Uraraka, Asui and Kirishima. And he promised to be back, tomorrow, so if he’s lucky their Sunday lesson won’t take too long, and he’ll have a good chunk of their free day to spend back with his boyfriend.

God, Izuku is ok. He still can’t quite believe it.

The ride back to UA goes by in a much more relaxed silence, now, as Shouto stares out the window, melted against the car seating. He suddenly feels exhausted, and he might just go straight to bed once back to the dormitories. Anything to make time go by faster, so it could be tomorrow sooner.

They get dropped down in front of the entrance gates, Present Mic driving away to go park the car in UA garages. Bakugou immediately stomps away, possibly noisier than usual, which Shouto guesses it’s his way to express relief? He’s honestly not quite sure.

All Might watches his back, before launching a look to the sky as if he’s mentally asking for strength. He turns to Shouto. “I’m not quite sure if Aizawa is going to get back, tonight, so I’ll probably accompany you both tomorrow, as well.” He says. “You did really good at the lesson, today.”

“Oh— Thank you.” Shouto replies, faintly surprised, taken aback by the sudden compliment. “Um, ok, then— Goodnight, sir.”

“Goodnight.” All Might replies, a smile pulling at his lips, and Shouto takes barely a couple of steps away before stopping and turning back to him.

“Actually—“ He starts, indecisive. “I wanted to say— Thank you. For everything.”
All Might regards him with a long look, before his shoulders seem to relax a bit. “That is quite alright, my boy, no need to thank me.” He replies, gentle. “If you need anything, just know that my door will always be open for you.”

Shouto nods, wordlessly. He’s not very good with words, and the only person in the world that’s truly capable of making him feel at ease in speaking his mind will have to spend the night in a hospital, so Shouto tries the second best thing he has to convey his gratitude.

He covers the distance between them and gives All Might a nervous hug. After an initial second of tense surprise, All Might let out a trembly sigh, putting his long fingers on Shouto’s shoulders gently. He squeezes him closer, and suddenly they don’t really need words anymore, to understand.

Shouto distantly wonders if this is how it should feel, getting hugged by a father. It’s quite a nice feeling.

—

After the downright chaotic dinner he shared with his classmates, all of them too happy and excited to really calm down, Shouto immediately retreated for the night, relaxed and happy in his futon for the first time in what felt like ages. They’ve been loudly planning a full blown party to welcome back Izuku and the others the day to follow, between a bite and the other. Even Iida, that looked strangely unkept as he sat by Shouto’s side, participated in the planning, instead of pulling the ‘class president’ card to try reign them in a bit. That had been very nice, even if neither he or Bakugou would probably be back until the afternoon to enjoy said party.

He wishes he could speak with Izuku a bit, but well- No phone. He feels like his chest is aching with the need to tell him— The words have been on the tip of his tongue all day— But he has no choice, he needs to be patient a bit longer.

Tomorrow. He’ll say it tomorrow.

He falls asleep, cradling in himself those words like a precious treasure that he cannot wait to gift Izuku with.
Today I have to bring you a not so happy announcement: due to the fact I've pretty much caught up with canon, I'm going to need some time to decide what to do with this story, and that is on top of all other life things I have to take care about-- It has been a pleasant ride, writing for this fic pretty much daily, and something that helped me through a very rough patch in my life, but I need to slow down, now.

That doesn't mean that I won't update anymore, mind you! I have all the intentions to keep going with this fic, I just need more time to do so, so from now on I'll have to slow updates down to a chapter a week. This hurts my soul, but I have no other choice, so I'm going to thank you all for you patience right away <(_ _)>

In the meantime if you want to keep up with me and whatever I'll post from now on, you can always find me on witscrib, on tumblr, and on twitter!
Their hospital-scrubs-party -as Kirishima baptised it- ended up getting cut short by a zealous nurse, that dragged Uraraka, Asui and Hadou senpai back in their room. It wasn’t too bad, as they just used Kirishima’s phone on speakers to call them and keep chatting, but at some point Izuku must’ve fallen asleep. That’s the only conclusion he could come too, when he suddenly rises from the deep warmth of sleep, confused about the hushed voices in his vicinity.

“…Knew they wouldn’t tell us.” Mirio senpai. He sounds vaguely disgruntled.

“To be fair, we should be in bed.” Amajiki replies, whispering even softer. “It’s pretty late. Of course they won’t tell you, right now.”

“Maybe we better let him sleep, though? I mean, he must be beat—” Kirishima intervenes, vaguely worried.

“I don’t know. I’m not sure Eri wouldn’t be intimidated by us, if we go to her without Midoriya—“

That wakes him up a bit more, forcing him to snap out of that soft sensation of being suspended between sleep and full consciousness.

“Wassgoingon…?” He slurs, lazily sitting on his bed and rubbing his eyes.

“Oh, Midoriya—“ Mirio replies, softly. He sounds a bit remorseful. “You should go back to sleep, don’t worry about it—“

“You were talking about Eri.” He replies, feeling already a bit more aware.

Mirio sighs. “I heard some nurses talking— She should be awake.” He says. “But it is right in the middle of the night, and you need to rest— Midoriya.”
Izuku jumped down his bed as Mirio spoke. “Senpai.” He replies, pointedly. “You know she must be afraid, right now. I’m not just going to sit here and do nothing.”

He hears three sighs, and then Kirishima mutters. “They’d probably kick us right back into the room as soon as they spot us, anyway.”

“And who said they have to spot us?” Izuku replies, a shit eating grin pulling at his lips. “I’m a human radar, remember?”

—

They ended up picking the girls up along the way, too, in their night adventure.

Izuku silently guides the little group through the hospital halls, pushing them in hiding places whenever needed. When they approach Eri’s room he can feel her light, definitely much calmer than she was back at the mansion, but there’s still a deep tinge of melancholy, doubt and fear in it.

The last nurse lingering around her leaves her alone, after gently inviting Eri to try sleep some more. As soon as the coast is clear, he nods toward the door of Eri’s room from their little dark corner, and they silently slip in.

She gasps, surprised, as the door closes behind them and someone turns the lights back on. Izuku hears rustling and the soft slap of feet hitting the floor, and then a lithe, familiar weight crashing into him, little arms on his waist.

“Hey—“ He laughs, gently kneeling in front of her after she takes a step back. “Hi.”

“H-hi—“ She replies, timid, sniffing a bit. She closes in once more, arms circling Izuku’s shoulders in a now all too familiar manner, squeezing him in a hug. “Deku. You are ok.”

“Of course.” Izuku replies. He has to force himself to ignore the very high wave of emotions from his friends, behind him, almost sweeping him away. They all feel so moved it’s kind of getting to his head, making it spin. “How do you feel?”
“Tired.” She murmurs, relaxing in his arms as he hauls her up. “And warm.”

He hums, feeling her forehead warmer than it should be, under his cheek. It won’t be surprising, if she got a fever. He gets her back on the bed, sitting by her side as she relaxes against his arm, the same she often did in the past few days.

“Sorry I wasn’t here when you woke up.” He murmurs, moving a strand of hair away from her forehead to feel her temperature, but she shakes her head.

“It’s ok. The ladies were very kind.” She replies, voice low.

Izuku hums, before turning. No one besides him has moved from the door. “What are you guys waiting for? C’mon, come here—“

They move, indecisive, and Eri feels a bit wary, but not in a terrified way—

“Eri, these are my friends. You know Lemillion already—“ Izuku says, turning again toward the girl. “Everyone else was there, too, to help us. Did you notice them?”

“Y-yeah—“ She says, indecisive. “Are they all your friends?”

Izuku nods, smiling. “Would you like to meet them?”

“Ok.” Eri replies, sounding a bit more sure, after a second of silence. Everyone’s seems to feel relieved, as they finally close in toward the bed, still careful not to loom over her. They all introduce themselves, using their names. Eri seems to pick up on that, because once all the introductions are done and everyone is sitting somewhere around the bed, like a protective wall, she turns toward Izuku and Mirio.

“Deku and Lemillion are your hero n-names, right?” She says, curious. “So— You have other names, right?”

“Yes.” Izuku replies, smiling. “My real name is Izuku, Izuku Midoriya.”
“Mirio Togata.” Senpai says, a sunny grin in his voice. “It’s quite a pleasure to meet you, young lady!”

A smudge of amusement seems to go by her light for barely a second, and then she murmurs their names, as if she’s testing them.

“I like them.” She finally declares, not a hitch in her voice. Izuku grins.

A relaxed silence falls on them, as Izuku distractedly pets her hair with his free hand, Eri’s head propped against his bicep, her little hands grabbing at his arm. She hums.

“What one is your boyfriend?” She suddenly asks, curious.

Izuku splutters, blushing furiously, as a series of little snickers reach his ears. “He’s— Not here, right now.” He replies, forcing his voice to be steady. “I’ll introduce him to you another day, ok?”

“Oh, ok.” She replies, faintly surprised. She shifts a bit. “Thank you for visiting me— The ladies were nice, but I don’t feel like sleeping, now— Is it ok if we stay up for a bit?”

“Of course.” Izuku replies with a little sigh, resuming his carding fingers through her hair. Surprising him, she shifts away, before grabbing his arm a little tighter and pulling.

“You look tired, though. Lie down.” She says, matter-of-factly. Izuku does not dare disobey, doesn’t want to make her think she did a bad thing by being so assertive, instead of frightfully asking him to do something the way she usually does. He ends up on a side on her bed, gratefully sinking against the soft pillows as Eri gently drags the covers over him and then hums to herself, clearly satisfied.

“Thank you.” He grins, quite grateful. Admittedly, he was feeling a bit cold.

“I’m sorry there’s not enough space for everyone.” She says, forlorn.

“Ah, that’s not a problem!” Mirio replies, cheerful. He moves toward a corner of the room behind an
hospital curtain with intent. “If I’m right— Ah-ah, bingo!”

“Mirio?” Amajiki asks, confused, as Izuku feels Mirio rummaging into something that might be a large closet. “What are you doing?”

“Getting space for everyone.” Mirio replies, slightly muffled, emerging back from behind the curtain with something in his arms. “Let’s make a pillow fort!”

Izuku laughs, finally realizing that the objects he couldn’t quite identify with his radar must be pillows and bed sheets.

“What is a pillow fort?” Eri asks, curious.

“It’s the safest place in the world!” Mirio replies, enthusiast. “Give us some time and you’ll see, Eri!”

They all get to work, except for Izuku stuck on the bed -not that he minds- with Eri hanging onto one of his arm as she observe, interested. He dozes off, unable to help himself since Eri’s bed is so comfortable -and having her near just feels— Right-, while they manage to build quite an impressive fort around it. Izuku is not quite sure, but he swears that Mirio disappeared more than a couple of times, only to re-emerge back with even more ‘materials’. By the time they are done, Izuku is barely hanging to consciousness by a thread, and for what he can gather going by his radar, as he fights the need to surrender to the sweet embrace of sleep, the pillow fort turned out to be more of a pillow castle.

They’d probably get yelled at as soon as someone will get into the room, but no one seems to really care. Eri feels quite charmed by this novelty.

“I think we are done, if we get another pillow in this room we’ll have to get out ourselves.” Kirishima laughs, softly. “Do you like it, Eri?”

She hums, affirmative. “Next time can I build, too?”

“Of course—” Mirio huffs, falling on the floor between a small mountain of pillows. “We’ll build all the pillow forts you want.”
The noise she makes it’s the closer thing to a little chuckle Izuku ever heard from her, even if it’s not quite a real laugh yet. He faintly smiles, unable to shake off the daze of sleep from himself to say anything.

That’s ok, though. He can let go and just sleep, now.

Eri is in the safest place in the world, after all.
The young doctor that called them before the sun even started to rise seemed unable to hold a smile.
halfway between amusement and exasperation as she quietly opened the door. The scene they found themselves in front of was definitely not quite what they expected.

The room looked like a pillow factory exploded in it. White, nondescript hospital sheets were hanging over the bed like a tent, using the machinery surrounding it like poles. Pillows of various sizes were strewn everywhere, and every single one of the students asked to stay the night were sinking in the small hills of pillows, deeply asleep. Mirio was half sitting, his head propped against the mattress, Amajiki draped over him, the both of them snoring. On the other side of the bed Uraraka, Asui and Hadou were pretty much piled on one another, with Kirishima just slightly further, using Uraraka’s ankle as a headrest, drooling on it a bit. Midoriya was on the bed, on a side, Eri held tight between his arms. She was curled up against him, seemingly very comfortable.

“Needless to say, this shouldn’t have happened—“ The doctor says, her voice barely a whisper. “But it’s hard to get mad at them, isn’t it? Still, we should’ve kept a closer eye on these kids, I apologize.”

“They are old enough to know better—“ Nighteye replies, adjusting his glasses with a little sigh. “We should be the one apologizing for causing troubles.”

She smiles, lopsided. “It’s really not that big of a deal— I guess they just wanted to make her happy. Don’t be too hard on them, ok?”

Aizawa sighs, too. They got really lucky that the doctor assigned to Eri seems to be pretty understanding. She leaves with a little nod.

“So, what do we do about this?” Aizawa ponders, voice low, putting both hands on his hips.

She had a point— It’s hard to get mad at them. They didn’t create a ruckus or disturbed anyone in the hospital —although he does wonder from where did they get this absurd amount of pillows—and they clearly just wanted to do something nice for Eri.

Much to his surprise, when he turns toward Nighteye, he’s smiling. He shakes his head with a fond sigh, adjusting his glasses.

“They are good kids.” He comments, almost to himself. “Still, we should probably get them back to their rooms—“
Despite the fact they were whispering, still standing in front of the closed door, Kirishima stirs with a little hum. When he opens his eyes he blinks a couple of times, gaze bleary, before he finally seems to fully snap into consciousness and gets up from Uraraka’s ankle.

“Sensei—“ He says, voice low, drying his chin with a wrist. “Whoops. Sorry?” He adds, an unsure grin pulling at his lips.

Aizawa tilts an eyebrow.

“We just wanted to keep Eri company for a bit— But then Midoriya fell asleep, and we didn’t want to disturb him— And Eri asked us to stay, so, huh—“ He makes a vague gesture, encompassing the room. “This happened?”

Asui also wakes, emerging from the girl-pile with a messy head and swaying a bit as she sits up. She also looks at Aizawa, vaguely confused, and then murmurs a sleepy. “Good morning.”

Kirishima stands, snickering, and carefully walks to the other side of the bed, stepping through the pillows.

“Senpai—“ He says, softly, shaking Amajiki’s shoulder. “Wake up. We got busted.”

Amajiki rises from Mirio’s shoulder immediately awake, at that, making a little ‘eep’ and hiding his face when he notices Nighteye and Aizawa standing by the door. That’s enough to stir Mirio awake, as well, that looks around himself and then blinks at them, immediately grinning.

“Oooops—“ He snickers, much like Kirishima did, looking anything but remorseful.

At that point Hadou and Uraraka also emerge from behind the bed, sitting up with heads just as messy as Asui’s.

“Who’s being so noiiisyyy—“ Uraraka whines, not even trying to open her eyes. “Wanna sleeeeeep —“

Hadou only yawns, looking even loopier than usual.
“It’s still too early, so you better all get back to your rooms—“ Aizawa sighs, not finding in himself even a shard of strength to scold them. “not before you’ve cleaned up this mess, though.”

They all groan but start to get up, yawning and scratching themselves over the hospital scrubs. They immediately get to work, starting to gather the pillows, except for Midoriya, that hasn’t even stirred, still deeply asleep if the steady rise of his chest is anything to come by. The boy could probably sleep through a marching band, for how tired he must be, but he still needs to get back to his room, too. Eri seems to be sleeping peacefully, too. Aizawa approaches the bed, whispering Midoriya’s name gently a couple of times, trying not to wake the girl as well. When that seems to fail he puts a light touch on his shoulder—

The reaction is immediate. Midoriya’s eyes shot open as he tenses and turns, and in a second he’s on Aizawa, the full weight of his body enough to push him back, crashing on the floor belly up, although the fall is gently broken by the pillows still sitting there. The boy straddles him, a hand painfully tight around Aizawa’s wrist, the other on his neck, cutting his air off. Midoriya grits his teeth like an angry animal above him, before his foggy eyes seems to clear over and the green of his irises turns brighter. He gasps, immediately letting Aizawa go and scrambling to get off of him.

“Fuck, shit, sensei— Sorry—“ He stammers, pale, breath heavy. He puts a hand on his chest, catching his breath. “Sorry, sorry—“

Careful, Aizawa sits up. Everyone around them seemed frozen mid-action. It all happened in less than a handful of seconds, but the atmosphere in the room immediately changed.

“It’s ok.” Aizawa replies, voice measured, carefully watching the boy, pale and still panting heavily. “I shouldn’t have touched you.”

Midoriya takes a deep, shaky breath before carding a nervous hand through his hair. “I’m sorry.” He repeats, barely a whisper.

“Midoriya. It’s fine.”

When Aizawa stands and offers the boy a hand, Midoriya accepts it, stumbling back on unsure feet, hanging his head low as Aizawa pulls him up.

“Is— Are you ok?” A little voice asks. They both turn, finding Eri kneeling in her bed, her cheeks
and forehead vaguely flushed and her eyes a little glassy. She looks worried.

“Oh— I must’ve woken you.” Midoriya replies, voice rough. “Sorry, Eri. Everything is ok, I got startled, is all.”

She pads toward the edge of the mattress, grabbing Midoriya’s hand with gentle fingers. He smiles at her, weakly, before speaking again, steadier. “Eri, this is Aizawa-sensei, my teacher— I told you about him, remember?”

The girl’s red eyes turns to him, regarding him with a long, curious look. She then add a sheepish. “Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you, too.” Aizawa replies, softly, with a small little head bow. Nighteye has approached the bed, too, and he puts a soft hand on Midoriya’s shoulder, calling his attention.

“Go help your friends tidy up and then back to your room.” He says, not without a note of kindness in his voice. “We’ll keep Eri company, don’t worry.”

—

It doesn’t take too much time to give the borrowed pillows back, even though some of the nurses gently scolded them. They all walk back toward their rooms just as the first, timid rays of daylight starts to show on the horizon outside the windows. Ochako definitely feels like she could use some more sleep, especially since her neck feels very stiff after having spent most of the night sandwiched between Tsuyu and Hadou senpai.

She silently eyes Midoriya’s back. He hasn’t said a word yet, as neither of them did, but he’s walking with his shoulders slumped forward, like he’s carrying something heavy.

He probably is.

What he told them yesterday— He spoke almost clinically, giving them an analytic, concise version of the facts, never lingering too much on extra details or how certain situations impacted him. But he did got hold captive, for five full days, in the hands of people that had no qualms using little Eri like a tool.
What did he really went through? None of them could understand—

The way Eri nestled herself in his arms seemed to come to her so easily, Ochako can only imagine it became routine for them— How many times did Midoriya got rudely awoken by people that wanted to harm the both of them? How many hours did he spend protectively shielding Eri, plunged in his personal darkness, not having any idea of what could be coming for him at any second?

Now that the first high of relief and happiness was over, Ochako felt as if the aftermath of what happened was already looming over them. And on Midoriya, most of all.

She’s snapped out of her deep musing, surprised, when Tsuyu puts a hand on her wrist. They are already in front of the room they are sharing with Hadou senpai.

“Alright, good night, I guess—“ Kirishima says, indecisive, as the boys also lingers around. “Or actually, good morning? Well, either way, sleep well.”

Ochako attempts a smile, nodding at him. But Kirishima hesitates, bright red eyes moving between them and a silent Midoriya, that’s keeping his own gaze casted downward. Careful, he closes the distance between them, putting a gentle hand on Midoriya’s bicep.

“Hey—” Kirishima says, softly. “Want a hug before we leave the girls?”

Midoriya doesn’t move for long seconds, but then he silently nods, still not turning his face up. Ochako immediately steps forward, as does Tsuyu, and the three of them close around Midoriya once more, in a gesture that’s already becoming familiar. Midoriya still keeps silent, pushing his face against Ochako’s neck, hands limp at his sides.

“Oh, what the heck—“ Mirio senpai says from somewhere behind them, his voice cracking a bit, and then suddenly there are three more people piling on them, although, going by the little strangled noise he made as Mirio squeezed the whole group, Amajiki senpai might’ve been roped in accidentally.

When they finally let go and part ways to catch some more hours of rest, Midoriya still says nothing. But at least he looks less like he might bite someone’s throat off at the drop of a hat.
When Izuku wakes for the second time, that morning, is definitely in a gentler way. He rouses from sleep naturally, but, to be honest, that doesn’t feel much better than it did waking up with that voice screaming *dangedangerdanger* inside him. His throat is dry when he attempts to speak, and he coughs for a handful of seconds before he’s finally able to clear it.

“Huh— Anyone?” He asks, unsure. Only absolute silence replies and, with a sigh, he turns his radar back on.

The other beds are empty, and at this point he has no idea what time it could possibly be. He slowly sits, stretching. He ponders the idea of just falling back down on the mattress and take some more time to rest, but his stomach grumbles loudly.

Very well, then.

He silently pads off the bed, scratching his head with a yawn, as he tries to pinpoint his friends’ positions— They are a floor beneath, and Izuku distractedly puts on the hospital slippers, feeling slightly as if he’s running on autopilot, following himself from a distance.

When he makes his way to the big room and enters, an inviting smell hits his nose immediately. The place is bustling with activity, and Izuku can only assume it must be some kind of cafeteria as he goes for the table his friends are sitting at.

“Oh, hey! Good morning!” Mirio is the first to notice him, cheerful as always. He scoots over, giving Izuku some space to sit down on the bench, by his side. “Do you usually snore, Midoriya?”

“Not as far as I know.” Izuku replies, flinching when his voice comes out a low, scratchy growl. He clears his throat once more, adding a clearer. “Why?”

“Sounded like a trombone concert, back there.” Mirio laughs, amused. “We already ate, but I can pick something up for you— Any preference?”

Izuku can’t help but yawn. He still feels like sleeping for one thousand years. “Anything’s fine. Thanks, senpai.”
“Don’t mention it.” Mirio easily replies, sliding out of his seat. Izuku follows his light with his head for a bit, before turning toward the rest of the group currently sitting at the table. He weakly smiles, which immediately helps, seeing as their lights went a bit more relaxed.

“What time is it?” He asks, crossing both arms on the table.

“Almost noon.” Uraraka replies promptly. “Aizawa-sensei came by our room, earlier— Told us to wait for him here. I’m going to guess he’s getting the papers ready to get us back to school.”

Izuku hums, distracted. He can’t wait to go back on school grounds, in his room, away from the goddamn hospital—

But he also feels guilty. Eri will probably need to be kept under observation for a bit more, but even if she didn’t Izuku couldn’t just— Take her and bring her to UA like a pet. She’s a child that’s probably currently stuck in a legality limbo— And she will need an adult to take care of her, from now on. There is not much he could do, realistically, but his heart beats painfully in his chest at the thought of leaving her here, nonetheless.

He rests his chin on his crossed arms, forlorn. He just wants to go back to normality, but at the same time the idea makes him feel like he’s abandoning Eri. How will she fare, without him? Won’t she feel lonely, scared? Wouldn’t she need Izuku to stay by her side?

Or maybe… Maybe he was just being conceited. Maybe, at the end of the day, he was the one that needed Eri to stay by his side. To have her near, to reassure that dark, animalistic presence in him that the job was done, she was fine, that no one would hurt her anymore, that he didn’t need to stay on guard all the time anymore—

He jumps when something clicks in front of him, tensing violently. Mirio slides by his side once more.

“Got you katsudon.” He says, his voice light. “That’s your favorite, right?”

Izuku stiffly sits straighter, blinking. There’s something painful and unpleasant in his stomach, and he suddenly doesn’t feel that hungry anymore. Still, the nice smell of katsudon it’s something familiar and, if only, he needs to eat to save his strength. Can’t afford to be picky with food, when he has to make sure to be ready for a fight at any moment—
Stop thinking like that, what is wrong with you? You are safe, your friends are here, stop acting like a wounded animal—

“Yeah. Thanks.” He forces himself to say, voice rough. He drags the bowl closer, breaking the chopsticks apart, and silently starts to eat. He feels like an exposed nerve— And the lights around him are— Strange. Slightly off. Like there’s something different to them, something Izuku cannot quite pinpoint, but he just knows it’s there— He should probably turn his radar off, even just for a bit, to calm down.

It takes him an inordinate amount of strength to do so, as if his own quirk is fighting against him for control. So much so, in fact, that he must’ve frozen mid-gesture as he focused to finally win over his radar and turn it off, a bite of katsudon hovering between himself and the bowl.

“Midoriya?” Uraraka says, careful.

Izuku sighs, only now noticing how tense his shoulders were. How tense he was, in general. That wasn’t doing him any favor, the old aches in his back more pronounced than usual. He forces himself to relax a little bit, shoulders slumping. He resumes the almost mechanical motions of eating, distantly realizing that, since he sat down at the table, no one really said a single word aside from Uraraka answering a direct question. (And Mirio. But Mirio is, well— Mirio.)

“Why are you all so silent?” He asks, his tone coming out almost reproachful. “Are you holding a wake?”

“Dude—” Kirishima sounds uncomfortable. “It’s not like that. We just don’t want to stress you out with inane chattering.”

“I really don’t need to be babied.” Izuku snaps, and immediately recoils at his own tone, at the surge of aggressiveness he felt rising up his throat.

Slowly, he puts the chopsticks back in the bowl and drags both hands on his face.

“Fuck.” He hisses. “Sorry. I don’t know what’s getting to me—“
His voice broke a bit, as he spoke. Mirio’s big, warm hands finds his shoulders, gentle.

“Hey.” He murmurs. “Midoriya. It’s ok. You went through a stressful situation. It’s ok to feel a bit off-center.”

“That’s the understatement of the year.” Izuku replies with a sarcastic little laugh, and then hisses. “Shit, I did it again. Sorry, I don’t want to be such a dick, it’s just coming out.”

He’s not quite sure what to make of the silence at the table, and he’s not going to struggle with his quirk some more, for the moment. Still, Mirio is keeping his gentle hold on him.

“That’s ok.” He says, his kind voice steady. “Why don’t we go talk with Sir, after you are done eating? I think he might help.”

—

He cannot deny that he’s quite grateful for Mirio’s gentle and steady presence. He guides Izuku with a firm arm around his shoulders, almost protective.

“Sir?” He asks softly when they stop. Izuku isn’t quite sure where they are, but that’s ok. He can trust Mirio. —I can, shut up, brain, I can trust Mirio, he’s not an enemy.— “I know you must be busy, right now, but can we speak for a minute?”

Izuku hears a little sniff, and he can only imagine that Nighteye is observing them, going by the silence that stretches. He still doesn’t talk, but he must’ve accepted, because Mirio is pulling him away once more, gentle.

Izuku hears a door open and then close, and then he’s being guided down to sit on a chair, the noises around him suggesting Nighteye is sitting in front of him.

“What is it?” He asks, practical, but not without a note of kindness in his voice.

“I think Midoriya is a bit stressed out after— Everything.” Mirio says, matter-of-factly. “But, sorry— Not really my place to say, isn’t it?”
It’s… True, though.” Izuku concedes, voice low. “I’ve been feeling— Weird, since this morning.”

_When I attacked Aizawa-sensei—_

He does not voice that thought, but Nighteye hums, thoughtful.

“Ah, before you say anything, Sir—“ Mirio intervenes, hasty. “Midoriya, do you want me to get out? I mean, it’s pretty private stuff—“

“No, it’s ok.” Izuku replies, flat. “I—I feel like I’m not— All quite here? But it’s nice to have you close, senpai.”

Silence follows. Then Mirio sits down by his side, their elbows brushing.

“I see.” Nighteye says, voice low. “Can you elaborate a bit more about how you feel, Midoriya?”

Izuku takes a moment to think. This feeling of detachment that’s been plaguing him since he first woke— It’s only becoming worse.

“I’m not quite sure how to put it into words, I—“ He starts, careful. “I’m like— I don’t know, I move my body and I say things but like— I feel like I’m not— Fully in control? Like I’m just sort of— Witnessing myself do these things?” He adds, frowning vaguely. “I just realized how wacky that sounds. Do you think I might be under the effect of some kind of quirk? Maybe one of Chisaki’s men— Could it possibly be in effect after all these hours? I don’t know, it’s just—“

“Midoriya.” Nighteye interrupts him, gentle. “I don’t think you’re under any quirk effect. Do you know what post traumatic stress disorder is?”

Izuku blinks. “…Vaguely?” He replies, honest.

“It might be too early to call a proper diagnosis, and I’m not a specialist— but I wouldn’t be surprised if what you are experiencing might be symptoms of it.” Nighteye says, voice even. “Not
just this past week— Everything you’ve been through, so far, would be enough for any pro-hero to crumble, and you are only just a teenager. The line of work you’ve chosen is a high-stress one, Midoriya, and I really don’t need to tell you the risks we all take on the job. You are already perfectly aware.”

Izuku nods, silent.

“Still, even pros are, at the end of the day, just humans. No matter how professionally prepared we are, some experiences can leave deep wounds inside us.” Nighteye continues in the same tone. “We must take care of our minds as much as we do our bodies. Midoriya, I don’t posses the knowledge required to fully help you personally, but I will take steps in order to find someone who can.”

“…I’m not quite sure what you mean, Sir.” Izuku says, tilting his head on a side.

“You need professional counseling.” Nighteye replies, practical. “I will speak with your teacher about it. For the time being, while I’ll be happy to have you at the office if you feel like continuing your internship, I will have to bench you from active duty until you’ll be fully taken care of. Do you understand?”

It… Makes sense, Izuku has to admit. Not that he particularly likes the idea, but if he can’t keep a lid on this sudden beast that seemed to have awakened in him, he can hardly go out there, helping anyone.

“…I do.” He concedes, voice low. “I— I think you have a point, Sir.”

Nighteye hums and he shifts. When he speaks again, his voice is much closer, as if he’s kneeling in front of Izuku.

“You are a good kid, Midoriya, and you’ve proven yourself through and through.” He murmurs, gentle. “But you’ve also taken way too many hits for someone your age. A little pause will be good for you.”

“Ok.” Izuku replies, his voice sounding dull to his own ears. Still, Nighteye doesn’t seem to take it personally, just puts a soft hand on Izuku’s arm.

“Eraserhead is probably speaking with your friends, right now. We will need to keep Eri hospitalised
for a bit more. Her fever seems to be running stronger as time pass, which we think might be an aftereffect of her quirk usage.”

“Oh—“ Genuine worry finally cuts through this strange, fleeting sensation of detachment. “Is she going to be ok?”

“I’m sure she will. She’s being taken care of and the hospital is going to keep her monitored until she makes a full recovery.” Nighteye replies. “After that, we will think about how to properly care for her in the future, but I promise we won’t take her away from you. I’ll personally make sure you’ll be able to see her any time you want.”

Izuku blinks, surprised, gaping like a fish. “I— Thank you, Sir.” He says, faintly.

“In any case, we’ve delivered some clothes to your room, and I went back to the office to get your cane and support items, as well— You should get changed and go say bye to Eri, for the moment, if you wish to do so.” Nighteye says, easily, as if he just didn’t gift Izuku with an enormous amount of relief. “I think Eraserhead said he wanted to leave during the afternoon.”

—

“How did you know?”

Mirio makes a quizzical noise, before letting out a soft, little ‘Oh’. He takes a few seconds, before answering, patting Izuku’s fingers hooked in the crook of his elbow.

“It’s as Sir said—“ His tone is serious, but not heavy. “We have to take care of ourselves. I— I’ve been working with him for only a year, but there had been a couple of times when things turned out to be really difficult. Sir helped me learn how to analyse my behaviour and recognize when I needed to stop and give myself a chance to heal. I just thought he might help.”

Izuku doesn’t say anything for a long time, letting himself get guided back to their room.

“Senpai—“
“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

—

He sits on the edges of the mattress, careful. When Eri speaks, after he told her that he must leave, for now, her voice is faint.

“But— I’ll see you again?” She asks, hopeful.

“Of course.” Izuku reassures her softly, squeezing her hand. “I’m not leaving forever, Eri. I just need to go back to school, but I’ll come visit— And the doctors and nurses are nice, they’ll take care of you until you feel better, ok?”

“Ok—“ She whispers. “Mister Aizawa said he’ll keep me company, too. He’s nice. He likes cats.”

Izuku snickers faintly, amused. “He does. Maybe one day he’ll sneak in a kitten for you.”

Eri hums, as if she likes the idea. Then she says. “Mister Aizawa said that you’ll need a doctor, too, when I asked if you were ok—” She sounds worried, stumbling on her words a bit. “Does that mean that you are still hurt? You are not— You are not going to d-die, right?”

The words hit like a spear through his chest, almost a phantom sensation of what he felt when Chisaki opened an hole in him. Izuku gulps around a knot in his throat, taking a deep breath.

“I’m— I will be just fine, Eri. You patched me up, see?” He replies, softly pounding a fist against his own chest a couple of times. “I only need to heal, like you do— just in a slightly different way.”

She sniffs, her little hand squeezing around his. “Ok. We can heal together, then.”

It takes everything Izuku currently has, to not just squeeze her in a hug and melt into tears.
“Yeah.” He replies, vaguely strangled. “We will.”

—

The car ride is silent, almost somber. Aizawa has to stop himself multiple times from sighing.

He has to admit that part of him hoped, for the boy’s sake, that he could come out of this latest stunt unscathed— Of course, that was pretty much an impossibility. The brief discussion that he and Nighteye had, both during the morning as the students went back to sleep, and before he left with them, was something he expected to happen, sooner or later. Aizawa would be coming back to the hospital, since he needed to watch over Eri until they were completely sure she wouldn’t lose control over her quirk, so they’ll have a chance to discuss Midoriya’s mental state more, surely. It was clear that something needed to be done about it.

Just one more thing that the school as a whole needed to implement, now more than ever, with the foundations of the hero world shaken, and the rise of villain activity. They needed specialists capable of dealing with the consequences that picking this line of job entailed, capable of helping the students if needed. And even if the board didn’t deem it necessary, — which, at this point, would make Aizawa question his decision to keep teaching at UA, but he’ll cross that bridge only if it really came to it — it was obvious that Midoriya would need it. And he probably wasn’t the only one.

He cannot deny that he feels guilty, too— It’s not logical, and he knows it. The boy would be suffering the consequences regardless, but it has been very stupid of him, earlier today, to just stroll up to the boy and touch him when he’d been the most vulnerable. He probably accidentally triggered this sudden mood shift.

He sees Kirishima shift uncomfortably on the seat by his side out of the corner of his eyes, droopy strands of red hair bobbing against his forehead. The boy seems to look at the rearview mirror, before he twists on his seat to face the back seatings, stretching an arm forward, silent. Blinking, Aizawa glances at the mirror as well.

Midoriya is leaning against Uraraka, head resting on her shoulders, eyes closed. She’s carding four fingers through his hair, her own cheek smushed against the curls, a melancholic expression on her face. Kirishima, still uncomfortably twisted on the seat, is keeping a steady hand around Midoriya’s, now, that doesn’t look prone to break that contact any time soon, as Asui is gently caressing his shoulder.
The boy has a difficult road to walk in front of him— But at least it’s good to know he won’t walk it alone.

Maybe the next break he’ll treat these kids, giving them a chance to relax and do something fun, a dinner, a day out, anything— He’s got a really good class, this year. He better take care of it.

—

The tables are prepared, all the food sitting on it, drinks still in the refrigerator as they wait— Everything is ready.

“Iida, sit down, you are giving me a headache.” Ashido whines, draped over the backrest of a couch.

“Sorry.” Tenya replies, tense. “I’m just nervous—“

“And worried. We all are.” She interrupts, voice kind. “It’s going to be fine, ok?”

The message that Uraraka sent to him privately, earlier, left him cold inside. They’ve spent the whole morning getting ready for their welcome-back party, the entire class — minus Bakugou and Todoroki that had another lesson today, even though Todoroki looked like he was seriously considering the idea of gluing himself on the door whining that he didn’t want to go.— collaborating in making everything perfect, all of them excited beyond belief.

And then Uraraka asked him to tell everyone to keep it down. It felt crushing, at first, and when he asked why, if something was wrong, she briefly replied that Midoriya didn’t seem to be in the mood for anything chaotic and noisy.

Much to his surprise -and yet not surprising at all- when he relayed this request to the rest of the class, everyone had been pretty understanding. He promised Uraraka that they will all behave. They had to forgo some plans they had in mind, but everyone took the news in stride.

He exchanges a look with Yaoyorozu, that looks just as worried as he felt, and finally gave in, sitting by her side with a sigh. She smiles weakly at him, nervously playing with a strand of her long hair that she left untied and free to fall over her back like a black wave.
Koda, that was sitting by the window, peering outside every now and then, suddenly jumps on his feet.

“T-They are coming!” He says, stumbling shyly on his words. “I can see them down the path—“

Tenya jumps back up from the couch like a spring, pent up nervous energy making him feel just like one. Everyone seems to get in position, like they are pretending to be casual, which is ridiculous especially considering that Midoriya won’t be able to see what they were doing, regardless.

As he’s trying to decide if he should laugh at the scene or not, the door opens. Kirishima is the first to enter, hair down framing his face, blinking confusedly at the whole room. He frowns.

“What the heck are y’all doing?” He asks, flabbergasted.

They all groan. So much for being casual.

Asui follows suit, Uraraka and Midoriya behind her right away. Uraraka blinks and then looks at the ceiling, shaking her head with a sigh. Midoriya turns vaguely toward her with a perplexed expression.

“What’s going on?” He asks, voice light.

“Nothing, they are being dumbasses.” A lopsided smile pulls at her lips as she answers.

Midoriya frowns, tilting his head on a side, but says nothing. He then turns toward Tenya, pale eyes boring into him. They stand there for long seconds, looking at each other -so to speak- in silence, before Midoriya silently opens his arms wide without a word.

Tenya blinks, and it takes him a second to understand what is going on, before he gasps and covers the distance between them with two large strides, grabbing Midoriya in a tight hug and literally lifting him from the floor.

Midoriya releases a little, unsure laugh, but he hugs Tenya back nonetheless. “Missed you too, pal.” He adds, swinging his feet mid-air a bit.
If Tenya’s eyes are wet, when he puts Midoriya down, that grins up at him, no one really comments.

The party is in full swing, all the food they prepared -mostly Sato, really- already half demolished. It’s easy to fall back into a relaxed chattering, as if nothing really happened, which Midoriya seems grateful for. He’s sinking into a couch, nursing a glass of soda as he laughs with Kaminari and Ashido, sitting near him, that are rapid-firing all the jokes they know on each other at an increasingly faster rate, as if they are in the middle of some kind of competition. Uraraka glances at the scene with a little smile, before she turns to Tenya and Yaoyorozu, and nods silently on a side. They follow, Kirishima turning toward them and also making a beeline for them when they stop in a more secluded corner of the communal area.

“I know you want to ask.” Uraraka says, voice low, after Kirishima stepped by Tenya and Yaoyorozu’s side.

“So… What happened to him?” Yaoyorozu finally tries, indecisive. They watch Kirishima and Uraraka exchange a little look, before they both sigh.

“I don’t know if it’s really our story to tell—“ Kirishima says, scratching his head. “I don’t want to go tattling on Midoriya, especially if he doesn’t feel like sharing it, but let’s say he’s been having a hard time.”

“I think he’s going to need a bit to recover.” Uraraka adds, hugging herself, eyes casted downward. “He seemed fine yesterday— But I guess that was just, you know— The high of the moment.”

Kirishima hums. “I mean, can you blame him?” He murmurs, frowning. “I don’t know how I’d react, if I—“ He stops, carding a nervous hand through his hair, glancing at Tenya and Yaoyorozu. “Sorry, guys, it’s not like we don’t want to tell you, but I really don’t feel comfortable sharing this without Midoriya’s permission.”

“That is alright.” Tenya replies, measured. “But… Are you two ok?”

Uraraka and Kirishima both blinks, surprised, looking at one another once more.
“…Let’s just say I had better times.” Uraraka replies, cryptic. “I’m fine. It’ll be ok. I’m mostly relieved everything turned out— Fine.”

She hesitates on the last word, but Kirishima glances at her with a little frown, lips a thin line.

“True.” He says, sighing. “It could’ve been much worse, all things considered.”

This is doing nothing to really placate all the questions that have been burning Tenya from the inside in the past week, but he can’t blame Uraraka and Kirishima for being so enigmatic. They are right, this is Midoriya’s story to tell, and if he doesn’t want to, Tenya will have no other choice but to accept it.

“I’m just glad everyone is in good health.” He says, adjusting his glasses. “Midoriya will tell us in due time, if he wants to. I just ask you to let me know if you think I’m stepping out of line— I don’t want to make anyone feel uncomfortable.”

Uraraka smiles at him, gentle. “You’ll be fine, Iida. Just keep being you.”

Yaoyorozu chuckles at that, before putting a gentle hand on Uraraka’s shoulder. “I agree with Iida, I won’t insist— Just know that if you need to talk, both of you, I’m willing to listen, ok?”

“Thanks, Yaoyorozu.” Kirishima sighs, a lopsided smile pulling at his lips. “I’m sorry we can’t tell you much. But I’m sure everything will be ok, given time.”

They all turn, looking at the couch. Kaminari and Ashido still seems to be bickering, but Tokoyami has taken place on the couch by Midoriya’s other side, that’s distractedly petting Dark Shadow, curled in his lap like a very strange cat, as the two of them talk softly. That is, until Midoriya suddenly perks up like a dog that just heard its owner’s footsteps in the distance.

Kirishima snickers. “One thousand yen that Bakugou and Todoroki are about to get right through that door.” He says, amused.

