Under the Floorboards

by noxes

Summary

In which Izuku, along with a few other people, are Borrowers.

Notes

In which our intrepid, if tiny, hero is introduced, and a few things about him

See the end of the work for more notes
Izuku rubs his eyes blearily as he watches the TV over Yagi’s shoulder, forcing himself to stay awake. It’s long past his unenforced bedtime at this point, but Cementoss is in the middle of burying a villain up to his neck in concrete and Izuku’s never seen him use this move before.

In the back of his mind, a worry whispers that if he stays up too late, he won't be awake enough to borrow tomorrow, and supplies are low. The voice isn't his, but it's achingly familiar to him, and he hurriedly smudges tears from his eyes, determined not to let his crybaby nature hinder him from watching the pro hero on TV. Yagi chuckles as the villain thrashes and struggles fruitlessly.

The angry man is subdued by now. Izuku scribbles a few more notes, being careful to keep the scratching of the pencil as quiet as possible. (Not quite a pencil, but rather a small piece of paper, rolled into a tight cylinder and fined into a point, dipped into a small pot of ashes regularly. Izuku is rather proud of himself for his pencil.) He sketches a quick doodle, then picks himself up and runs across the thin ledge until he reaches his rope. Sticking the crude hook (made out of a bobby pin- Yagi ties his unruly blonde hair up a lot, and the effect is rather nice, if Izuku is any judge) into a crack in the wood and tossing his rope out over the edge, he sticks his notebook, pencil, and ash pot into his satchel, grabs the rope, and jumps, being sure to only let the parts of him that are clothed touch the rope to avoid burns on the way down.

Izuku jumps off when he’s close to the ground, wincing slightly when his ankle flares with pain.

Too far.

Hissing slightly as the pain fades slowly, Izuku hops over to the rope, grabbing it with both hands and waiting for the prickling pain to abate completely before snapping the rope upwards. The hook dislodges with a quiet snick and comes tumbling down, and Izuku is forced to step back to avoid the sharp point.

There’s a thunk when the hook hits the ground, thankfully without embedding itself, and Izuku flinches and shoots a frightened glance at Yagi. His host, however, seems to be completely focused on the reporters who are now swarming Cementoss. Izuku breathes a quiet sigh of relief and grabs the rope, looping it loosely around his forearm. He tries not to think about the person who taught him how to do this.

Sticking the loops on a hook attached to his bag, he scuttles over to a hole in the wall