“Oh, don’t look at me, I’d bet right along with you on that.” Uraraka laughs. Midoriya gives one last pat to Dark Shadow, saying something they cannot hear to Tokoyami that just nods, before he gets up from the couch. Right on cue the door opens once more, Todoroki and Bakugou stepping in, and the expression on Todoroki’s face when Midoriya runs up to him and literally launches himself in his
arms is absolutely priceless. He instantly drops his bag to catch Midoriya, stumbling a couple of steps backwards as Bakugou barely manages to dodge them with a sidestep. Midoriya laughs, tilting his face up, and seems to pretty much melt when Todoroki leans in to kiss him, a hand sitting through Midoriya’s curls.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake.” Bakugou groans, putting some more distance between himself and the still-kissing-couple. “You’re both so damn dramatic—“
I really don't need to see this.
“-zuku—“ Shouto manages to say, breathless. “We gotta get off the elevator—“

Izuku huffs against his lips, just as breathless as Shouto feels. They rapidly excused themselves from the party, some amused snickers following them, but no one protested. As soon as they got on the elevator Izuku seemed hell bent in pushing forward a one-man assault on Shouto, catching his lips in another long, desperate kiss, hands running up and down Shouto’s neck and cheeks almost frantically.

Not that he minded— Still, the elevator wasn’t exactly the most private of places, so Shouto would rather move this somewhere else. Thankfully, Izuku’s room was just on the second floor, and he drags his boyfriend toward the door, as he nuzzles against Shouto’s neck, even as he opens the it.

The room is just as they left it a week prior, obviously. Izuku seems to suddenly freeze by the entrance, and Shouto gently disentangle himself from his grip, softly closing the door behind them. He silently takes off the school uniform jacket and shirt, casually leaving them on the dresser, taking a long look at Izuku.

He looks tired and pale, hair freshly washed but messy. He seems to hold himself with a subtly nervous posture, his shoulders a tense line, wearing a nondescript black shirt and dark jeans, clothes Shouto could not remember him ever wearing, before. Slowly, Izuku takes some careful steps inside and sits on his bed with a little sigh, nervous fingers picking at the sheets. Shouto sits by his side, silent.

They don’t say anything for a long while. Shouto doesn’t want to push him, especially now that he had the time to properly mull over what Izuku told them the day prior, to really reflect upon the sheer amount of shit Izuku must’ve gone through— Izuku, that seems to be deep in thought, so Shouto waits, patient, to give him time to decide which step to take from here.

It’s not surprising, but his heart still falls on the floor when suddenly Izuku’s eyes fill with tears and he sobs, folding on himself.

“Hey—“ Shouto murmurs, rough, shifting to put careful hands on Izuku’s shoulders. “Izuku—“
“S-sorry—“ Izuku sobs, broken, hiding his face against his hands. “Sorry—“

“Izuku, it’s ok.” Shouto replies, pained, shifting even closer, until his chest is pressed against Izuku’s shoulder. “It’s ok. You can cry. Let it out, it’s ok.”

Izuku hiccups, trembling, turning toward Shouto and rolling up against his chest like a nervous ball of limbs. Shouto envelops him in a hug, putting his chin against the soft curls, gently caressing his back, feeling every single one of the irregular bumps of Izuku’s scarred skin under his palm.

Shouto let him cry for as long as he needed, even if he felt a stabbing pain at every each loud, broken sob that makes it out of Izuku’s chest. He holds him tight, murmuring soft reassurances against his hair, a hand steady on Izuku’s cheek, collecting his tears in the point of contact between them.

It seems to take forever before Izuku calms down a bit, his sobs subsiding until they turn into little hiccups and then fully stops, breath heavy and trembly. Shouto doesn’t let him go even then, gently kissing his head.

“…Sorry.” Izuku says one more time, rough. “I—I don’t know what got to me—“

“Izuku, you don’t need to apologize. It’s ok to cry, if you need it. It’ll help.” Shouto murmurs, and when Izuku shifts away a bit he let him, not wanting to smother him and stress him more.

Shouto turns vaguely, to reach the nightstand and grab a couple of tissues from the packet sitting there. When he gently tilts Izuku’s face upward, cleaning the tear tracks on his cheeks, Izuku does not turn away, red and pale eyes still watery. Izuku sniffs, and Shouto silently hands him the other issue, giving him a second to clear his nose.

“Better?” He asks, putting a careful palm on his now dry cheek when he’s done. Izuku hums.

“I’ve been kind of a mess since I woke up this morning.” He murmurs, sounding tired. “Sorry, I just ruined what was supposed to be a good moment—“

Shouto snorts. “Don’t be stupid.” He reprimands, gentle. “This is isn’t some kind of dramatic romance movie. It’s fine, really.”
The ghost of a smile passes on Izuku’s lips, as he tiredly blinks up at Shouto.

“You need to tell me something.” He then says out of the blue, not quite a question. Shouto sighs.

“I do, but it’s really not important, for now.” He replies, honest, stroking a thumb against the freckles dotting Izuku’s cheeks. “I just want to make sure you are ok, first.”

“But it is important for you, I can tell.” Izuku replies, stubborn. “What is it? Just tell me—“

When Shouto hesitates, Izuku frowns, pale eyes moving as if he’s deep in thought. His lower lips wobbles a bit.

“D-do you want to break up?” He asks, watery. Shouto gapes at him.

“What?! No!” He immediately replies, shocked. “What even gave you the idea— Oh, for the love of —“

Izuku sniffs, a little paler. Shouto sighs deeply.

“Why do you had to immediately jump to the worst conclusion?” He asks, tired. “I just want to give you some time—“

Izuku is still staring, so to speak, pale eyes covered by a sheen of tears. Shouto groans, biting his lip nervously.

“Fine, I’ll tell you.” He mutters, surrendering to the fact that Izuku would know no peace until he does. *Cursed empathic quirks.* “I really wanted to tell you this once you’d be less upset, but you are really giving me no choice.”

Izuku sniffs again, shifting a bit closer, stubbornly silent. Shouto takes a second, distractedly moving a curly tuft of hair behind Izuku’s ear.

“It’s— something that I’ve wanted to tell you for a long time, now.” He stars with a murmur. “But I
didn’t want to— I don’t know, pressure you— I just thought I’d give us time to be together, before—“ A sigh. “But then I— After what happened, I realized that if things took a turn for the worse and I didn’t say anything, I’d regret it for the rest of my life.”

Long seconds pass, as Shouto hesitates, heart beating painfully in his throat. Izuku blinks, hands rising to gently slide along Shouto’s chest, up to his shoulder.

“Shouto.” He murmurs, pointedly. Shouto gulps nervously. For how many times he’s been a step away from saying it, now suddenly he feels like there’s a brick in his throat, preventing the words from coming out naturally.

“…I love you.” He finally manages to croak, forcing the words out so fast he’s not quite sure they even made sense. Izuku’s gasps, eyes going wide, hands stilling on him.

“What?” He exhales.

“I— I love you.” Shouto repeats, steadier. “I’ve been in love with you for a while. Since the summer camp, actually.”

Izuku blinks, looking not unlike a very realistic statue, mouth slightly open. Words seems to fail him for long seconds, before he puts a slightly curled hand against his mouth.

“I— I don’t know what to say—“ He murmurs, trembly. “I—“

“You don’t have to say anything.” Shouto reassures him, carefully stroking his neck. “It’s ok, if you don’t have an answer. I don’t expect one right away.”

“Shouto—“

“I’m serious.” He interrupts. “We haven’t been together for a long time, and I don’t expect you to feel as strongly as I do, right now. It really is ok if you don’t have an answer for me.”

A smile pulls at Shouto’s lips, as he watches Izuku slowly takes his hand away from his mouth, pale eyes filled with wonder.
“Just— Give yourself some time to think about it, ok?” Shouto adds, gentle, caressing Izuku’s shoulder with his other hand. He adds, with a sigh. “That’s why I didn’t want to tell you right now— I’m sure you have enough on your mind as is.”

“No, I— It’s fine.” Izuku whispers. “Even if I— Even if I don’t really know what to say, for now, I — That made me really happy. Thank you.”

“…I’m glad.” Shouto murmurs back, unable to stop his hand from wandering upward, along Izuku’s cheek, to go card through his soft hair. “I just want you to be happy.”

Izuku sobs, his eyes filling with tears once more. But they don’t spill, his trembling fingers finding Shouto’s chin and lips in butterfly-light touch.

“Do you want a kiss?” Shouto murmurs against his fingertips. Izuku nods.

He doesn’t just lean in right away. Instead, he gently grabs Izuku and guides him down, lying belly up. Izuku complies, pliant, hands resting lightly on Shouto’s biceps as he also climbs on the bed, leaning over him, elbows at the side of his head. He gently moves Izuku’s hair away from his forehead, their breath mixing as their lips barely graze.

“Are you sure this is ok?” Shouto whispers.

“Yeah.” Izuku murmurs back. “Just, give me a second— I think it’s better if I—“ He closes his eyes for a second, frowning, and when he opens them again, the green turned paler. “There.” He adds.

“Ok.” Shouto replies, closing the tiny distance between their mouths. Izuku hums softly, catching Shouto’s lower lip between his gently. That’s all they do for long seconds, slowly, softly chasing each other’s lips, until Shouto feels Izuku’s tongue shyly poking at him and, with a little huff, he deepens the kiss, tilting his head some more.

Izuku’s hands rose along his arms, to go circle his neck, dragging him closer. Chest to chest, Shouto has to take little gulps of air every time they shift a bit, their tongues meeting halfway, neither of them really wanting to stop to catch their breath.
It’s not the first time they kiss so deeply by any means, but something feels different— This vague sensation, like electricity running through them. He feels a shiver run down his spine every time Izuku’s fingers comb through his hair, tickling the nape of his neck. Izuku’s skin feels hot under his palm, even through the cloth of his shirt as Shouto runs his right hand down, along his toned body. He feels not without a little trill the firmness of Izuku’s muscles under his palm as he slowly slides it downward, until his finger reach the seams of Izuku’s shirt, finding a strip of naked skin. He follows the line of Izuku’s hipbone with his fingertips—

Izuku moans against his mouth, tensing.

“Sho— Wait—“ He murmurs, breathless. “It’s—“

Shouto blinks, feeling like he’s suddenly snapping out of a dream. They breath heavily against each other mouths for long seconds, before he carefully moves his hand away from Izuku’s hip.

“Sorry—“ He murmurs, rough. “I got a little carried away.“

“ ‘S ok.” Izuku whispers, cracking his eyes open. They are like melting aquamarines. “I just— I—“

“It’s fine.” Shouto murmurs when Izuku’s words seems to fail him. He presses a little kiss on his cheek. “I don’t want to do anything that makes you uncomfortable.”

Izuku sighs, relaxing under him. They don’t move for a long time, Shouto half-draped over him, gently carding his fingers through his hair as Izuku silently stays there, unmoving, sinking into his bed with both arms lazily hooked around Shouto’s neck, heavy lidded eyes staring at nothing.

“There’s so much on my mind, right now.” He suddenly murmurs. “I don’t know what to do.”

“You don’t have to do anything.” Shouto replies, careful. “Give yourself some time to just— Rest. And then when you’ll feel ready, you can start to take some steps forward.” In front of Izuku’s silence he adds. “I’ll be right there with you.”

A first, real smile blooms onto Izuku’s red, vaguely swollen lips. “I know.” He murmurs, sounding genuinely happy. He turns, pushing Shouto on a side and squeezing him closer, hooking a leg through his. “Is it ok if we take a nap? O-or you can go back downstairs with the others, if you prefer —“ Izuku adds, nuzzling his neck. Not exactly a compelling argument, for the ‘go back to the
“Sounds fine.” Shouto replies softly, tipping his face downward and pushing a kiss against Izuku’s forehead. “I’m not going anywhere. Sleep as much as you want, Izuku.”
Despite his promise of not going anywhere, Shouto had to softly disentangle himself from Izuku’s hug. Nature call, and all that, much to his dismay.

Still, Izuku doesn’t wake. Doesn’t even stir, still deeply asleep, half of his face sunk in the pillow, mouth slightly open. He looks relaxed.

Shouto can’t help but kneel by the bed for a minute more, just staring. It’s what he’s been doing for the past two hours, occasionally dozing off but never really falling asleep. He just couldn’t help himself, staring at Izuku like he wanted to burn the image of him in his brain for the rest of the eternity. He didn’t even really feel those two hours go by, not even once feeling tired or bored of lying on the bed with him, Izuku’s arms loose around him as he slept peacefully.

Maybe Bakugou had a point. He was a bit of a birdbrain when it came to Izuku.

Finally, giving up to the requests of his body, he gets up, silently going for the bathroom. After that he decides to at least take five minutes to go downstairs and also welcome back Uraraka, Asui and Kirishima. He’s sure they didn’t take the fact he immediately left with Izuku personally, but still. Would be really rude of him to don’t check on them, too.

When he steps into the communal area, now much more peaceful since the party has quieted down and most people are just relaxing, he’s glad to notice that the three friends in question are sitting at a table side by side, along with Iida and Yaoyorozu -no surprises, there-. What it’s surprising is Bakugou, sitting in front of Kirishima by Yaoyorozu’s side, distractedly fiddling with his phone. But then again Bakugou had been there, too, at the hospital— A strangely quiet presence. And today there had been something different to him, something like—

He cannot say ‘soft’, that’s not a word that applies to Bakugou in any way, shape or form. But he definitely felt less biting, like something smoothened his sharp angles a tiny bit.

And Shouto had to admit he’s— Grateful, for Bakugou’s own brand of ‘kindness’ he shown the past three days. Although maybe he’d better not say that directly, he doubts Bakugou would take it nicely.

He approaches, silent, sliding in an empty seat by Iida’s side as Uraraka looks up at him, blinking.
She looks tired, and a bit rattled, but she smiles, nonetheless.

“Everything alright?” She asks, softly. Shouto hums.

“Izuku’s asleep. I wanted to check on you guys.” He replies, honest, searching the three of them with a pointed look. “Sorry, I kind of disappeared without even asking if you were ok—“

“That’s fine.” Asui replies with a little ribbit, amicable as usual. “We understand. I’m fine, thank you.”

Kirishima hums, affirmative. “What Tsuyu said. It’s ok, man. We get it, really.” He adds a little, toothy grin.

Uraraka shrugs, her smile turning lopsided. Iida and Yaoyorozu have been silently staring, eyes piercing, and Shouto could definitely tell that Bakugou was also listening attentively, even if he pretended to be busy with his phone.

Shouto takes a moment, crossing his fingers on the table, before meeting Uraraka’s eyes again.

“Could you tell me the rest of that story?” He asks, softly.

She tenses a bit, her eyes immediately turning toward Asui and Kirishima at her side. Shouto didn’t ask, yesterday, wanting to take advantage of what little time he had left to spend with Izuku before going back to school— But—

He just needs to know.

“Well—“ Kirishima hesitates, nervously drumming his fingers against the table. “Since we were there for that part, I guess that’s— Ok? If we say?”

Shouto is not quite sure what he means— Uraraka turns to look at Iida and Yaoyorozu, apologetic, before she scratches the back of her head with a sigh. “I guess.” she admits.
“Regardless of what y’all been angsting about, you might as well say what you can.” Bakugou suddenly intervenes, flat. “Some stuff already made the news, in any case.”

Kirishima blinks repeatedly. “Huh— That makes sense, I guess. It turned into kind of a urban battlefield, out there—“

“Right.” Uraraka groans, resting her forehead on the table. “We were in the middle of the bloody city.“

When she looks up and meet Shouto’s eyes, she sighs deeply, sitting straighter.

“Allright, then.” She says, quietly.

She’s the one that starts, but Kirishima and Asui intervened multiple times, adding little details or giving their side of the whole ordeal. It doesn’t take much, as they describe how the battle went. —and Shouto has to admit he felt a bite of vengeful pride in himself when Kirishima took delight in describing how Izuku made some of that guy’s teeth, Chisaki, pop out his mouth with a well placed punch— Their side of the story much shorter than Izuku’s— But still, Shouto definitely felt like they were keeping something.

Uraraka looks uncomfortable, avoiding his eyes. She couldn’t have been more transparent. He tilts an eyebrow.

“What are you not telling me?”

She squints at him, her mouth a thin line. “…Why do you have to be like this.” She grumbles.

“Uraraka.” He replies, flatly.

“Todoroki.” She bites back, defiant.

The rest of the table is blinking at them. Well, except for Kirishima and Asui, that both look as uncomfortable as Uraraka does.
“Maybe we should just— Tell him?” Kirishima tries to say, voice tiny.

“Do we?” Uraraka immediately replies, crossing her arms. “Is it really necessary?”

“Uraraka, just fucking say what you need to say.” Bakugou intervenes. “He’s not a delicate flower.”

Iida clears his throat. “Language.” He says, almost an automatic response. “But— I kind of have to agree. Whatever it is, if it’s something that we need to know, I think we’d all prefer to hear it from you, instead of the news.”

A forlorn silence falls on the three of them, Asui looking indecisively between Kirishima and Uraraka, before piping up gently.

“If Eri hadn’t activated her quirk— Midoriya would’ve surely died.” She says, looking sad.

The air around them seems to become colder. Actually, it did become colder, Iida jumping a bit as some frost forms on his shoulder, near Shouto’s.

“…Sorry.” Shouto forces himself to grit out, putting a lid on his quirk. “You said he just got wounded.” He adds, reproachful.

“Yeah— Badly enough that he would’ve died without Eri’s intervention.” Uraraka sighs, tiredly massaging her forehead. “Look— In that moment we just— I don’t know.” Her eyes are a bit wet, now. “It was obvious he wouldn’t have made it. It’s pretty much a miracle he’s still alive.”

“Shouldn’t he be still in the hospital, then?” Yaoyorozu whispers, from behind a hand, a worried frown twisting her eyebrows.

“It’s… Eri’s quirk is quite strange.” Kirishima adds with a low voice. “Midoriya said that she might be able to ‘rewind’ things, but even he wasn’t quite sure of how it really works— So when she activated her quirk she must’ve rewinded him, in some way, because all the visible wounds he had disappeared like they were never there. Technically speaking he came out the battle without even a scratch, even the doctors gave him the clear.” A pause. “That said, it doesn’t mean he didn’t feel all of it.”
A heavy silence fell on them, following that statement. Shouto gulps around a knot in his throat, forcing himself to take a series of deep, regular breaths.

“…Sorry I’ve been so pushy.” He finally murmurs, breaking the silence. “Thank you for telling me.”

Uraraka takes a long look at him, a little crease between her eyebrows. “How was he?” She asks, quietly.

“Pretty shaken.” Shouto admits, dragging a nervous hand through his hair. “He’s not going to get out of this one scot-free, isn’t he.” He adds, not quite a question.

“…I don’t think he ever did.” Uraraka whispers, sadly.

—

His chest hurts and his back hurts, he just can’t tell if there’s even a single centimetre of his body that’s not covered in something painful—

He’s lost, the ground icy under his feet. Everything is grey and dark brown and cold looking. It’s hard to see as he aimlessly walks, impossibly high walls getting lost to sight, but something white and silver shines in the distance. Izuku squints, until his unsure, flickering sight focuses.

“Eri!” He smiles, when the blurriness finally recedes. “Eri, c’mon, let’s go home.”

The girl stares, before turning a corner, running away from him. His heart does a little, painful somersault.

“Wait!” He calls, anguished. “Come back! It’s dangerous!”

He runs after her. He keeps catching glimpses of her before she turns another corner, twisting and turning into this monotone, oppressive place. He runs as fast as he can, ignoring the pain, panting. But still, he can never reach her.
“Eri!” He yells. “Please! We have to go! I have to save you!”

A laugh behind him. When he turns, a tall, hulking man with a beak mask is hovering on him. His fist connects, sending Izuku flying and skidding on the cold ground.

“You really thought you could run away?” The man says, cruel, as Izuku wheezes painfully, eyes squeezed close. “Stupid kid.”

When Izuku opens his eyes, he’s in a bedroom. Something heavy on his wrists, and he looks down, noticing the cuffs and chains keeping him prisoner. He looks around.

The room is sad and gray, a small, red plastic table in a corner with two anonymous, scruffy looking wooden chairs by it. There are abandoned, broken dolls on the floor, limbs scattered, empty eyes staring at him.

When he turns toward the king sized bed, covered by a thin looking white sheet, Eri is there, too. She’s all folded into herself, knees tight against her chest, arms around them. Her long, silver hair is al like a wave on her back, and Izuku stares at her, unable to see her face.

“I’m sorry.” She whispers.

When Izuku tries to talk, the words simply won’t come out. He feels like there’s something alive squirming in his chest, unpleasant and unwanted, and he only makes a strangled sound, coughing.

“She’s coming for you.” She adds, with a little hiccup. “And when he’s done with you, he’ll kill me, too—”

The coughing fits gets stronger, spasm in his chest as he falls kneeling on the floor. He takes wheezing, painful gulps of breath, feeling like he’s not breathing enough—

Eri turns, her ruby eyes shining like molten lava, red tear tracks on her cheek. She smiles weakly.
“Thank you for trying to save me.”

A hand closes on Izuku’s left wrist and he turns, his entire being screaming *fight fight fight fight fight*— It’s not a human hand, claws painfully squeezing him. The monster looms over him, it’s black feathers melting like a oily goo that falls on the floor with an unpleasant squishy sound, and the thing opens it’s beak, full of dark, crooked teeth.

“I told you she was cursed.” The monster says, guttural.

Izuku manages to scream in rage over that thing in his chest, charging his right hook back— When his knuckles hits the monsters, it makes a pained sound and a crashing noise, and suddenly the nothingness is back.

Izuku blinks, catching his breath. His hand throbs a bit, and nothing is around him anymore— He can’t see, but he can breathe again, and his body doesn’t hurt anymore—

*A nightmare—*

He releases a deep sigh, as finally everything snaps back into focus. He must be on the floor of his room after falling down from his bed, one leg still awkwardly hanging on the mattress. Carefully, he shifts his weight on his hands, kneeling on the floor. His head throbs a bit and he massages his temples with a little moan.

He has no idea what time it could be— How long did he slept? This nap was a mistake, he feels even more sluggish and confused than before—

When he carefully shifts on his feet to try find his bearings once more, with the intention to find his alarm clock, he hits something soft with his toe. Confused, he kneels once more, patting in front of him.

He finds what distinctly feels like a hand. Frowning, he turns his radar on.

“Shouto—“ He exhales, relaxing, not having even realized how tense he was. “Gee, you scared me —“
No answer comes. Confused, Izuku slides his palm along Shouto’s arm— He feels— His light feels like he’s— Unconscious?

“Shouto?” He repeats, frowning. That’s when a faint smell hits his nose, rapidly getting stronger. *Something acrid, almost metallic, like*—

When he puts a careful palm on Shouto’s cheeks, something wet and sticky met his fingertips.

—*Blood?*

“…Shouto?” Izuku exhales, but no answer comes.
I just realized how mean it is leaving you guys waiting a week for next chapter... Whoopsies... (but things are going to pick up from here! Hang in there! ( b°ω°)b )

But hey if you wanna scream at me, you can always find me on witscrib, on tumblr, and on twitter!
Everyone went on their way pretty much as soon as Todoroki left the table. Katsuki guessed no one really felt like partying anymore, so when Kirishima silently started to help pick up plastic glasses and plates strewn everywhere, Katsuki joined him.

It didn’t take much to gather all the trash in dark plastic bags, and they left Sato to the task of putting away leftovers for the next days, taking a bag each to go to the garbage dump.

“What.” He asks with a tired sigh, after the approximately one thousandth time Kirishima glanced at him.

“…Nothing.” Kirishima replies, grinning. “You’re being kind.”

Katsuki doesn’t dignify that with anything beside a brief, irritated snort. Kirishima laughs, unfazed as usual. He doesn’t comment further, which Katsuki is grateful for, because otherwise he’d have to make him eat dust. His pride was on the line, damnit.

When they get back from the brief trip, he makes a beeline for the stairs. Kirishima apparently decided it was ok to pester him like an annoying fly, because he promptly follows.

“Do you wanna watch a movie?” He asks, bouncy. “There’s this action flick I’ve got recently, it’s about a guy with a quirk that allows him to spit bullets—“

“I’m going to bed.” Katsuki replies, ignoring him, starting to climb the stairs.

“Whaaaaat—“ Kirishima whines. “It’s not even nine, what are you, an old man? C’mon—“

“No.” Katsuki grumbles, stopping on the platform on the second floor to turn toward Kirishima with an unamused glare. “I really don’t care for that stuff, and you should go to bed, too. We have lessons, tomorrow—“
He trails off when Kirishima looks behind him and pales, eyes going wide. Katsuki turns, following his line of sight.

It takes him a moment to realize he isn’t looking at a ghost. Deku is so pale he might just *be* one, a lost expression on his face, tear tracks along his cheeks.

There’s blood on his hands.

Kirishima already ran forward, speechless, grabbing Deku by the shoulders.

“Dude, what the *heck*— Are you ok?” He asks, concerned. Katsuki reaches them, just as Deku blinks, his mouth opening and closing silently, looking possibly even more lost. For the second time, Kirishima leaves Katsuki behind, making a strangled sound as he let Deku go and dashed past him, directly into his room. Deku stumbles, and would’ve probably fallen straight down like a sack of potatoes if Katsuki didn’t grab him in time, steadying him.

When he peeks over his shoulder, he can see what had Kirishima turning even paler.

Todoroki is a crumbled heap on the floor, a small pool of blood under his head. Kirishima kneels by him, not touching him as he examines his wounds. For what he can see, Todoroki’s nose seems to be broken and a deep, long, diagonal cut is splitting his right brow in half, most of his face covered in blood. He doesn’t answer, when Kirishima calls him loudly.

“He’s breathing—” Kirishima exhales, a hand hovering near Todoroki’s mouth. He turns to them, eyebrows scrunched. “I’ll stay with him— Bakugou, take Midoriya away and call someone, please.”

Next time he’ll speak with Aizawa, he’s going to have to ask him if life as a teacher was supposed to be like this, because Toshinori is fairly sure this cannot be *normal*, even for UA’s standards.

He almost had a heart attack when he answered young Bakugou’s call, that briefly explained the situation. He and Recovery Girl made a dash for 1-A’s dormitory, finding young Iida waiting for them at the door, that silently guides them upstairs. Toshinori doesn’t really have the time to ponder
too much about the fact that they hastily walk by young Midoriya on one of the couches, hanging to one of Bakugou’s arms like his life depended on it, hiding his face against his bicep. He really doesn’t have the time to reflect upon young Bakugou’s slightly pale face and his enigmatic expression as he stood there, letting himself be used like a crutch by the boy he claimed multiple times to hate.

For the moment, he has to focus on the more pressing matter. When they enter young Midoriya’s room, other students nervously waiting in front of it parting to give them space, Kirishima is there, kneeling by Todoroki’s side. He’s keeping a rolled up towel stained with blood pressed against his forehead. He turns to them, frowning.

“I didn’t move him, just tried to stop the bleeding—“ He says, concise. “I’m not sure how hurt he is, but he’s breathing regularly, even if his nose seems to be broken.”

“Good job.” Recovery Girl replies, immediately kneeling by the boy herself. “Did he wake or move at all?”

“A little bit. He made a sort of groan and tried to move after I called him really loud, but I stopped him.” Kirishima scoots over, leaving her space.

She examines Todoroki, prodding him carefully. Then with practiced, gentle hands, she cradles the boy’s head, inspecting the damage at a different angle. He releases a little moan, eyes still closed.

“It’s ok kid, give me a minute. It’ll be over soon.“ She reassures, gentle, before muttering to herself. “This wound—It’s deep, but the skull is intact— Nose is definitely broken, though—“

Toshinori takes a look around, inspecting the scene. There’s a little pool of blood on the floor, messy, red hand and foot-shaped prints around it— And it’s not the only place stained with it. The sharp corner of the nightstand by the bed is shining red, too, and Toshinori feels a little shiver run down his spine, looking at the rapidly drying blood on the apparently innocuous piece of furniture.

*He’s starting to put the pieces together, here—*

Recovery Girl inspects the boy carefully for another minute, before placing a long, wet kiss on his cheek. Young Todoroki moans weakly once more, as his nose shifts slightly, turning back to its normal shape. The deep wound over his right eye closes, too, but leaves behind a long, angry red scar that breaks his pale brow in two, starting a bit below his hairline to curve nearby his eye. He’s
lucky his eye is unscathed, even a few millimetres on the side would’ve surely meant some kind of damage to it.

He blinks, blearily, after that, the gray of his iris is a stark contrast with the drying blood that pretty much covers the right side of his face entirely, staining his snow white hair. He looks at them, unfocused, before his gaze seems to clear over and he immediately shoots up like a spring, sitting on the floor.

He moans, cradling his head, as Recovery Girl grabs him firmly.

“Don’t move.” She reprimands. “You might be slightly concussed—“

“Izuku—” Young Todoroki replies, anguished. “Where—“

“He’s downstairs. He’s ok.” Young Kirishima intervenes, soothing. “What happened?” He adds, faintly, clearly concerned.

“It’s—“ Another little pained groan. “I— I think he was having a nightmare, so I tried to wake him — And he— But it wasn’t his fault—“

“Oh, no.” Young Uraraka exhalles from the door. Toshinori turns, noticing the little group was still hovering in the corridor. She looks pale, both hands on her mouth. Young Todoroki stubbornly ignores Recovery Girl’s grip, shifting to get up on his feet.

“I told you not to move—“ She tries to snap, to no avail. The boy stumbles a bit, shaking his head slightly.

“It wasn’t his fault—“ He repeats, turning toward the door and walking straight past Toshinori as if he isn’t even there. “Where is he? I need to tell him—“

“Not like this, no.” Young Iida intervenes from the door, too, with a tired sigh. “At least get cleaned up, first—“

Todoroki stops cold, looking vaguely surprised at his classmate, before replying, deadpan. “He’s
Iida groans, massaging his eyes behind the lenses. “I know.” He replies, terse. “But I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to go speak to him, right now. He’s too upset. Give him a minute to calm down.”

Todoroki blinks, turning back toward the three of them still in the room and then to the little group outside.

“…If you are all here, who is with him?” He asks, incredulous. “Did you leave him alone?”

“Bakugou’s with him.” Yaoyorozu replies softly.

Young Todoroki does what Toshinori can only describe as a double take. “What?”

“It’s fine, I think?” Yaoyorozu adds, not sounding exactly convinced herself. “I mean, we tried to pry him off of Bakugou but— He won’t let go? Bakugou seems ok with it anyway, so, huh—“ A pause. “Since you are fine, I’m going to check on them.” She adds, slightly concerned, turning to walk downstairs.

“Let’s go get you cleaned up.” Iida sighs, putting a steady hand on young Todoroki’s shoulder, guiding him away. He seems unsure at first, but he gives in, following. Toshinori walks out the room, rapidly followed by Recovery Girl and Kirishima.

“I’ll request some cleaning bots to come take care of this mess.” Recovery Girl mutters as they all turn to look back. The room looks like a crime scene. “The boy is clearly ok, so I’ll go write an incident report. But if he shows any symptoms of concussion, or anything strange in his behaviour, call me right away, ok?”

“Yes, m’am.” Young Uraraka replies, tiredly. “Thanks for coming so quickly.”

She hums, walking away. They all watch her go, before Toshinori sighs deeply.

“Huh, sensei, would you like something to drink? A tea?” Young Uraraka suddenly says, looking up at him. “You don’t look too good, right now—“

She hums, unconvinced, before adding. “Well, since you are here, maybe go speak with Midoriya? I think he could use it.”

“Yes, I think I will do that.” He murmurs back.
...HE'S BLIND, IIDA

I KNOW
When he gets back into the communal space, young Yaoyorozu gets up from the couch and nods at him, walking away to give them space. It’s just the three of them, now, and when he closes in young Bakugou turns to him with an expression Toshinori could only read as ‘help me!!!’

Young Midoriya it’s still hanging onto his arm firmly, head hanging low. Toshinori kneels in front of them, trying and failing to observe which kind of expression his young pupil is wearing.

“My boy, everything’s ok— Young Todoroki is totally fine, Recovery Girl promptly took care of him, he’ll probably be here in a minute— and I think young Bakugou is about to lose sensitivity in that arm.” Toshinori says, his voice carefully crafted to sound casual and light. “Why don’t you let him go?”

“I need him.” Young Midoriya replies, voice low. “If I go apeshit again and start attacking everyone, he’s the one strong enough to stop me.”

Young Bakugou blinks, his eyes going wide as he turns to look down at the messy head of curls.

“You’re so fucking stupid.” He snaps. “You’re not going to attack anyone, dumbass. It was an accident.” When Midoriya doesn’t answer, he groans. “Let my fucking arm go, idiot. And here I thought I was supposed to be consoling you, or some shit— You’re not some kind of rabid dog, stop making a mountain out of a molehill.”

The silence stretches as young Midoriya refuses to relax his grip.

“You’re always like this, mulling over everything until it stops making sense.” Young Bakugou continues, exasperated. “Stop that brain for a goddamn minute and take a deep breath. You’re being dramatic. It was an accident. Chill and let me go.” A moment of silence. “Deku. Deku— Izuku.”

Young Midoriya’s face immediately snaps up, eyes wide. He’s pale, dark circles around his eyes. After a second, his hold relaxes, allowing young Bakugou to take his arm back.

“There. Now fucking calm down.” He adds, massaging his forearm. “It was a freak accident, ok?
You’re not going to attack anyone. Shit happens, sometimes, ok? Got it? Give me a clear answer.”

“…Ok.” Midoriya murmurs, faintly.

“That wasn’t clear, but I’ll take it.” Bakugou replies as he stands. “If I ever hear you spout any more of that angsty bullshit, I’ll give myself a goddamn good reason to stop you. Now, cry a bit on your dad’s shoulder and everything will be just fine.”

Toshinori doesn’t really have the time to do anything else other than gape wordlessly as young Bakugou turns on his heels and leaves with big strides. Young Midoriya blinks, pale eyes unmoving from the point Bakugou disappeared into.

Toshinori clears his throat, taking the place that the boy just left, sitting carefully. He’s not sure what to say, but then young Midoriya turns to him, eyes big and expression lost, and murmurs. “What is wrong with me?”

Toshinori freezes for a second, before releasing a deep sigh. He carefully put both hands on the boy’s cheeks, gently cradling his face.

“Nothing is wrong with you. You just need a bit of time to let some things go.” He replies, softly. “Young Bakugou was right. It was just an accident. Don’t let yourself give in to those dark voices inside you— That’s all they are. Just voices. Don’t listen to them.”

Midoriya stares, silent. He looks like he wants to ask ‘how do you know?’, but he doesn’t.

Toshinori is far too accustomed with dealing with the aftermath of a scarred soul, to don’t have at least a vague idea of what’s going through his young pupil’s mind.

“I hate this.” The boy sobs, instead, pushing Toshinori’s hands away. “I thought I was finally going to get back to normal, instead I feel like I’m still there. Like at any second I’ll woke up and realize I just dreamed all of this, and— There’s part to me that’s like— Just wants to strike back at anything and anyone. Like my mind refuses to accept that I’m safe, now—“

“That’s… A fairly normal reaction.” Toshinori murmurs, not touching him again, no matter how he wish to do so. “You need time to process everything.”
“…I don’t like it.” Midoriya grumbles, nervously crossing his arms.

“No one does.” Toshinori replies with a little sigh. “It’ll be ok, I promise. You just need to be patient.”

Young Midoriya huffs, nervously bobbing his leg in front of him. Then he rises from the couch, carding a stiff hand through his hair. “What time is it?”

Toshinori fumbles with his phone for a moment, before he finally unlocks it. “Quarter to nine. Why?”

“I still have a bit of time before curfew, then.” Midoriya mutters, adding a little louder. “I’m going out, I need to clear my head.”

“Do you want me to come with you?” Toshinori asks, tentative, but the boy, that already covered the distance toward the couch to the exit, shakes his head.

“I— I need to be alone for a bit.” He replies, flat, not even turning as he pats the shoe rack in search of his bright red shoes and then leans down to put them on. “I’m just going to take a walk around the building, I won’t go far.”

Toshinori watches, pained, as the boy exits and softly clicks the door close behind him. Aizawa hinted that his young pupil might be going through a rough patch, when they spoke on the phone, earlier, so this doesn’t come as a surprise. But it hurts, nonetheless.

He wonders if he shouldn’t have put a firmer foot down, and stopped him from actually getting an internship— But then again, the boy probably would’ve found a way to convince him, regardless. It was hard to condemn him for his eagerness and willingness to work hard. No one could’ve possibly imagined any of this could’ve happened— Well, almost no one.

Still, Toshinori cannot hold this against Nighteye, either. He knows how careful he always is with his quirk, and how even more careful he started to be after he and Toshinori parted ways. Nighteye has always been a good friend and an amazing sidekick, but Toshinori often wondered how the guy dealt with his ability. The mere idea of the things Nighteye witnessed, always unable to change them, was soul crushing, at times—
Steps behind him shake him out of his thoughts and he turns, finding himself meeting young Todoroki’s eyes. His expression is carefully flat, face and hair now clean, unstained clothes on him. It takes Toshinori a moment to realize that the bright green hoodie he’s wearing looks so familiar because he saw young Midoriya wear it multiple times, in the past. It always was a bit too big for him, the sleeves piling around his wrists, but it seems to be a perfect fit for Todoroki, even if the color clashes with his peculiar hair.

“Where is he?” He asks, cutting directly to the chase.

Toshinori sighs. “Went to take a walk. He said he needed some time alone.”

“And you let him go?” The tone is almost reproaching. Toshinori tilts an eyebrow.

“I did not wish to force my presence on him, since he outright expressed the need to be alone.” He replies, whipping out his best ‘teacher voice’. “Come here.”

Looking unconvinced, young Todoroki still obeys. He doesn’t sit on the spot young Midoriya left empty, preferring to perch on the armrest of the couch.

“I understand your concern, but fussing over him will do more harm than good, right now.” Toshinori says, not without a note of kindness. “It is ok, wanting to take care of him, and I’m sure there will be moments in which he will gladly accept your help— But you also need to give him space, when he asks for it. I promise he’ll be fine. He’s strong, you know that.”

Todoroki shifts uncomfortably, eyes sliding on a side. “The point is that I’m a damn idiot.” He says, low. “Do you know how many times I’ve woken up swinging wildly, myself? Enough times that I should’ve known better. Instead, I went and grabbed him, and now he feels guilty for my mistake.”

Toshinori blinks. It takes a second for the info to fully sink in.

Why would young Todoroki, someone with a quirk that puts to shame about fifty percent of the current pro heroes out there, someone that has grown up under the protective wing of the man that for the longest time occupied the number two spots in the rankings, would ever have a reason to wake up swinging at anyone?
That was, unless the protective wing wasn’t as protective as everyone would assume. Another, unsurprising piece of this puzzle Toshinori really wishes he didn’t need to be putting together.

And the boy must’ve realized his slip, because he’s now eyeing him warily. Toshinori meets his eyes, and they look at each other in silence for what feels like an eternity.

“Oh, goddamnit—“ Young Todoroki whispers, nervously carding a hand through his hair. The split in his right brow is more obvious, like this, without the white strands of hair covering it. His freshly acquired scar looks slightly less red-angry than it did a handful of minutes ago, but still jumps to the eyes, contrasting with his fairly light complexion.

“…While we wait for young Midoriya to come back, why don’t we have a little chat of our own?” Toshinori asks, careful.

“I— No.”

“No?”

“No.” Todoroki replies, stubborn. “I’m grateful for your help, I really am, but this talk is not happening.”

“Why not?” Toshinori can’t help but prod, softly.

“You know why not.” Todoroki sighs, launching him a little unamused look. It’s quite interesting, the range of emotions he manages to convey through his face alone, when he’s not making a point of keeping his shields up. “If I say anything, it will be like— Launching a little snowball down a mountain. Once it’ll start to roll, it would probably turn into an avalanche, and— Not just my family, but the world as well might end up getting caught in it. Do you really think that we need any of that, with what’s happening out there, right now?”

“We don’t have to— To do anything you don’t want.” Toshinori frowns. “I can keep things confidential.”

“No, you couldn’t, trust me. I’m pretty sure you’d be legally enforced to report any of the shit I’d tell you.” The boy sounds tense and impatient, now. “I appreciate what you’re trying to do, but let’s drop this topic. It’ll be all the better.”
A cold silence falls on them, and Toshinori wonders just when things started to become so complicated — or maybe they always were, he just hadn’t realized —, when Todoroki sighs.

“Speaking of which, I’m going to guess this — And he points at his new scar. “Will probably need to be communicated to my legal guardian, doesn’t it?”

‘My legal guardian’, not even ‘my father’ — For the love of —

“Yes, I think.” Toshinori replies, measured.

“Can you tell anyone else but him?” The boy asks, tired. “My sister—“

“I doubt so.”

“My mother, then.” He immediately adds. “That’s— Not that I like the idea, but it’d be much better.”

“…I’ll see what I can do.” Toshinori sighs, massage his forehead. “Anything else?” He adds, tired.

“Actually, yes.” The boy replies. “Can I call you Yagi-sensei, instead of All Might?”

The question drops on him like a bucket of water. Out of nothing, surprising, and slightly uncomfortable.

“Um… Well, that is my name, so, yes, of course you can.” He carefully says, frowning. “…Why?”

“It’d help me.” Young Todoroki replies, not missing a beat, and absolutely, utterly cryptic.

These kids are going to kill me, I swear. I need a vacation. Or two hundred—
Catching his own train of thought, Toshinori groans, the boy turning to look at him curiously.

“I’m starting to sound like Aizawa—“ Toshinori murmurs to himself, exasperated. Young Todoroki releases a little sound that may or may not be a laugh.

He sits on the stairs, legs extended in front of him and feet vaguely bobbing. He doesn’t move at all, hands resting between his knees.

He left All Mi— No, Yagi-sensei to speak with his other classmates. Those that assisted to the whole ordeal, at least. They must be as shaken as Shouto feels. Actually, to be fair, they probably must be more shaken than Shouto feels. He is pretty damn aware of his own mistake that led them to this situation and, earlier, after he washed the blood away from his face and took a second to observe the scar he just acquired, he felt something—

A rustle of grass and then silence snaps him out of his own train of thought.

He can tell that Izuku is hesitating. The noise was enough of a giveaway and, besides, Shouto just had this vague feeling in his guts— It wasn’t logical, but he could tell he was nearby.

So he waits, silent.

In the end, patience, and the fact Izuku had no choice but to walk by him if he wanted to get in before breaking curfew, won. Izuku emerges from the dark, irises shining like weak green neons into the night.

He stops at the bottom of the stairs, in front of him. His face is a mask, mouth a flat line, and then he climbs some steps, before bending down on his knees, Shouto shifting his legs a bit to give him space.

Izuku’s face turns on a side as he accepts the hand Shouto is offering him. He doesn’t quite take it, unsure, his fingers resting limp into Shouto’s hold. Shouto leans forward, extending his hand even more, Izuku’s fingers sliding away from him, and he grazes his cheek. Izuku sniffs, goes still for a second, and then grabs the hoodie’s sleeve and drags it a bit closer to his nose, taking another, deeper sniff.
“…Is this my hoodie?” He asks, perplexed.

“How can you tell?” Shouto replies, blinking, taking the hand away gently.

“It smells like the detergent only I use.”

Shouto tips his head downward, sniffing his own shoulder.

“…It smells like nothing.”

“To you lucky, sighted bastards, yes.” Izuku replies, but his voice lacks any real bite. “It's one of the few brands I like to use exactly because it smells so faintly. Other soaps bother me, sometimes. Why are you using my hoodie?”

“Why not? It's comfortable. And you left it in my room, last time you came by.” Shouto replies, shrugging. “Finders keepers.”

Izuku huffs, before shifting in a more comfortable position, sitting on the steps with his back toward Shouto. When Shouto leans forward and puts both arms around his shoulders, careful, he accepts it.

“So.” Shouto says, softly, after the silence stretched for a good thirty seconds. —Yes, he counted.— “Did the walk help?”

“…I don’t know.” Izuku replies, flat, pulling at his sleeves. “Aren’t you angry?”

“You’re the one with the empathic quirk. What do you think?” Shouto shrugs, fully knowing that Izuku will find absolutely no trace of anger nor resentment in him.

Izuku glares a bit, but says nothing. He sighs, tipping his face down.

“You should be.” He mutters, childish.
“Why? Because I was an idiot?” Shouto replies, tilting an eyebrow. When Izuku turns his face back up to him, confused, he continues. “Izuku, I’ve lost count of how many times I woke up instinctively punching someone. Especially you know who.” A pause. “He liked to surprise me in the mornings, to ‘test my reaction time’, he said.”

Something dark, darker than usual, squirms into Izuku’s eyes, at that, but Shouto continues. “One time I was taking a nap in our living room and one of my brothers tried to wake me so we could watch our favorite show. One of those rare times that guy wasn’t around to try destroy my relationship with my siblings. I punched him in the teeth so hard he spit out three. The last few baby teeth, so luckily it wasn’t too bad. He didn’t speak to me for two weeks, though.”

“Shouto—“

“What I’m trying to say is: I should’ve known better.” Shouto continues, unfazed. “If this whole thing is anyone’s fault, it’s mine.”

Izuku’s quirk is a curse and a blessing. This time around, it definitely comes in handy, because Shouto knows that he doesn’t need to add anything else for Izuku to feel his sincerity.

“It wasn’t your fault, either.” He finally murmurs. “It was just a freak accident.”

“I’m glad you understand that. I don’t want you to blame yourself.” Shouto sighs. “And in any case, Recovery Girl was right around the corner, so no harm done.”

“…Did it hurt?” Izuku asks, faintly.

“Not for long. I went down pretty much immediately.” Shouto admits, seeing no point in even attempting to lie to him. “You’ve got a mean right hook.”

“Sorry.” Izuku sniffs. “Well, at least this whole thing just shows one more flaw in my little ‘become a hero’ plan.” He adds, self-reproaching, expression turning tense.

“Huh?”
“I completely panicked.” He murmurs. “Because I could feel and smell the blood, but I had no idea how hurt you were— I didn’t know if I could even risk to touch anything without making something possibly worse. First-aid is probably something I’ll never be able to do.”

“Mh—" Shouto replies, taking a second to think. “Well, means we’ll always have to work together, so I can take care of that.”

“Yeah, and what if you get hurt and end up unconscious?” Izuku replies, sarcastic. “What then, smart guy?”

“Then it means we’ll have to recruit Uraraka. And Iida. And Yaoyorozu. We’ll be a full team, watch each other’s backs. So you won’t have to worry.”

The frown on Izuku’s face deepens. “That’s not reassuring. I hate the fact I can’t be self-sufficient —“

“You don’t need to be— Izuku, listen to me.” Shouto snaps, interrupting him. “You don’t need to do everything alone. No one does! We are only human, ok? That’s the point of having friends and partners. They can be there to make up for what we lack. Working together makes us stronger, not weaker. Do you think you are the only hero that cannot deal with first aid? I’m ready to bet there a ton of pros, out there, right now, that are absolute rubbish at it and they might as well just not even try, leaving it in the hands of others.”

Izuku blinks at him, eyes wide, clearly surprised by his little rant.

“Besides—“ Shouto adds. “I’m sure there are things you can learn to do, even if you can’t see. You are not the kind of person that just gives up and doesn’t even try.”

“Why are you like— This—” Izuku sniffs, voice tense. “Why— Why do you believe in me so much?”

“Because you believed in me when no one else did.” Shouto replies promptly, voice firm. Izuku gasps softly, frozen in his spot, until he looks down with a forlorn expression.
“I don’t understand how any of this happened.” He mutters. “What did I do to deserve you?”

“How do you prefer, this list: in numerical or alphabetical order?” Shouto replies, not without a touch of sarcasm. He smiles to himself, satisfied, when Izuku finally releases a little, surprised chuckle.

“Come here.”

Izuku hesitates for a handful of seconds, before shifting up a couple of more steps, nesting himself between Shouto’s legs. Shouto squeezes him closer, putting his chin on the soft curls.

“…I’m sorry I hit you.” Izuku murmurs. “There was a lot of blood— Even if I just broke your nose, which I think I did, I can’t explain that much blood.”

“You don’t have to apologize, but if it can help, just know that you are forgiven. And— I think I hit my head on the nightstand.” Shouto replies, evenly. “Opened a cut above my eye. Head wounds tend to bleed a lot.”

“Oh—“

“It’s actually pretty cool.” Shouto adds, his lips curling, not giving him the time to apologize again.

“What?” Izuku replies, tipping his face up with a confused expression. Shouto takes his hand, guides his fingers along the fresh scar above his eye. It still itches a bit, and feels tender, and when Izuku’s fingertips follows it for its entire length a couple of times, a little shiver runs down Shouto’s spine.

“It scarred.” Izuku murmurs, clearly unhappy. “I’m so sorry—“

“Don’t be. I like it. It looks a bit like the scar you have, and it’s above my right eye, too— Now we match.”

Izuku’s hand stills near his face, as he frowns. Shouto has the feeling Izuku is trying to figure out if he’s lying to make him feel better, but since Shouto knows for a fact Izuku will find no lie in him—because he does. He likes the scar. Yeah, that isn’t rational, but who cares?— he just relaxes, and waits for his reaction.
“…You know, I just remembered that you called me ‘crazy’ and ‘insane’, a couple of times.” Izuku finally replies, incredulous. “I’m suddenly realizing how absolutely rich that is, coming from you. You’re a goddamn weirdo.”

Shouto splutters, and the surprised short laugh that follows is loud enough to echo into the night.

—

Despite the fact that he slept a good chunk of the afternoon away, Izuku feels absolutely exhausted.

He’s not even sure he wants to go to lessons, tomorrow. He will, he knows he will, because with five full days of lessons lost, he already has a whole lot of catching up to do, and certainly doesn’t need to add to that. But still, doesn’t mean he particularly wants to go.

He just can’t quell this permanent, jittery nervousness at the bottom of his stomach. Everything keeps feeling slightly off, not helping the constant nagging thought at the back of his head that this isn’t true, and he’ll probably wake up, blind and radar-less and chained once more at any second, now.

(He knows that’s not the case. He knows. But logical brain and animal brain don’t always agree on certain things, it seems.)

At this point he has no idea what to do with himself anymore. His best guess is to just try and be normal, force himself back into a routine. Fake it until you make it, they say.

Maybe tomorrow things will be better. Maybe he’ll wake up feeling less tense, after a good night of sleep in his own bed. Who knows.

He and Shouto were toeing the line of the usual evening curfew. After he let out that short, but genuinely amused laugh, Shouto took a deep breath, released a little sigh, and squeezed Izuku closer to himself, not saying anything else as he gently strokes his back with long, slow caresses. His light was a warm embrace as much as his arms were, surrounding Izuku with a sense of peace that managed to push back those dark thoughts, even if just a tiny bit.

—And doesn’t that make much more sense, now. Izuku never felt anyone’s light behave like that, before— Of course he didn’t. No one ever fell in love with him, before.—
Eri’s words echoes in his mind.

*If Deku likes him so much, he must be a special person.*

He is. He is special. No, he’s more than special, he’s *perfect*. (If a bit crazy, apparently.)

Izuku really has no idea what the hell he did to deserve someone like Shouto. Someone that didn’t even bat an eye in front of the fact they got a broken nose and possibly concussed by their own, stupid boyfriend. Someone that apparently liked to have another scar on his face. Because they *match*. Someone that felt absolutely no anger toward him, not even a bit, despite the fact he probably should.

And, for some reason, Shouto is in love with Izuku.

Just… How did that even happen? Why did he fell for a disaster like Izuku? Shouto could have so much better, if he so desired—

And yet— That’s what he said. Multiple times.

*I love you.*

Just recalling the words, Shouto’s voice, the warmth of his hands as he said it, makes Izuku feel like his heart might be melting. He kind of wanted to ask Shouto to say it over and over, but refrained. It would be so selfish of him, to ask Shouto to bare his heart repeatedly, when he couldn’t even give him a proper answer. Especially after what just happened.

He just barely started to understand what it meant to be in a relationship, with their tentative, at times awkward attempt to be ‘boyfriends’. How could he even tell if he loved Shouto, too? There are many things he loves about him, sure. How smart he is. His surprising kindness, his thoughtfulness, his ability to pay heed to any tiny detail. The way he speaks, voice deep but soft, his words always holding the weight of someone that really means what he says.

The way he touches Izuku, almost reverently, like he’s something precious that must be protected. The way he kisses, gentle but passionate. Just— His presence, in general, had already become
something that Izuku needed like he needed air.

But— Does he love him?

Izuku sighs. He shouldn’t have been so pushy. Shouto had a point, in not wanting to tell him right away. But in that moment Izuku felt so unsure of what could Shouto possibly want to say, and so certain he’d want to call the whole thing off (Why would he want to be with you? You are damaged goods, Midoriya, face it.) that he just— Needed to hear was Shouto had to say. He couldn’t have lived in peace with that doubt.

Of course, now he has a whole new problem between his hands. It doesn’t feel right, leaving Shouto hanging, not having a proper answer to his confession. Even if he directly asked Izuku to take his time, reflect upon it—

And Izuku punched him in the face.

“What is it?” Shouto asks, softly. Izuku didn’t even realize he groaned aloud.

“Nothing.” He mutters back, unconvincing to his own ears.

“Yeah, no, it’s not nothing. What are you overthinking about, with that constantly running head of yours?”

“I—” A sigh. “Just stupid thoughts. Little malignant voices telling me things I know are not true. Nothing to be worried about.”

A long silence follows.

“Shit, did I just say out loud that I have little voices in my head?” Izuku adds, almost detached. “That’s… A lot to worry about, actually.”

Shouto huffs. “Nah. I get it.” He replies, easily. “I really do. Tell them to shut the fuck up.”
Izuku snickers, surprised, unable to help himself. Shouto moves his hand on Izuku’s cheek and tips his face up, pushing a long, loud kiss on the other.

“Isn’t that better? I much rather hear you laugh.” He murmurs, breath caressing the slightly humid spot he left behind. “We should get back inside, now. It’s almost ten.”

“I guess.” Izuku concedes, admittedly unhappy at the idea of having to leave Shouto’s warm embrace. “You’re probably tired after Recovery Girl patched you up— You should go to sleep, I think I’m going to stay up a little longer. I’ll see you tomorrow.

“…What are you talking about?” Shouto replies, as they both stand, and he helps Izuku up. “I’m not sleeping alone, tonight.”

Izuku sighs, unamused. “I just punched you in the face while I was sleeping.”

“Yeah, because I tried to wake you up like a dumbass.” Shouto immediately replies, sounding just as unamused as Izuku feels. “It’s going to be fine. If you get another nightmare, I’ll make sure to wake you from a safe distance. I’ll poke you with your cane, or something.”

“Shouto—“

“Shut up, just—“ Shouto snaps, before sighing. “This is for myself as much as it is for you. I don’t want to sleep alone again, Izuku. I need to have you by my side.”

He sounds so desolated that Izuku really cannot even try to object again.

“…Ok, then.” He concedes, massaging his forehead tiredly. “Let’s go to bed.”
The phone buzzing against his thigh roses him from his light sleep, making him jump just a tiny bit. He dozed off in the chair by Eri’s bed, and his neck isn’t all too happy about it. Launching a tiny look to the girl, he’s reassured of the fact she’s deeply asleep, before slipping out the room.

He takes some steps away, down the corridor, as he fishes the still buzzing object out of his pocket. He glances at the time —Well past midnight— and the name displayed, a little groan finding way out of his throat.

“What is it?” He asks, more than a bit grumpy, finally picking up the call.

“Oh—“ Toshinori replies, faintly surprised, from the other side of the phone. “I was just about to close the call, I thought you might be asleep— Well, did you made it back to the hospital?”

“’course—“ Aizawa replies, massaging his forehead. “Why are you calling at this hour?”

The sigh sounds scratchy, through the receiver. “There was— Bit of an accident at the dorms. I would’ve called you sooner, but I needed to speak with Recovery Girl and Nedzu, first—“ Toshinori says, voice tiredly flat. “Young Midoriya punched Todoroki in the face, when Todoroki tried to wake him up from a nightmare.”

Aizawa hisses a curse, and if Toshinori heard it, he doesn’t comment. “Goddamnit— Didn’t even had the time to stop five minutes and speak with the class—“ Aizawa mutters to himself. He had to drop the students back at school and come back to the hospital right away, due to the fact he was assigned to his new duty of Eri-watcher— why couldn’t days be composed of forty-eight hours, or something? “I was counting on being able to do that tomorrow or in the next few days, but fuck me, I guess— Is Todoroki ok?”

“Broken nose and a cut above his right eye, where he hit the nightstand by Midoriya’s bed— But Recovery Girl patched him up right away and he seems to be perfectly fine.” Toshinori replies, almost mechanical. “Didn’t seem to be particularly upset about it, and I saw him and young Midoriya— Well, they seemed to be fine with each other, so I think that, all things considered, it all went better than I feared it could.”

Aizawa sighs. That’s a tiny measure of relief, but he’ll get anything he could. “How did that even happen? Actually— Why was he in Midoriya’s room?” Aizawa frowns, groaning. “…Aren’t those two going a bit too fast?”
There’s a second of silence, before Toshinori confusedly asks. “What do you mean?”

“He was in Midoriya’s room.” Aizawa replies, and when the silence stretches, he sighs to himself. *This is Toshinori Yagi you are speaking with, dumbass. Spell it out.* “They are two teenage boys in a romantic relationship. Alone. In a bedroom.”

Something finally must click, because Toshinori makes a spluttering noise. “Oh— Do you think—” He stutters. “I mean— I don’t think they were doing— Anything? They were both fully clothed, at least—” A small cough. “I assumed they were just sleeping together— I mean, not sleeping together— I mean— You know what I mean!”

Aizawa would’ve probably laughed in his face, under any other circumstances, but right now he just felt too tired with— Well, everything, to do so. “Please keep an eye out for them? Just to make sure they are being… Safe.”

Toshinori makes an undefinable noise, before sighing. “Fine, I will.” He sounds like someone being pushed toward their death sentence, so Aizawa is not surprised when he suddenly changes the subject. “Anyway, how is Eri doing? How long are you going to stay there?”

“I spoke with the doctors again as soon as I came back—” Aizawa takes the bait, willingly. There will be other times to awkwardly speak with him about how he should give his totally-not-adopted-son The Talk.

For now, he fills him in with everything he could, distractedly observing the few stars visible out there, in the deep night sky.

—

“Are you really sure?”

“Yes.” Shouto replies, flat, once more. He slips under the covers, Izuku scooting over a bit to make space for him. He doesn’t like the idea of sleeping near Shouto’s right side, now that temperatures definitely dropped and autumn was knocking on their doors, but he really doesn’t have much of a choice. If he gets another nightmare, Shouto will need to get up quickly. So he keeps that to himself, hoping the comforter he threw on the bed would be enough to keep him warm.
His room has been cleaned thoroughly (he’ll ask tomorrow who he has to thank for that), but a faint smell of blood lingers in the air. Izuku is not quite sure if the smell is actually there, or its just his mind making up things. He ignores that, too, as he relaxes with a little sigh in the comforting softness of his mattress. Shouto turns on a side, facing him.

“Izuku.” He murmurs, and when Izuku hums, he adds, a smile in his voice. “I love you.”

He doesn’t have any more nightmares, that night.

—

Apparently, Ochako’s mind had a limit of ‘weird shit I can accept’, and what she’s seeing goes way above it.

She just so happened to stumble into Midoriya and Bakugou as she came downstairs for breakfast, catching a glimpse of their quiet discussion. Bakugou was already wearing his uniform, while Midoriya was still in his pajama.

“…Just— Sorry.” Midoriya says, voice low, nervously playing with his cane. “Um— You were right. I was overreacting, yesterday. Sorry I put you in a corner, I’ll try stop overthinking stuff so much.”

Bakugou sighs, rolling his eyes. “If you say it with that kicked-puppy expression, it doesn’t sounds convincing at all.” He replies, flat.

And then he does the thing.

Ochako is pretty sure she saw it. That just happened, right?

Midoriya weakly smiles, after, not seeming particularly shocked. “Ok, then— Gotta go get changed, now, huh—“ He says, vaguely indecisive. “I’ll see you in a bit, I guess.”

“You can’t see me.” Bakugou immediately quips back, although there’s no venom in his voice, and Midoriya laughs.
“True that. Well, you will see me in a bit, then.” He says, sounding slightly more cheerful. He waves at Bakugou (???) before turning toward the elevator, stepping in it.

When Bakugou turns and sees her standing by the stairs, he jumps, eyes going wide.

“…Did all that just happen.” Ochako says, not even a question. “Am I seeing things?”

“Shutthefuckup!” Bakugou immediately snaps, flustered, suspiciously looking like he might be blushing.

“Did you just pat Midoriya’s head—“ She continues, flabbergasted. “—Gently?”

Granted, he only did it once, while looking as emotionally constipated as he possibly could—But he did it, nonetheless.

There’s a long, long moment of silence, as they look at one another, frozen in their respective spots.

“Uraraka, I swear to god— If you tell anyone at all—“

“What shouldn’t she say?” Kirishima appears from behind her, cheerful. The expression on Bakugou’s face suggests he either wants the ground to open up and swallow him, or to kill the both of them slowly and painfully.

Probably leaning more for the second option.

“This is all your fault.” He growls, glaring at Kirishima. “You put things into my head and now everything’s weird.”

“Huh???”

“I just saw Bakugou being kind to Midoriya—“ Ochako says, faintly. “Like a normal person.”
Two small explosions rang in the corridor, loud, as Bakugou gritted his teeth at her positively murder-y, palms up. Kirishima’s grin could possibly break his face, as his glinting eyes pointed at Bakugou, unfazed by the noise.

“Aaaaw, you did listen, then!” He says, equally parts touched and joyful. “I’m so glad! Good job!”

“Don’t you ‘good job’ me, you asshole!” Bakugou snaps. “That’s patronizing as fuck— Besides, it was my own decision, so don’t you get strange concepts that shitty-haired head of yours.”

“Yeah, of course.” Kirishima replies, amused. “I would never dream of that.”

Ochako kinds of want to point out that Bakugou outright accused Kirishima of putting things into his head, like, fifteen seconds prior— But she likes her face un-exploded, thank you very much.

“Anyway, the both of you— Zip it. If you go around gossiping, I’m going to blow up everything you care for, and that’s a promise.” Bakugou says, pointing an accusatory finger at them. “What I do with the shitty nerd ain’t any of your business, got it?!”

Kirishima shrugs, still grinning, as Ochako mimics zipping her mouth close. Bakugou regards them with one last, long, pointed glare before turning with a huff and walking away from them. They watch his back until he disappears into the kitchen, before exchanging a little look.

“…What did you say to him?” Ochako can’t help but ask, tilting an eyebrow.

“I just asked him if he’d do me a personal favor and try to mend things between himself and Midoriya.” Kirishima replies, his grin much smaller, but still there, nonetheless. “I’m honestly not quite sure when that happened but— It’s good to know they may be working things out, isn’t it?”

“I’ve never seen Midoriya that relaxed around him, before.” Ochako replies, shaking her head in amazement. “It’s— It is good, you are right. Very good.” A little, lopsided smile pulls at her lips, as she locks eyes with Kirishima. “You are a good friend.”

Kirishima blushes furiously, scratching the back of his head as he shifts his weight from foot to foot, embarrassed but also pleased. “I— I try.” He replies, with a little smile. “I just want everyone to go
Ochako bumps her shoulder against his, playful, making him laugh.

“I still have to eat breakfast, but I’m kind of scared of going into the kitchen, right now—“ She says, pensive. “Bakugou might decide to explode my face, after all.”

“Human shield at your service.” Kirishima replies with a little bow. “I’ll be happy to escort you, and make sure your face stays pristine and not turned into one thousand tiny pieces.”

It’s Ochako’s turn to laugh, snorting ungracefully into her palms. They made their way to the kitchen, walking side by side.

“I heard explosions, what pissed Bakugou off?” Tooru asks, bumping into them as they walked to the other side of the counter.

Bakugou turns on his stool and glares at them, slowly sliding a thumb on his throat.

“The real question is: what doesn’t piss Bakugou off.” Kaminari intervenes from around the stove, bed-haired. “I mean, it’ll be a easier list to compile.”

“Everyone has a death wish, this morning, I see.” Bakugou replies, glacial, and looking slightly unhinged as he slowly turns to stare at Kaminari. Kirishima flails his arms in a clear ‘shut up!’ gesture above his head, immediately stopping when Bakugou turns back to them.

“Good morning.” The possibility of more morning-explosions is thankfully stopped by Todoroki, appearing at the entrance of the kitchen. A silent, slightly jittery Midoriya trails by his side, fingers hooked in Todoroki’s elbow, the both of them now in their uniform.

“Whoa!” Mina exclaims, her dark eyes widening. “What happened to you?!”

“Huh?” Todoroki replies, blinking.
“That wasn’t there, yesterday?” Mina says, halfway between a question and an exclamation, pointing at Todoroki’s forehead.

Ochako holds her breath— Not everyone was there, the past evening, when Bakugou emerged from the elevator with a shocked-looking Midoriya basically glued to his arm, of course. A good chunk of the class already left to do their own things in their respective rooms.

Todoroki confusedly palms at his own face, before his fingers make contact with the new scar above his right eye.

“Ah—“ He says, faintly. “I hit a sharp corner with my face.” He adds, shrugging.

It’s technically not a lie, but definitely not the whole truth, either— Mina frowns, clearly more confused than ever, as Midoriya flinches oh-so slightly, turning his face down.

“Gee, man, you gotta be less clumsy—“ Mina huffs, crossing her arms. “You’re going to ruin your pretty face, like this.”

Todoroki huffs back, slightly amused. “I don’t have— It doesn’t matter, either.” He replies, shaking his head. “Me and Izuku have a couple of things to do, before class, so we’re going ahead. We’ll see you there.” He adds, nodding slightly, and just as fast they appeared they go, the entrance door softly clicking in the distance as they get out.

“…Is it me or did Midoriya look worse than he did yesterday?” Tooru quietly says, clearly worried. “I thought you guys said he wasn’t hurt? Maybe he should go to the infirmary—”

“Leave him be. He just needs time.” Bakugou intervenes, flat, before Ochako could even answer. They all turn to look at him. “Getting kidnapped by some shithead ain’t a damn walk in the park.”

No one really says anything, after that, finishing their breakfast in contemplative silence.

—

Izuku’s hold on his arm is a bit tighter than necessary, but Shouto doesn’t protest. It’s not like it hurts,
anyway.

The walk to school is much quieter, at this hour. It’s early enough that no one but them got out their dormitories, yet—it’s nice, being able to enjoy the peace and silence, just the two of them.

“…You know.” Izuku suddenly says, subdued. “It’s the second time I heard Ashido make a comment about you being pretty, if I remember right. Are you?”

“What?”

“Pretty?” Izuku slightly turns his face up to him. As far as Shouto could tell he slept peacefully, but he definitely looks out of sorts and vaguely loopy.

“How would I know?” Shouto replies, honest.

“What? Are you blind, too, and didn’t tell me?” Izuku chuckles, vaguely surprised.

“I— I don’t think I can really say if I’m— Pretty. Isn’t that conceited?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think so?” Izuku sounds unsure, frowning vaguely. “I mean—if you are, might as well admit it to yourself, right? There’s nothing conceited in that, I think.”

Shouto huffs, shaking his head. “I honestly don’t know, but—I don’t think so? I mean, my hair is dumb and my eyes are strange, not to mention the scar on the left side of my face—People always gawk at me, so I doubt I’m particularly attractive. I’m sure Ashido was just joking.”

“Nah, she was totally serious.” Izuku replies, promptly. “I think you might be misinterpreting the way others look at you. I can tell that a lot of people are interested in you, especially when we hang around in the cafeteria.”

This is—Definitely new, to him. “Are they?”

“Wow, you really didn’t realize.” Izuku replies, surprised. “You’re silly.”
Shouto huffs, blushing slightly. “Maybe they are being silly. And need glasses.” He mutters, slightly uncomfortable. “In any case, whenever I’m pretty or not, it really doesn’t matter to me.”

Izuku hums, pensive. “Well, for someone like me, not caring about looks, I can get— But you— Do you really not care?”

“I never had any reason to.” Shouto shrugs. “And I’m already with the person I fell in love with, regardless of how I look, so—“

Izuku blushes, hiding his face against Shouto’s bicep, grumbling something he cannot quite understand. Lips curling, Shouto bumps into him gently. “Why so curious? Do you want to brag about the fact you got a pretty boyfriend?”

That drags a huffy laugh out of Izuku. “Stupid.” He replies, a smile in his voice. “I just want to know more things about you, I guess.”

Shouto hums, non-committal. Izuku’s grasp on him relaxed a bit, and he slides down a hand, interlacing his fingers with Shouto’s.

“Why are you so sure Ashido was serious, anyway? Are you keeping you quirk on?” Shouto asks after a few seconds of silence, realization faintly hitting him.

“Um, yeah.” Izuku replies with a sigh. “I tried to keep it off for a bit this morning but— It just made me more nervous. I’ll try to turn it off again later, balance things out as much as I can, I guess.”

“I see.” Shouto releases a little sigh, trying to quell the worry he feels at the bottom of his stomach. Izuku really doesn’t need to deal with that, on top of everything else. “Well, since you have it on, then— I know you said you don’t care about looks, personally, but I’m sure that, if you aren’t mulling over this already, you probably will at some point, so I just want to let you know one thing.”

“What?” Izuku asks, perplexed, stopping when Shouto does.

Shouto grabs his other hand, too, facing him. “You are the most beautiful thing I ever laid my eyes on.”
It’s worth to say it, just for the violent blush that rises to Izuku’s ears and cheeks. Shouto grins to himself, as his flustered boyfriend pushes his face against Shouto’s chest, moaning something about Shouto being too damn much to handle.

—

The knocks on his office door arrived perfectly punctual.

“They are here, just a second—“ He says into the phone, getting up to open the door. Young Todoroki looks up and nods, entering with young Midoriya in tow.

“Good morning. Young Midoriya, hand.” Toshinori says, a small smile on his face. When the boy blinks, but obeys, offering his hand palm up, Toshinori puts his phone on it. “It’s your mother.”

“Oh—“ The boy exhales, faintly surprised, fumbling with the object for a second to make sure it’s the right side up, before putting it at his ear. “Hi, mom—“

He steps away from him and young Todoroki, approaching the window of Toshinori’s office as he speaks softly. They watch him go, leaving him some privacy as they turn to look at one another.

“Speaking of which— I’ve convinced Recovery Girl to leave to me the duty of reporting yesterday’s incident to your family, instead of letting Principal Nedzu call—“ Toshinori says, voice low. “But the number listed as a contact for you mother connected me to a hospital?”

Young Todoroki groans, turning his face up to the ceiling, clearly exasperated. “Of course.” He grumbles. “Bet that shithead doesn’t even know she has a personal phone—“

Toshinori doesn’t comment on his choice of words, at this point not even vaguely surprised.

“I have her number, of course, but I can’t remember it right now— Is it ok if I’ll give it to you later?”

“That’s fine, as long as I’ll be able to report to her within the day.”
“Ok, I’ll go grab it during lunch-break—“ The boy sighs, massaging his forehead. “Thanks for—Huh—Listening to my request.”

“Not a problem.” Toshinori replies, shrugging. “Everything alright?”

“Yes. I’m pretty sure he internalized the concept that what happened yesterday wasn’t his fault.” The boy replies after a short silence. “He’s still stressed out about—Well, everything, but I guess that’s a given.” A pause. “I think he might need a bit of help.” He adds, voice lowering significantly.

Toshinori sighs. “It’s something I’ve been discussing both with your homeroom teacher and young Midoriya’s mother, along with the Principal. We are currently looking into options—“ He murmurs. “I’m only telling you due to your relationship with him, but all of this should obviously be confidential, so please, keep it to yourself. It’s young Midoriya’s prerogative, to eventually disclose his health situation to others, ok?”

“Sure.” The boy replies, easily, mismatched eyes pointed at Midoriya’s back. “I’m glad something is being done.”

That’s when young Midoriya suddenly turns, walking up to them.

“Mom asks if you want to come with us—We are going out this afternoon, after lessons are over.” He says, addressing young Todoroki. “We need to pick up a new phone, since mine broke.”

“Oh—Sure.” The boy answers, blinking. “I need a new one, too, so—”

Midoriya smiles briefly, before turning back to his call. He mostly listens in, idly playing with the button of his uniform jacket, humming every now and then.

“Ok, see you later, then. Bye, mom.” He murmurs, and then he offers the phone back, expression blank. “Thanks.”

There’s something deeply unsettling in seeing the boy look so—Detached. Holding a sigh, Toshinori gently takes the object off his hand.
“Thank you for coming by— I also wanted to let you know that Aizawa will keep being absent a bit longer. He’s staying at the hospital as a safety measure, considering the nature of Eri’s quirk, although we don’t believe she will lose control over it— But, better be safe than sorry.” Toshinori says, practical. “She’s still feverish, but her temperature hasn’t gotten any higher, so the doctors are sure she’ll start to get better in the next couple of days.”

“Ah— That’s good to know.” Midoriya replies, blinking, his entire face instantly lighting up at the mere mention of the girl. “I’m glad Aizawa-sensei is keeping her company.”

“Apparently she likes watching the endless amount of cat pictures on his phone.” Toshinori replies with a chuckle. “But I haven’t told you anything about Aizawa’s dark secret, mh?”

A small grin passes on the boy’s face, at that. “My lips are sealed.” He says, amused. He turns toward young Todoroki, gently grabbing his arm. “Maybe when she’ll feel better we can go visit?” He says, clearly barely capable of containing his excitement at the thought. “She’d love to meet you.”

“I’ll be glad to meet her, too.” Todoroki replies, softly, and Toshinori swears that if this boy could manage to channel even a tiny bit more of pure adoration into his eyes as he looks at young Midoriya, he might just explode in a cloud of hearts and rainbows.

Chasing away the silly mental image, Toshinori smiles to himself, before intervening again. “That was all I needed to tell you— You can go to class, now, I’ll see you both during the afternoon exercise.”

The two boys politely excused themselves, but they must stop right outside the corridor, because Toshinori can still faintly hear them even after he closes the door.

“I think it’s still a bit too early to go to class… Unless you want a headstart? I’ve been taking notes for you.” Young Todoroki says, softly.

“…Shouto.” Midoriya replies, voice low and slightly moved. “Of course you did.” A sigh. “It’s… Maybe later? I just don’t feel like it, now.”

Todoroki hums. “Well— We can go outside and enjoy the gardens.” He proposes.
“That’s code for ‘let’s go sit under a tree and make out’, isn’t it.”

“…Maybe.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Toshinori splutters at the rapid-fire exchange, hiding his face in his palm. While he’s happy for both of them, seeing how they clearly enjoy their relationship, there are certain things he definitely doesn’t need to know. Especially not after what Aizawa implied the past night—

Although, he did promise to keep an eye out for them— He just had no idea how to do that, when to even start— This is pretty much uncharted territory, for him.

He sighs to himself. He will have to find a chance to speak with his young pupil alone, sooner rather than later.

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They walk side by side, shoulders brushing, a relaxed silence following them.

The day went— Not badly. Izuku still felt moody as hell and not quite in control of his quirk once more, but he’s not going to fight it, for now. He’s just too tired.

All in all, going back to school wasn’t as bad as he feared. He ended up being confused by some of the topics touched in the morning lessons, but during lunch break his friends helped clarifying some things for him, and for what he could read of the notes Shouto compiled for him, (perfectly ready to be put into his braille display, even though he never explained Shouto how any of that worked. Just Shouto being thoughtful, as usual.) it shouldn’t take him too much to catch up with what he missed.

The afternoon rescue exercise had been nice. It felt good, to burn through some pent-up nervous energy and focus on it completely, forgetting for a bit his temperamental mental state.
They really didn’t have much time to rest after lessons were over, since they had to go meet Mom outside right away, so he felt a bit tired, admittedly.

“So, are you going to tell me what happened to your phone?” Izuku asks, breaking the silence as they rapidly approach the entrance gates.

Shouto doesn’t immediately answer his question, releasing a little sigh. “I chucked it against a wall in a fit of rage.” He replies after long seconds, flat.

Izuku blinks. “Oh— Um, why?”

“Friday evening I got a text from my father.” Shouto continues tiredly. “Saying he was going to attend my lesson on Saturday— You can imagine how happy that made me, with everything else that was going on. I just sort of saw red and threw the phone and it went in pieces.”

“…I’m sorry.” Izuku murmurs, finding his forearm and caressing it. “I’m sorry you had to deal with that. Did he actually came to the lesson?”

“Yeah, but— I went to Yagi-sensei after I lost my cool because— I don’t know, I just needed someone that would understand.” Shouto mutters, his light tense. “And he promised me that he’d keep him at bay, and— Well, he did. I didn’t have to speak with my father even once, thanks to him, so it wasn’t too bad.”

Izuku blinks, surprised, and wondering— This is clearly a condensed version of the facts. Admittedly, he’s kind of curious to know what Shouto and All Might might’ve possibly spoke about…

At the same time, he’s not going to pry. Shouto is clearly not too keen on sharing more than he already did, and Izuku definitely doesn’t want to put salt in the wounds.

“I’m glad he helped.” He says, instead, softly. “I— If I can ask, why are you calling him Yagi-sensei? I’m fairly sure you’ve always called him All Might—“

Shouto sniffs. “It’s— It’s dumb.” He mutters.
“I’m sure it’s not.” Izuku sighs, slightly exasperated. “Just tell me, it’ll be fine.”

“I… I just thought…” A moment of hesitation. “I just thought that if I tried to separate the concept of ‘All Might’ from my perception of him as my teacher, and a person I can trust, I— It’d make it easier for me not to linger too much on the bad memories I have due to his hero identity. Hence the name.”

“Shouto, that’s not dumb.” Izuku replies, honest, a small smile pulling at his lips. “That’s a very nice idea, actually. Pretty smart. Is it working?”

“A little bit, I think. He does make it easier.” Shouto says, a smile in his voice. “He’s— Nice.”

Izuku grins, happiness blooming in his chest. “He is. I’m glad you’re doing this. I hope you’ll be able to build a relationship with him.”

Shouto hums, non-committal, circling Izuku’s shoulder with an arm. Izuku gladly leans into him, just as they are coming up to the gates.

Mom is already there, waiting outside the car. She feels amused, but as soon as they step by her side, her light turns concerned.

“Oh, dear, what happened?” She asks, worried, and Izuku doesn’t have the time to ask her what she means, before she steps in front of Shouto. The way her light moves, suggests she might be putting a light touch on Shouto’s face. “You didn’t had this last time, didn’t you?”

Shouto’s light turns surprised and shy, rapidly, at that. “I— Accidentally hit my face on a sharp corner. It’s nothing.” He replies, even, and Izuku wonders yet again just how obvious the new scar is, for people to react so strongly to it.

He gulps down a ball of guilt. Shouto doesn’t blame him, and he’d be angry if Izuku kept doing so. He made it pretty clear he doesn’t want Izuku to be wallowing in guilt about this.

Mom tuts, before letting out a little, annoyed sigh. “This school is too harsh on you boys.” She grumbles.
“It— It wasn’t during a lesson. Just an accident in the dorms.” Shouto adds, quietly. “But really, it’s nothing. I mean, have you seen the other side of my face?”

There’s a long second of silence, before both Izuku and mom release a surprised little laugh at that, Shouto’s light caressing him with a sense of accomplishment.

“You’ve got Izuku’s brand of humor, too, I see.” Mom says, amused. “Get in the car, you two— I was hoping we could get your new phones quickly, so we’d have more time to catch a bite before getting you back here.”

They obey, claiming the backseats to sit side by side, fingers entwining. Mom seems to take a second, maybe glancing at them in the rearview mirror as a flash of fondness goes by in her, before she starts the car.

“Oh, Izuku—“ She says, her voice carefully flat, a couple of minutes into the drive. “We’re gonna meet up with Ichiko and Miki, too— I— Ichiko knows what happened, but we’ve decided not to tell Miki.” She continues, her voice lowering. “I don’t know if you agree with this decision, but in that moment we didn’t want Miki to worry, so I just told her your phone broke— Now it’s up to you to tell her the truth, or not. Or, if you want her to know but don’t feel like talking about it, I can tell her for you, dear, whatever you prefer—“

Izuku blinks, taking a second to ponder on it. It’s— Maybe they took the right choice. No point in letting Miki worry needlessly, especially after how many times she had to deal with worrying for Izuku in such a short time.

“…I think you did the right thing, although I’m sure Miki wouldn’t agree.” He sighs, tiredly. “I don’t know if I want to tell her— At least not for now. I don’t know.”

“…Ok, honey.” Mom replies, voice low. “Think about it. You don’t have to take a decision right away.”

Izuku huffs, leaning sideway to rest his head on Shouto’s shoulder. The chilly sensation of his right side is reassuring.

He feels like his entire life has come to a halt, as he stands in front of all these things to reflect upon and these decisions he cannot quite make yet. They are rapidly piling up to the size of a mountain range.
A step at a time. He thinks to himself, as Shouto silently leans in and presses a soft kiss against Izuku’s hair. *A step at a time.*

___

Shouto takes a little sidestep, wisely, as Miki literally tackles Izuku into an energetic hug, making him release a noise not dissimilar from a wheezing squeaky toy.

“Air—“ Izuku tries to say, weakly grasping for said air as the girl squeezes him.

“Oh, shut it, Midoriya, I haven’t see you in ages. You’ll live.” She replies with a little laugh. She gives one last squeeze, before letting him go. Izuku takes a big dramatic breath, making her laugh again.

“Glad to see you, too.” He replies after that, a genuine little smile pulling at his lips. “What have you been up to?”

“What have you been up to.” Miki replies, eyeing him critically. “If I have to be honest, you don’t look too good right now, buddy.”

Shouto observes, silent. Izuku goes absolutely still for a moment, his face a mask, before he casually replies.

“My internship has been pretty demanding. I’m just tired.”

Miki eyes him critically, frowning. “Yeah, I bet.” She says, flat. “I’ve seen the news, that battle the other day— What happened there?” She adds, curious, but immediately follows up with. “Ah, never mind, I know you can’t tell me details. Don’t answer that.”

Izuku relaxes so minutely anyone but Shouto would’ve missed it. He smiles again, shrugging. That’s when Miki’s attention suddenly snaps onto Shouto, that blinks, vaguely surprised. She grins, all teeth.
“So, you two still going strong, huh?” She says, cheerful. “I swear that Izuku can’t shut up about you for a minute. We could be talking about taxes and the weather and he’d find a way to get the topic back to you.”

“Miki.” Izuku hisses, blushing furiously. He hides his faces in his palms. “Oh my god, why do you have to be like this—“

“Oh, let me have my fun.” She grins, elbowing him.

“To be fair…” Shouto intervenes, calmly. “If I had a friend out of school to speak with, I’d probably talk about Izuku just as much.” He finishes with a little shrug.

He really didn’t think it possible, but Izuku goes possibly even redder with a small, muffled groan.

“Aaaaw, aren’t you two disgustingly cute—“ She says, amused.

“You guys, let’s go!” Izuku’s mother suddenly calls from a bit further away, standing near Miki’s. “We haven’t got all day, you know?”

Miki huffs slightly but then winks at Shouto, before hooking her arm under Izuku’s and dragging him toward the two women. Shouto follows suit, observing as Miki’s mother step by their side and puts a protective arm around Izuku’s shoulders, the three of them falling into an easy chit-chat. Much to Shouto’s surprise, Inko Midoriya turns and walks by his side, her face turned up to him.

When he meets her eyes, he distantly wonders if Izuku would’ve inherited the emerald of her gaze, under different circumstances.

“We never really had a chance to speak, you and I, didn’t we?” She says softly, a small smile on her lips. “I guess it couldn’t be helped, we all got swept by all these events— Still, I would like to get to know you better, dear.”

Shouto gulps around a knot in his throat. He has no reason to be nervous— Izuku’s mother is, for what he has seen and heard of her, a very nice person. He really shouldn’t have any reason to be nervous.
He’s not quite sure what it is— Maybe the fact that he wants to make a good impression on her, especially after their disastrous first meeting way back before he and Izuku were even a thing— Or maybe it’s just how— Mom she is. Even if he’s been slowly rebuilding a relationship with his own mother, there are still things that hurt and stings in him. And looking at Inko’s smile, hearing her calling him ‘dear’ so easily, feels like someone insistently poking at the distant memories he has, of those days before his face became scarred and everything went wrong.

“I guess.” He concedes, softly. “Not much time to sit around with a cup of tea and talk, huh.”

She chuckles lightly as they enter the shop, going for the phone section. They both look at Izuku, that seems fully distracted by Miki that is already looking over some phones, describing the specific to him. Shouto also looks at the objects, although he isn’t particularly interested, admittedly. As long as he has a device with the basics, he’ll be happy with it.

“I would definitely love to actually sit with a cup of tea and time to spare, but I’ll get what I can.” Izuku’s mom says, thoughtful. “I know you boys are very busy at school, so I understand that you only get so much free time. Anyway, I— I don’t mean to pry, of course, but as a mother I can’t help but worry— And wonder— What pushed you to pursue a relationship with Izuku?”

Shouto can feel a slightly blush rising to his cheeks, as he nervously massages his own neck. “It’s— I can’t say it was a conscious decision—“ He manages to answer, a little tense. “I mean, I just— I just really like him. He’s smart, and funny, and staying with him makes me happy—”

That sounds like an understatement to his own ears. There are so many amazing things about Izuku, and he would love to spend hours listing them, waxing poetics about him, but apparently actually attempting to do so leaves him tongue-tied and unable to properly put to words his own feelings.

Izuku’s mother only hums at that, and a bit of a silence stretches between them, only filled by the sound of a bubbly clerk chatting about a specific model to the trio not far from them. Shouto picks up one of the phones on display, just to have something to do with his hands.

“He— He did so much for me— Even if we were basically strangers.” He continues, softly, breaking the vaguely heavy silence. “He saw the obstacles in my way, and helped me climb over them, of his own volition— He accepted me as a friend without a single question— And as time went by, as I saw all the small and big things he does for others without a word, as I witnessed his selflessness, I— I couldn’t help but fall in love with him.” He finishes with a whisper.

Inko Midoriya, at his side, gasps softly. He turns, perplexed, meeting emerald eyes full of surprise and wonder.
“…In love?” She whispers, kindly.

Shouto’s blush must definitely be visible, now, as he clears his throat.

“…Yes.” He admits, voice a little rough. “I love him.”

Shouto remembers many things, branded into him by pain and anger. He remembers his father telling him that emotions are a weakness, and that, in order to fill his purpose, Shouto must stifle them. He remembers his father telling him he wasn’t supposed to build a connection with his own brothers and sister. He remembers how he took mother away after the incident, not giving them even a single chance to try reconnect, and forgive.

He remembers the many times he’s been shown that ‘affection’ was not something he was allowed to feel, both by words and actions.

But these feelings bloomed in him, regardless, changing his life for the better. And now here he is, standing in a random shop, holding a phone he’s not even interested in, as his boyfriend’s mother (the mother of the person he loves more than life itself) looks at him with tears in her eyes and a fond smile opening on her lips.

Her hand is kind, when she puts a butterfly-light touch on his forearm.

“I see.” She says, low, still smiling. Like she has absolutely no doubt Shouto was being honest. “I—I’m glad to know Izuku is capable of making you so happy—and I’m glad to know you are here for him. I hope we’ll have other chances in the future to talk and know more of each other, but I just—I just wanted to thank you for taking care of him.”

“It’s— More the other way around, to be honest.” Shouto replies, vaguely uncomfortable.

She chuckles. “I’m sure you both love to take care of each other. In any case—I can see how happy Izuku is about this relationship. It means a lot, to me. So, thank you.”

With a little sigh, Shouto puts down the phone, turning fully to her. “Maybe I should be thanking you.” He says, his mouth running before his brain.
“What for?” She asks, blinking.

“…Would it be crass if I say that I should thank you for bringing him into this world?” Shouto replies after a second, embarrassed.

She splutters, clearly astonished, before melting into a laugh. Shouto is pleasantly surprised, in noticing the way she puts a hand on her mouth as she does so, much like Izuku does when he laughs.

—

His brand new phone cheerful little ring and announcement that he got a message from Miki shakes him awake. He hadn’t even realized he was dozing off, as he waited for Shouto to come back from his shower. With a yawn, he palms on the nightstand, finding it.

Thankfully they found a model not much different from his now broken phone, so it wasn’t too hard getting accustomed to it during dinner. He opens the texts, letting the message he just received play.

“Even if we couldn’t see each other for long, I’m glad we’ve got some time to spend together. Izuku, I know there’s something that you aren’t telling me, but I just want you to know that it’s ok. I understand that, with the road you’ve chosen, there will be many things in the future you will need to keep to yourself. Just know that, even if things will inevitably change, you’ll always be one of my dearest friends and I will always support and cheer for you, ok? Love you.”

Izuku blinks, as silence falls after the voice-over is done reading the long text to him. He feels his nose sting, and tears collecting in his eyes. It takes him a while to compose a reply, after taking a long, shaky breath.

“I know you will. You’ve always done that, ever since we’ve met each other. I’ll never stop to consider myself lucky to have met you, and grateful for what you’ve done for me. It’s true that there are things I can’t share right now, but one day maybe I will be capable to. Thank you so much for understanding. I love you, too.”

After sending the text, he just lies there, the phone on his chest, both hands resting on it. The door opens softly, and the familiar smell of Shouto’s shampoo fills the hair, as a weight gently tips the mattress down a bit.
“...Everything ok?” Shouto asks, softly, vaguely concerned.

“Just thinking.” Izuku replies, voice low. “I’m very lucky.”

Shouto’s weight on the bed shifts, as he must be sitting cross legged on it, his knee gently bumping into Izuku’s side. “What makes you say that?”

“I’m surrounded by so many amazing people— All of them so willing to help me.” Izuku murmurs, finding Shouto’s knee with a hand, fingers lightly drumming on it. “I’m just very grateful.”

Shouto hums, warm fingers landing onto Izuku’s. “I see. I think I understand what you mean.”

Izuku smiles to him, before softly asking. “What did you and mom spoke about?”

Shouto seems to take a moment to reflect, before answering, sounding slightly embarrassed. “Not much. She said she’d like to know me better. She’s very nice.”

“Oh— Well, that’s good. Maybe, one weekend, we could go home and spend some time with her, so you two will have a chance to know each other more.” Izuku replies, the idea making him feel both a bit tense but also— Very warm inside. He likes the idea of Shouto and mom getting to know each other properly.

“Yeah, I— It'll depend on our schedules, I guess, but that sounds like a plan.” Shouto replies, pensive, before adding in a voice so soft Izuku barely hears him. “I— I was wondering if you’d want to come with me and meet my mother, too, someday.”

Izuku blinks, surprised, as Shouto carefully entwines their fingers still sitting on his knee. “You— Want me to do that?”

“Yes. I— I haven’t told her about us, yet, but I think we’re getting there. I think I’ll be able to tell her, soon.” A pause. “Would that be ok, with you? Meeting her?”
“Of course.” Izuku whispers back, squeezing his fingers gently.

Shouto sighs, before sliding away from his hold and turning on the bed, to get under the covers with Izuku, after taking his phone off his chest and put it back on the nightstand. Neither of them really had to ask the other if they wanted to sleep together again. Izuku is under the impression this is going to become pretty much the norm.

Not that he minds.

He finds Shouto’s jaw, caressing him, and carefully leans forward, gently putting a careful kiss on his forehead. Izuku’s lips grazed the bigger scar on the left side of his face, the texture rough under the touch. Shouto relaxes after that, releasing a little sigh through his nose before scooting a bit closer. Izuku feels the warm breath tickling his collarbone, and then Shouto speaks, so quietly he can only hear him due to the absolute silence into the room.

“I know that trying to get back into the school routine must’ve been really difficult, today. I just wanted to let you know that I think you did really good.”

“…It was.” Izuku admits, voice low. “But— Having you near— and everyone else, too, helped a lot. I feel like I’ve taken a little step forward, maybe.”

“That’s good. A small step is better than no step, right?” Shouto replies, and Izuku feels just slightly his jaw shifts under the fingers still sitting there. Maybe he’s smiling.

The sudden wish to see Shouto’s expression, his smile, hits Izuku like a sledgehammer.

But no matter how much he wishes, that’s not something he can have. Not now, very probably not ever. But— Well, there was something else he could try to do, maybe.

“Shouto…” He murmurs, interrupting the silence. For a second he thinks Shouto might already have fallen asleep, but he hums back. “Can I— Touch your face?”

“I think you already touching my face, right now?” Shouto replies, faintly amused.
Izuku releases a little huffy laugh. “I don’t mean like that—“ He shifts, sitting up. “Come here a second.”

With a little grunt Shouto drags himself up, also sitting, and gently takes Izuku’s wrist to guide his hand against his cheek. Izuku easily follows with the other, palms now sitting on both of Shouto’s cheeks, the temperature difference between them obvious under his skin.

“If— If this gets uncomfortable, tell me, ok?” Izuku says, indecisive, and when Shouto hums, affirmative, he takes a deep breath to steady himself, before carefully starting to explore Shouto’s features with his fingertips. He slides down to his jaw and chin, a place he’s already fairly familiar with, having picked up the habit of searching for Shouto’s lips in a silent request for a kiss. But he let himself do more than that, this time. He follows back up with the line of Shouto’s nose and the arc of his eyebrows, sliding his fingers under Shouto’s soft bangs to feel his forehead and hairline. He goes sideways, following said line to his temples and ears, back to his jaw. Izuku kept exploring, silent, fingertips easily sliding along Shouto’s skin, and Shouto didn’t move nor made a single noise, letting Izuku turn his head around gently as he curiously mapped his features.

When Izuku decided he had enough, his palms turned back to where they started, sitting on Shouto’s cheeks. The silence around them turned so heavy Izuku is almost afraid of breaking it, even when Shouto releases a little, trembly sigh.

Shouto’s fingers tickles along his neck, when he rises his own hands up to caress Izuku’s cheeks and then cup his jaw. Izuku still kept silent as Shouto gently tips his face up a bit and presses a gentle but firm kiss on his lips.

Even after Izuku shifted his arm to lazily circle Shouto’s neck, their noses brushing and their breathing tickling one another, they didn’t spoke for a long time.

“Did that… Help?” Is Shouto that breaks the silence, sounding a bit rough and indecisive.

“If I have to be honest, I’m not quite sure. I don’t think this whole face-touching-thing it’s actually effective.” Izuku admits with a little chuckle. “But it felt— Nice. Was it uncomfortable?”

“Of course not. You can touch me anytime you want.” Shouto replies with a little huff, before adding. “…That came out with a little more innuendo that I thought.”

Izuku splutters a little surprised laugh, cheeks pinking. “It’s ok, I know what you mean.” He replies,
smiling, and Shouto releases a small, amused huff, before leaning in to rest his forehead against Izuku’s neck. Izuku grabbed the occasion to spend some time carding his fingers through Shouto’s soft hair, the silence around them much more relaxed, now.

That’s when the realization that he felt much less tense suddenly hit him. He still feels his head murky with heavy thoughts nipping at him from the back of his mind, but being back home, surrounded by the people he cares for— Maybe it’s finally really sinking in.

“I think I’d like to spend some time with Uraraka and Iida, tomorrow.” Izuku says. “I feel like we haven’t had the chance to just— Speak, for ages— Would that be ok with you?”

There’s a moment of silence, before Shouto replies with a question of his own, confused. “Why are you asking permission?” He says, rapidly adding. “I’m not your owner, Izuku.”

“That’s not— I— “ Izuku blinks, confused. “I— Guess you’re right. I don’t know what my line of thought was, there. I guess I just— I don’t know, with everything that has happened, I guessed you’d like to spend some time just the two of us.”

“Of course I like being with you, but I want you to be happy.” Shouto murmurs, trailing his lips up to place a small kiss on Izuku’s cheek. “If spending time with our friends makes you happy, so be it. And I like being with them, too, it’s not a sacrifice for me.”

“…Ok.” Izuku replies, a small smile pulling at his lips. “Thank you.”

A small huffy laugh escapes Shouto’s lips, tickling him, before he smacks another small kiss on his cheek. “You’re silly.” He murmurs, affectionate. “Better get to sleep, now. We had a full day, today.”

Izuku obeys, gladly, and they settle back down, facing one another, noses almost brushing. Shouto’s hand gently circles his, and he distractedly plays with Izuku’s fingers until his hold goes slack and his breathing turns even. Izuku listens to it intently, smiling to himself a bit as he entwines their fingers together, and he slowly slides in the gentle arms of sleep.
Chapter End Notes

Me, yesterday: Oh, tomorrow’s posting day! : D I didn't even check how long this chapter is...

*almost 15k*

*thinking emoji.gif*

Edit: Modified the line about Shouto's brother-- What I meant to say was that between the two older brothers he has, one of them is younger than the other, but Shouto is still the last one in the family, and I can see how my wording was unnecessarily confusing lmao, so I corrected it : D

As usual, you can find me on witscrib, on tumblr, and on twitter!
His first week back went by in a flurry as he juggled school, and training, and catching up to the lessons he missed with the help of his infinitely patient friends and Shouto’s notes, finally managing to set back into a routine. Mirio senpai came by their dormitory on Friday evening, gently inquiring if Izuku felt up to go with him to Nighteye’s office during the weekend.

That’s something Izuku actually fought tooth and nail for. After what happened to him, it seemed that the school might decide to interrupt internships for first years— Which he found unfair. It wasn’t anyone else’s fault, that Izuku got kidnapped. He didn’t see the reason why all the other first years should pay for that, and he made no secret of this opinion, going directly to speak with principal Nedzu as soon as he caught wind of the rumor. The small principal felt almost amused by Izuku’s stubbornness and his little rant about the topic, but he was serious —and truthful— when he spoke.

“It’s true that what happened to you is one of the reasons we are taking in consideration the idea of suspending internships for first years—“ He replied. “But it’s far from being the only one. Still, we’ll take in consideration your opinion, Midoriya. Now go, I don’t want you to waste your entire lunch break arguing with me, young man.”

Despite the fact he didn’t want others to stop their internships (Kirishima, Asui and Uraraka seemed really happy to be working with Fatgum and Ryukyu, respectively.) he wasn’t quite sure yet what he wanted to do, himself.

“I— Maybe next week?” He replies to Mirio, the both of them idly sitting outside class 1-A dormitories, side by side. “If you think Nighteye isn’t going to be mad about it, I mean— I’m technically still employed in his office, right? I don’t want to waste his time—“

“That’s ok.” Mirio interrupts him with a gentle, light touch to the shoulder. “Don’t worry about that, Midoriya. Sir will be more than happy to give you as much time as you need. You’ll always be welcome to come back, when you’ll feel up to it, ok?”

Izuku finally manages to flash a small smile at him, grateful. He did want to keep working with Nighteye, but— He just needed a bit more time to settle his racing thoughts and feelings.
“Sir told me that Eri’s fever seems to be gone and her condition has stabilised—“ Mirio says, after, a smile in his voice. Although his tone turns serious, when he adds. “Apparently, the horn on her forehead shrunk considerably. Her quirk might be linked to that, so it’s very probable that, for now, she might not be able to access her powers at all.”

Izuku hums at that. “Aizawa-sensei told me something of the sort, too—“ He replies. “I spoke with her on the phone a bit, thanks to him. Maybe— Sunday we might go visit her, at the hospital— It’ll all depends whenever Aizawa-sensei can get the time to make the trip, but— Considering she seems unable to access her quirk at all, I think they will let him off the hook long enough to come pick us up.”

“Mmh— ‘Us’, huh?” Mirio says, voice suddenly turning conspiratorial. “You and who else?”

Izuku blushes a bit, at that. “I promised I’d introduce Shouto to her—“ He mutters, nervously playing with his fingers. Mirio snickers, gently elbowing him.

“She did ask who your boyfriend was, after all.” He laughs, cheerful. “Shouto Todoroki— He’s Endeavor’s son, right?”

“…Yeah.” Izuku replies, flat, trying to keep his voice neutral. Still, senpai must pick up on something in his tone, because he’s silent for a couple of seconds, before speaking again, careful.

“He seems nice. Are you happy with him?”

Izuku blinks, unable to discern the strange tone he detects in Mirio’s question. “Very.” He admits, voice lowering. “He— He is nice.” He adds, lamely, unable to really express his feelings into words. He can feel his own cheeks burning.

Mirio hums. “Well, that’s the most important thing.” He comments, before rising back up to his feet. He puts a big, warm hand on Izuku’s head, musing his hair playfully. “I’ll try go visit Eri myself, but in any case, say hi to her for me, will you?”

Izuku chuckles, swatting his hand away. “I will, if you say hi to Sir for me.”

Mirio gives him one last, fond head pat. “Deal.”
Toshinori looks up from his phone, when he hears the familiar tip-tap of the cane coming closer. The morning air is crisp around them, but pleasant, and young Midoriya’s nose is just slightly flushed at the tip as he folds his cane and blinks, his eyes changing color in the split seconds he does so. He turns toward Toshinori and nods, a small smile emerging on his lips.

“Ready?” Toshinori asks, almost pointlessly. The boy is already in gym clothing, after all, an old, battered pair of running shoes at his feet, instead of his usual bright red ones.

“Set the pace as you wish, I already did a bit of warm up before coming here.” Young Midoriya replies, stepping by his side. Toshinori hums and starts on a light jog, the only sounds breaking the peaceful morning silence their own steps as they run down the track. They don’t speak for a long while, as Toshinori slowly increases the speed.

It feels nice, this relaxed silence between them, but it can’t go on forever. In the end, he has no other choice but to break it. “What are your plans for the day?”

The boy takes a second, before answering, easily keeping up despite the fact he had to take two steps for each one of Toshinori’s, due to their difference in height. “I’ll finish catching up with the stuff I’ve missed with Iida and Yaoyorozu. We should get that done early enough, and then we’ll go out for a bit. Iida said his brother is coming to visit.”

Toshinori hums, unsurprised. Young Todoroki will probably be out most of the day due to his extra lessons, and he saw young Uraraka, Asui and Kirishima head out, since the decision about the possibility of interrupting internships for first years was still pending. It was good to know that the boy won’t be totally alone all day long.

They cover another good chunk of the track, before Toshinori speaks again, careful. “How are you doing? Still getting nightmares?”

Young Midoriya sniffs, drying a bit of sweat away from his forehead with his wrist. “As good as I can, I guess.” He replies with a shrug. “It’s— A couple of times, yeah. But it wasn’t too bad. Shouto woke me up.” A moment of silence. “From a safe distance.”

That’s an opening he’s been kind of fishing for, but also dreading. Toshinori clears his throat. “I’m glad to hear that.” A pause. “Can I— Ask you something?”
The boy turns vaguely, with a little confused frown. “Sure?”

When only silence follows, young Midoriya’s frown deepens a bit, but before he can say anything Toshinori sighs. “This is—I’m not good with this stuff.” He admits, honest. “I’ve never— Anyway.” A little cough. “Is— Everything ok? Between you and young Todoroki?”

Clearly confused, Midoriya tilts his head on a side. “Yeah, everything’s fine. Why are you asking?” His mouth turns into a thin line, as he adds. “If it’s because of what happened the first day I was back, I—Shouto made it very clear that he doesn’t blame me, so I’m trying not to let myself mull over it—I think I’m doing a good job of it.”

“That’s good to hear, you are doing a good job.” Toshinori replies, honestly relieved. “But it’s not— Quite what I meant.”

“Ssssooo— What is this all about?” Midoriya asks, tilting an eyebrow.

Toshinori huffs. He’s been keeping up with his jogging, lately, but he’s starting to get a bit short of breath. “Let’s slow down for a minute.” He says, bidding his time, and the boy silently obeys. They slow the pace to a light jog and then a walk, the both of them stretching along the way.

“I’m going to be honest with you—” Toshinori finally says, once his breathing calmed down. “All of this is uncharted waters, for me, but I still worry— And I still wish to be of help, as much as I can.” A pause. “I was wondering— The nature of your arrangement with young Todoroki. For what I gather, you’ve spent quite the number of nights together?”

“Oh, yeah.” Young Midoriya replies, easily. “I don’t think Shouto has spent a single night in his own room, this past week.” He adds with a chuckle. “I’ve tried to convince him to take turns but— Well, admittedly, my back doesn’t appreciate futons too much, so it was pretty much fighting a lost cause. So, in my bed it is.”

Toshinori blinks, surprised, at how easily the boy is speaking about this. He feels his cheeks burn a bit, as a little cough escapes his lips. “Ok, good, um— I just hope— You are both being responsible and safe—”

Young Midoriya shuts his mouth, turning to him with a little confused frown. His pale eyes move slightly, as if he’s deep in thoughts, before they suddenly go wide and a violent flush rises to his ears
and cheeks. “What—“ He stammers, before slapping Toshinori’s forearm lightly. “What do you think we are doing?! Oh my god—“ Then he hides his increasingly blushing face in his palms. “We are just sharing the bed!” He almost shouts, muffled.

Toshinori resists the temptation to also hide his face. “I— Well—“ He coughs. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to embarrass you. I just wanted to make sure you were— Ok—“

Midoriya groans against his palms, before glaring over his fingers. “I already had my fair share of awkward parent talks about certain topics.” He mutters. “I don’t need more of those, thanks.”

“Oh— Um, I’m glad you are— Properly informed—“ A groan. How was he supposed to even talk about it without turning into a stammering mess? His already pretty high respect toward Inko Midoriya suddenly increases tenfold. That woman is fearless. “I’m sorry. I’m terrible at this. I just wanted to help.”

There’s a long silence, before the boy finally takes his hands away from his face with a sigh. “I know. I appreciate the thought, but—“ A soft blush rises to his cheeks again. “Me and Shouto are not— I don’t think either of us are really thinking about that kind of stuff in the slightest, right now. We are just not ready.”

“Ok, ok, sorry for even bringing up the topic.” Toshinori kind of wants to kill Aizawa, right now, but he pushes the thought aside. “In any case— Well, if you ever need to talk about— Anything, if you have doubts— You can come to me, ok?”

“…You know perfectly well that I’d probably rather jump off a cliff than do that, but thanks.” Midoriya replies, faintly amused. “Never mind the fact that you are saying this, but your entire being feels like the exact opposite of that.”

“That’s— Young Midoriya.” Toshinori reprimands, smiling to himself when the boy laughs. “It’s true that I’m very… Stunted, when it comes to romance, but I meant it.”

“I know, I know, sorry.” He replies with a chuckle. “I know you meant it, but your panic is showing.”

Toshinori groans, as the boy regards him with a little curious look. “Why does the topic unnerve you so much? I mean, beside the obvious—“ He asks, interested
“It’s— Well. It’s just that I never felt these kind of things— Logically, I can understand. But it’s hard to talk about such personal matters, when I have no experience of my own to draw inspiration from.”

“Huh.” The boy blinks, a light in his eyes suggesting he’s cataloguing this info for later. “Never?”

Toshinori shrugs. “Never.” He confirms. “Do you find it odd?”

“…Not particularly, no.” Midoriya replies, easily, before adding in a low mutter. “It makes sense.”

That sounds… Cryptic. But Toshinori doesn’t feel like prodding at the meaning behind that sentence. He’s relieved enough by the fact that his young pupil seems to be so easily accepting of his feelings on the matter, he really doesn’t see any reason to drag the topic further.

The boy smiles faintly at him, as if he can tell what Toshinori is thinking— Which, to be fair, he probably is, in a sense.

“Ok. Glad we had the chance to— Clarify?” Toshinori sighs, awkwardly carding a hand through his messy hair. “Anyway, moving on— There is something else I would like to talk about.”

Young Midoriya hums as he keeps doing some more stretching exercise. Toshinori hadn’t even realized they actually stopped walking, so he resumes a light jog, and the boy promptly follows.

“With Nighteye’s help, we’ve found a doctor willing to come here at UA— She’s— Rather enthusiastic about it, actually.” Toshinori starts, neutral. “Very interested in the possibility of implementing a permanent team of on-site specialists. It’ll probably happen in the near future, but in the meantime I guess this could be a sort of test-run. She will arrive on Monday. I know that Nighteye already spoke to you about this, so— Do you feel up to meet her?”

“Monday, huh—“ The boy murmurs to himself, distracted, after some seconds of silence. “Yeah, ok.”

“Do you… Have any question?” Toshinori tentatively asks, admittedly vaguely surprised by young Midoriya’s immediate acceptance.
“No, it’s ok.” Midoriya replies with a shrug, pale eyes pointed forward. “A did a bit of reading on my own, this past week. I have a general idea of how things are going to pan out, I think.”

“Of course.” Toshinori comments with an affectionate chuckle. “Sometimes I forget what little inquisitive mind hides under this mess.” And he puts a hand on the boy’s head, mussing his hair.

“You really don’t have any room to talk about messy heads!” Young Midoriya replies, playfully swatting his hand away. “Everyone in class is starting to call you ‘lion-sensei’.”

“They do not.”

“They do! You might want to consider a hair cut—“ When he shoves the boy, lightly, he laughs, shoving right back.

If their morning jog turns into a silly game of tag, after that— Well, they still slipped in some cardio, there, didn’t they?
It’s the all too familiar faint smell of smoke that clues him in before anything else.

Shouto stops at the intersection between the two corridors with a little sigh, attracting the attention of Bakugou, that turns toward him with a shade of slight confusion on his permanent frown.

“...Go ahead, I’ll be right there.” Shouto says, answering the silent question in his gaze. Bakugou eyes him for a second longer, before walking away without a word. Shouto leans on the wall, crossing his arms on his chest, and waits.
If you think I’m going to come to you, you are in for a surprise. He thinks to himself, stubbornly.

A good minute later, the sounds of steps. Right on cue, Endeavor appears from behind the corner, flames framing his face, as usual.

They look at each other, silent. Shouto watches his father’s eyes glance above, probably at the new scar over his right eye, before they lock gazes once more. Shouto tilts an eyebrow, having absolutely no intention to lose this silent battle.

“Shouto.” Endeavor finally gives in for the second time, voice a flat, quiet tone.

“Don’t you have anything better to do than come here every weekend?” Shouto replies, adding a vaguely sarcastic. “I thought being the number one hero would mean you’d have no time to waste.”

Endeavor purses his lips in a thin line, but when he speaks his voice is still flatly measured. “Did you ask him to play guard dog, last week?”

“What if I did?” Shouto tilts his head on a side, cheekily. “I don’t know which part of the sentence ‘I don’t want to talk to you’ you don’t understand, really.”

There’s a moment of silence and then Endeavor sighs deeply, exasperated, massaging his forehead.

Shouto feels the unpleasantly familiar sensation of the rage squirming deep inside his stomach, at that. What right does he have to even sigh?

Shouto still has so many buttons, and, as usual, his father has the innate talent of being able to push all of them by merely existing.

But he won’t let the anger take over, this time. He takes a deep breath and focuses. He’s here to remedy to his mistakes and get his license. He’s here to become the hero his mother promised him he could be. He’s here to catch up with Izuku.

Izuku, his sword and shield in the face of his own father.
The anger bubbles and fizzles inside him, and when he meets his father’s eyes again, there’s only a quiet, but determined, sense of peace taking over in his guts.

Endeavor’s eyes are almost curious, now, as if he’s examining him. “Why didn’t you want to speak with me, last week?”

“You’re really not getting on with the program. I don’t want to speak with you, full stop.”

“Shouto.”

Shouto’s expression shifts, unamused. “Why do you care?”

“You’re my son.” Endeavor replies, unreadable.

“Oh, now I’m your son.” Shouto scoffs, sarcastic. “What, now that you got what you wanted I suddenly stopped being an extension of you?”

“Shouto.” Endeavor repeats, in the same, strange flat tone. “I was under the impression that you did want to become a hero. Was I wrong?”

It’s like speaking with a wall.

“No, you were not wrong.” Shouto concedes just as flat. “But I want to become one for my own reasons, not yours.”

“Which are?”

“Is this some kind of test?”

“Shouto—” It almost sounds like a ‘please’.
Almost.

He could tell him of his mother’s voice, loving, murmuring to him ‘you can be a hero, if you want to’. He could tell him of All Might and his blinding smile, or of Yagi-sensei and his gentle blue eyes apparently filled with all the kindness in the world. He could tell him of Iida, that in the face of grief recognized his own faults and promised to do better, or of Uraraka, which eyes burned with the passion and the need of helping others. He could even tell him of Bakugou, that started off with manners startlingly similar to Endeavor’s own, but that was rapidly maturing into a person that would one day be really ready of taking the role of a hero.

But, between all, he could speak of him.

“I’ve been saved by a hero.” Shouto finally says, voice lowering, eyes locked with his father’s. “I guess I want to repay the favor.”

Whatever answer Endeavor might’ve expected from him, mustn’t have been anywhere near what Shouto just said, because the look on his face… Shouto could only describe it as ‘speechless’.

“I have to go, now, or I’ll be late.” Shouto adds into the silence, flat. He doesn’t wait for an answer, and that answer doesn’t come even as he walks away, the faint smell of smoke getting fainter with every steps he takes.

—

When he enters into the changing room, Bakugou isn’t there. Probably speedily changed and got out, seeing no need to wait for Shouto anymore, now that things turned back to normal— But Inasa was there, and he enthusiastically waved at him with an entire arm stretched upward, as if they were meeting each other from the opposite sides of a long stretch of road, instead of in a rather small changing room.

Shouto found himself smiling just a tiny bit, at that. The last weekend he’d been too wrapped up in worry, at first, and then an almost drunken sense of relief, to really pay much attention to Inasa’s over-enthusiast attempts to strike a conversation with him. But now there wasn’t much occupying his mind, not even his earlier encounter with Endeavor bothered him, so he acknowledges Inasa with a nod, as he steps forward, putting his bag down on the bench and starting to get changed by his side.
“You look better, today.” Inasa says. “I’m going to guess whatever was troubling you last week got resolved?”

Shouto hums, non-committal. “You could say that.” He admits softly.

He can feel Inasa’s eyes pointed at him, as he puts on his suit.

“Can I… Ask you something?” Inasa blurs, indecisive. It’s a tone that doesn’t suit him, and his nervous shift from foot to foot even less so. Shouto turns, meeting his eyes, finding in them a mix of feelings he cannot quite make sense of.

“…Let’s trade.” Shouto replies, hit by a sudden idea. “You get a question, and then I get one.”

“Deal!” Inasa immediately agrees, the cheerful grin back on his face. “I was wondering if—Whatever was bothering you last week, had something to do with—What is his name—Midoriya, is it?” He nervously adjusts the cape on his shoulder, before continuing. “I saw in the news he was involved in some battle—So—Well, maybe I’m wrong.” He finishes, finally breaking eye contact.

“What made you think that?” Shouto asks, careful, and more than a bit surprised.

“You were holding hands at the provisional exam.” Inasa replies with a little shrug.

Shouto blinks, finding himself thinking back and—Yeah, Izuku did hold his hand when they got their results, and Inasa was by their side—

“You are right.” Shouto confirms, making Inasa do a little surprised jump. “I can’t tell you details, but that was what was bothering me. But… Izuku is fine, so I have no reason to worry anymore.”

“So, you guys are…”

Shouto can’t help but let a mischievous lopsided smile pull at his lips. His expression must be surprising enough for Inasa, because his eyes widens just a bit.
“That’s— You know, I kind of expected your family to have you engaged to some high-class girl, ready to get married off as soon as possible.” Inasa blurs, and then slaps a hand on his mouth. “Damn it— I always speak too much. Sorry.” He adds.

Shouto blinks. That seems— Uncharacteristic of Inasa and his loud, brash attitude.

That was, unless he was actually making a conscious effort to befriend Shouto— Which, examining his actions ever since they’ve first met for their extra course, is exactly what Inasa must be doing.

“Oh, he probably wishes he could do that.” Shouto scoffs, theatrically rolling his eyes. That wins him a small, surprised giggle-snort. “He can only keep wishing, since I long disavowed him. Too bad, so sad.” Shouto adds, deadpan.

The giggle-snort turns into a full fledged, but still just as surprised, laugh, as Inasa leans on himself a bit, holding his belly. Vaguely satisfied with himself, Shouto finishes putting on his suit, before turning fully toward Inasa.

“My turn, now.” He says, casually resting his thumbs inside his belt. “Why do you hate Endeavor?”

That immediately sobers Inasa up, that eyes him warily. “Is— Do you really want to know? Like, I don’t want to offend you—“

Shouto unhooks his thumbs from the belt, turning his hands palms up. “I mean, I literally just told you that I pretty much refuse to recognize that guy as my father.”

“…Fair enough.” Inasa replies, quietly, after a handful of silent seconds. “I really admired him when I was kid— I really believed he was an incredible hero, but one time, after I tried to speak to him— He acted like I was a bug in his way, and his eyes were so cold— I never seen such a look on a hero’s face. It was disappointing and— Scary.” Inasa’s voice lowered as he kept going, eyes subtly shifting away from Shouto’s. “Aren’t heroes supposed to bring hope and courage in the hearts of those around them? And yet, what I felt that day, meeting his eyes, was anything but.”

Shouto blinks, surprised— And yet not surprised at all. He had that look pointed at him for pretty much his entire life, after all.

*Imagine being his son.* Shouto kind of wants to bite back, sarcastic— But Inasa is actually making an effort to be nice after their squabble during the exam, and blurring that line would probably put the both of them ten steps back. So he just hums, non-committal, as Inasa turns his gaze back on him,
looking pensive.

“I was wrong about you.” He says, the words charged with far more than they let on. “I’m— I’m sorry. I was a total asshole. I let my own preconceptions twist my opinion of you. Maybe— Maybe I’ll have to re-examine my feelings about Endeavor, too.”

Shouto shrugs. “It’s all water under the bridge. No need to apologize.” He says, honest. “And… If you want to do that, that’s your prerogative. I’m not going to play devil’s advocate for Endeavor, but I’m not going to tell you what you should feel, either. Whatever you think of him is your own business.”

Inasa nods, his face strangely serious. “Thank you for answering my question.” He finally say, his voice a mix of honest relief and vague finality. Shouto give hims a short nod of his own, before flashing a small smile.

“I think we better go, now, before Gang Orca decides to launch us around some more.”

—

“Iida.”

“Yes?”

“I don’t want to be that person.” Yaoyorozu says, tone halfway between amusement and concern. “But I think this might’ve been a mistake.”

Tenya hides a snort behind a hand, as they hastily follow behind Tensei and Midoriya. Midoriya, that was perched on the back of Tensei’s electric wheelchair —irresponsible—, one arm stretched forward, hand in a fist, the other gently hooked around Tensei’s shoulders to help himself stay balanced. Midoriya, which eyes lit up at Tensei’s offer to ride with him, that exclaimed “Onward!” as Tensei laughed and sped up way more than he should. —so irresponsible—

Tensei wasn’t even supposed to come by— But some change of plans allowed him time off. And, as he said, what better way to spend said time, if not visiting your younger brother you haven’t seen in ages? The fact that he finally got to meet at least part of Tenya’s group of friends, Midoriya and Yaoyorozu, seemed a bonus, at first—
That was until Tensei and Midoriya seemed to immediately click, getting along like a house on fire. They’ve been two chatterboxes, earlier, as they sat in a coffee shop and enjoyed some sweets together, pretty much taking hold of the conversation as Tenya and Yaoyorozu observed, the both of them vaguely overwhelmed but also pleasantly surprised by seeing Midoriya being so expansive.

Midoriya hadn’t avoided them by any means, this past week… If only, he seemed to seamlessly click back into a familiar routine. But the way he hold himself, tense and guarded, and how often he would fall into silent spells that left him distracted and distant— Tenya was just happy to see him being a bit more relaxed, the lines of his shoulders less strained.

It was hard to scold him and Tensei, as they rolled down the sidewalk, laughing, at a speed that Tenya wasn’t sure wheelchairs could or should even get to.

Wouldn’t put it past Tensei, to mod his chair in order to go faster.

“You two slowpokes!” Tensei calls, peering for a split second behind him. “If you don’t hurry up we’re going to leave you in the dust!”

Tenya huffs, breaking to a jog to reach them once more, Yaoyorozu hurrying after him, a bit awkward in her skirt.

“It’s hard to believe he’s your brother—” She laughs, hair bobbing around her head in time with their pace. “You two couldn’t be more different!”

“Someone has to balance out Tensei’s excessive irresponsibility.” Tenya grumbles, adjusting his glasses, as they finally reach the two.

“See, told you he was shit-talking me.” Tensei replies, as if picking up from a discussion that was interrupted, and Midoriya snickers.

Tenya ignores him. “We are about to get into a more trafficked road, you two should stop!” He says, instead, unable to keep his hand still as he does a little air-chop. “You could get yourselves or someone else hurt!”
Midoriya groans, as Tensei let out a little chuckle. “You heard the boss, Midoriya.”

“Party-pooper.” Midoriya grumbles, but hops down the wheelchair once Tensei stops. Tenya knows Midoriya doesn’t really mean it, especially since he’s surely aware of the risks of what they were doing, so he doesn’t take it to heart.

They resume their walk toward the shopping district, Midoriya forgoing the cane that’s hanging on his belt, bouncing on his thigh with every step, in favor of keeping a hand on Tensei’s chair, as they continue chatting relentlessly, their topics shifting from the latest hero news to the advancement of support items, down to the history of hero’s families like Tenya and Tensei’s own. Their chat lowers in volume when they arrive in the place that initially sparked Tenya’s need to get outside of school grounds, that day, and quiets down completely once they approach the counter.

“Oh, hello!” The bubbly clerk behind it greets them with a smile. “Iida, right? Your order is ready, just a minute!” She adds, before disappearing in the back.

“...Where are we, anyway?” Midoriya asks, vaguely tilting his head sideway, moving away from Tensei’s wheelchair with a hand on the counter and stepping by Tenya’s side.

“Oh— I ordered new glasses.” Tenya replies, blinking. “My current model has the tendency of becoming loose, every now and then. As you can imagine, that doesn’t go well with training.” As he spoke he took off his glasses, blinking to adjust to his fuzzier vision without the lenses. Yaoyorozu plucks them out of his hands, placing them in front of her eyes, and squints. —Or, at least, Tenya thinks is what she did. Hard to say, when everything looked blurry.—

“Wow, Iida, these are stronger than I thought—” She considers, shaking her head minutely after lowering the lenses away. “Have you needed them for long?”

Tenya hums, affirmative, as Tensei adds with a little grin. “Always been like this— When he was a kid he constantly forgot to put them on and then smashed face first into things when he used his quirk.”

“Tensei—” Tenya tries to protest, embarrassed, as both Yaoyorozu and Midoriya laughs, and he instinctively tries to adjust glasses that currently weren’t perched on his nose. He tries to get them back, but before he could, Midoriya gently pulled them out of Yaoyorozu’s hand, after finding her wrist. He fumbles with them for a second with careful fingers, searching for the right side up as the three of them observe him curiously, and then he slides the glasses on his face.
They are too big for him, immediately sliding down the soft slope of the bridge of his round nose. He blinks, and then earnestly exclaims. “Gee, Iida, I can’t see anything.”

There’s a second of silence, before the three of them splutters and explode into a loud laugh. Tensei literally wheezing as he holds his stomach, head lolling on the backrest of his chair. Midoriya’s lips curl into a smile, clearly satisfied, and he slides the glasses off his face, offering them back on his palm. Gulping down another laugh, Tenya accepts them, putting them back on.

“Midoriya, you are a menace.” Tenya finally manages to comment, fond, watching as the little smile on Midoriya’s face turns into a full grin. The clerk walks out right in that moment, confusedly blinking at Yaoyorozu, that’s still hiding her face in her hands shook by little laughs, and Tensei, that’s currently drying out a tear from his eye, catching his breath.
The walk to the station, after they dropped Midoriya and Yaoyorozu back at UA along the way, is
quiet but relaxed. Tensei’s chair whirrs softly as they make their way down the street. He sighs deeply, once the station comes into view.

“I kind of don’t want to go home—“ He whines, letting his head drop on the backrest. “Today was fun. Made me miss my own days of school.”

“…I remember how impatient you were to get out of school and start on ‘some real work’. ” Tenya replies, tilting an eyebrow.

Tensei tuts. “You never know what you’ve lost until you lose it.” He replies, giving himself some kind of old-wise-man tone. “Cherish your school days, Tenya. Especially since you have such good friends. Kind of a shame I couldn’t meet Uraraka and Todoroki, too.”

“I’m—Glad, that you approve of them.” Tenya says, quietly. “They…”

They understand me like no one else did, before. He kind of wants to say, but it’s a bit embarrassing. It’s not that he didn’t have friends, back in middle school, but if he had to be honest with himself, those friendships rapidly fizzled over once the school year came to a close.

But his actual friends? These, he can see himself keeping for life.

Tensei hums, like he knows what he’s thinking, despite the fact he never finished his sentence. “Midoriya—He’s the one that first came to help you against Stain, isn’t he?”

A pang of shame squirms in Tenya’s stomach, at that. Even though Tensei forgave him for his brash acts, it still hurts. He forces himself to stifle it down, before speaking softly. “Yeah, he did.”

Suddenly, as they step up to the entrance of the station, Tensei turns on his chair, facing Tenya fully. It’s strange, having him looking up, when it’s always been the other way around.

“He’s a good one.” He says, dead serious. “You know I don’t say these things lightly, Tenya, but that boy? He’s going to get to places. You better hang on tight on this friendship, because you don’t meet people like him often.”
“…I agree.” Tenya replies, softly. “And I will.”

Tensei nods, and starts to maneuver himself to face the station once more— But he stops midway, side-eyeing Tenya.

“On another note…” He starts, a little grin opening on his face. “Is there anyone you like, in your class?”

Tenya blinks. “Well, of course, I like all of my friends and classmates—“

“I didn’t mean like that.” Tensei snickers, before doing a little eyebrow dance. “I mean romantically.”

Tenya splutters, arms flailing for a second. “That’s not— That’s inappropriate! I’m in UA to study and better myself, not—“

“Oh, Tenya, c’mon—“ Tensei interrupts him with a whine. “You need to relax! Enjoy your youth! There’s nothing inappropriate in that— You told me that Midoriya is with Todoroki, right? Do you consider their relationship inappropriate?”

Tenya frowns, taken aback. “Well… No. They are very happy together, there’s nothing wrong with that—“

“Then why would it be inappropriate for you to find a partner?” Tensei interrupts once more, shrugging.

Tenya huffs. Tensei has always been really good at dismantling him with a few, well placed words. “Fine, you make a point. In any case, I don’t feel any need to pursue a relationship, currently.”

“…We’ll see.” Tensei replies, an undefinable tone in his voice and a little grin on his lips. “I can take it from here, lil’ bro, you go back to school.”

And he’s off, before Tenya even had the time to mull over nor ask what he meant, with that. He watches the back of the chair disappear between the crowd, silent.
Shouto isn’t sure if he should smile fondly or worriedly, as Izuku almost vibrates excitedly by his side. He’s been overexcited the moment Shouto stepped through the dormitory’s entrance, pretty much launching himself on his chest, urging him to get changed into something more comfortable because they were going to the hospital now now now!

The car ride probably felt like forever to Izuku, as he shifted on his seat, and drummed his fingers against Shouto’s palm, and opened his mouth multiple times, probably wanting to ask if they were there yet, before shutting it like he thought back on his choice. He seemed to need quite a bit of restraint, to follow Aizawa-sensei at a normal pace up the stairs and down corridors, instead of running forward and taking the lead.

And here they were, waiting in front of a closed door, after Aizawa-sensei ordered them to stay so he could speak with Eri, first.

Shouto distractedly caresses Izuku’s back, as Izuku bounces nervously on the balls of his feet by his side. He couldn’t help but wonder— And feel a bit tense. It was clear that Eri meant a lot to Izuku—which wasn’t surprising—and it wasn’t hard to imagine that Izuku must mean a lot for her, as well. Apparently Izuku spoke to her of Shouto, and now Shouto couldn’t help but feel like he should be making a good impression, even though it was slightly ridiculous. She’s just a kid—

But nonetheless, Shouto hopes she will like him.

The door opens once more, Aizawa-sensei sliding out of it.

“Try to don’t overexcite her. She’s still recovering.” He says, quiet. “I’ll leave you some privacy, but I’ll be right out here. Shout, if you need anything.”

“Thanks, sensei.” Izuku manages to say despite his impatience. He grabs Shouto’s hand and drags him inside without hesitation, as soon as Aizawa-sensei steps away from the door.

Shouto blinks, when he finds himself meeting two ruby-red eyes, framed by a cascade of silver hair framing the soft features of the girl, a curious little horn poking just barely out of her forehead.

She looks tiny, sinking in the pillows and the hospital bed. Her expression lights up the moment her
eyes set on Izuku, clearly happy to see him, even if she doesn’t quite smile.

Izuku doesn’t let Shouto’s hand go until they are at the bedside, and then he carefully sits down on the edge of the mattress, a soft smile caressing his face as he offers his hand.

“Hi.” He says, gentle. “I told you I was going to visit, see?”

Eri hums, putting a careful hand in his, so much smaller than Izuku’s. “You did. I’m glad you are here.” She says, almost timid, before glancing at Shouto.

“This is Shouto.” Izuku says, as if answering an unasked question. “You remember who he is, right?”

Eri’s eyes turn much more interested, after that, as she looks at him up and down. Shouto could swear that her lips moved to form the word ‘boyfriend’.

“…Hello.” Shouto says, careful, daring to step a bit closer and putting a hand on Izuku’s shoulder. “It’s nice to finally meet you. Izuku has told me so much about you.”

Eri shifts a bit on her bed at that, jumping like she got caught doing something she wasn’t supposed to and tipping her face downward, clearly shy. She peers at him from behind the curtain of her long, silver hair.

“It’s… Nice to meet you, too.” She finally says, nervously playing with the cover of her bed with her free hand. “I— You—“ She frowns, as they both patiently wait for her to find the right words. “Deku told me that a boyfriend is someone special… Is— Deku special, for you? Do you really love him a lot?”

Shouto feels Izuku’s shoulder go a bit tense, under his palm. He squeezes gently, smiling to himself, as he answers, quiet and honest. “Yes, I do. I love him a lot.”

Eri’s eyes are boring into his, now, almost determined, all shyness forgotten. Long seconds of silence pass, before she gives a small, but decisive nod. “Ok. I’m glad.”
I guess I’m approved, then. Shouto thinks to himself, lightly amused, as he sits down on the edge of the mattress right behind Izuku, circling his waist with an arm as he leans forward into his personal space, to be able to meet Eri’s eyes over his shoulder. Izuku’s cheeks are of a suspicious shade of red, but he looks vaguely satisfied.

“Ok— You’ve met each other. Cool.” He murmurs to himself. “So, um— I think there’s another good reason for you two to meet and talk— If it’s ok, I mean— Well—” He adds, louder, but clearly indecisive.

Shouto blinks, surprised and curious, turning his face toward Izuku as he rests his chin on his shoulder. Eri seems curious, as well, tilting her head on a side vaguely.

“You don’t have to talk about it, if you don’t want—” Izuku continues into the silence, vaguely nervous. “But— I think the both of you have a lot in common—“

It takes Shouto a moment for the meaning of Izuku’s words to truly sink in. What happened to Eri— She was hurt and abused by the people that were supposed to take care of her. What she went through was arguably worse than what he had to endure, in Shouto’s opinion, but maybe he could understand her, even if just a tiny bit.

Eri looks perplexed, now, a small frown creating a crease between her eyebrows as she looks between Shouto and Izuku repeatedly.

“I see.” Shouto murmurs, giving a reassuring squeeze with the arm circling Izuku’s waist. “Izuku told us some of the things those men did to you— They hurt you, didn’t they?” He softly adds, locking gaze with the girl.

She squirms in her bed, forlorn. “…Yes.”

“They were supposed to take care of you, but they hurt you.” Shouto continues, tone soothing and matter-of-factly. “I got hurt like that, too.”

The look in her ruby eyes is heartbreaking— A mix of shock and vague hope, like she couldn’t quite believe that these kind of things might’ve happened to other people, too. Like she couldn’t believe someone could understand. “You… Did?”
Shouto nods. “When I was a kid, like you— I got hurt by someone I thought I could trust, many times.” He takes a deep breath, before continuing. “Those memories still burn, but— I’m lucky, because I have good people around me that are helping me. And— The fact that we both got hurt is not the only thing in common between us, is it?”

Izuku blinks, turning a vaguely confused frown on him, as Shouto adds. “We both got saved by Izuku.”

Izuku splutters, his blush deepening, but Eri makes a noise akin to wonder. Her eyes lit up possibly even more, at that. “Really?”

“Huh-huh.” Shouto confirms, a small smile pulling at his lips. “He’s pretty good at saving people, isn’t he?”

Her gaze looks exactly like the way it did when she first saw Izuku stepping into the room, but it was pointed at Shouto, now. It was almost as if she suddenly thought the world of him—

It made sense, if she thought the world of Izuku, but it was a bit unnerving, having that kind of look locked on him. After all, all Shouto did was just say some words, but Izuku— Izuku almost gave his life away, for her. Shouto didn’t think he was deserving of being looked at like that.

“And— And it’s better, now?” She asks, faintly. “Does it really get better?”

Forcing himself to ignore the sting of pain in his hearts at those words, Shouto takes a second to collect his own.

He could tell her of how much worse it got, before it became better— But Eri— She already long reached rock bottom, didn’t she?

“It does.” Shouto murmurs, holding her gaze. “And it’s not just Izuku— I have many friends that help me push away the pain. Not forget, but accept— And move on. There are many people that wish to help you do the same, out there. It will get much better, I promise.”

She sniffs, her eyes rapidly getting covered by a sheen of tears. But they never spill, as she shifts closer, nesting herself between them. With her free hand, seeing as the other one was still firmly in Izuku’s hold, she finds Shouto’s, small fingers slipping on his palm.
Shouto squeezes gently, flashing a little sad smile to her, as Izuku releases a soft, trembly sigh, and leans into the both of them, closing his eyes.
“Shouto… Sorry for sneaking this up on you without telling you first.” Izuku murmurs, indecisive. “I just sort of got the idea along the car ride and I didn’t want to risk saying anything with Aizawa-sensei right in front of us— Was— Was that ok?”

Shouto has been silent ever since Eri ended up dozing off in their embrace. The pose is a bit awkward, with half his back resting against Shouto’s chest and Eri holding on his arm, but Izuku can’t say he particularly minds. It’s nice, sharing this contact with two of his favorite people.

“I admit that it surprised me—“ Shouto replies after a handful of seconds, gentle. “But if it can help her, even just a tiny bit, I— I’ll be happy.”

Izuku releases a sigh he didn’t know he’d been holding. He smiles weakly, vaguely turned in Shouto’s direction. “Thank you. It means a lot.” He bites down on his lip. “…I really should’ve warned you sooner, though.”

He hears Shouto sigh, almost long suffering. “Izuku. It’s ok. I don’t mind.”

“But… I know you don’t want anyone to know—“

“Well, Eri is kind of a special case, isn’t she?” Shouto interrupts him, voice low. “I know how much she means to you, Izuku. I’m happy to help, if I can.”

Izuku’s heart beats painfully in his throat, as he forces himself to stifle the sense of guilt. Why does Shouto have to be like this? It’s as if there’s literally nothing Izuku could do that would ever make him mad in any way—

“Izuku.” The soft call snaps him out of his thoughts, that were already spiralling down. “I want to help. I really do— It’s— It’ll be the most useful thing I’ve ever done ever since I started school—“

Izuku frowns, at that. “You don’t need to be… Useful.” He replies, confused. “We are in school? That’s kind the whole point? We are here to learn, not—“

“Yeah, and while I’m learning—“ Shouto’s voice is full of sarcasm. “—I’ve failed an important exam and accomplished nothing. Meanwhile, you saved a mall full of people, and risked your life
successfully for three children, avoiding certain death for two of them, and a possible lifetime of torture for the other.”

“It’s not a competition—“ Izuku tries to protest, unable to even finish the sentence.

“It kind of is, thought, isn’t it?” Shouto replies, quiet. “That’s how the whole system plays it, at least.”

“Well, it’s not a competition for me.” Izuku says, flat. “I want to help people, not race madly for that spot on top of the charts. Is it not… The same, for you?”

The silence stretches, as Izuku breathes so softly, as if he doesn’t want to disturb it. When Shouto speaks again, his tone is simply indecipherable.

“I agree with the sentiment.” He says. “But… I’ve grown up elbows-deep in the hero system and—It’s hard, to shake that feeling off. The need to claim that spot with my own strength. At the end of the day, even if we’re all friends and enjoy each other’s company, everyone in our class is working toward that goal. You, most of all, should be familiar with that competitiveness. You’ve known Bakugou longer than any of us.”

Izuku works his lower lip, a small frown permanently painted on his features. “I know what you mean, I just don’t fully agree with that concept of hero. But— Everyone has their reasons, I guess, and at the end of the day it’s really not my job, to decide which reason is the right one. I just know that, for me, what is truly important is to help people.” A pause. “Shouto, if you’re glad that you can help Eri then I won’t object, but— Don’t think I consider you below me, or anything like that. You don’t have anything to prove, not to me, at least.”

“I know.” Shouto replies in a low murmurs. “But I can’t help how I feel, can I? I just wish I could be doing more. Sometimes, I feel like I can only watch your back as you run forward at full speed— Why are you making that face?”

Izuku had a vague idea of which face he could possibly be making, because hearing those words shook him down to his core, like he suddenly got hit by a thunder.

How many times has he thought those exact same words, before? So many he couldn’t possibly count them— So many times he stayed back there, and admired from afar all these people out of his reach, trying to imagine how it could possibly feel to walk by their side—
And Shouto felt like that? Toward him?

“I—” Izuku took a deep sigh, trying to calm his racing heart down. “Shouto I— That’s very flattering but— Are you listening to yourself? You’re the strongest in our class! You’re so smart and capable, there’s no doubt you’ll have a slew of offices begging you to join them, once we’ll graduate! You can’t possibly be running after anyone, if only, it’s us that are trying to desperately chase you down—“

“Are you—“ Shouto snapped, before sighing deeply. “You’re unreal—“

“Shouto—“

“No, listen.” Shouto interrupts, his voice charged. “I know you got this thing were you constantly put yourself down, and I know you’re working to try don’t do that anymore, but sometimes you let the leash go, so let me make this very clear. I personally consider you the absolute top our class has to offer, and I know I’m not the only one. And I’m not saying this because I’m your boyfriend, but because I truly, deeply admire you and what you do.”

Izuku feels the familiar sensation of a violent blush rising to his cheeks and ears, at that, gaping wordlessly. He finally manages to close his mouth, nervously gulping around a knot in his throat, face sliding away— But to his surprise, Shouto’s fingers close in a gentle hold on his chin, stopping him.

“I mean it.” He murmurs, and his voice is so close— “I really do.”

“I— I believe you.” Izuku replies, voice hitching in his throat. “It’s just— Strange. To have this kind of sentiment pointed at me.”

Shouto’s soft little laugh caresses his lips, as the tip of their noses brushes gently. “You’re silly.” He murmurs.

“No, you are—“ Izuku can’t help but smile back, tipping his head upward just barely. The brush of Shouto’s lips on his is faint, at first, until Shouto gently bites down, pulling just a bit. Izuku pushes down the little shiver he felt running up his spine, a small little groan crawling out of his throat.

There’s a moment of absolute silence and stillness, until Shouto goes right back on the attack,
coaxing Izuku’s mouth open with his. Another groan rose from deep inside his chest, muffled against Shouto’s mouth. He relaxes, letting himself just— *Not think*, letting himself get lost in the sensation, even if only for a second—

“…What are you doing?”

Their noses bumps painfully and they both jerk back, at that call from Eri’s small voice. Izuku stutters, embarrassed, as Shouto clears his throat discreetly.

“We were— um—“ Shouto starts, when it’s clear Izuku will not say anything. “—Kissing.”

“Oh!” Eri exclaims. “Boyfriends do that?”

“Huh, yeah. Sometimes.”

“And what else do boyfriends do?” She inquires, clearly curious.

“We… Hold hands?” Shouto replies, sounding almost questioning.

“We also hug!” Izuku intervenes, finally finding back his voice, blurting that out like he suddenly got the answer to a problem during class.

Eri hums, thoughtful. “I see. Being a boyfriend sounds nice.”

Izuku smiles, at that, petting her hair with his free hand as she adjusts her position against his arm. “It is.” He confirms with a little chuckle.

“Can I be your boyfriend, too?”

_This is an attempt on my life._ Izuku can’t help but think, while Shouto let out the most undignified splutter-laugh, clearly stifling it against his palm.
Toshinori takes a deep breath, standing in front of the door. He’s not quite sure he managed his disguise as well as he hoped, because not even three minutes in, as he waited at the reception downstairs, one of the young men behind the counter suddenly pointed his eyes at him— eyes that seemed to grow in size, as an absolutely flabbergasted look emerged on his face.

He could only hope the boy assumed he must’ve been mistaken, as a polite nurse guided him inside, because Toshinori definitely doesn’t want any rumor about this going around in any way, shape or form. That’d be a recipe for absolute disaster.

He finally finds in himself the strength to knock, after a long minute of hesitation. A soft voice gives him permission to enter, and he does so delicately, almost as if he’s scared of what he will find inside.

The room is not too big, but feels— homely. Definitely nothing like a hospital room. There’s a pink shirt draped on the back of the chair sitting by the little desk. On it, framed pictures, and Toshinori blinks at them, surprised to recognize a much younger, and yet unmistakable face in many of them. A stack of paper, that looks like envelopes, is sitting in a corner of the desk, along with a beautiful calligraphy set.

There are books sitting on the dresser, too, clearly worn out and well loved. Fresh flowers are on the nightstand, a point of color in the pearl white of the room. It’s a pleasant room, all in all—

But knowing what he now knows, Toshinori can’t help but pick up an underline sense of sadness in the air, like stale dust.

The woman sitting on the bed smiles at him, pleasantly, as he takes off his hat and shakes his jacket away, two grey eyes so similar to one Toshinori is well accustomed with crinkling at the corners. She moves a strand of snow white hair away from her eyes.

“Thank you for bothering to come all the way here.” Todoroki Rei says, her voice gentle and demure. “Please, have a seat.”

Chapter End Notes
TODO-MAMA IS HERE! *pops confetti* since I can’t keep her unnamed for the sake of my sanity, from now on her name will be Yuki.

Yes, it’s boring and predictable. There’s a character named Tetsutetsu Tetsutetsu in this goddamn manga, give me a break.

Edit: has destiny would have it, of course we got a canon todomama name like, a bit after I posted this chapter, go figure. I guess I’m changing the name to her canon name now lol

Another announcement: I got a discord server! It’s a small, very easy-going thing, and I’d like to keep it so, so I won’t just launch a permanent invitation link into the void. If you are interested in joining, feel free to contact me privately —and off anon, obvs— at my witscrib, or tumblr, or on twitter!
Then:

“Hello?”

“Am I speaking with Miss Todoroki?”

“...Yes.”

“My name is Toshinori Yagi. I’m calling you on behalf of UA—There was a little accident, yesterday, involving your son, Todoroki Shouto.”

“Wha—Is he ok?!”

“Please do not worry, he’s fine. He hit a sharp corner that opened a cut on his face and got a broken nose, but both wounds have been promptly taken care of with no lasting damage. Still, I would like to apologize for letting it happen. I’m truly sorry, both as a teacher of this school and as an individual. I take full responsibility for this accident.”

“...”

“Miss?”

“I—I know who you are, of course. I can hardly imagine this accident, however it may have happened, to be your fault.”

“I—“
“I have a request for you— Even if I know how selfish it is of me— I was wondering if you’d be willing to meet in person, and talk.”

“… I would be happy to do that, Miss.”

Now:

The box of sweets Toshinori brought with him remains untouched on the desk, as he and the petite woman sit in front of one another.

Todoroki Rei is small, frighteningly so. Even if they are both sitting, it’s not hard to imagine Toshinori would tower over her. She looks frail and delicate, but there’s something almost noble in the way she holds herself.

He has so many questions, it’s truly difficult to keep them at bay, but he keeps his mouth shut. This might be his one occasion to know more about young Todoroki’s past, to maybe find a way to truly help him. Immediately bombarding his mother with questions would hardly yield good results.

They regard each other in silence for long seconds. There’s something in Rei’s eyes that Toshinori cannot quite identify. And yet, so familiar— It takes him a moment to realize it’s because he’s found himself at the receiving end of that look multiple times, in the past. A look that always came from young Todoroki.

“I can tell there are things you wish to ask.” She finally breaks the silence, voice low. “And there are definitely things I wish to speak to you about. But first, if you’ll allow me, I have some questions I need to ask myself.”

Toshinori blinks. With the distinct impression his answers to said questions will be what will determine her trust in him, he nods. “Feel free to ask anything you wish.”

She answers with a nod of her own, her thin eyebrows knitting just slightly in the middle. “What do you think of Shouto?”
“He’s certainly a brilliant young man.” Toshinori replies, promptly and honest. “Hardworking, talented and smart. He’s very level-headed, especially for a boy his age. I only have positive things to say about him—“

“But you— Not as a teacher, but as a person— What do you think of him?”

Toshinori takes some seconds, at that. It almost feels like a trick question. But, lately, honesty has been serving him quite well, so he opts once more for that.

“I cannot help but worry.” He murmurs, crossing his fingers in his lap. “He seems to be very mature, and if there’s something I’ve learned in these years, doing the things I did— Is that maturity at that age often comes from a place of hardships. He seems to be very guarded around adults, and I’ve only recently been able to start building with him a bond that goes further than a teacher-student relationship. I have some suspicions about what could’ve possibly happened to him, but he firmly refuses to tell me more, even if he knows I just wish to help.”

“...I see.” She replies, carefully flat. “I take in you’ve already attempted to talk to him multiple times. If I can ask… what do you think happened?”

Toshinori’s heart skips a beat in his chest, at that. What is he supposed to answer? He simply doesn’t have enough information to know if he can really say those words in front of her—

Why does she clearly live full time in a hospital? Which kind of relationship does she have with young Todoroki and Endeavor? Toshinori is walking the finest possible line, here—

And yet, a gut wrenching memory nips at him at the back of his mind. Of the sobs wrecking the boy as he hold onto Toshinori desperately, his expression when he spoke of his own father—

No matter how difficult it was going to be. He simply couldn’t turn a blind eye to young Todoroki’s suffering.

He looks at her, serious, a deep frown emerging on his face.

“What I think happened— It’s a very serious accusation that I wouldn’t ever wish to make.” He replies, low. “But there are signs— And what I think, is that something between him and his father must’ve happened. Something serious enough to create a deep rift between them. I think you
understand why even only *implying* is extremely risky for me— And if there’s something, *anything at all*, that you can tell me to clarify—”

He doesn’t manage to finish the sentence. Rei’s eyes fill with tears, and she brings a hand up to her mouth, failing to stifle a sob.

“I’m sorry—” She manages to hiccup, tears streaming down her cheeks. “I’m sorry. For all these years I thought— I thought that I’d lost him. I c-couldn’t watch my own son grow up— I couldn’t be by his side when he needed me the most— I failed to protect him— I’ve hurt him with my own hands— Her voice broke so much Toshinori almost didn’t understand her. She folds on herself, shook by another loud sob. “*I couldn’t protect him*—”

Careful, Toshinori shifts, kneeling in front of her. The pain and grief on her face is heartbreaking, and he takes a deep, shuddering breath, putting gentle hands on her shoulders.

“I’m here, now.” He murmurs, a pale imitation of his booming catchphrase. “Let me help him— And *you*. Tell me what I need to know.”

And she does.

—

“My name is Kazuko Mori—“ The woman introduced herself. Her voice was soft and gentle, almost melodious. “It’s nice to meet you, Midoriya. I’ve heard quite a bit about you.”

Izuku offers his hand, letting her take the lead— She gives him a firm, short shake, before putting a very light, careful touch on his shoulder.

“If you could sit here— There, perfect.” She murmurs, guiding him down on a chair. “If I am to believe what I was told, you are already aware of what my profession is, and you are already informed about what we will do together.”

Izuku hums, crossing his fingers in his laps.
“Do you have any questions? Doubts you’d like to clear, before we start?”

“Not— Really?” He answers, tilting his head on a side. “I figured we’d just— Start.”

“Fair enough.” She replies with a smile. He hears the scrape of a chair being moved, before she speaks again. “I want to make something immediately clear— This road we are about to take together will not be short. But you are a smart young man, and I can see your willingness to tackle this issue, so I have no doubt that, given time and patience, you will be able to walk it. Now, why don’t you tell me a bit about yourself? I’d love to know you better.”

Izuku isn’t quite sure if she really wants to know him better, or if she’s required to know him better — But either way, it did not matter all that much. He will have to open up to this woman, in order to finally climb over this imaginary wall he feels in front of himself, no matter how much he wishes he won’t have to do that.

He just wants to get over these feelings plaguing him.

With a sigh, he shifts on the chair. “I’m not quite sure where to start, to be honest.” He admits, scratching the back of his head. She chuckles.

“Well, I can start instead, then.” She says, tone light, and Izuku blinks confusedly,

But she continues, relaxed, introducing herself once more, telling him little funny episodes of her life — Before he knows it, he’s much more relaxed on his seat, and speaking himself, after she slips in some questions.

“I— Oh!” Izuku finally exhales, eyes going a bit wide, before a small chuckle escapes his lips. “I see what you did there.” He adds with a smile.

There’s a smile in her voice, too, when she speaks. “Are you less tense, now?”

“I— Think so.” Izuku admits, grateful.

“Good. What we need to do— We are not going to dissect your mind, Midoriya, as I said: We are
going to walk this road together. We will need to build a relationship based on trust, ok?” She asks, gentle.

There’s something in her voice, almost like a maternal tone— It just puts him at ease.

He thinks he likes this woman.

Izuku nods, smiling, before taking a big breath and starting from the beginning.

—

There is something different, that day— Almost like something charged in the air, a spark in his mother’s eyes the moment Shouto steps in after softly knocking three times. But in a second it’s gone, and the usual soft, pleasant smile rises on her lips. A scene he’s very used to, at this point, as he greets her with a small nod, before fully stepping in and softly closing the door, taking place in front of her.

They chat of everything and nothing, as usual. He tells her of lessons and exercises, and she tells him of the last book she read. It’s light and almost mindless, it’s meant to be. A well-oiled process for the both of them, to ease them slowly in a place were they’ll both feel comfortable sharing far more important words with each other.

“You know…” She says, interrupting a small lull in the conversation. “I’ve been wondering— Your teacher called me about the accident in the dorms, but— I still don’t know the details.”

It takes Shouto a moment to realize exactly what she is talking about. He blinks, distractedly searching the scar above his right eye with his fingertips. She follows his movements with her eyes, almost subtly.

“Well, my… Friend, he— He was having a nightmare and without thinking I tried to wake him up.” Shouto replies, voice carefully flat. “He accidentally hit me and I ended up slashing my face open on furniture. It was just a accident, really not that big of a deal.”

He watches as his mother’s eyes lingers on the scar just a tiny bit, looking vaguely unconvinced. Shouto looks away, uncomfortable— It’s not like he doesn’t want to tell her what happened in a more detailed manner, but doing so would mean having to speak more about Izuku—
Then again, he’s been meaning to tell her about Izuku for a long while, now. Even having to say ‘friend’ felt like a lie in itself. It didn’t have to be— They still were friends, other than boyfriends, after all, but—

*I should just bite the bullet and say it.* Shouto thinks to himself, taking a deep breath. *I have no reason not to.*

“Mom—“ He starts, indecisive. Despite the fact he’s been able to finally call her that, the word still feels a bit strange on his tongue. He forces himself to ignore the uneasiness in his stomach, as he continues. “It’s— There’s something I want to tell you.”

She blinks, tilting her head vaguely on a side, as he gapes wordlessly for a handful of seconds. In front of his silence, she gently nudges him. “Yes?”

“I— I have a boyfriend.” Shouto finally manages to blurt out, the words coming a bit too fast in his haste to get them over the knot in his throat.

His mother blinks, a faint wave of surprise passing in her grey eyes for a moment, before a small smile pulls at her lips. “It’s Midoriya, isn’t it?”

Shouto closes his mouth and looks at her, eyes wide. That’s enough to make her laugh, actually make her laugh, as she puts thin fingers over her mouth. “Oh, dear, sorry, I didn’t mean to laugh at you— But your face—”

Just hearing her laugh it’s enough to placate the sense of anxiousness in his chest. “How did you know?” He asks, softly. “I haven’t even told Fuyumi, yet—“

She slides the hand away from her face, eyes shining with mirth. “Shouto, I don’t think you quite realize how much you talk about Midoriya.” She says, gentle. “And the light in your eyes, when you do so.”

Shouto blinks and coughs in his fist, feeling his cheeks burn vaguely. “I— I guess—“

“I’m very happy to know that your feelings are returned.” She continues, still smiling. “Unrequited
love is no fun. So, will I get to meet him at some point, then? I feel like I’ve known this boy for ages, and I don’t even know how he looks!"

Shouto smile is hidden behind his fist, as he replies. “I— I asked him if he’d like to visit, someday, and he said yes— So that’ll probably happen soon.” He finally takes his hand away from his face, to fish his phone out of his pocket. He’s incredibly grateful for Yaoyorozu’s help in transferring the files from his old, destroyed phone, to the new one. When they did so, he really realized how many precious pictures he didn’t want to lose there were. It didn’t take him much time at all—or any, really—to find a picture of Izuku to show her.

It’s a beautiful one— Then again, every picture with Izuku in it is beautiful, for him, but this one especially so— Izuku looks relaxed and happy, smiling at someone off camera, eyes crinkling a bit at the corners. The way the light hits him makes his freckles stand out, and his untameable curls look even greener than usual. His eyes are a pale aquamarine, the usual way they look when he’s keeping his quirk off, but they almost look gem-like in the golden light of the picture.

His mother accepts the phone and looks down at the screen. Ages seems to go by, as she silently observe, her eyes shining with something akin to fondness.

“He’s got beautiful eyes.” She murmurs, almost to herself.

Shouto could not agree more.

She looks at the picture just a tiny bit more, before giving the phone back with a smile and bright eyes.

“I’m really happy for you.” She comments, quietly crossing her hands in her lap. “I’ve been wondering for a while, about your feelings regarding Midoriya, but I— I wasn’t sure if it was my place to pry into them. Thank you for telling me.”

“It’s— No problem.” Shouto replies, vaguely stunted, as he pockets his phone. “I— Is— Is that ok, for you?”

“What?” She asks, perplexed.

“Me— Being with another boy.” Shouto murmurs, avoiding her eyes.
He jumps, when he feels gentle hands on his cheeks. The touch is almost careful, indecisive.

“I only want you to be happy.” She says, voice low and serious. “It’s all I want.”

He manages to drag his eyes back up, meeting her’s. There’s a quiet determination in the gray, a look he didn’t recall ever seeing on her, before. He slowly nods, and closes his own eyes, when she leans in to place a gentle kiss on his forehead.

—

He waits in front of the dormitory, a familiar feeling. Young Midoriya soon emerges from the usual road, cane in hand, and he carefully climbs the stairs as Toshinori rises back to his feet. The boy jumps, when he puts a light touch to his shoulder.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you—“ Toshinori rushes to say, internally slapping himself. “I should’ve said something. Sorry.”

Young Midoriya blinks and frowns, relaxing minutely. He turns to face him vaguely. “…Are you ok?”

Toshinori examines his pale eyes—He’s pretty sure the boy has his quirk off, especially since he caught him by surprise by being a thoughtless idiot—

“There’s something in your voice—“ The boy adds in front go his silence, vaguely gesturing with his free hand.

“I—“ Taking a deep breath, Toshinori massages his eyes. They still burn. “I have a couple of things I need to ask you. Privately.”

“O— k?” The boy replies, clearly perplexed and slightly worried. “We can go take a walk around the building.” He offers. Toshinori agrees with a little hum, and when the boy finds his elbows, hooking his fingers there, Toshinori releases a little grateful breath.
He’s not quite sure he’d be willing to have this talk while young Midoriya has his quirk turned on.

They walk in silence for a good couple of minutes, grass soft under their feet, and Toshinori had to take a series of deep breaths, trying to think how to approach this—

There simply isn’t a way to approach this with tact, isn’t it?

“I think—“ Toshinori starts, careful. “I’ve been putting together a puzzle for a while, now.”

“A… Puzzle?” The boy asks, tilting his head on a side.


There’s honest concern on the boy’s face, now. His fingers in Toshinori’s elbow tighten a bit, and Toshinori pats them briefly, before guiding the boy sideways, the both of them sitting down with their backs against the solid wall of the dormitory. Toshinori takes a look around, assuring himself no one is close, as young Midoriya folds his cane and rests it in his lap, before turning his face up to Toshinori, expectantly.

“…Did you know of young Todoroki’s family situation?” Toshinori finally whispers, frowning.

The change is obvious. The boy tenses, his shoulders squaring, a guarded expression rising to his face.

It’s all that Toshinori needs to see, to know.

“I was given a chance— And I decided to take it.” Toshinori continues, before the boy could ask anything. “I had suspicions, but nothing concrete— Until I met with Rei Todoroki. The picture she painted for me is… Concerning, to say the very least.” He takes a moment, a deep sigh. “You knew, didn’t you? It’d make sense— Why the both of you suddenly grew so close. He confided in you— And you decided to step in. Help him. Save him.”

Toshinori takes another deep, trembling breath, pushing his fingers against his eyes. They burn.
“All this time, and I had no idea—” He murmurs. “All this time— I could’ve done something. Anything— And he was alone, left to deal with that—” His voice breaks at the end, but he continues. “This is my fault, isn’t it? All these years I blew Enji’s rivalry off— I thought nothing of it. I thought he was just very ambitious— Hell, I was even happy, in a sense, because I thought that his desire to raise to the top would make him a better hero— Someone that would protect more people— And in the meantime, while I brushed all of it off, that poor boy was dealing with—”

A solid hand lands on Toshinori’s shoulder. He jumps minutely, taking the hand away from his face to meet young Midoriya’s eyes. Pale eyes, shining with a determination so deep you could get lost in it.

“No.” He says, firm. “None of that was your fault. What you did— You wanted to be a symbol, and you are. The responsibility of how other people reacts to that is not yours. It was his decision to let the frustration eat him from the inside. It was his decision to— To breed children like cattle, a-and raise Shouto like a weapon instead of a person—“ His voice trembles, but he continues. “It was his decision, and responsibility. His, not yours. I— I know Shouto didn’t want to tell you because he knew you’d blame yourself. Because you are a good person, and his father isn’t. So, please, if you— If you really want to help Shouto—” A single tear runs down his cheek, but he continues. “If you really want to help him, then throw the guilt away. He never wanted you to feel like this. Please.”

Toshinori stares, speechless, before he feels his lower lip tremble. He shifts forward, circles the boy with both arms and drags him in a tight hug, pushing his face against his shoulder. He’s a small, firm weight in his arms, and Toshinori lets himself go—

“All this time. His son—” He sobs, as young Midoriya gently put a hand on the back of his head, pet his hair. “His own damn son—“

“I know.” The boy murmurs, voice trembling. “I know.”

“Why didn’t you tell me…?” Toshinori can’t help but ask, feeling like his heart might break. He could’ve done something sooner, had he known—

“I didn’t want to break Shouto’s trust. It’s— He doesn’t want anyone to know. And I know that’s not a healthy way to deal with it, but—“ A sigh. “At least— He’s been taking small steps forward. I’ve been trying to be there for him, and I did not always succeed— But I’ve been trying.”

Toshinori gently shifts away, puts both hand on the boy’s cheeks. He looks as crushed as Toshinori
He’s been carrying this weight with young Todoroki all this time— Those scars on his hand— A symbol of how much he’s willing to sacrifice to help others.

Young Todoroki— The way he looked so much different at the end of the sport festival, how soft his expression seemed to be, if confused— How much more sense does that make, now.

With a trembly sigh, Toshinori circles the boy’s shoulders, hugging him tight once more.

“Thank you for saving him.” He murmurs against his hair, raw. “Thank you.”

Young Midoriya says nothing, as he reciprocates the hug. They stay like that, holding to one another, in silence, until the sun sets.

—

Shouto eyes the time on his phone, vaguely worried. He knew that Izuku had to speak with his therapist for the first time, today— But was it supposed to take so long?

Granted, it’s not like he knew much -or anything, really- about therapy, but—

Right on cue, the door opens. Shouto turns on the bed, putting his phone down, as Izuku goes through the familiar motion of propping his cane by the door, in the usual spot.

There’s a vague tenseness to his expression that immediately doesn’t sit well with Shouto— He knew that Izuku would have to tackle some unpleasant memories in order to really start healing from them, but that doesn’t mean he has to like it. He gets off the bed as Izuku unbuttons his shirt and neatly folds it, putting it on the dresser. Shouto puts a gentle hand on his shoulder, feeling the soft cloth of Izuku’s t-shirt under his fingertips.

“Hey.” He says, softly. “How did it go?”
Izuku blinks, his expression clearing over a bit. A small, little smile pulls at his lips.

“I think I’m off to a good start.” He replies. “You?”

“It was— Ok. Really good, actually.” Shouto replies, palm sliding down along Izuku’s arm. “I told her— About us.”

“Oh—“ Izuku exhales, fully turning to face him. “Was she— Ok with it?”

Shouto hums, smiling to himself. “She said she’d like to meet you.”

Izuku sniffs, taking a step closer. He gently rests his head under Shouto’s chin, leaning in against his chest, and Shouto gladly circles him in a hug, pushing his cheek against Izuku’s soft hair with a little satisfied sigh.

“That’s— Good. I’d love to meet her.” Izuku murmurs after a while, his breath caressing Shouto’s collarbone. “Did she say— Anything else?”

“I— Not really? She just said she’s happy for me—“ A little cough. “I mean, not that it didn’t feel good, to hear that, but— What she should’ve said?”

Izuku hums, before letting out a little. “Nothing. Just askin’.”

Shouto blinks, tipping his face down. Izuku is nervously playing with the hems of his shirt.

“—Is everything ok?” He asks, softly, watching Izuku’s fingers go still.

“Yeah.” He answers, flat. “Just— I’m a bit tired.”

Before Shouto has the time to say anything, Izuku takes a step back and puts both hands on his chest, gently pushing. Shouto let himself walk backward, confused, gently landing on the bed when the back of his knees hit the mattress. Much to his surprise, Izuku climbs on top of him, straddling his legs and resting both arms loosely on Shouto’s shoulders.
He blinks up at him, silent. Izuku’s hair has grown a bit, lately— The curls fall around his face longer than usual, creating soft little shadows on his skin. There’s an unreadable but soft expression on his face, and he gently slides his palm up along Shouto’s neck, on his cheek, finding his lips in a now familiar gesture— Shouto doesn’t move, just tips his head up a bit more, as Izuku leans in carefully and presses his soft lips against Shouto’s.

Shouto melts. A little hum escapes his throat as he closes his eyes, hands rising to sit on Izuku’s waist. He stays almost passive, letting Izuku take the lead, dutifully opening his mouth when Izuku pushes against him with a little more urgency. They kiss like that, slowly and calmly, until Shouto’s head feels light and he has to lean back, separating from Izuku’s lips with a soft wet sound, panting.

“What was that about…?” He can’t help but ask, vaguely amused, between a little pant and the other. Izuku shrug.

“I just wanted to do it.” He murmurs, before leaning in once more, landing a soft little kiss at the corner of Shouto’s mouth. He follows up with another, and another, slowly moving to Shouto’s left cheek, caressing his scar with soft, butterfly light kisses, before moving down and leave more firm ones on his jaw.

Shouto trembles, a little shiver running down his spine, and he tips his head up, exposing his neck with a little groan. He feels like Izuku’s lips are scorching hot on his skin, as they move down along his neck— When Izuku’s teeth graze him in a gentle little bite he can’t help but let out a moan, fingers tightening on Izuku’s waist.

They both go still. Izuku clears his throat, and he sounds a bit raw, when he speaks. “I— Sorry.” He murmurs, carefully moving away from Shouto’s neck.

“… ’S ok—“ Shouto forces himself to reply, even if his heart is beating in his throat and his eyes feel watery. “I— Didn’t mind.”

I kind of want you to do that again. It’s what he meant to say. Sadly, Izuku didn’t seem to pick up on his unexpressed thought, silently sitting on Shouto’s legs and carding his fingers through his hair without putting his lips anywhere near him, much to Shouto’s dismay. He seems distracted, as if far in thought, and with a little sigh Shouto let his wishes go and slides both hands up Izuku’s back, dragging him a bit closer. He’ll take what he can, and it’s not like he doesn’t appreciate the cuddling — But the world seemed hell bent in not letting him have what he wants, that evening, because there’s a soft knock and then Uraraka’s voice, muffled by the door.
“Dinner’s almost ready— You two in there?”

“Yeah, coming—“ Shouto replies with a little sigh. He pats Izuku’s shoulder and, silent, Izuku climbs back up on his feet, off of him, stepping back to give him space to do so as well. Shouto pushes a little kiss against his temple, before taking his hand and guide him out the room. Uraraka smiles at them when they open the door, and they silently walk downstairs to join the rest of the class.

—

“Aaah— I’m a bit jealous—“ Mina moans, melting on the table with both arms stretched above her head.

Ochako blinks, looking up from her homework. “Huh?”

“Those twoooo—“ She moans, making a vague gesture toward the couches. Ochako turns, noticing Midoriya and Todoroki cuddling as they both read, Midoriya nested between Todoroki’s legs. She blinks, perplexed.

“They— Constantly do that?” She asks, turning back to Mina as Momo by her side let out a little chuckle.

“Exactly!” Mina hisses, conspiratorial. “I mean, it’s cute and romantic and all that, but those two are setting the bar too high. I feel like everyone, now, is just too intimidated to make even a little step— We are teenagers, damnit! Where are all the timid confessions and longing looks?!”

Ochako huffs a laugh, surprised. “Why? Is there someone you like?”

“No! Well— Not for now—“ Mina sighs dramatically, putting a hand on her chest. “I’m anxiously awaiting for the day my heart will go ‘beep beep beep’—“

Ochako laughs again, holding her belly, as Momo shakes her head.

“You can’t force these sort of things—“ She says, in her ‘class vice-president’ tone. “You’ll have to
let them happen naturally. You can’t blame it on Todoroki and Midoriya if no one else seems interested in pursuing a romantic relationship, for now—“

“You say that just because you think they are cute.” Mina protests with a pout, making a bit of red rise to Momo’s cheek.

“That has nothing to do with it.” She replies, dignified.

“Ugh. So boring.” Mina moans, squishing her cheek on the table. “Who would’ve thought that sticking a bunch of teenagers living in single building would’ve turned out to be the least romantic thing ever.”

“It does feel like that, doesn’t it?” Tooru intervenes, the sleeves of her shirt moving as if she waving an arm. “It’s kind of hard to develop a crush on anyone when you first see them in the morning drooling like zombies and with their hair sticking all over the place.”

Mina releases a grumpy noise of agreement at that, not moving from her position. Ochako snickers, shaking her head at the silliness.

“Honestly, I agree with Momo. You have to let these things happen naturally.”

Mina turns a piercing gaze on her. Suddenly, Ochako feels like she’s a little mouse, being watched by a hungry cat.

“And you? Someone that you like?” She asks, her mouth curling in a little grin. Ochako huffs.

“No. And I think I’m good with that.” She replies, tapping her pen against her notebook, distracted.

“Mmmh— That’s a shame.” Mina hums, vague. “I think you and Iida would make for a good couple.”

The pen stops tapping. Ochako frowns, her mouth hanging slightly open. “What?”
“She’s not wrong—” Tooru intervenes, a wondering tone in her voice. “I think Iida likes you a bit.”

“Of course he does. We are friends.” Ochako protests, frowning. “Tell them, Momo— Momo?”

Much to her dismay, Momo looks pensive, a finger on her mouth.

“You know, they kinda have a point?” She says, frowning just a tiny bit. “It’s hard to say because Iida is— Well, Iida. But maybe he does have a crush on you—“

Ochako gapes, wordlessly, her cheeks pinking. “That’s not— You are just trying to embarrass me, now.”

Mina pipes up, finally sitting upright, bobbing her legs under the table. “Ah-ah! You blushed! Could it be that there’s more going on, here?”

“There’s nothing going on!” Ochako tries to protest, both hands on her cheeks. The girls laugh, and she glares at them. “Very funny. I’m going to go make a tea, please stop being silly while I do so—“ She adds in a mutter, getting up, followed by little snickers as she stalks to the kitchen.

And promptly bumps into Iida’s chest on the way there just as he walks in from behind a corner. She looks up, eyes wide, as Iida adjusted his glasses.

“Sorry!” He immediately apologizes, serious as always. “Are you hurt?”

Ochako ignores the obvious giggles behind her. “I’m fine!” She squeaks, suddenly blushing even harder. Was Iida always this tall? “Tea. I need to make tea. Yeah. Later!”

She zips past him, not daring to turn and see which kind of expression he might be wearing. She distractedly put up a kettle on the stove, still feeling her cheeks burn.

Oh. Oh no, this is bad. She thinks to herself, feeling like a door she hadn’t even realized was there, in front of her, was smashed open, showing her a whole new world of possibilities. I’m going to kill Mina!
She looks up, meeting eyes with Dabi. He looks just as bored and unimpressed as she feels. By her side, Twice is muttering something to himself, always the chatterbox.

“Do you think they are going to make us wait another hour?” She asks with a sigh, shifting her knife from hand to hand. “The boredom is killing me.”

Dabi rolls his eyes with a shrug. “Not much we can do ‘bout that—” He replies. “You know how bad that damn lizard is behind a wheel. They probably smashed the van against a pole, or something.” After a pause he adds, muttering. “Fucking Kurogiri had to go get his ass caught— I miss the teleportation.”

Himiko giggles, amused, putting her knife away and standing, stretching her arms with a little moan.

Right on cue, came a violent screeching noise of wheels and a white van appeared from behind the corner, violently stopping in front of them. Shigaraki jumps down the passenger side, scratching his neck.

“I swear to god, I’m going to learn how to drive myself—” He mutters, almost distracted, as Compress follows him from the backseats, wobbling a little on his feet.

“You’d disintegrate the steering wheel, boss!” Spinner replies from the driving side, amused. “Everyone’s here? Ready to go?”

“We’ve been ready for the past hour and a half, scale-y!” Dabi replies, leaning down to grab two of their bags and circling around the van to launch them in back.

“I told you to call me Spinner!” Spinner yells back, the banter familiar. Himiko shakes her head with a little eye roll, before bending on her knees by Twice’s side, poking his shoulder.

“Ride’s here, gotta go.” She calls with a sing-song tone. Twice jumps, looking up at her and blinking from behind his mask. -how he managed to get his mask to emote, she’s not quite sure yet-
“Right. Got it.” He says, standing and grabbing his bag. “Hey, bossman.”

“Shuddup. I’m not in the mood.” Shigaraki mutters back.

“When are you in the mood.” Twice murmurs under his breath, making Himiko giggle again as the both of them launch their bags into the back. They climb in the backseats, where Dabi already took place, crossing his arms on his chest. Shigaraki and Compress both get back on-board, and off they go.

Hopefully, not smashing into any pole.

“So, what’s the plan?” Dabi asks, tilting an eyebrow.

“Found a new base of operations.” Shigaraki replies, nervously bobbing a knee, legs crossed. “You guys are going to love it. Got some people in line that seems to be interested in joining—“

“New friends!” Himiko exclaims, enthusiastic, both arms stretched above her head as much as the space let her. “Are we gonna, like, do interviews?”

“I guess we are.” Shigaraki concedes with a sigh. “We need to be a bit more selective, at this point. We need some specialists, too— If we are lucky, there might be some ready and waiting as we speak.”

Spinner drums his fingers on the steering wheel, an impatient little huff escaping his— snout?

“Guess we’ll have to lie low a bit longer, ay?” He asks.

“Patience.” Shigaraki replies, flat. “It will serve us well. Our time is coming, do not doubt it.”

Himiko hums, happily, as Twice, by her right side, shrugs and Dabi, by her left, rolls his eyes without saying nothing.
The future was shaping to be *really* interesting!

Chapter End Notes

No art this chapter because NO TIME OTL

Also, an important announcement. I'm going to take a hiatus of about a month.

Do not panic, I will NOT leave this story incomplete. I am already working in planning out my own original storyline to diverge from canon and wrap things up, and I have all the intentions of seeing this fic to the very end, as it is dear to my heart.

But I've been writing this fic literally non-stop since the day I started it, on February 2, 2018. Every. Single. Day. And I need a pause, because the last few chapters have been a bit of a drag for me to write, and I don't want to work myself to the point I just lose any willingness to finish this fic.

Thank you for sticking with this story all this time, and I hope you will patiently wait for more OTL

And if you want to keep tabs on my and other works I may create during this little pause, you can always find me on witscrib, on tumblr, and on twitter!
Endeavor’s bad week

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The list of things that did not enrage Todoroki Enji had always been pretty short, but it was getting increasingly shorter as the weeks trickled by after what was going to go down in History as the Kamino-Ward incident.

Enji had been enraged to discover the truth about All Might. And then he was enraged by the fact he rose to the top—*the thing he’s always wanted*—not by merit, but because *goddamn* All Might turned out to be too weak to keep his place as the number one hero. He was enraged by how feeble Toshinori Yagi was, by the fact that Enji would never be able to claim that spot that he yearned for for his entire life with his own hands, now.

Enraged because of the *waste*—

All these years, all that work, to prepare Shouto—Only for All Might to become a not-obstacle, only for Shouto to fail his provisional license exam like an idiot—Only to see the boy rebel to him, stupidly stubborn, and then see him finally give in, accepting the power Enji had donated to him, only thanks to *that* boy.

Midoriya Izuku enraged him. Midoriya Izuku was strong, scarily so. Midoriya Izuku had a power that would surely come to easily rival All Might’s own, in due time.

Midoriya Izuku was the one that pushed Shouto to use his full potential and, by doing so, shackled him.

Enji wasn’t stupid. He knew what he saw in his son’s eyes. In the way he spoke about that boy to Fuyumi. How he said the word *friend* that night in Hosu—

Midoriya Izuku was surely going to be the next big obstacle in Shouto’s future, and yet the boy was blinded by his own feelings, letting himself fall meekly at Midoriya’s feet, adoringly looking up at him as if he’s someone to be grateful for, instead of the problem that Midoriya really *is*.

Midoriya Izuku with his pale, unseeing eyes that met Enji’s own with a fire that promised pain,
them. Midoriya Izuku who fought against Stain without hesitation, who somehow battled and won, alone, against Muscular— Midoriya Izuku, who hid a beast inside him, masked behind a smile that looked more like teeth bared threateningly. And no one but Enji seemed to have noticed that.

Someone dangerous. Someone that Shouto called *friend*.

Midoriya Izuku enraged him.

That’s why when the papers came back, that morning, Enji came *this close* to setting them on fire.

“Sir, we can’t refuse now— Everything has already been decided.” His assistant said, tiredly patient. “And *we need this.*”

What a goddamn tiresome situation. His Majesty All Might decided to step down the throne, leaving a kingdom in shambles behind him, and now Enji was forced to pick up the pieces.

And the people insisted from him that he should do so with a *smile*—

That wasn’t his style. He was a practical person, no time for bullshitting or dilly-dallying, he had his assistants to take care of PR, he wasn’t supposed to pay any mind to this kind of stuff.

“Our latest popularity poll shows we’ve lost even more points.” She continued in what she probably thought was a reasonable tone. “We have given our availability for this operation, we’ve chosen the candidate based on what will help us gain some trust into the public’s eyes, and we *need it.*”

Enji would need to set something on fire, at some point, but it clearly could not be the papers that were glaring back at him with as much force as Enji was using to glare at them.

Hissing a curse, he took his pen and signed the papers.

—

The look on Aizawa-sensei’s face was more than enough to let them all know what he thought of
this latest stunt, as he explained the situation to them.

“With the amount of accidents and villain attacks we’ve been having, the school has decided to institute a public relations week to try gain some trust back.” He explains, bored. “Everyone with a provisional license is asked to participate, although it is not an obligation. Technically speaking, this should not be a complete waste of time, as public relations are part of a hero’s job— But this is a complete waste of time.” A pause. “So, as your teacher, I order you all to make the best out of it, and learn as much as you can, are we clear?”

After the dutiful chorus of “Yes, sensei.” Aizawa-sensei continues. “I already have the list of the offices you’ve been assigned to.” He sighs, adding in a mutter. “Who thought of this—“

Shouto internally breathes a sigh of relief. It still sucks that he doesn’t have a provisional license, of course, but at least he won’t be forced to participate in this buffoonery.

—Also it’s a good thing Bakugou failed the exam as well. The words ‘Katsuki Bakugou’ and ‘public relations’ definitely did not go well together. —

He launches a little look at Izuku. He seems excited, of course, seeing how he’s sitting at the edge of his chair, back straight and head up, as if he’s scared he might miss his own assignment if he doesn’t listen intently. Izuku is always capable of making the best out of a situation, so he would be sure to spin gold even from something as silly as a public relations week.

Aizawa-sensei is reading the list, now, some of his classmates happy about the office they got assigned to, some of them not so much— But Shouto’s blood literally run cold in his veins when Aizawa-sensei reads the next name.

“Midoriya. Assigned to Endeavor’s office branch in Musutafu.”

Panic threatens to overcome Shouto as he looks back at Izuku with wide eyes. He sees the lines of Izuku’s shoulders tense a bit for a second, but then they relax, and—

Shouto cannot be sure, the position of his desk not allowing him to fully see the expression on Izuku’s face, but— Is he grinning?!
Izuku can tell that Shouto is nervous even without his quirk.

His arms are vaguely tense around him as they cuddle on the couch in their usual position, Izuku comfortably nested between Shouto’s legs, reading with his braille display. Shouto is not reading the school books as he usually does, clearly distracted, preferring to hug Izuku closer to his chest.

“Shouto.” Izuku says after a while, feeling him sigh yet again. “I’m going to be fine.”

Shouto doesn’t say anything for long seconds. “…I still worry.” He finally murmurs, voice low.

“I know you do. But I will be fine, I promise.”

“…Izuku.” He says after a bit, something charged in his tone. “Why were you grinning when Aizawa-sensei told you the office you were assigned to?”

“Oh, was I?” Izuku chuckles, a shit eating grin opening on his face. “I didn’t notice.”

“Izuku.”

Carefully putting his braille display down on the coffee table, Izuku turns. He curls up against Shouto, knees pressing on his belly a bit, hands going to sit on his chest. Shouto’s heart beats steadfast under his palm.

“Aizawa-sensei told us to make the best out of it, right?” He says, tilting his head on a side with a little smile as his left hand slowly rises up along Shouto’s chest. “And I will be doing exactly that.”

“Izuku.” Shouto says yet again, exasperated. But he trembles, just a bit, when Izuku’s fingers rises along his neck to go graze against his jaw, Izuku’s thumb gently sliding on Shouto’s soft lips. His usual, silent request for a kiss. “Don’t try to distract me with kisses, now—” Shouto adds against his fingertips, severe.

Izuku leans up a bit, sliding his thumb away as he carefully follows the soft sound of Shouto’s
breathing. He grazes his lips against Shouto’s after a couple of false starts, before gently nibbling at his lower lip.

Shouto let out a tiny groan, barely audible, his arms tightening around Izuku a bit.

“Shouto.” Izuku whispers, tongue darting out just for a second, poking at the point he’d been gently biting on.

“I hate you—“ Shouto grumbles, a little choked, before leaning down and catching Izuku’s lips in a possessive kiss.

Knowing he just won, Izuku cheerfully tilts his head, reciprocating with gusto.

“Ew, gross—“ Kacchan’s voice grumbles from the corridor leading to the elevator. “Can’t you two keep it somewhere more fucking private?”

Izuku stops the kiss with a wet noise, more noisy than he really needs to be. “This is cuddle hour, Kacchan. You know that.”

“You have a choice of not one, but two fucking bedrooms to be cuddling in, you shitty nerd. Why do you two always have to swap saliva on the goddamn couches?!”

“Bite me, Bakugou.” Shouto intervenes, breathless, before putting a hand behind Izuku’s head and dragging him forward, catching his lips once more.

Izuku laughs into the kiss, when Kacchan makes a desperate noise and grumbles all the way to the kitchen.
When Midoriya Izuku enters his office with a bright smile and holding his cane, Enji rolls his eyes.

His secretary, Sasaki, welcomes the brat cheerfully, guiding him through the office. She seems immediately smitten with him as he timidly asks her if she could guide him with her arm. He prefers not to use his cane in enclosed spaces, you see, he’s always scared he might knock something over with it—

She doesn’t aaaw, but it’s clear on her face she’s very damn close to do so. So here he is, this wolf in sheep’s wool, going around his office hanging from his secretary’s arm like a lost child as she takes her sweet time to make sure he’s well accustomed with the place.

“And of course, here’s the boss!” She says, cheerful, guiding Midoriya in front of him. Midoriya smiles a toothy smile that could light up a room.

—And Enji knows that is not a smile, it’s not, this brat is baring his canines like a little animal in disguise—

“It’s an honor to be working with you, sir.” He says with a little proper bow. “I hope to learn much from you!”

Sasaki pointedly looks at him, and Enji has to bite down a sigh.

“I hope you will have a good experience.” Enji says, monotone, like he’s reading from a script. “Welcome on board.”

Midoriya points his unseeing eyes at him, apparently excited and eager, but Enji sees it, that dark light pooling in the depths of the washed out green, and wonders how good of an actor this snot nosed brat really is, to be having everyone around him wrapped around his pinky with this little hopeful-blind-hero-act he’s got going.

—

Of course he knew why his PR team has chosen Midoriya, between all.
The boy had steadily gained popularity ever since the incident at the Kiyashi-ward mall, especially after the truth about his condition came out. *Midoriya Izuku, barely sixteen, saves hundreds of lives by risking his own!* *Midoriya Izuku, UA student, blind since the age of four, working hard for his dream of becoming a hero!*

And the public drank it all up. Who doesn’t like a underdog story? Poor young boy, so determined and brave, fighting for the future, despite his disability.

This kind of shit made people feel better about themselves. Gave them courage. If a blind boy could follow his dreams, why couldn’t they?

Yes, it was very obvious the reason as of why his PR team choose Midoriya, between all. The public’s approval of Endeavor’s office has been steadily plummeting ever since he rose to the number one spot. The people still wanted All Might, but they clearly couldn’t find him in Enji.

They needed a good stunt. Like showing how much they cared by taking little, blind Midoriya Izuku under their wing.

And the boy definitely confirmed how much of a good actor he was, as Enji watched him interact with his assistants. Everyone fell for him and his apparently adorable exterior, his hopeful energy, his quick mind. In a matter of a single day Midoriya had pretty much everyone in the office at his beck and call. And, Enji had to admit, that was vaguely admirable. To be able to spin people around that way, made them think they are acting on their own volition while you are actually pulling the strings from the backstage. Yes. *A good actor indeed.*

But Enji knew what was really hidden behind the facade. He had seen the kind of scorching hatred that could burn into those unseeing eyes. Enji had seen the signs on Stain, he had seen in which condition Muscular had been in after his encounter with Midoriya. He was perfectly aware of just what kind of cold brutality this boy was capable of.

For how much he hated this stupid publicity stunt, Enji could at least try to take advantage of the occasion and keep a close eye on the brat, assessing him. If he was lucky enough, maybe he’ll find something he could use to finally break this silly *friendship* Shouto seemed so hell bent in building with this boy.
Izuku knew he was in for a ride from the start.

Endeavor’s light constantly gave away an aura of suspicion and distrust toward him. Which wasn’t misplaced, per se, considering what Izuku was planning to do, but still. Izuku was fairly sure Endeavor had no idea about how his quirk worked or about the fact he was an empath, otherwise he would’ve probably tried to reign those feelings in a little bit.

—Or maybe he would just… Go right ahead and keep his feelings going full force toward Izuku, not giving the slightest fuck. Izuku wouldn’t put it past him.—

But Izuku wasn’t deterred. Not in the slightest. He had a plan and would stick by it, damnit.

The first point of his plan was simple: Get to know Endeavor’s assistants, gain their trust. That had been rather easy, as the workers surrounding Daddy Dearest were actually just normal, decent people. It was clear they had no idea what Endeavor did in the privacy of his own home, otherwise Izuku doubted they’d still be working for him. They were kind and accommodating and it didn’t take him much to gain their sympathy. Admittedly, Izuku felt a bit bad about dialing up to eleven the ‘pity-me’ factor, but he was a man on a mission, and a week goes by fast.

He would find a way to apologize, later.

His first day at Endeavor’s office went by without much to show for it, apparently, but Izuku was laying down the ground work for his plan, bidding his time.

Izuku would make sure that by the end of the week, Endeavor would regret every single, shitty thing he has ever done to Izuku’s boyfriend.

—

Something had been off all morning.

Enji could not explain what. Nothing noticeable had happened. They went for a round of patrolling that was more for the sake of the general public rather than real work, the brat faithfully following in his hero costume. Enji had been curious about the support gear he wore secured to his ears, but not curious enough to outright ask. Besides, he didn’t need to, as his youngest assistant, a bubbly young woman using the hero name Candle-light, asked for him.
“It’s to help me out with… You know.” Midoriya answered with a vague gesture to his pale eyes and a timid smile. Candle-light hummed in understanding, smiling at the boy.

“You look really cute with them, Deku!” She then said, whipping out her phone. “What do you think about a selfie? Twitter will love it!”

Midoriya grinned, with a happy little nod, letting Candle-light push her cheek against his as she took the picture, both of them flashing a victory sign. Enji managed to reign in the need to roll his eyes. They were doing this whole stunt for good PR, if Candle-light wanted to plaster her face with this boy all over the internet, so be it.

They just walked around, Enji trying not to mull over what a waste of time all of this was while there was real work he could take care of. Nothing really happened, just people gaping at them and sneaking pictures, the more courageous ones approaching for an autograph. More than a couple of people recognized Midoriya, too, who reacted with a facade of timidity, a blush spreading on his cheeks every time.

Literally nothing happened all morning, so why couldn’t Enji shake this ominous feeling off of himself?

They got back to the office for lunch, Candle-light and Midoriya happily chatting.

“So, how was your first patrol with us? Did you like it?” She asks the boy, that smiled brightly.

“Very interesting!” He chirps back. “Mr. Endeavor is very popular, so seeing him dealing directly with the public has been… Informative.”

There’s something in his tone of voice that Enji cannot quite pinpoint. An insincerity, a touch of sneer… And yet, neither his secretary nor Candle-light bat an eye, smiling at the brat like he’s the sweetest thing that has ever walked on planet earth.

“I imagine it mustn’t be easy, being so popular.” Midoriya continued, pensive. “Probably very stressful— Must make even one’s private life very difficult—“
The way he subtly stresses that last word zaps Enji like a thunderbolt, as the sense of dread in his stomach got worse. He carefully side-eyes the boy, that is doing exactly the same. —for how ludicrous that sounds, considering the brat is **blind**—

Then Midoriya smiles sweetly.

*Something is up with this kid.*

Then Midoriya smiles sweetly.

The day didn’t improve much as it went by. When they got their lunch delivered Enji had at least been looking forward to that, wanting to distract himself from all the bullshit surrounding him by eating his favorite meal—

But when he took the first bite, immediate disgust overcame him. He pales a bit, confused, forcing himself to gulp down the food—

He frowns down at the take-out box. He couldn’t see anything amiss, just looked like the usual order—

Perplexed, he tries again, and has the same exact reaction.

*Were his taste-buds drunk?!*

“Sir?” Candle-light asks, perplexed. “Is everything ok?”

Enji looks over at the brat. He’s blinking, confused, tilting his head on a side.

...*Don’t be ridiculous. What could he have possible done? You’re being paranoid—*

“It’s nothing.” He finally says, because Candle-light was worriedly looking at him with her bright orange eyes.
The day definitely did not improve from that.

Enji kept having these—*Moments*. He’d get hit by an idea, and get up to do so, only to forget what he wanted to do in the first place mid-way to whenever he wanted to go, leaving him dizzy and confused. He kept getting distracted during their usual afternoon training session, random thoughts and feelings flashing in his mind, breaking his focus.

It was as if his brain just didn’t want to obey him, that day. And it showed, all his assistants looking at him and exchanging confused glances.

The entire shit-show culminated during the evening, as they went out for another patrol. They met a group of teenagers, couldn’t be much older than Midoriya himself, that had excitedly approached them asking for an autograph— Enji sighs to himself, preparing for the usual round of loud fan-boying as he signs everything as fast as he can, and then—

“Wow, boss.” Candle-light whispers to him, eyes as big as plates, a small smile on her lips once whatever had possessed him, making him cheerfully asks the teens if they wanted some pictures too, finally let him go. “You’re really working hard for this PR week!”

Enji hides his burning cheeks behind his usual mask of fire, speechless. *What has gotten into him?*

Midoriya is smiling, too. “Mr. Endeavor is kind, too! How surprising.”

*What the fuck is up with this kid*?!
“Why don’t you ask your boyfriend?” Katsuki replies, tilting an eyebrow. “What, you two breaking up or something?”

Deku scoffs, as if he finds the idea that he and half-’n-half could possibly ever break up absolutely ludicrous. “Don’t be silly. I would’ve asked Shouto, if I could, but this favor needs you, specifically.”

Groaning, Katsuki turns, putting his pen down on the table more forcefully than really needed. “What do you want.”

“Do you still have that shirt that Aizawa-sensei banned you from wearing on campus?”

Katsuki frowns, perplexed. “Yes…?”

“Can I borrow it for a day?”

Katsuki blinks repeatedly, taken aback.

“Why would I—“

“Kacchan, this is a life-or-death situation. I need to mess with someone. You can respect, that, right?” Deku interrupts him, eager, a mischievous light in his pale eyes. “You can respect a man’s need to fuck someone up, right?”

That’s… new.

“I— guess.” Katsuki begrudgingly admits.

“Awesome. So? Can I borrow it?”

“ Fucking fine.” Katsuki grumbles, getting up to go to his room with Deku in tow. “You can keep it, anyway, it’s no fun if I can’t wear it on campus.”
Deku’s grin is almost face-breaking.

—

This brat is really asking for trouble.

“Do you think this is funny?” Enji hisses, and Midoriya flinches, confusion written all over his face.

“Sir?” He asks in a tiny voice.

“I don’t know what you think you are doing—“ Enji continues, fuming. “But I know you are doing something, somehow—“

His secretary chooses that exact moment to walk in, and noticing Midoriya —a little pale, curling into himself as if he’s scared— she immediately glares at Enji, like an angry mom.

“What’s going on?” She asks.

“Oh, Miss Sasaki—“ The boy stammers, nervously playing with his fingers. When he turns around, she jumps just a tiny bit in surprise.

The boy is wearing a black t-shirt with a giant hand giving the middle finger printed on it. Sasaki’s lips curls as if she’s trying not to laugh.

“I— I’m sorry, I must’ve done something— I—“ He continues, nervously. “I didn’t mean to— I’m really sorry—“

“Midoriya, it’s ok.” She says, gentle, and when she catches Enji’s angry-flabbergasted look at her, she makes a silent, jerky gesture with her hands, pointing at her own eyes, mouthing ‘Boss, he’s blind—’ “Tell me, is it possible that your clothing could’ve gotten mixed with someone else’s, on campus?”
Midoriya blinks, tilting his head on a side “I— I guess, yeah. Is something wrong with my clothes?”
He adds, confused—

“This is unacceptable—“ Enji snaps, enraged. There’s no way this kid didn’t know exactly what he was doing—

Midoriya flinches again, his pale eyes filling with tears, lower lip trembling. Sasaki’s glare strengthens tenfold as she makes an exasperated gesture, pointing at the boy, as if saying ‘Look, you made him cry, now! Good job!’

“I’m s-sorry—“ He sobs, again, trying to wipe away the tears with his wrist. Sasaki approaches him, putting a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“It’s ok, Midoriya, it’s not you fault. Let’s go get you changed, ok?” She says, gentle, and the boy nods with a little sad pout, letting himself get guided away.

And later that day Enji could only assume the story about what has happened must’ve gone around, because his entire office spent the rest of the day subtly glaring at him.
This week from hell seemed to trickle by at a snail-pace.

Midoriya was messing with him. Enji knew it, he knew it, but had no proof.

The boy’s act was squeaky clean. Not a single gesture betrayed his guilt. In the eyes of everyone he was just a nice, hard-working kid with a heart of gold.

But Enji knew.

There was no other explanation as to why all these strange things had started happening to him ever since the start of the week. Midoriya had to be responsible, somehow.

Things had gotten increasingly worse. On top of everything else, Enji kept finding himself victim of these sudden, weird moods that thrown him in for a loop. Enji had always had one mood. Cold, controlled anger. It’s what has always driven him forward, made him capable of keeping control over everything. What made him the number two —now number one— hero.

But these flashes of moodiness— They came in at the worst times, making him laugh at inopportune moments, making him feel dizzy and confused. And everyone had noticed, his assistants giving him a wide berth, eyeing him worriedly as if they were afraid he might lose his goddamn mind at any seconds.

And not only that. The brat would sometimes mutter little taunts that immediately flared Enji’s temper, and every single time that happened, someone had turned a corner, catching him in the act of scolding the boy, or glaring at him, making the person that caught them shake their head at Enji with
a little, judging frown.

_Every. Single. Time._

“Mmh, I wonder if Mr. Endeavor has any idea what it means to love someone…” The brat muttered after they’ve met a pretty eager fan that had declared her undying love for Enji just as they were getting back to the office, and right on cue Sasaki walked in on them in the hall after Midoriya said that, squinting at Enji menacingly.

Enji kept his mouth shut.

Going out for their “PR operation patrols” was becoming a nightmare. Enji kept unintentionally making a fool out of himself by acting completely out of character in short bursts, with this small, green little shit following him, the image of pure innocence as he trails after Enji with a smile.

Izuku Midoriya was messing with him big time, and Enji had no way of proving that, and it was driving him _insane._

—

Honestly it was as if destiny itself was working in Izuku’s favor.

The last evening patrol of the last PR week day came, and Izuku definitely felt relieved. He’d been straining his quirk quite a lot in order to push forward his ‘messing with Endeavor at every possible occasion’ plan, and it was starting to really wear him down. But he also felt a bit sad as, barring Endeavor, everyone else in the office had been really kind to him, and Izuku would surely miss them. Candle-light, especially, felt really bummed, her light giving away a gentle feel of sadness at the thought Izuku won’t be part of the team anymore after that last patrol.

She was such a nice girl. Izuku had been speaking with her quite a lot whenever Endeavor wasn’t around, subtly hinting she should probably find a better office to be employed in. She deserved to find someone that would really appreciate her hard work.

And his words seemed to have an effect, as in the past two day Candle-light had felt more and more doubtful around Endeavor. Honestly, making her question the man had only been a secondary effect of Izuku’s plan, but he was definitely glad for it.
Maybe, if he was lucky, Endeavor’s other assistants would follow her example and leave for something better than whatever Endeavor had to offer.

They walk in a park near the office, surrounded by people that excitedly point them out. It seems as if the patrol will be uneventful and mostly focus on making a good impression on the general public, as they did the whole week, and then—

Izuku flinches when a high pitched shriek fills the air, deafening all of them for a few instants. When the sound stops, Izuku’s ears are still ringing.

“—Stand back!” Endeavor says, commanding. “Make sure the civilians are secured, I’ll take care of this.”

And he was off, directed toward the two lights that were giving away waves of aggression. Izuku obeys, leaving him be, because for how funny it had been to fuck around with Endeavor’s mood all week, he’s not quite so petty as to put civilian lives in danger for the sake of keeping doing so. He and Candle-light get to work, efficient, making sure everyone is moved away from the site of the battle as Endeavor took care of the two villains.

“Do you recognize them?” Izuku asks with a loud voice over the chaos of the battle, once they are done, as he scans the surrounding to make sure no one is nearby anymore.

“One of them is a guy that calls himself Shock-wave!” Candle-light yells back. “Small time villain, mostly responsible for some robberies— That shriek we heard was him. The other, I never seen before—“ She makes a little choked sound, surprise spiking in her light. “He— Just disappeared!”

An invisibility quirk. Izuku thinks to himself. He can still feel the guy’s light just fine, of course. Endeavor is busy with Shock-wave, the high-pitched shrieks getting mixed in the rumble and cracking of Endeavor’s fire. He seems focused, apparently ignoring the other villain—

“Boss—“ Candle-light tries to yell, worried. And Izuku realizes he must’ve not noticed the invisible man that’s creeping right behind him—

Izuku’s feet move on their own, the energy of One For All sparking through his veins as he makes a dash for the villain. The kick connects with the villain’s face, the metal of Mei’s supports on his feet heavy as a sledge-hammer against the unfortunate soul, and Izuku hears the cracking of bones
breaking as the man makes a choked sound of pain, ungracefully flying back and away from Endeavor. His light shifts, suggesting the effect of his quirk had been interrupted, making him visible to working eyes again.

“Are you ok?” Izuku instinctively asks, and then feels the explosion of angry annoyance in Endeavor’s light.

_Yikes. That definitely feels familiar. Thank god Kacchan seems to be on the way of becoming someone that doesn't get that pissed off about people thinking he needs help anymore._

The mere idea Kacchan risked to become the kind of adult Endeavor is sends a shudder run down Izuku’s spine.

Irritated, Endeavor makes a quick work of Shock-wave, ending the battle for good. The invisible villain is lying down, unconscious, after taking a One For All powered kick to the face, and Endeavor seems to observe to him, calculating, before turning toward Izuku.

Izuku has already switched One For All off, but he feels Endeavor’s eyes bore into him like two burning coals.

“I did not tell you to intervene.” Endeavor snaps in a low voice.

“A simple _thank you_ would suffice.” Izuku answers back, unable to stop his mouth from doing so. He feels Endeavor’s rage hiss like an angry pot in his light, but he doesn’t have the time to say anything as Candle-light is approaching them.

“Deku, are you ok?” She asks, worried. “You scared me!”

“I’m fine, sorry— I couldn’t just stand there doing nothing, you know?”

“That was pretty cool, though!” She says, a smile in her voice. “Nice kick!”

Izuku grins, as Endeavor behind him tries to stifle his annoyance. Police officers arrived on the scene in the meantime, Endeavor leaving the villains to them as he turns around toward the park exit.
“Back to the office, you two.” He says, monotone. “We are done here.”

Izuku follows dutifully, but just as they get out the park gates they are stopped by a little group of curious and journalists.

“Endeavor! A minute, please—“

Izuku and Candle-light stand back as the man takes care of the press, curtly answering the questions, and then—

“Deku! How was it, working with the number one hero?”

Izuku blinks, surprised by the fact he’s being addressed directly when said number one hero is standing right there. Endeavor’s light gives out a quiet note of surprise, too, before being stifled by his usual rage.

Izuku plasters the most brilliant smile he has on his face, mentally praising the deities for giving him one more chance to annoy Mr. dad of the year. “It was great! Such an honor— I’ve learned much from Mr. Endeavor! I’m a little sad the week has already ended, but I’m sure I will have many more chances in the future to meet him—”

Izuku feels the sneer in Endeavor’s light as soon as the words are out of his mouth. It’s clear that he’s thinking ‘Yeah, right, this is not happening ever again’.

“Izuku feels the sneer in Endeavor’s light as soon as the words are out of his mouth. It’s clear that he’s thinking ‘Yeah, right, this is not happening ever again’.

“Oh, does this mean you are aiming to work in Endeavor’s office once you graduate?”

“Well, that’s not quite what I meant—“ Izuku shrugs, still smiling brilliantly. “But me and Shouto, Mr. Endeavor’s son, are really good friends. Very close. You could say we are best friends, actually, and Shouto has confided in me a lot— It’d only be natural for me to meet Mr. Endeavor again, in the future, thanks to that, would it not?”

The annoyance in Endeavor’s light only increases tenfold at that, mixed in with a quiet tenseness at Izuku’s implications regarding how much Shouto might’ve told him of the way Endeavor acted toward his own son— The journalists immediately start to try and fish for some juicy details about
the elusive private life Endeavor leads with his family, and Endeavor rushes to put a stop to that, firmly declaring that they had work to attend to and pushing both Izuku and Candle-light away from the crowd, falling into a stony, tense silence.

—

Enji is doing his damn best not to explode.

There was something in the boy’s voice as he declared this presumed closeness with Shouto—

How much does he really know? What could’ve Shouto told him? It wasn’t like him to be so open with strangers— But this boy— He clearly was no stranger to Shouto.

“It’s so nice that you two are friends!” Candle-light comments, cheerful, gently bumping into the boy. “Whenever I’ve happened to meet Todoroki he always seemed very— Private. I’m glad to know he has a friend as nice as you. He’s very lucky.”

Midoriya’s face seems to change, as they enter the office. A small, gentle smile pulls at his lips, the light in his eyes softening. “I’m the lucky one, having him by my side.” He says, voice low and full of affection.

Enji steps away, frowning, as the two linger by the entrance.

…Just how deep their relationship is? School hasn’t started so long ago—

Candle-light blinks, tilting her head on a side. A small, mischievous grin opens on her lips. “Dekuuuuu—“

“What?” Midoriya replies, shaking his head as if he suddenly woke up from a dream.

“Is there more to your friendship with him?” She asks, still grinning, gently elbowing him. “Have you got a crush? You can tell me—“ She adds, conspiratorial.
Enji was just about to exit the room, when he notices the boy blush violently out the corner of his eye. He stops by the door, turning around minutely.

“…I was kind of joking.” Candle-light comments, clearly surprised and apologetic. “I didn’t mean to tease you— I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s— Ok.” Midoriya replies, stilted. “Um—“

Candle-light’s bright orange eyes seems almost piercing, as she stares at the boy. “I have the distinct feeling there’s more to this than you are letting on.” She says, pensive. “Well— None of my business, I guess, is it?” She adds, shaking her head.

“You are not wrong, though.” Midoriya replies, and then slaps his hand against his mouth, as if he accidentally let those words out.

Candle-light is smiling, now, a fond light in her eyes. “Are you two together? That’s adorable—“ She says, a hand on her chest, before Midoriya glances in Enji’s direction, and she goes still.

Time seems to freeze. Both Midoriya and Candle-light turn toward Enji, expressions suggesting they pretty much forgot he was there—

Well, that explains what the fuck went wrong with Shouto— Failing the provisional exam— He was probably too distracted thinking about his shiny new little boyfriend to focus on what was really important—

No. No, Midoriya must be lying— There’s no way Shouto really could be—

“Midoriya. My office. Now.” Enji snaps, because if he has to think for even a single instant about how adorable the idea of Shouto getting involved with this little animal is supposed to be, he might just puke.

Candle-light hesitates, putting a hand on the brat’s shoulder. But he turns to her with a little determined frown, and nods once. She carefully takes her hand away, watching them as they silently make their way to Enji’s office.
“What the *fuck* was that about.” Enji hisses as soon as the door is closed, quiet rage seeping through his voice.

Midoriya stays silent for long seconds, a frown setting on his features and a dark light pooling in his eyes.

“I’m not quite sure what you are referring to—“ He replies, flat.

“Don’t play dumb, now, what you’ve implied out there was more than enough. Am I supposed to *really* believe that you’ve gotten involved with my son?” He presses, furious. “Do you think lying about that just to get to me is funny?”

The dark light pooled Midoriya unseeing eyes seems to get even deeper, now, his voice lowering. “I wasn’t lying about what I feel—” He says, barely controlled. “I love Shouto.”

Enji growls, but Midoriya continues before he can say anything else. “I love him. That’s all that there’s to it. You are free to believe I’m lying, if it brings you comfort, but that won’t change the truth.”

“I want you out of my office.“ Enji snaps, flames coming out of his tight fist against his will. “Right now, and I don’t want to see your face ever again, you ungrateful, rude, little—“

“I don’t want to ever see you again, either.” Midoriya growls back, before letting out a mirthless chuckle. “Lucky me that I can’t *actually* see your ugly mug. But let me make something clear, *Endeavor*—“

He takes a step forward. This child that’s just barely over half Enji’s height, squaring up to him, his pale eyes brightening as sparks of green lighting runs all along his body, a suffocating pressure immediately filling the air around them—

“If you dare turn a single hair on Shouto’s head again, I *will* come for you, and it won’t be pretty.” Midoriya slowly says, baring his teeth. “If you dare utter a single word to him that isn’t the sentence ‘I’m sorry for what I’ve done to you’, what you’ve been through this week would be a walk in the park compared with what I will do to you. And do not deceive yourself in thinking you might get away with abusing him ever again, because I *will* know. Are we *clear*?”
“Get the fuck out.” Enji hisses, the words coming out a little choked.

Midoriya stares angrily up at him for long seconds, the pressure he’s exerting increasing tenfold, as if he’s making a point, before slowly releasing it, like he’s powering down on his own, perfectly controlled volition. “With pleasure.” He says in a low growl, turning on his heels, walking out of Enji’s office with an angry stride.

Enji falls on his chair, finally able to breathe again, beads of cold sweat collecting on his forehead.

—

Shouto looks down at his ringing phone, indecisive.

Izuku had been… Busy. With what, he would not tell. He would usually get back to the dormitories pretty late, tired, and Shouto didn’t had it in him to drill him for answers. Not when he could cuddle and kiss him, instead, for what little time they had before going to bed— Not when he could work out the little tense knots in Izuku’s back with careful, gentle massages. —Shouto would never forgive himself if he hurt Izuku by accidentally working his abused, scarred back too strongly.—

The PR week was to end today. Finally. Not that the week ending meant much for the amount of time he’ll be able to spend with Izuku seeing as they both still had to frequent their extra classes, but at least Shouto would be able to get rid of that constant sting of worry that had taken permanent place in his heart, knowing that Izuku was working with his father. Then the call came in.

And Shouto cannot deny that he is a little worried. Izuku had clearly been up to something Shouto was not quite sure he wanted to know about. The fact he was calling him when he was to be back to the dormitories in less than half a hour was… Concerning.

Taking a deep breath, Shouto picks up the call. “Izuku?”

His heart falls to his feet and his head feels light with worry and anger, when he hears Izuku try -and fail- to stifle a sob.

“Hey—“ He hiccups, sniffing. “Shouto. I m-messed up—“
Shouto is going to kill his fucking father.

“What did he do.” He hisses angrily, not quite a question. *He will strangle him, he will. He made Izuku cry, this is unacceptable—*

“No, I— I messed up.” Izuku replies, voice low. “I said something I shouldn’t have said without your permission. I’m sorry.”

And Shouto, that is far too familiar with the feeling of losing control over his mouth whenever his father is involved, slowly sighs.

“Izuku, it’s ok. He’s good at fishing words out of people, I’m sure he must’ve been insufferable—“

“It’s… Not quite that.” Izuku whispers. “I— Kind of went way over my head and, um— I’d rather talk to you about this in person, but I still wanted to give you a heads up in case you hear something strange—“

“Something… Strange.” Shouto repeats back, carefully. Just what the hell happened?

“I’ll be there soon, just… I’ll be there soon. Love you, bye.” And he closes the call.

Shouto looks down at the phone in his hand with wide eyes, gaping.

*Did Izuku just say love you —*

“Don’t—” He murmurs to himself, pinching the bridge of his nose. “It probably just slipped out. It means nothing. Just don’t.”

With a sigh he pockets the phone, walking downstairs to go wait in the communal area.
Izuku’s heart is beating in his throat as he hesitates in front of the dorm doors. He’s so tired, and rattled, and so many conflicting emotions are storming inside him.

And, most of all, he’s terrified of having let Shouto down.

He had all the intentions to subtly drop the bomb on Endeavor at the end of the week, letting him know that Shouto was not to be touched ever again. It was part of his plan from the very beginning.

Code word being subtly.

What Izuku had done had been about as subtle as taking a sledge-hammer to a glass shop.

He was terrified at the idea Endeavor might retaliate through Shouto— Thankfully Shouto was safe and sound at the dormitories, and he would come stay with him and mom, at the next break. —and all the breaks that were to come, if Izuku could help it— And while Izuku’s initial intention hadn’t exactly been to outright threaten the number one hero, what he said to him had been one hundred percent true.

If Endeavor tried do anything to Shouto ever again, Izuku would go for him, no questions asked.

Still, Izuku shouldn’t have let himself lose his temper— but he did, enraged by Endeavor’s sneer at the idea that Izuku could possibly care for his son. The man was a fool, an absolute buffoon, and had absolutely no idea of what was going on in Shouto’s life.

That’s not how a parent should act.

Angry tears rose back to his eyes, traitorous. He was so mad, and there was this sting of pain in his chest at the mere thought of what kind of hell Shouto had been forced to grow in, just because he was unlucky enough to have a father like that.

A man that did not deserve to be called father.

Izuku took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down. Shouto was probably going to worry himself sick, if he entered already crying.
He slowly cracked the door open, propping his cane against the wall as he took his shoes off. He didn’t hear any sound at all, his classmates probably already all either in bed or having to come back from their own last day of PR week—

“Izuku.”

He jumps, tense, and then hears the muffled sound of steps, Shouto’s gentle hand finding his.

“Hey.” Izuku forces himself to say with a strained, lopsided smile. Shouto doesn’t reply, interlacing their fingers and gently walking him toward the couches, guiding him to sit down. Then he pushes something warm in his hands, and Izuku smells the familiar aroma of his favorite tea.

Tears sting in his eyes again. Shouto is always so nice and thoughtful, and the way Izuku payed him back, today, has been by threatening his shithead of a father that was surely going to find a way to pettily get back to Izuku, probably through Shouto himself.

Good job, dumbass.

“So, want to tell me what happened?” Shouto asks, his voice low and kind. Izuku gulps around a knot in his throat, forcing himself to take a sip of tea. Then sigh deeply.

“Shouto, I’m sorry, I made a mess—“

“Izuku.” Shouto stops him, cold fingers on his arm. “Just tell me what happened, ok?”

Pursing his lips, Izuku takes a moment to think, before explaining what he’s been up to the entire week in a low voice. Shouto listens in silent patience, never moving his hand away from Izuku’s arm, even when Izuku shamefully admitted of having completely lost his cool—

“I just… I don’t know, I was so angry I snapped.” Izuku murmurs once he’s done relaying the entire experience, nervously rolling his now empty cup of tea between his hands. “I shouldn’t have been so blunt with him, I just— I don’t know, I wanted to make things clear, but—“
Shouto sighs, gently caressing Izuku’s arm. “I understand.” He murmurs. “I know— I know how it is, with him. He’s just naturally good at pushing people’s buttons. I know how it feels, losing control over your own mouth—“

“I’m really sorry.” Izuku murmured, unable to stop the tears rolling down his cheeks. “I made a total mess. I—I should’ve kept my mouth shut, I shouldn’t have lost it like that— It’s a delicate situation, and I just waltzed in with absolutely no tact— I’m sorry, Shouto.” A sniff, as he angrily wiped the tears away with the back of his hand. “I really am. I don’t know how I can possibly remedy to this —“

“I’m not— Going to say everything is ok.” Shouto replies, slowly. “You shouldn’t have said those things, but— I honestly don’t care.”

Izuku blinks, surprised. “…You don’t?”

“I don’t.” Shouto continues, firm. “I’ve said far worse things to him, multiple times— And what can he do? I’m here, and he’s out there— He has no power over me anymore, Izuku— He will never take me out of UA because he actually wants me to become a hero, and now I have you, and all our friends— I have Yagi and Aizawa-sensei— I have my mother back.” He adds, voice lowering. “I’m not alone, and I’m not defenseless. I’m not scared of him.”

“Oh—” Izuku exhales, shoulders relaxing. He hadn’t realized how tense he was. “I—I’m glad to hear that. I—I’ll do everything I can, to keep you safe—“

“I know you will.” Shouto murmurs, affectionate, fingers squeezing Izuku’s forearm. “It’s ok, Izuku. You told my shithed of a father to stop being a shithed— It was about time someone told him that.” He adds, with a little chuckle.

“I still shouldn’t have, not without speaking with you first.” Izuku grumbles, frowning. “I’m sorry.”

“I know you are. You are forgiven, if that’s what you want to hear.”

“Ugh.” Izuku replies, frown deepening. “You are far too quick to forgive me things, Shouto— You’ve got to get mad at me, every now and then.”

“I don’t want to get mad at you.” Shouto says, perplexed. “Why would I?”
“Because I need to learn my lessons!” Izuku replies, incredulous. “If you constantly give me a pass for every stupid bullshit I do I’m just going to get used to it—“

Shouto interrupts him with a short, amused laugh. “Don’t be silly. It’s clear that you are learning your lessons plenty.” He adds, his voice coming closer. He leans in, hands rising along Izuku’s shoulders as Izuku rests both palms on his chest. He takes Izuku’s face in both his hands and tilts it up a bit—

“Ugh, no, don’t kiss me now, I’m all snotty and gross—“ Izuku tries to protest, squeezing his eyes shut and turning his face away, making Shouto laugh again.

“I am a bit, too, so we can share a snotty kiss?” He says, laughing once more at Izuku’s Eeeew— “It’s really not that bad, Izuku.”

“Alright, geez, knock yourself out—“ Izuku mutters, his hands sliding down from Shouto’s chest and going to rest on his knees as Shouto tilts his head and presses his lips against Izuku’s in a gentle, slow kiss.

Izuku smiles into it. This week kind of sucked —no matter how fun his petty revenge against Endeavor had been— and he was definitely stressed out after having strained his quirk so much, and this last evening was an absolute disaster— But this?

This makes it all worth it.

“I can’t believe you’ve been messing with my father the whole week and didn’t tell me—“ Shouto mutters against his lips, catching his breath. “I could’ve given you pointers.”

Izuku let out an ungraceful laugh through his nose. “Let me be the petty one of this couple. No reason for you to also go down this rabbit hole.”

“…May I remind you that you are talking with the person that refused to use half of their quirk out of sheer pettiness? I’m afraid I’ve been down this rabbit hole for longer than you, Izuku.”

Izuku snorts again, feeling Shouto’s smile against his own lips.
His Sunday night was plagued by doubts.
He walked around distractedly, not paying as much attention as he usually did during his patrolling.

He felt as if the world was shifting under his feet before he could even realize. Everything suddenly changed so fast—

The last time he spoke with Shouto, he seemed— Different. There was still that resentment in his eyes that Enji was used to, but there was also something more— Something different. A calmness he’d never shown, before, and his words…

“I’ve been saved by a hero.”

He wondered a lot, about those words. The meaning behind them that Enji could not quite grasp.

He wondered about a lot of things. About what All Might said to him when he played interference. About his own position as the current number one hero, that only seemed to be doing harm rather than good—

And now, he wondered about Midoriya, too.

Enji’s night went by, perturbed by many thoughts, and when he arrives back in his office, on Monday morning, he’s surprised to find on his desk a resignation letter by Candle-light. He’s looking at it, confused. —Why would she leave so suddenly? And to think she seemed so eager to work with him, when she got hired—when there’s a knock on the door.

Another rather new hire pokes his head inside, looks at the letter in his hand, and hisses “Damnit, she beat me to it—“

That’s pretty much how the rest of Enji’s day goes.

Chapter End Notes

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT! : D I will be at Japan Expo 2018 (Paris), tabling in the amateur area with friends! If you will visit the con, here’s a post with some info
about my position at the con! Or if you can't open tumblr for any reason, a couple of links to the mapping! Come say hi! : D

I guess I just wanted to give you guys a little snack with this silly chapter, lol. Updating schedule will be a bit hectic from here on because convention and other irl obligations I have to juggle, but I will keep working at abidt with a renewed passion! See you with a new chapter hopefully soon!
Rei bites down on her lip, suffocating the small gasp of surprise she felt rising up her throat.

She had been waiting impatiently, knowing Shouto was going to visit with his boyfriend in tow—He told her enough about Midoriya that she knew the boy she was about to meet played the biggest part in changing Shouto’s life for the better, making him happy—She was so grateful, and she wished to make a good impression. Despite the fact this room was all she could show, she made sure to tidy it up, asked the nurses for some fresh flowers to bring some colors into the otherwise anonymous paleness of the place, put on her best outfit—

But now, as the two boys enter after knocking, she truly realizes how very little she knows of her son’s life.

Izuku Midoriya looks exactly like the picture Shouto showed her some weeks earlier, if only with vaguely longer hair.

Izuku Midoriya is also clutching a white and red striped cane in one hand, his other hooked into Shouto’s elbow, and his pale eyes, the same eyes she saw shining like gems in that picture, are unmoving, not reacting to anything.

He’s blind—She thinks to herself, mercifully stifling the surprise inside her chest—Has Shouto ever mentioned it? I can’t recall—Would I have known that, if I tried to make more of an effort to look into Shouto’s life? What kind of mother am I—

She forces herself to snap out of the dark thoughts gnawing at the back of her mind, the two boys now expectantly waiting by the door. She rises on her feet with a small smile, nodding at Shouto who appears to be indecisive, his hand resting on Midoriya’s fingers in the crook of his elbow.

“Mom—This is Izuku.” He finally says, taking a couple of steps forward, Midoriya following his lead. Midoriya smiles, gently sliding his fingers off Shouto’s elbow to fold his cane and offer a hand. There’s a vague tenseness in his gestures, and Rei cannot help but find herself losing her own anxious feelings, noticing that Midoriya is actually wearing a nice grey suit.
She isn’t the only one that wanted to make a good impression, she guesses.

“It’s so nice to meet you.” She says, honest and gentle, taking the boy’s hand in a soft hold.

“I’m glad to meet you, too!” The boy replies with a little tense smile, and once they let go he nervously fidget with his cane with both hands.

“Please, have a seat, you two.” She adds, gesturing vaguely toward the two chairs she kept ready for them, silently observing as Shouto gently guides his boyfriend down to sit in a way that suggest he’s long got used to doing that. “I’m sure we are all a bit tense, but there’s no need to be—” She continues once the two boys are seated in front of her, resting her hands in her lap. “Thank you so much for finding the time to visit— Shouto told me you are all working very hard for the upcoming Cultural Festival, I imagine finding the time to come here mustn’t have been easy.”

Midoriya visibly relaxes at her words, his shoulders drooping just a tiny bit, and his smile gets bigger. “It’s actually a good excuse to escape Ashido’s hell course in dancing—” He laughs. “I mean, she’s a great teacher and I’m learning a lot of things I will probably be able to apply in my own training, but there’s only so many times I can go to sleep feeling like my feet are about to catch on fire before I go insane.”

Rei chuckles, pointedly not staring as Shouto casually slides his palm on Midoriya’s thigh, to go grab his hand.

“I got lucky, I guess.” He comments, amused. “Although being in the staging team has it’s drawbacks— I constantly have to talk down Kirishima, Sero and Aoyama’s increasingly crazier plans. Good thing I got Koda on my side, at the very least.”

“What are you guys going to do, anyway?” Rei inquires, curious. “With how busy you’ve been, Shouto couldn’t exactly explain in great details…”

“A live concert!” Midoriya pipes up, clearly excited. “It was actually Shouto’s idea, I’ve been told—”

Shouto blushes slightly. “It wasn’t— Ashido said that getting everyone to dance would be fun, and I agreed. But it was a group idea.”
The smile on Rei’s lips gets wider at that. It was nice, to know her son was relaxed enough around his classmates to suggest something like a live concert—

It was just nice to know he now lived in a place where Rei knew he would be safe and happy, not having to walk on eggshells anymore.

“I’m sure you boys will do great.” She comments, honest. “Maybe— I can come see you, if you want me to?”

Shouto perks up, eyes shining the way they did when he was but a small boy, playing heroes and villains with her. “You would?”

“Of course.” She reassures, feeling guilt and affection battle inside her chest. “I would love to. I’m sure the doctor will have no trouble clearing me up for a day out.”

The smile on Shouto’s face, at that, could light up a room. Rei promises herself she will move hell on earth to make sure to get cleared for a day out, even if it was the last thing she did.

“Oh, man— I can feel the pressure—“ Midoriya suddenly snaps her out of her thoughts, fanning himself with a hand. Shouto laughs, elbowing him softly.

“You are going to do fine, Izuku.” He says, rolling his eyes affectionately.

“Ah—!” Rei pipes up in the short, relaxed silence that followed. “I actually asked to get some sweets delivered— Shouto, can you please go downstairs and see if they’ve arrived?”

Shouto blinks, at that, looking between her and Midoriya a couple of times, indecisively biting on his lower lip. Rei manages to catch it, the way Midoriya minutely squeezes Shouto’s hand, before Shouto releases a tiny sigh and leans in to place a small kiss on Midoriya’s temple.

“I’ll be right back.” He murmurs, letting the boy’s hand go as he stands. He nods to Rei, something charged in his eyes, before padding outside and closing the door with a soft click.

She stays silent for a second, observing the boy sitting in front of her properly. She only now notices
the small scar under his right eye, and how the constellation of freckles on his cheeks actually extends on the bridge of his nose, so pale they are almost invisible. How his right fingers look vaguely misshapen, more scars appearing on them, and on the back of his right hand.

She’s almost overwhelmed by the need to ask so many things, to know more about this boy that clearly means the world to Shouto— But she doesn’t want to scare him away. And in a sense— Maybe she still has to properly earn the right to ask more, to put her nose into Shouto’s business.

“I guess that was a very transparent way to get a minute just the two of us—“ She finally starts, careful. “I just— Wanted to thank you personally for everything you’ve done for Shouto, even if I know but a small part of that.”

Midoriya blinks, pale eyes pointed at her widening vaguely in surprise.

“Ah—“ He gasps, surprised. “It’s not— I’ve not— I haven’t done much, really.” He finally says, nervously picking at the seam of his suit. “If only— I probably just caused him more trouble than any good thing I could’ve possibly done for him.”

*Based on what Shouto told me of Midoriya this is not surprising at all.* Rei comments to herself, a lopsided smile pulling at her lips.

“I’m sure you’re downplaying your own actions greatly—“ She replies, shaking her head. “Regardless, I still wish to thank you. Shouto is so much happier, and the fact we’ve been able to reconnect— It’s only thanks to you. I owe you a great debt.”

The boy shifts on his seat, nervously rubbing his neck. “I— There’s no need— You really don’t owe me anything.” He says. “Shouto has done so much for me, too— It’s not like I was the only one— I really don’t need anything, just to know that he’s happy.”

Rei hums, crossing her fingers as she observes him. She’s so lucky— Who knows if her and Shouto would have ever been able to see each other, hadn’t it been for Midoriya—

She’s so lucky, to have such a nice, caring boy having crossed paths with her son. To have him return Shouto’s affection, support him in his lowest moments…

“Miss— Huh—“ Midoriya hesitates, frowning just a tiny bit. His pale eyes set on her in a way that
makes her almost feel like he’s staring, for how impossible that is. “I don’t know if— If you want me to call you ‘Todoroki’, or—“

She goes still, surprised. Shouto told her he opened up to Midoriya, but never quite elaborated on that—

The way Midoriya just said that sentence— Definitely makes her feel like Shouto must’ve opened to him quite a bit. More than he has ever done with anyone else in his life.

“…I think you can just call me Rei.” She finally says, careful. “I won’t be offended.”

Midoriya gives her a sharp nod, the little twist between his eyebrows smoothing over. “I guess I just… I just want to reassure you that Shouto is being taken care of.” He continues, voice low. “Not just by me… All our friends care deeply for him and will always be there for him— And our teachers, too— So, I think— I think you shouldn’t worry too much for Shouto and focus on your own healing, s-so one day you’ll be able to welcome him back home— Your own home.” He pauses for a moment, biting down on his lips. “He never said it, but— I think Shouto wishes nothing more than to be able to one day be able to say ‘I’m home, mom.’ without having to worry about anything else.”

Rei cannot help but let out a small, sharp gasp. Tears sting in her eyes, and as Midoriya’s eyebrows twist in worry and he opens his mouth again, Rei murmurs. “I— I hope I will be able to do that, one day.” She reassures him, her voice only trembling at the start. “I will try my best.”

The boy shifts on his seat again, giving her a softer nod, a small, contrite expression on his face. Rei takes a deep breath, recomposing herself, before asking a lighter tone.

“Why don’t you tell me a bit about yourself? Even if Shouto has told me much already— I would like to know you a bit better.”

“Oh, huh—“ Midoriya blinks, stumbling on his tongue. He clears his throat, before continuing. “I don’t know— There’s really not much to say that you probably don’t know already— I’m sixteen, my birthday is on July 15th— I’m in U.A. because I want to become a hero, of course— My favorite food is katsudon and, huh— I’m blind?”

Rei splutters a small laugh, surprised by his bluntness. “You’d be surprised— I didn’t know at least three of the things you said.” She says, amused.
Midoriya smiles, looking accomplished. “I guess Shouto didn’t tell you that I’m blind— You sounded surprised, when we entered.”

“I don’t remember him ever mentioning it.” Rei admits softly. “If I can ask— Is it partial, or…?”

“Total blindness.” The boy shrugs. “I have no light perception at all— It’s actually probably due to my quirk. I’ve been like this since I was four.”

“Really—“ Rei murmurs, her fingers raising to her lips. “That’s— Surprising. I’ve never heard of such a drastic quirk effect, before.”

Midoriya shrugs again. “I guess I drew the short straw in the evolutionary pool, but it could’ve been worse.” He comments, almost sardonic. “I’m used to it, so it’s really not that big of a deal.”

“I understand— Thank you for telling me.” Rei replies, keeping at bay her curiosity. “I know this isn’t really any of my business. But— What about your family? Siblings?”

“I’m an only son. It was just me and my mom.” His voice turns affectionate. “I never really suffered for it, she’s the best.”

Rei tilts her head on a side, not sure she has any right to ask, but before she can say anything, Midoriya continues. “My biological father, he— He left to work abroad when I was so little I basically don’t remember him. We don’t have much of a relationship— Or a relationship at all, really.”

She hums her understanding, distractedly tapping a finger on her chin. “I hope you have a better one with your step-father, then.”

Midoriya blinks, eyes going wide. “What?”

Rei blinks back, confused by that reaction. “… I’m— Sorry? Did I say something wrong?”
“I— Uhm. Don’t have a step-father.” Midoriya replies, clearly puzzled.

“Oh—” Rei exhales faintly. “I’m sorry, I guess there was something in the way you worded your sentences that made me think you had one— Sorry for assuming.” She apologizes, embarrassed by the blunder. But Midoriya snaps his mouth close, sudden understanding flashing in his eyes.

“…It’s ok.” He finally says, softly, after a couple of seconds of silence. “I guess— There’s someone that’s… Kinda like a father, for me. So you were not entirely wrong.” He paused a moment, looking strangely melancholic. “I never really thought of it that way, before.”

She stays silent, feeling like she just stepped in what is uncharted territory for the both of them. Thankfully, Shouto’s timing seems to be on point, because he steps back into the room with a tray of baked goods just in time to break the embarrassed silence that fell on the both of them.

“…Is something wrong?” He immediately asks, glancing between the both of them.

“Everything’s alright.” Midoriya replies with a small smile. “What have you got, there? Smells real nice.”

“You’re such a hound—“ Shouto replies with a little eyeroll and a smile, depositing the tray on the desk carefully. Rei rises on her feet, approaching the small electric kettle in order to prepare some tea.

The rest of the afternoon goes by far more relaxed, the three of them sharing the sweets sitting around her small desk, as Shouto and Midoriya both entertain her with funny stories from their school days, making her laugh almost to the point of tears.

—

“Oh, so many visitors, today—“ The young woman behind the desk says, clearly happy. “I’m sure Miss Todoroki must be thrilled.” She continues filling in a form, missing the confused look Fuyumi and Natsuo shared. “Here—“ She finally looks up, giving them a small card. “You know the way.”

“Thank you.” Fuyumi replies, her tone almost shifting into a question. Still, they silently walk down a familiar corridor and then climb in the elevator, exchanging another look once the door slides close mutedly.
“I guess Shouto’s here.” Natsuo finally says, tone a bit flat. Fuyumi gives him a small pat, knowing very well how tense his younger brother is about the idea of meeting Shouto so suddenly— He probably hadn’t seen him at least since a good month before high school even started.

“He’s been visiting pretty consistently, but I didn’t know he was going to come today.” She says with a small shrug. “He told me he’s been so busy, lately, with his extra lessons and the festival approaching that I didn’t think he’d find the time.”

Natsuo doesn’t reply immediately, staring up at the shifting numbers on the display. “Do you think it’s— Going to be fine? Will he be mad at me?”

Fuyumi frowns. “Why would he be mad at you?”

Natsuo gapes silently, making a vague gesture with both hands before deflating with a sigh. Fuyumi pats him again.

“It’s going to be fine.” She says, gentle. “You told me you wanted to try build a better relationship with him, right?”

“Yeah, but not so suddenly!” Natsuo immediately pipes up, almost pouting. A gesture she’s very familiar with, meant to hide how tense he truly was. “I wanted to ready myself, first—“

It takes everything Fuyumi has, not to roll her eyes at him. “It’ll be fine, Natsu. C’mon. I’m sure mom will be happy to have all of us there.”

Giving in with a sigh, Natsuo follows her as soon as the door slides open. But the both of them freeze in surprise, when they turn a corner and notice Shouto down the corridor, in front of their mother’s room—

He’s not alone. There’s a boy with him, someone that they both knew indirectly. The mop of messy green hair it’s unmistakable—

Izuku Midoriya is smiling gently, nodding at Shouto after he said something they couldn’t hear. Shouto smiles back in a way they hadn’t seen him smile since pretty much forever, offering his arm,
and Midoriya hooks his fingers in the crook of Shouto’s elbow, clutching a cane with his other hand. They turn, walking in the other direction toward the exit elevator, clearly not having noticed Fuyumi and Natsuo. They step in, and the both of them have just a split second before the doors slide close to notice Midoriya put his head against Shouto’s shoulder, and Shouto leaning in to rest his cheek on Midoriya’s curly hair.

They stand there a couple of seconds, completely silent, before exchanging yet another look and then making their way for the door. When they open it, their mother is standing by the desk, putting away empty cups and a tray full of crumbs with a small smile.

She turns, blinking.

“Oh— Fuyumi, Natsu!” Her smile widens. “What a surprise! You guys just missed Shouto for barely a minute—“

“We didn’t miss him!” Natsuo exclaims, widening his arms. “We just saw him going away with his classmate!”

Rei blinks again, clearly puzzled by Natsuo’s tone. Fuyumi intervenes, tone softer.

“They seemed to act very— Close.” She says, tilting both eyebrows. Much to their surprise, Rei chuckles

“He did told me that— Well—“ She says, putting down the empty cups that she piled in a small tower. “I don’t know if I should say—“

“Mom.”

She chuckles again, clearly amused. “That boy he was with— Is his boyfriend. He brought him here so he could introduce him to me.” She finally says, her voice suggesting she’s very likely thinking ‘Isn’t that adorable?!’.

“Say whaaaaat?!” Natsuo exclaims, his arms going even wider. Fuyumi hums, a finger on her lips.
“I was wondering about that… There was definitely something in the way he spoke of Midoriya—“
She turns toward Natsuo, frowning. “What’s with that face? Don’t tell me you’ve got a problem with
that—“

“Oh, please, who do you think I am?” Natsuo replies with a scoff. “I’m just salty Shouto’s got a
significant other before me. Unfair.”

Both Fuyumi and Rei laugh, at that, and Natsuo theatrically let himself fall on the bed, an arm over
his forehead.

“Yeah, be that way, laugh about it—“ He moans, melodramatic.

Rei shakes her head. “There are a couple of pastries left in the mini-fridge, if you guys want them.”
She says, amused.

“And you get pastries, too, when Shouto is visiting!” Natsuo exclaims, clearly fake-offended. “I call
favouritism!”

It’s a testament of how much better their mother has gotten since her and Shouto reconnected, the
fact that she grabs a pillow and throws it in Natsuo’s face, making him laugh.

As Fuyumi bends down to take the pastries out the mini-fridge, smiling to herself, she start to think of
the best way to scold Shouto for not telling her about his boyfriend— That is, after she’s made sure
that their younger brother knows that they are happy for him, and they will always love and support
him, no matter what.
Izuku: “Hey. I know you are busy, but do you think you can come to the hospital you’re taking your class in, next Saturday morning?”
Miki blinks down at her phone, surprised, her elbows resting on the counter as she thumbs in a response.

“Yeah, sure. If I can ask, why? Is everything ok?”

Izuku: “Nothing to worry about… I think? My therapist gave me some exams she wants me to do, I don’t really know much- But I thought it could be an occasion to see each other, even if the circumstances are what they are.”

“You have a point, better than nothing I guess. Give me a time and I’ll be there. How are preparations for the festival going?”

Izuku: “Ashido is still trying to kill me, lol. But she said I’m getting better, so I guess the training it’s paying off.”

“Oh, Miki, hi!” The voice surprises her, making her look up from the screen. The familiar face of Miss Shimizu welcomes her. “I wasn’t expecting you, today. Did I mix days…?”

“No, no, there’s no class today.” Miki replies with a smile. “I was just passing by and I thought I’d bring some snacks for the kids.” She adds, raising an arm to show the plastic bag hanging from her elbow.

“Oh, thank you so much!” Miss Shimizu exhales, surprised. “You’re always so thoughtful, dear.”

Embarrassed, Miki shrug, before sliding the bag off her arm to give over the counter. The woman accepts it gladly, before her expression turns pensive, and she sighs.

“…Is something wrong?” Miki asks softly after a pause, distractedly shifting the phone in her hands.

“It’s nothing— I was just thinking about a patient we had some time ago.” Miss Shimizu replies, her tone subdued. “She was about your age— Suffered a terrible incident, poor girl. I’m just sad she left before you started taking classes, I’m sure you would’ve got along pretty well. She surely needed a nice friend like you.” Before Miki could say anything, Miss Shimizu shakes her head. “Well, no point thinking about the ‘what ifs’. Sorry for unloading this on you—“
“It’s ok.” Miki says, voice low. “I think it’s nice of you that, even after working here so many years, you still care so much about the patients.”

Miss Shimizu smiles at that, eyes crinkling behind her glasses. “A blessing and a curse.” She comments, amused. “I’m sure you understand what I mean very well.”

Miki can’t help it, and looks down at the phone in her hands. Izuku just sent her a lopsided selfie, just the top of his head visible in frame, behind him some of his classmates in gym clothes frozen in weird poses, with Ashido Mina throwing her arms up in the air. A small smile pulls at her lips, but still she can’t help but worry.

She loves Izuku so much, but she really wish she could just slap him on the head, sometimes. The guy is damn trouble magnet, and the things he’s not telling her are piling up, she can hear it in his voice whenever they have five minutes to speak on the phone.

She knows she can’t do much. It was inevitable that, with the start of high-school, they would grow a bit apart, and she’s grateful for the fact that they are both making efforts to stay in contact, despite how busy they are. But she still wishes Izuku would confide in her like he used to—

*He’s got his U.A. friends, now, and his boyfriend, too. She thinks, a bit sad. Just accept it and move on. Hopefully once you’ll both be out of school it’d be easier to spend some time together.*

At least mom and Miss Midoriya are still as close-knit as ever. That was better than nothing.

“Yeah, I think I get it.” She finally replies with a lopsided smile, pocketing the phone. She should just give up to the fact she will always worry for Izuku, no matter what. “Does it ever get easier?”

“Not really.” Miss Shimizu says with an apologetic smile. “You’ve still got time to change your mind about your future career and not launch yourself in this madness, you know?”

“Nah. I think I’m set, at this point.” Miki shrugs. “I’m in way too deep.”
Her steps echoes as she follows the empty alley, heart lodged in her throat.

*You still can turn around.* A tiny, traitorous voice whispers from the back of her head. *You don’t*
have to do this.

But I do. She replies, a scowl emerging on her face. What is else is left, at this point?

The voice quiets as she finally arrives at the red door described in the message she got. She knocks once, pauses, and then knocks three more times in rapid succession. The door opens with a painful creak of metal turning, opening onto complete darkness.

She steps forward, adjusting her grip on the strap of her backpack, and the door closes behind her with a clang. It takes her a few seconds of squinting, before her eyes adjust to the lack of light.

“Didn’t know this was supposed to be a kindergarten.” A male voice sneers from a corner, and she turns, setting her eyes on a short, humanoid figure with insect-like features she cannot properly make out, in the dark.

“Give it a break, Ro’.” A woman replies, sounding tired.

She only answers with a dignified sniff, ignoring the insect-like guy. There are other people in the room, their features just barely visible in the black. A pair of bright, pupil-less white eye shines bright from a corner, making her feel like she’s being stared at.

She doesn’t speak, even if the question is just right on the tip of her tongue. Thankfully, another door soon opens, a blade of yellow light cutting in and make her flinch slightly.

“You are all here for the same reason.” The man that opened the door says, his tone flat and bored. She squints, adjusting to the light, and finding herself observing a young man with spiky black hair, what parts visible of his body covered in patches of purple, marred skin. “Now follow me. No questions, no ifs and buts, the boss reserves all rights to put you back out that door if you aren’t considered fit. Don’t get aggressive with others, there’ll be time for that.” He adds, vaguely cryptic.

Silent, she follows, as do all the other people in the room, squeezing out the darkness into an anonymous grey corridor, the paint peeling from the walls. She barely catches a glimpse of a person covered in acid green scales and a hulking man that has to bend down in order not to hit the door frame, long, muscly arms stretching well below his knees.

She notices the man that first spoke when she entered, too, as they walk down the corridor. His body
seems that of a normal man, but his head has nothing human, antennas twitching as he turns his
cockroach-like face to her.

“Watcha’ looking at?” He asks, aggressive, and she distantly wonders how can a creature like this emit human sounds.

“Gee, man, gross.” She mutters back, unable to stop herself. The cockroach man immediately turns to her, grabbing the front of her hoodie with bug-brown and hair covered fingers.

“Hey! What the hell did I just say?!” The man that instructed them interjects, irritated. “Cut the crap, bug, or I’ll kick you out right away!”

Grumbling, cockroach man lets her go, staring down at her —she guesses he’s glaring— before turning away with a huff. The rest of the walk goes smoothly, after that, as their little group gets guided down what feels like a maze of corridors into a big, barren room made of concrete and nothing else.

“Get into a line, here—“ The man guides them, gesturing vaguely as they line up with their backs to a wall. He turns—

“Kyaaah!!” A girly voice seems to suddenly appear from nowhere, the quality of it suggesting it’s coming through some speakers. “You! You with the blue hair!”

She jumps, surprised, looking around with wide eyes as she instinctively points at herself. “M-me?”

“Yeah, you! What’s your name? How old are you?”

“T-Tamashi—“ She replies, confused. Then gulps, squaring herself and willing her voice to be stronger, steadier. “I’m Tamashi Yurui. I’m sixteen.”

From somewhere down the line someone scoffs -probably cockroach guy-, but the female voice speaks again. “Aaah, Boss, can we keep her? Please please pleeeaaasee?”

“Shut it, Toga.” A male, scratchy voice intervenes. “She can stay if she proves herself. Now— You
guys are— twelve, perfect.” A small pause. “Dabi, I’ll leave it to you, divide them in pairs as you see fit.”

The guy with the scars -Dabi- does a little sarcastic salute with his fingers, before slowly walking along the line once, icy azure eyes set on them. On his way back he starts to point at people.

“You, go with her— You two— And you—” He finally points at Tamashi. “With him.”

She follows his finger. He’s pointing at the giant, hulking guy. Tamashi takes him in, trying to gather how tall he is —Must be at the very least two meters and a half—. He glares down at her, squared features giving him a dull expression, not helped by the prickly buzz-cut on top of his head. Tamashi doesn’t back down from that gaze, looking right back up with her bright yellow eyes and a scowl on her face.

“What now?” Cockroach-man asks, sarcastic, standing by the side of the person with the white eyes. Tamashi can’t make out who they are, they look like someone of indefinite age and gender, and staring at them too long makes her head spin.

“Now you fight.” The man with the scratchy voice intervenes once more. “You all told us you’d be useful to the league, as warriors. Prove it.”

Tamashi feels her heart fall straight down to her feet. It’s true, that she decided to join despite not having a particular talent— She figured fighting it’s all she could do—

But she’s never been in a real fight, before. She highly doubts skirmishes with bullies at school counts as such.

What did you expect? The voice from the back of her mind is back, sarcastic. A walk in the park? This is an organised group of villains you are talking about— People that were in contact with that man — You knew what you were in for, dumbass.

The hulking man is grinning, now, menacingly cracking his knuckles. Tamashi knows she must’ve gone pale, but she pushes her trembling hands in the pocket of her hoodie, glaring right back up.

Dabi snaps his fingers, and then guides them back to stand in line against the wall as the first pair selected goes up to the center of the room. It’s the man she noticed, covered in bright green scales.
His face is covered in scales, too, orange eyes emerging from the shiny acid green. He’s facing what would like a normal, boring salary-man, hadn’t it been for the two pairs of strangely misshapen, covered in thick black fur arms that emerges from his back like a sick imitation of some spider legs.

“Well, get on it.” The man says thought the speaker, sounding almost bored.

“Before we start—“ The guy covered in scales pipes up, strangely pacific, as his adversary shifts into a battle stance. “I must warn you. My scales are covered by a toxin— Minimal contact can cause hours-long paralysis of the limbs, and a prolonged contact will cause a cascade failure of all your internal organs. If you still want to fight, I take no responsibility of what will happen.”

The man with the spider-y arms freezes, squinting behind his glasses.

_He’s probably trying to figure out if his adversary is bluffing—_ Tamashi muses to herself. _It’s what I’d do— But if he’s serious— Man, would I take that risk?

Much to her surprise, the man with the spider-y arms does not hesitate a second more, charging for scale-y guy. She holds her breath as the two clash. The scale-y guy does nothing more than try to land a chop on his adversary’s neck, stopped by his furry arms. Scale-y guy gasps, surprised, as the second pair of arms grabs his leg and yanks him, launching him some meters away to painfully hit concrete.

“I see.” Scale-y guys says, his voice still as peaceful as it was when he first spoke, while he rises back to his feet. “That fur isn’t just for show.”

The other man smirks, charging once more. This time, scale-y guys is more proactive, charging right back, and the two engage in a messy battle as the man with the furry arms tries and fails to hit scale-y guy, while simultaneously dodging the hits that scale-y guy is attempting to land on his not fur covered limbs.

In the end, all it takes is a small cut. The man with the fur covered arms stumbles when one of the scales grazes his thigh, and then falls down, his leg minutely twitching.

“You won’t be able to move for a bit. Sorry.” Scale-y guy says, keeping his distance.

“Mh. Ok.” The scratchy voice says, monotone. “Next pair.”
The battles go on, as Tamashi observes, cold fear sitting heavy in her stomach. Everyone here seems to be extremely dangerous and extremely driven. Cockroach guy ends up going down soon, when his inexplicable adversary, that hasn’t said a single word and remained silent even during the battle, does—Something. No matter how hard Tamashi tried to keep her eyes on the action—Something she cannot explain happens, and then cockroach guy is on the floor, cussing up a storm as he holds his arm.

When it’s finally her turn, she walks to the center of the room feeling like a freight train is roaring in her ears. She’s starting to get tunnel vision, cold sweat beading on her forehead—

‘You don’t have to be afraid. Breathe in and out, slowly—Your talent is so much more amazing than you think!’

She closes her eyes, a pang of pain in her chest.

What would he think?

But she doesn’t have the luxury to let herself linger. She stifles the question in that dark corner of her soul where everything she didn’t want to think about went, and faced her adversary.

He’s big, but how fast can he be? She wonders, shifting on her feet as a drop of sweat run down from her temple. All I need is one touch—

“Start!”

Thoughts leave her mind completely as that word is pronounced, and she dashes. The hulking man doesn’t hesitate, charging a punch with his strangely long arm.

The pain once the big knuckles make contact with her soft belly is unbearable, but she manages to graze his naked forearm before flying, and when she rises back on her feet, managing just barely not to puke her guts out, the hulking man is on the floor, having ungracefully fallen like a puppet with no string.

She can feel the energy in her shivering palm, and holds it there, even if it doesn’t help her dizziness
“…What it is that you just did?” The man asks through the speakers, a small note of curiosity breaking through his flat tone.

She grins.

“I’m so glad you’re in!” The blond girl squeals, happily dancing. “Everyone here is so old and boring! You’re the first person that’s my age! We’re gonna be great friends, I know it!”

Tamashi keeps the ice pack on her stomach, smiling weakly. Ever since she got welcomed into the room, the girl -Himiko Toga, she said- has been chatting her up the wall, excitedly grinning and flashing her strangely pointed canines.

“So I’m old and boring, huh—“ The man with the black-grey suit covering him from head to toe says, sounding disappointed.

“Aaaaw, twice, don’t be like that!” Himiko exclaims, doing a little twirl to face him. “You’re not included in that, you know it.”

The man seems to perk up at that, and Himiko shifts closer to Tamashi, whispering in a conspiratorial manner. “Twice is a nice guy, but a bit out there. Be kind to him, ok?”

Before Tamashi has even the time to think about how to reply, something beeps from Himiko’s ear.

“Huh-oh, boss is calling.” She giggles. “Stay here and rest, you earned it. We’ll probably call you guys in in a minute, ok?”

She watches as Himiko, Twice and Dabi get out, leaving the now cut in almost half group alone. Much to her surprise and disappointment, cockroach guy seems to have been accepted despite his disastrous fight with the strange person, that’s now sitting —Are they sitting? Or hovering? Tamashi can’t really say— in a corner, silent as ever, despite the pointed glares cockroach-guy is launching in
“Are you ok, young woman?”

Tamashi shakes her head, emerging from her thoughts and looking up in the orange eyes of the man covered in scales.

“Oh, huh— I’m fine.” She replies, surprised by the kindness in his deep voice. He nods, sitting down by her side with a respectable forty centimetres of distance between them.

“You gave your real name. That wasn’t very smart.” He suddenly says, as peaceful as ever.

Tamashi curls her nose, lips pursing. “I’ll do what I want.” She replies, immediately regretting how childish she sounded. “I’m gonna guess you have a code-name, then?”

“Call me Dokueki.”

“Go figure.” She snorts. “What is this, anyway? You worrying or what?”

“Of course I do. You are barely a child.” He replies, unfazed. “What would even push you to join such a dangerous group?”

She squints, indecisive. Why is this guys pushing his scale-y nose into her business, anyway?

“I reserve the right to keep that to myself.” She replies, imitating his formal speech pattern sarcastically. “What about you?”

He turns to look at her, and she has the distinct impression he’s tilting an eyebrow. It’s hard to discern, with all those scales.

“I’m a person covered in deadly venomous scales. What do you think?”
She stares back, gold against orange, until she looks away with a little sigh. “Guy with a quirk that makes people treat him with hate and suspicion decides to go dark side.” She says. “A little stereotypical, if you ask me.”

He chuckles, deep. “You’d be surprised.” He replies. “I was actually a police officer, until I did something I should’ve not and won a nice place in a prison cell. The man that took me out of there—I owe him. That’s why I’m here.”

Tamashi blinks, surprised.

“You’re… Rather candidly admitting being once part of the police while getting into an underground villain group.” She comments, flat. “Now who’s the very not smart, between the two of us?”

“Oh, I have no doubt my allegiance will not be put into question.” He replies, getting back up on his feet, and for the first time since she first heard him speak, a bit of steel seeps in his voice. Tamashi follows him suit, abandoning the now fully melted ice pack on the floor.

“Why is that?” She asks, just as the door opens once more, Dabi beaconing them with a sharp hand gesture.

“I killed my entire squadron when I was in the police.” He says, flat, leaving Tamashi behind as he follows to little group toward their new destiny.
Chapter End Notes

Glad to be back on this! <3 hope you guys had fun with the chapter- Reminder that while I will very probably borrow elements from future chapters of the manga I am going fully AU with this story, so don’t get confused by the sudden influx of not-canon characters, gotta build up those conflicts ya know.

And as usual I invite you to check out my social media pages to see whatever else I’m up to these days! I would appreciate that a lot : D

I’m on tumblr, and twitter!
“Ok, this definitely surprised us—“ The voice of the doctor that invited Izuku and his mother in, to speak alone with them, is indecisive. “Do you see these spots? They are—“

“Uhh— I can’t see.” Izuku interrupts him, flat. Normally he’d be kinder, but he already feels disgruntled after spending pretty much the entire morning getting dragged left, right and center for the exams he had to do. “Literally.”

There’s a moment of silence and a little, embarrassed cough, matching the flash of shame Izuku is feeling from the man.

“…I apologize, I hadn’t been told. Well—“ Rustle of paper. “Midoriya— As I was saying— The results of your exams definitely surprised all of us. The brain scans we did showed us unusual activity, which lines up with the information we already had, regarding your quirk— But there definitely are things we did not expect. On top of the unusual shape of your brain, which is again very likely explained by your type of quirk, there are spots on the scan that are akin to scarring. Do you have any idea of what could’ve possibly caused them?”

Izuku blinks, and his short-lived surprise rapidly gets buried down the guilt, as, by his side, mom’s light seems to almost squirm with an astonished sense of pain. He sighs, massaging the bridge of his nose— He feels a vague ache in his temples, which he can’t decide if it’s caused by his overactive imagination or the stress he can already feel building up inside himself.

“It’s probably because— Well, it’s a long story.” He mutters, shaking his head. “Short version: I stressed my quirk way over the limits more than a couple of times. I’m going to guess it’s the aftermath of that.”

“Mh— What makes you think that?”
“When I stress my quirk, I tend to get symptoms like nose-bleeding and—Bleeding from other places, in very extreme cases. Headaches. Stuff like that.” Izuku replies, sounding almost casual, even if he was still massaging the bridge of his nose.

“I see. I guess you most likely got it right.” The doctor continues, pensive. “The problem with quirks akin to yours is how little we know about the way they function, and how difficult it is to study them in action due to—Well, obvious reasons.” A sigh. “It’s hard to define how old the scarring is, so I’m not sure I can confirm if your suspicion is right—Have you stressed your quirk, recently?”

“Not to the point of getting those symptoms. no.” Izuku sighs.

“Ok, that’s good, I’d definitely recommend to keep doing so. We definitely don’t want the damage to expand.” The doctor says, clearly relieved. “Has there been any noticeable effects? A sudden change in habits or strange temperament?”

Izuku frowns, confused by the question, but he realizes the doctor must’ve addressed mom directly when she sighs.

“No—Nothing out of the ordinary, I’d say.” She replies, contrite. “He’s a growing boy and there are definitely changes in his life, but nothing I’d say is caused by the—Scarring.”

The doctor sniffs, going silent for a few seconds, before murmuring. “I see—It’s very probable that your brain is more resistant in some ways, but still—The fact we have these signs definitely hints to the fact that stressing of your quirk for long periods of time might be too much to handle even for it, and damage caused by that will probably stay permanent.” A huff. “I’d advise you to be careful and absolutely do not stress your quirk to that point under any circumstances. I don’t want to terrify you, but—One more injury like this and, depending on the part of your brain it’s being inflicted, might be enough to permanently cripple you. Or worse.”

Izuku visibly gulps, even though he knew already where this conversation was going to end up the moment the doctor spoke of signs of scarring. He remembers moments of his fight with Muscular and his desperate search for Kacchan hazily, like attempting to make out shapes through a thick fog—How close had he been, in those instances, to damage himself to the point of no return?

In a sense, he should probably count himself lucky.
That said, the quiet soup of sadness and anger he feels bubbling inside his mother isn’t very consoling, nor hints to the fact she shares his opinion about his luck. Neither his friends, nor Shouto or All Might will either, probably.

“Well, in any case, here’s your file for your therapist—“ The doctor cuts through his thought, gently depositing a something paper-y in his lap. “All the info she asked for and everything else we did not expect to find— If you get those symptoms you spoke of again, or you feel like something isn’t right, absolutely do not hesitate to get checked out, ok?”

“Ok. Thank you.” Izuku replies quietly, carefully slipping the file inside his bag, his mother’s hand heavy on his shoulder. “Anything else?”

“No, besides another very passionate invite to please be careful, young man. You’ve got a lifetime in front of you, so don’t rush things, ok?” The man replies, clearly sympathetic. “I understand that young aspiring heroes like you are very impatient to prove their worth, but I promise you nothing it’s worth hurting yourself over.”

“Understood.” Izuku murmurs, getting back up on his feet. “Thank you.”

“If you need anything—“ Izuku stays silent as the man steps by his mother’s side, his light suggesting he’s handing something to her.

“Thank you so much.” She replies, strangely flat. She still has a hand on Izuku’s shoulder.

They bid their farewell to the doctor, before stepping out. Mom only lets him go once they reach Miki, who waited for them outside. She keeps going, silent, as his friend gets up from the plastic chairs and hooks an arm under his, following her out the hospital.


“…I’ll tell you when we’re in a more private place.” Izuku sighs.

Miki stays silent, her light giving off waves of worries. Feeling guilty and yet knowing there was nothing he could do not to make her worry, Izuku sighs once more and shifts his hand to hook his fingers in Miki’s elbow, turning his quirk off and trusting her in guiding him the way she used to do so with ease back in middle school.
She seems to fall into place seamlessly, her voice subdued. “You look beat.”

“The news I got was simultaneously a shock and yet not surprising at all.” Izuku replies, disgruntled. “You know, like— I mean, it’s stupid, I know that this was long time coming, but I still feel like this is some instant-karma bullshit.”

“What do you mean?”

“I did a really damn stupid thing, recently.” Izuku replies, massaging his forehead with his free hand. “And on the spot I felt justified and like I was totally doing a good thing, but now that I’m more far removed from the situation I realize I just let myself get dragged down by my own anger and frustration and acted like an absolute dumbass.” He releases a cold, short laugh. “Which is like, such a novelty, right?” He asks, sarcastic. “Every time I think I learned my lesson I just stumble and fall down in some other way. I’m really not going anywhere.”

“Izuku— Miki sighs. “Ok, I don’t know what you are talking about and I’m sure even if I asked you won’t tell me—“ A pang of guilt sizes his stomach, but she keeps going. “But— You gotta think a bit better of yourself, ok? You’ve taken such big steps and— You’re only sixteen, we are allowed to be dumbasses—“

“Not in the way I did.” Izuku murmurs, quiet. “Not— Not in the way I took calculated, cold choices to bother and trouble someone else, no matter how bad this person is and how much I dislike them. What I did really does not make me any better than them.”

Even if he has his radar off, it’s not hard to imagine Miki’s confusion. His tongue tingles with the need to admit what he did during that week with Endeavor— But telling her would mean revealing a lot more than Izuku had any right, nor was willing to reveal.

He really felt like he had the right to act in such a way, during those days— But then in the weeks to follow, as he went forward with his therapy sessions and has he found himself letting go of a lot of stress and anger thanks to that and the preparations for the cultural festival, he truly realized how childish and stupid he acted, and how lucky he had been that his action didn’t cause permanent consequences for Shouto and his family.

Meeting Todoroki Rei just some days prior really cemented his shame for the what he did— The woman that felt so caged and chained by her past, but still sounded so sincerely grateful to Izuku as he thanked him—
Even when he tried again to apologize to Shouto about it, Shouto kind of waved him off. Izuku could understand why—Shouto still held a lot of rightful resentment toward his father, so he didn’t protest at having his apology minimised—It wasn’t on Shouto to forgive and absolve Izuku of his actions, anyway. He will have to keep living with this shame, and hopefully learn something from it.

“Miki.” He says, cutting through the silence, the voices and sounds of the traffic around them feeling almost muted. “Would you like to come see our show at the cultural festival?”

“Oh, about time you’d ask!” She replies, laughing. “I thought you would be too ashamed of your lousy dancing to invite me.” A moment of pause, and when she speaks again, there’s a sad note hidden under the joviality in her voice. “Of course I will come, you dum dum.”

—

It was clear that mom was still pretty pissed off, when she dropped him back at school and then drove herself and Miki away without the usual hug-and-kiss combo. Miki was perturbed, as well, which Izuku couldn’t exactly blame her for, considering the bomb he dropped on her.

If her reaction was anything to come by, he will have to do some intense consoling in the days to come.

Izuku sighs, scratching his head, bag heavy with the stack of papers that resulted from this day of exams. He knows how much his penchant for getting hurt also hurts his mother—It’s not like he does it on purpose, but—

Well, now that he truly knows how much he risks every time he gleefully ignores the limits of his quirk maybe he’ll stop being reckless—There’s not much he can do to remedy to the damage he already caused, but at least now, hopefully, he’ll stop worrying her so much.

He’s got a whole other bag of issues, though, as he walks back to his dormitory, quirk off and cane distractedly tip-tapping. Should he say anything to his friends, about this? To All Might? He guesses he’s got the right to keep things confidential. Technically speaking he’s got no obligation to disclose anything to anyone…But the idea doesn’t sit well in his stomach. He feels a bit of a cheater, like he’s trying to weasel himself out of the consequences of his actions, at the idea of keeping in the dark all the people that have to put up with his bullshit.
Besides, it’d probably be better for everyone involved if they knew. At least, that way, if he was to ignore the risks once more in the future, he’d be surrounded by people ready to bring him back down to earth and stop him from potentially damaging himself further.

“Did… Something happen?”

Izuku jumps, shaking his head like a wet dog. He made it back to the dormitories pretty much on autopilot, not even bothering to check if anyone was in as he entered—

“No, no, I’m fine, Mineta.” He rushes to reply, forcing what he knew was an unconvincing smile on his face. The hum he receives back is anything but convinced.

“You sure? You look so gloomy, man.” Mineta insists, sounding vaguely worried. “Want to talk about it?”

“I’m fine, really. Just had a long day.” Izuku replies with a shrug. There was something— Consoleing in the fact his classmates seems to always pick up on his mood and always try to be kind to him.

Making him feel like he’s not alone.

“Ok, I guess.” Mineta replies with a little sigh. “But if you want to talk about it I can listen, ok?”

“Oui! I would be enchanté to listen!”

Izuku blinks, turning vaguely toward the familiar voice that interjected at his left. He can’t exactly say he’s got a deep relationship with Aoyama, but his voice sounded just— Honest.

A little, huffy laugh escapes him, and he knows his little smile must look far more genuine, now. “Thanks, Aoyama.”

“No need to thank me. We are neighbours, after all, oui?”

“Yeah.” Izuku agrees, mood definitely lifted, a little grin pulling at his lips. “That we are. Did I miss
“Just more of Ashido’s hell course in dancing, nothing new. We called it a day, like, twenty minutes ago.” Mineta replies, following after him as Izuku turns for the couches. Aoyama must be following, too, going by the soft shuffling of slippers. “She’d probably make you double down on it, tomorrow, to make up for the fact you had to take a day off.”

“Mmmh. I can already feel my feet ache.” Izuku exhales, letting himself fall down on the couch with his bag in his lap.

Mineta huffs a laugh. When he speaks again, there’s a clear smile in his voice. “Be prepared. I got some homework to finish, before another day of crazy dancing— That ok?”

Before Izuku can really answer, a tiny frown emerging on his face, he can feel the couch dipping a bit, as Aoyama sits by his side.

“You go, I’ll stay!” He declares, bombastic. Izuku blinks, silent, as Mineta bids them goodnight and his steps disappear into the distance. He turns with a tilted eyebrow toward Aoyama.

“You look like you could use company.” Aoyama says, matter-of-factly.

The honesty is refreshing, at least. Izuku releases a little sigh, and then gingerly fingers at the seams of his bag for a few seconds, before just opening it and taking the stack of paper out, fingers sliding on it—

“Of course.” He mutters, hanging his head down as he stuffs the paper back into the bag. Why was he so dumb as to expect it’d be printed in braille? The file was for his therapist, after all—

He still would’ve liked to read it, too, though. And he would have to wait another week before having a chance of giving it to her…

“…I think we are similar, you and I.” Aoyama declares, voice considerably softer than his usual tone, shaking him out of his thoughts.
"Huh?"

“Our quirks do not fit our bodies.” Aoyama continues, sounding pensive. “Did you know that I had to wear a belt to contain my navel laser ever since I was a kid? And using it in rapid succession makes my stomach ache terribly.”

Izuku blinks. “I— Didn’t know, actually.” He replies, slowly. “I—“ He hesitates, biting down on his lower lip. “I have to admit that there had been times I wondered why my quirk caused my blindness. If it was meant to do that, or something just went— Wrong.”

Aoyama hums, sounding thoughtful. “Still— Even with our difficulties we both made it in UA’s prestigious hero course.” He adds, an undefinable tone behind his words. “And we are now both in possession of a provisional license.”

“…Yeah?”

“So we should keep going forward and support each other.” He continues, with a tone of finality, before adding an almost hopeful. “Oui?”

It takes Izuku a moment of confusion, before understanding clicks in his mind. Aoyama, since the start of school, seemed to mostly keep to himself—But was that entirely by choice? It wasn’t really so long ago, that Izuku himself wasn’t surrounded by so many people that cared for him and appreciated him the way he was, flaws and all… Maybe it was the same, for Aoyama. Maybe he was making an effort to reach out.

He resists the temptation to activate his quirk. He ought to try to ‘cheat’ a little less with it, when he’s confronted with something new.

“You are right.” He says, a careful smile rising on his mouth. “We both came a long way. And we should definitely support each other. We are neighbours, right?”

“Indeed!” Aoyama exclaims, clearly happy, his voice back to his usual bombastic tone. Izuku grins to himself, satisfied. It’s good to know he doesn’t always need to rely on his ability to pry into people’s inner feelings, to get a hint.
“Movements have come to a stand-still. They all seemed to have fallen off the radar, and no suspicious rumors seem to be floating around.” Nimble fingers collect the papers scattered on the coffee table, tapping them into order before Toshinori hands them over. “I really don’t know what to think. Part of me wants to be optimistic— Now that All For One is being held in prison… Maybe, without his guidance, Shigaraki cannot go on, after all. But at the same time I cannot believe the ‘League of Villains’ situation can be solved just like that—“

Nothing seems to transpire on Nighteye’s impassive expression, as he accepts the reports he’s being handed. Toshinori leans back on the couch with a sigh, giving his ex-sidekick, sitting by his side, some minutes to skim over them.

“What does Tsukauchi think?” Nighteye asks, looking up with sharp eyes over his glasses, once he’s done.

“Same as me, he’s dubious.” Toshinori replies with a shrug. “All signs seems to point to the fact the League might be no more— But he doesn’t want to claim victory without concrete proof. And I agree. We cannot let our guards down.”

“So he will keep investigating. That’s good, I trust his judgment.” Nighteye murmurs, putting the reports down and then picking his cup of tea up to take a sip. “I’ll give him a call, later. There’s something I think might have a connection with the League, even if it’s only based on my gut-feeling.”

“…Go on.” Toshinori invites, careful, after a moment of surprise. It’s not exactly everyday that Nighteye allows himself to express suspicions not based in concrete proof.

“According to the testimony of the members of the Eight precepts we could interrogate— Something must’ve happened after Midoriya managed to escape with Eri, leaving behind a completely unguarded mansion. Some things seems to be missing.”

“Things—?”

“Chisaki wasn’t just using Eri to create that quirk-suppressing drug— He was also conducing an in-depth research about her quirk.” Nighteye continues, voice low and eyebrows furrowed in the middle. “And a lot of this research material, along with a stock of the drug, seems to be missing. It’s unclear how that happened— And I have the feeling that Shigaraki must be involved, somehow.”
“If that’s case, that’s… Troubling.” Toshinori replies, pinching the bridge of his nose. “You haven’t found a way to use your quirk and find confirmations, I imagine—“

He was distractedly keeping his eyes on Nighteye, as he spoke, but Toshinori did not miss the flash of something undefinable that seemed to pass in his eyes at that question.

“…Nighteye?”

“This is… Another thing I wanted to speak with you about, other than the state of the investigation.” Nighteye murmurs back, right hand curling over his mouth and eyes unfocused. “The drug Chisaki was producing— Just before the arrest, he found out how to make the effect permanent. He must’ve used some of it during that battle— It’s a good thing Red Riot was there to shield Eraserhead from those syringes, but—“ He sighs, shifting his hand away and looking back up at Toshinori. “I got hit by one.”

Toshinori can’t help but let out the sharp intake of surprise hissing through his teeth. “You mean—“ He trails off, when Nighteye offers one hand, palm up. Indecisive, he puts his finger over Nighteye’s, peering up at his expression of focus.

A small, sad smile rises on Nighteye’s mouth, after long seconds of silence. “It doesn’t work anymore. I might have lost my quirk for good.”

“Oh, Nighteye…”

“I think— I know it’s counterproductive, but I cannot help feel slightly— Relieved.” Nighteye replies, still sporting a lopsided smile as Toshinori closes his fingers around his hand in a firmer hold. “When I saw you fighting against All For One I was sure that must be it. What I saw back then— But you pulled through. You’re still here. And now— Now I cannot be certain of what awaits you, and part of me feels— At peace, not having to know your destiny anymore.” He releases a little sigh. “I’m still managing, at the office, for now. A time when my lack of quirk might push me to retire could be closer than I think, but as long as I can still fulfil my duty I will keep doing so. Maybe that’s foolish, of me.”

“I don’t think it’s foolish. I understand what you mean.” Toshinori replies, carding his free hand through his hair tiredly. “I always… I always wondered how you dealt with the weight of knowing an unchangeable future.”
“Not easily, that’s for sure.” Nighteye says, giving one last squeeze to Toshinori’s hand before gently letting go. “But I’m not quite sure the future is as set in stone as I thought. You’re right here, after all — And— If losing my quirk was the price to pay to make sure Mirio can keep going forward, then I’m glad to have paid it. I’m sure that when I will not be able to keep up anymore, Mirio will be more than ready to step in my stead.”

“He’s a good boy. A hero through and through.” A smile pulls at Toshinori’s mouth, as he watches the clear pride rising on Nighteye’s face, at that compliment. “You’ve done an amazing job shaping him.”

“…That means a lot. Thank you.”

They fall in a contemplative, but relaxed, silence, knees brushing. Toshinori is just so… Grateful, to have reunited with his ex-sidekick. He cannot deny how much he’s missed Nighteye, in the long years since their fight. Could’ve things been different, if they hadn’t gone their own way, at the time?

Maybe they would. Maybe he should’ve listened to Nighteye, back then— How different everything could’ve been, if he had retired as Nighteye urged him to. Then again, he might’ve never met young Midoriya, in that case, and that’s certainly a thing Toshinori would never regret.

“So— You are sure you are ok without a quirk?” He says, softly, shaking himself out of the myriads of ‘what ifs’ that were trying to occupy his thoughts. Nighteye hums.

“I don’t really have much of a choice, but— I am fine with it. I wanted to tell you not in search of pity, but because I wanted to make sure you’d know we cannot rely on my future sight anymore. I have already disclosed this information to the police and my collaborators.”

Toshinori doesn’t have the time to let out an hum of understanding, interrupted by a soft knocking. He turns toward the door of his office, surprised.

“I take in you weren’t expecting other visitors.” Nighteye comments, tilting his head just vaguely. Toshinori shrugs at him, before rising to go open the door— And find himself in front of an indecisive looking young Midoriya, not in his school uniform but with a bag slung over his shoulder.

“Huh— Hope I’m not disturbing?” The boy says, frowning just vaguely. It’s clear by the way he’s clutching his cane that he’s got his quirk turned off, at the moment.
“Of course not.” Nighteye replies, peaceful, making the boy jump just slightly.

“Oh, hello, Sir!” Young Midoriya exclaims, surprised. “I didn’t know you were here— I can come back later, if—“

“This is quite alright.” Toshinori interjects, putting a soft touch on the boy’s shoulder and guiding him inside, closing the door behind him with a soft click. “What brings you here?”

“It’s, well…” Young Midoriya shifts his weight from foot to foot, clearly indecisive, not sitting down even when Toshinori guided him toward his usual stool.

“If this is a private matter, I can leave.” Nighteye pipes up, as the boy trails off. But young Midoriya shakes his head.

“No, it’s— Fine. I guess this is something I’d have to tell you, too, if you still want me back at the office—“

“Of course I still want you back at the office.” Nighteye replies easily, adjusting his glasses. “You and Mirio could make quite the duo, with some work. I’m not giving up on that.”

That finally manages to pry a smile out of the boy, if small and lopsided. “Ok, then.” He says, as he carefully sits down and folds his cane. Toshinori takes his place back by Nighteye’s side, as the boy rummages in his bag and produces a small stack of papers out of it, handing it over silently.

Toshinori exchanges a short look with his ex-sidekick, before taking it. Young Midoriya rests both hands in his lap, still quiet, as the two of them bend over the documentation to skim it together.

Toshinori has gone through enough medical procedures to be able to translate the information presented well enough, and he knows that Nighteye, ever prepared, won’t have trouble either— Which is confirmed by the thin-lipped frown he launches at him, when Toshinori meets his eyes with what he knows must be an anguished expression.

“Young Midoriya…”
The boy winces. “I know.” He sighs, putting both hands up. “I know it’s not— Nice.”

“That’s an understatement— What did you even do to get to this?” Nighteye asks, voice low and flat, just barely disguising the clear worry, fingers tapping on the paper.

“Oh, right, I guess you don’t know—” Young Midoriya replies, hanging his head on a side tiredly. “It’s kind of a long story— Like, really long.” He sniffs. “You might decide to fire me, if I tell you.”

“I’m not kicking you out the office, Midoriya.” Nighteye replies with a small head-shake. “But I still would like to know how come you’ve arrived to the point of damaging yourself so severely.”

“Look— I know it’s kind of selfish of me to ask, but can you get filled in by All Might?” That’s enough to make Toshinori jump just a tiny bit, as he was still reading some of the exams results. “I’ll have to go back to the dormitory in a bit, and I kinda needed someone to read that to me for— Obvious reasons.” He adds, gesturing vaguely at his pale eyes. “I can’t wait a week for my therapy appointment, I really want to know how bad that looks, before I show it to Shouto and my friends and make their heads explode with worry.” He finishes, looking unamused.

“…I didn’t think you’d want to tell them.” Toshinori manages to drag out of his throat, wary. The boy’s got a point, his friends were surely going to take this badly.

“I thought about not telling them for a bit, but— With everything that has happened and everything they went through ‘cause of me? Yeah, I’m not dumb enough to pretend they wouldn’t find out, in a way or the other.” Young Midoriya replies, putting his elbow on a knee and resting his chin in his palm. “So I’d prefer to tell them myself and face the music sooner rather than later. So we can move on and get to the point where I can see how to deal with my quirk going forward.”

The stack of papers feels like it weighs more than it should in Toshinori’s hands, as he looks at the boy. He doesn’t seem crestfallen, mostly— Quietly determined to tackle yet another obstacle in his way. One last silent exchange of looks, and a nod from Nighteye, was enough to make Toshinori let out a small sigh, before saying, “Very well, I’ll inform Nighteye about the issues you’ve encountered with your quirk later. For now, we’ll read this to you.
Katsuki jumps, just a tiny bit, when something lands heavily on the grass at his side. He turns, eyebrows furrowing -more than usual-, as Deku makes himself comfortable, belly up and hands crossed under his head.

“What, now, you trying to be a ninja?”

Deku let out a huffy, short laugh through his nose. There was an expression between annoyed and amused, on his face. “You just didn’t hear me because you were too focused on— Whatever it is that you are doing.” He turns just slightly, pale eyes pointed up at him. “What are you doing?”

Resisting the temptation to close the notebook resting on his knees — *No point, he can’t see it anyway* — Katsuki makes himself more comfortable against the trunk of the tree he’s been sitting on for the last half hour. “None of your business, nerd.”

Deku rises an eyebrow, following with his face the arc of the drumstick Katsuki distractedly launched in the air and then caught again. His mouth tilts in a lopsided smile.

“Take that smug expression off of your face.” Katsuki grumbles, but his voice lacks any real bite. Much to his dismay, the smile on Deku’s face becomes wider. “Why did you come bothering me?”

“Just wanted a change of mood.”

Now it was Katsuki’s turn to tilt an eyebrow. “What does that even mean?”

Deku shrugs. “Just— Wanted to be five minutes around someone that wouldn’t feel like my mom times ten, you know?”

The eyebrow tilt intensifies. “I guess you are talking about how half-face, round-face and square-face had been acting like you’re made of glass, these past few days.”

That seems to drag a snicker out of Deku. “*Square-face*—“ He murmurs, mirth clear in his voice, before letting out a long sigh. “But yeah, that. I know they don’t mean it, but— They are taking longer than I hoped to get over it. It feels— *Smother-y.*”
Katsuki isn’t quite sure what ‘it’ refers to. All he knows is that Deku came back from a day he spent out the school, and then the day after his squad of friends started looking like someone was murdering kittens in front of them.

He doesn’t even know if he wants to ask.

“Really.” He replies instead, sarcastic. “I cannot imagine… Being around someone always acting like a worry-wart and being all like ‘Ooooh you looked like you needed heeeelp!’”

He watches, satisfied, as Deku’s eyebrows knits in the middle, his mouth opening as if saying something and one finger rising as if pointing out some mistake— But no words got out, as Deku put his hand on his chin, instead.

“Oh, stop it.” Deku interjects, elbowing Katsuki’s thigh. “I know you aren’t as annoyed as you are trying to sound.”

With an eye-roll, Katsuki pushes back the elbow that was prodding him, eliciting a small laugh out of Deku. After that he blessedly stops talking. His presence is still vaguely irritating, but it’s not like he’s doing anything other than lying on the grass in silence, so Katsuki focuses back on the notes Jirou wrote for him, practicing movements with the drumsticks in the air.

He’s not quite sure how much time has passed, when the annoying nerd speaks again. “How’s the practice going?”

“It would go better if you kept your mouth shut—“

“I’m not talking about the practice for the festival! I know that’s going well, you make enough noise to make it clear.” Deku replies, grinning. But his expression sobers fast, as he turns on a side, facing him. “I mean those extra lessons— You think you’re ready to take the provisional exam again?”
Katsuki sniffs, as he contemplates the idea of not even dignify that with a reply. But Deku got that familiar expression on his face— The one that says ‘I’m biting down and I’m not letting go’.

“It’s none of your business— But if you really want to know, they are going fine. I’ll ace that stupid exam.” He grunts, hoping that would be enough to shut him up—

“You got why you failed the first time, right?”

—No such luck, of course.

“Oy,” Katsuki squints, clear irritation seeping in his voice. “I’m trying to be civil, here, but it’s like you’re purposely trying to piss me off, nerd.”

“Fffiiiiine— I just wanted to make sure you won’t make the same mistake twice.” Deku replies, pouty. With one more eye-roll, Katsuki pokes his forehead with one of the sticks, gaining a little ‘ow’ as Deku massages the spot that was hit.

“Think ‘bout that airhead of your half-face. If there’s one between us that risks to fail again, it ain’t me.”

“Nah, Shouto’s gonna do fine.” Deku immediately replies, gaining one more forceful poke.

“How come he doesn’t get any distrust?!”

“Because he’s my boyfriend and you are more fun to provoke.” Deku quips back, sounding almost — Delighted. He turns on all fours, rising on his feet and distractedly dusting his knees. “But I’m kidding. I’m sure you’re going to do fine. Thanks for letting me hang around for a bit.”

“Yeah, whatever, don’t come back.” Katsuki immediately replies, shooing him. That only seems to cause hilarity in Deku, going by the little laugh that he releases as he walks away, waving at him. Katsuki’s eyes follows him until he turns a corner, disappearing toward the dormitories, before he releases a huff.
The usual weird nerd, pulling weird stuff like coming to him when he wanted a break instead of telling his little squad to stop being worry-warts—

The realization clicks suddenly. Deku came to him to feel something that wasn’t worried smothering for a nice change. Deku, that but a couple of months prior openly told Katsuki he couldn’t feel him with his quirk— And now, after they sort-of-kinda-maybe started to mend their broken relationship, implied he actually felt something with his quirk.

“…Huh.”

He doesn’t get much time to ponder on the realization, his phone suddenly buzzing in his pocket. He puts the sticks down, fishing the object out, only to find himself in front of a text from Kirishima.

“I saw you and Midoriya hang out from the window, good job (‘ v ‘)”

“Oh, for the love of—“
Despite how sure he was he’d be able to wake up at the drop of a pin as he went to sleep the night earlier, anxious as he was, Shouto has to struggle more than he imagined to drag himself out of his futon. He pads around his room, throwing clothes on himself almost casually as he struggles to keep his eyes open. By the time he makes it down the stairs, in the communal area, he’s only marginally more awake.

“‘Morning.” Izuku greets him, either keeping is quirk on already or having heard the shuffle of Shouto’s slippers coming closer. “Breakfast?”
“No.” Shouto manages to reply, almost drowned in a yawn. “It’s way too early to even think about putting food in me—” Another jaw-cracking yawn rises from his throat, as he rubs at his right eye. “I thought the old man used to make me wake up early, but you win.”

Izuku only replies with a sniff, as he serves himself the breakfast that, considering the time, was closer to a midnight snack. Despite the smell of food making Shouto’s stomach twist in denial, he still drags himself closer to his boyfriend, depositing his head on Izuku’s shoulder heavily and gaining back a soft, little chuckle.

“At least drink something.” Izuku murmurs, tilting his head just enough to rub his cheek against Shouto’s hair. “There should be enough hot water for a tea, in the kettle.”

That, he could probably stomach. Shouto turns his face just enough to peck at Izuku’s cheek, before moving away toward the kettle and the box of tea bags that Yaoyorozu seems to keep constantly overflowing. The peaceful silence is only interrupted by his sips or the soft noises of Izuku’s chopsticks as they sit side by side in the empty communal area, washed in soft blue tones coming from the sun that just barely started rising somewhere over the horizon.

Mug almost emptied, Shouto feels finally awake enough to have a bit of anxiety seep in him like a snake. He pretty much forced himself to fall asleep, the prior evening, after he and Izuku separated for the night. The past few days had been pretty harsh, after Izuku came back from the exams he had to endure at the hospital with horrifying news—Which wasn’t helped by Izuku apparently uncaring attitude about the whole ordeal. He promised Shouto that wasn’t the case, that he just didn’t want to let this drag him down, tank his morale, but—

Sighing, Shouto let the last bit of tea roll around at the bottom of his mug, before throwing his head back and drinking. He had no idea why Izuku asked him to wake up at such a time, with the promise he’d tell him something important that would, hopefully, lay to rest some of Shouto’s more oppressing worries. Had no idea why it was even necessary to get up before the sun even rose, in order to fulfil this promise—But Izuku asked. And Shouto just accepted, because he just couldn’t say no to that cute -reckless- face.

“Are you wearing a jacket? It’s pretty cold out there, at this hour.” Izuku asks as they stand by the door after they both rapidly washed the few cutlery that were used, vaguely leaning down to put on his shoes. In place of an answer, Shouto puts his right hand on Izuku’s shoulder, rising the temperature just enough to win a small laugh. “Alright, point taken. Let’s go.”

He follows, their breaths immediately condensing in front of their faces as soon as they got out the pleasing warmth of the dormitory. The sky was still light blue, although it was rapidly brightening,
and the only noises were the chirping of birds and rustle of leaves. It was quite pleasing walking like
this, hand in hand, in the peaceful quietness.

“So?” Shouto asks, softly, after they turned away from the main road to plunge into the woods
surrounding UA’s grounds. Izuku smiles.

“We aren’t there yet.” He replies, and at Shouto’s quizzical hum, he adds. “There’s a reason I asked
you to get up this early. We need to talk, and we need to do so away from prying ears.” He blinks,
and while Shouto did not need confirmations to know Izuku was keeping his quirk on, considering
the lack of cane, the fact that he rushes to add “It’s not a bad ‘we need to talk’! And it isn’t just the
two of us that needs it.” is pretty telling.

“…You’re going to be cryptic as much as you can, aren’t you.”

Izuku snickers. “I get my fun where I can.” He replies, grinning. “Almost there.”

It’s somehow surprising and simultaneously not surprising at all, to see a familiar shape as they step
in a small clearing in the woods. All Might is already impeccably dressed in a suit, despite the hour.
He looks as tall and lanky as usual, but seems to be healthier as he grins at them, giving a small
wave.

“Good morning.” Shouto says as they walk up to him, before turning a bit toward Izuku. “So this is
why you were so hellbent we’d sleep in our rooms, lately, huh?”

A lopsided, little smile pulls at Izuku’s lips. “Yeah. Didn’t want to wake you up so early every single
morning.” He shrugs. “You don’t seem surprised—“

“I’m not.” Shouto interjects, honest. It’s not exactly a secret, at this point, that Izuku shares a close
bond with All Might. “So, what’s up?”

All Might, that had been following their brief banter with a vague shade of amusement to his smile,
rapidly loses it, sighing.

“I’m afraid things are going to get heavy, forgive me for that.” He says, quietly. “Who do you think
should begin, young Midoriya?”
Izuku curls his nose, mouth thinning as if he’s smelling something unpleasant. Then he sighs. “You start.” He releases Shouto’s hand, giving him a small pat on the shoulder. “I’ll— Go warm-up a bit. Give you two some privacy.” He adds, before trotting away and starting on some stretches far enough as to don’t hear them.

Shouto gulps around a small ball of nerves that suddenly lodged itself in his throat. He’s not quite looking up at All Might’s face, more at a point over his left shoulder, but he still can’t see the melancholic little smile that pulls at All Might’s mouth.

“Sorry for making you get here so early but— I thought the things we want to tell you would better be shared in as much privacy as possible.” He starts, soft. “I won’t beat around the bush. I had a chance to speak face to face with your mother.”

He can’t help but tense up, back straighter. Shouto gulps once more around the knot in his throat, pushing his hands in his pockets just to have something to do. “…Ok.” He replies, careful. All Might seems to take a second, before continuing.

“We spoke quite a bit, and are keeping in contact via phone. I—“ An heavy sigh, long, thin fingers rising to pinch at the bridge of his nose. “I know.”

In any other circumstances, Shouto would’ve wondered what exactly All Might could mean, with that ‘I know’. But not now, not when he was asked to get up before the sun, meet All Might in the privacy of the woods, and get informed of the fact the man was now, apparently, in direct contact with his mother. His fists, still deeply stuffed in the pockets of his jeans, tightens a bit.

“I’ve been suspecting for a while, but the confirmations I’ve got ended up being well over any of my worst suspicions.” All Might continues in a murmur. “I’m— I’m sorry, young Todoroki, I—“

“Don’t—“ Shouto snaps, before taking a deep breath. Push down the erratic beats of his heart. “Don’t apologize. Nothing of what happened is your fault.”

He’s still not quite looking at All Might’s face, but it doesn’t really matter. The man is releasing sadness and regret in waves.

“Young Midoriya told me you’d say that.” He comments, tone melancholic. “I won’t burden you with my regrets, but I’m still sorry you had to endure that. No child should be subjected to that kind
of treatment.” His voice hardened significantly, at that. It was almost chilling. “Needless to say, there are very many things I’d like to do with this information, but— I don’t want to do anything that would put you in danger or make you uneasy.” He sighs deeply. “So, I’d like to hear your opinion. What should we do?”

Shouto blinks, finally turning his gaze enough to meet All Might’s. There’s a fire burning and the azure of his sunken irises, something that tickles at Shouto’s stomach— Suddenly, he feels like if he said just one, single word, that would be enough for All Might to move hell on earth and make sure Shouto would receive the justice he deserves for what he had to bear.

But— He doesn’t want that. Not now. Maybe not ever.

“I— I don’t want to do anything.”

“Young Todoroki—“

“No, listen.” Shouto interrupts, voice almost pleading. “I understand that the idea of acting as if nothing is wrong, now that you know, it’s unbearable, but— This isn’t only about me. This is about my mother, too. About my siblings. About the world—“ He takes a second, trying to collect his thoughts. It’s… So hard, trying to bear his soul to anyone other than Izuku. Other than their friends. “We are all in a precarious situation, now that you have retired, and— For how much I dislike my father, I cannot deny he’s good at what he does. He’s— Kinda supporting the whole system, right now, as we are all trying to find a new stability. I don’t want to threaten that— And I don’t want to gamble on the safety of my family, either. My mother is being taken care of, I can see that she’s improving a lot— And— Both my brother and sister are still— connected to him, whether I like it or not.”

Blessedly, All Might didn’t interrupt him, even as Shouto took another handful of seconds to collect his thoughts, glancing at Izuku’s small figure in the distance, still busying himself with some basic exercises. “I’m— Ok, really. I’m safe, here, I have Izuku, and all our friends— I— I have you to rely on.” He was still looking at Izuku, but he didn’t miss the tiny jump of surprise that shook All Might at those words. “I’m happier than I’ve ever been, here. I don’t know if I will ever forgive my father for what he has done— More to my mom than to me, really— If I’ll ever do, I’ll do on my own terms. But pushing this under everyone’s eyes? Will only help in dragging all that bitterness and rage I had back to the surface, and— I’m tired. Of being bitter and angry. I just want to move on.”

“…His actions aren’t justifiable in any way, and he should properly face his mistakes and take responsibility.” All Might replies, softly rough, after long seconds of silence. “Still— I do understand your feelings, so I’ll only ask this once. Are you really sure you’d prefer to keep this a secret?”
“In a perfect world he should face proper justice, but that’s not the world we live in.” Shouto shrugs, turning back to All Might. “I’ve thought about this plenty, so— Yes. I’m sure.”

All Might sighs deeply, closing his eyes, and then opening them once more, slowly. “Very well. My lips are sealed.” He murmurs. “Just— Promise me you will tell me, if you ever change your mind. And— If you ever need to talk, about anything—“

“I promise.” Shouto replies softly, as All Might trails off. “And I will. I— I know I can trust you, now.”

That’s enough to finally cut through the clear sadness in All Might’s eyes, dragging a small smile out of him. Thin fingers brush against Shouto’s shoulder, hesitating for a second before squeezing gently.

When Shouto turns, and throws his arms around All Might’s waist in an impromptu hug, the man sighs, putting a gentle touch on Shouto’s hair. It’s quick, going by in only a handful of seconds as they share that gentle moment, before stepping back. All Might sniffs briefly, before speaking again in a much lighter tone.

“I think young Midoriya had a point, giving me the first turn.” He comments, cryptic, gaining a raised eyebrow from Shouto. “Go call him, we still have one important topic to talk about.”

—

Izuku stops, as he hears the soft noise of feet on grass, turning slightly.

“You can turn it back on, if you want.” Shouto says, voice low, putting a gentle touch to his bicep. “Yagi-sensei asked me to call you, for— Whatever it is that you want to tell me.”

Hesitating just some seconds, Izuku ponders on Shouto’s tone. He’s— Quiet, but doesn’t seem to sound particularly rattled. That’s a good thing, hopefully—

He’s still not sure if he wants to keep his quirk on, for what it’s about to happen. Even if he gave Shouto and All Might all the privacy he could, by actively not prodding into their feelings as they spoke, he couldn’t stop his overactive imagination in making him feel like he was still doing so. Telling him surely there would be so much anxiety and sadness and anger coming from them, as they
discussed Shouto’s past— And that was enough to make his stomach feel like someone deposited a block of iron directly in it.

“Izuku?”

He sighs. “Sorry. Got distracted.” He replies, a lopsided smile on his mouth. “Did— Things go— Ok?”

Shouto hums, stepping closer. He nudges his shoulder against Izuku’s just slightly, “It’s fine. I’ll tell you the details later.”

He must be curious. Izuku can’t exactly blame him for that. He nods, turning as he instinctively rises one hand along Shouto’s forearm, curling his fingers around his elbow for guidance as Shouto, not commenting on his clear refusal to turn his quirk on, guides him back toward All Might.

“Want me to begin?” All Might asks, practical. Considering how anxious he initially felt as Izuku proposed the idea to him, a handful of days prior, he sounded pretty calm. Izuku wasn’t quite sure if he was putting a front for their sake, or if he just came to terms with it—

“Ok, before you begin—“ Shouto pipes up, careful. “Are you going to tell me you are actually father and son?”

All Might makes a strangled noise, as Izuku releases a splutter and a laugh.

“Shouto—“

“What?” He replies, the movement of his arm suggesting he’s shrugging. “I mean, all this secrecy— It’s kinda suspicious, you know?”

Izuku snickers, shaking his head. The silliness was enough to cut through the vague sense of anxiety that was clogging his chest at the idea of revealing what was probably his biggest secret.

There was no need to be afraid. Shouto was… Shouto. Izuku could tell him anything.
“Let me start.” Izuku says, shaking his head, clearly amused. His tone soberes considerably, as he tightens his fingers around Shouto’s elbow, turning toward him just slightly. “Shouto— I know you’ve been worrying non-stop ever since I showed you the results of those exams…”

The only response he receives, to that, is a pointed sniff, so Izuku continues. “I know you have— Questions, about the way I use my quirk. And that you worry about the consequences, so, huh— This is something I’ve kinda wanted to tell you for a while, so I might as well do it now and— I guess making you worry less.” He hesitates a second, shifting his weight from foot to foot. “I’m not quite sure it will make you worry any less, to be honest, but here we go, I guess.” He adds in a low mutter.

At that, All Might sighs heavily. “Yeah, I’m not quite sure either— I guess this will be more of a— Shift of worry.” He chuckles briefly. “In any case— I’m sure you’ve wondered about young Midoriya’s rather— Unusual physical abilities, have you not?”

It’s clear that the question is directed at Shouto, so Izuku keeps his mouth shut, as a few seconds of silence go by.

“…I can’t deny I find it— Puzzling.” He replies, careful. “I mean, with training, quirks can be used in a variety of ways, but— It’s still hard to see the correlation between Izuku’s emphatic radar and, huh— His ability to punch holes into concrete.”

All Might hums. “Well, let me just— Give you a brief explanation.”

Izuku slides his hand back down, to entwine his fingers with Shouto’s, as All Might gives him an abridged version of the story he shared with Izuku himself months prior— Shouto is stonily silent, if a bit tense, as he listens. It was probably for the better, that Izuku choose to keep his radar off. Both to give his boyfriend some privacy, and because he’s sure whatever must be storming inside Shouto as the truth is revealed to him mustn’t be nice, considering— Well, everything.

Shouto sighs deeply, once All Might is done explaining the history of One For All. “I guess—“ He starts, indecisive, his hold on Izuku’s hand tightening. “I guess that you are about to tell me that you’ve passed this power to Izuku, aren’t you?”

A tense silence falls on the three of them, and Izuku can hear All Might shifts his weight nervously, as he works his throat. “You don’t— Seem surprised.” He manages to drag out of his mouth, heart beating painfully in his chest.
“I’m not.” Shouto replies, almost in a whisper. “I’ve— Been suspecting something since Kamino-Ward. Not… Not this. I don’t think I could’ve ever imagined this, but— I knew something was up.” He goes silent for a couple of seconds, before sighing. “That explains a lot.”

“…Are you— Ok?” All Might asks, clearly indecisive— Enough to make Izuku almost take in consideration the idea of turning his quirk on. At his side, Shouto shrugs.

“It’s weird but— I don’t know, I guess it makes sense.” He turns toward Izuku just slightly. “You— Really wanted to tell me this?”

“I don’t like keeping secrets from people, especially not from you. But— Well, I’m sure you understand why I’m not exactly shouting it from the roofs, don’t you?”

There’s a long stretch of silence. When Shouto speaks again, he sounds vaguely strangled. “Yeah— I think keeping it a secret is— Certainly for the better. Thanks— For telling me, though.”

“You’re not going to worry about young Midoriya any less, are you?” All Might interjects softly, almost tender. Shouto releases a huff.

“Not in the slightest, but at least I won’t have to fear he might bleed his brain out next time I see him kick something into oblivion.” He replies, a somehow self-deprecating humor in his tone. “At the start of school— You didn’t had this— One For All yet, didn’t you?”

Izuku shakes his head briefly, before adding. “It— Happened after the U.S.J.— All Might wanted to wait— Ask me after I had the time to study and be a bit more experienced— Shigaraki kind of forced his hand.”

“Mh.” Shouto replies, flat. “Well, at least you were responsible enough to not ask him the second you met him.”

“…I have to admit the thought crossed my mind.” All Might replies, sounding in equal parts amused and embarrassed. Izuku laughs, surprised. At that, Shouto seems to go considerably less tense, his shoulders drooping a bit.
“You woke me up at an ungodly hour to drop two bombs like these on me—“ He says, tiredly amused. “Honestly.”

“Sorry?” Izuku replies, forcing a guilty grin on his face. Shouto releases a deep, almost theatrical sigh.

“What have you two been up to, meeting so early in the morning, anyway?”

“Just practicing some ranged attacks— It’s kind of the only hour we could do it, between lessons and our preparations for the festival.” Izuku shrugs. “Wanna help me out? I could use some training with moving targets.”

“Sure.” Shouto replies, easily, mussing Izuku’s hair affectionately. “I’ll give you some hail to hit.”

And as he steps away, Izuku finally turns his quirk on -kind of necessary to hit fast moving targets, after all-, not really thinking much—And the sudden wave of deep affection he can feel from both Shouto and All Might is almost suffocating, in a warm, pleasing sort of way. Maybe he just—Worried too much, about having this talk. It’s clear that the both of them are much more resilient than Izuku thought.
Chapter End Notes
It's been a while, isn't it? I'll try my best not to have another 5 months go by before a new update.

Still, can't say for sure when next update will come, since I'm hella busy as you can imagine. As I said in the notes at the start of the chapter, I'm working at a *tododeku comic*, which is being posted both on my *tumblr* and *twitter* account. If you want to keep up with whatever the hell I'm up to these days, follow me there! :D

Works inspired by this one:

- [I Don't Have A] Telepathic Heart by UltimateGamer101
- Elements to See by ShadowTrooper1414

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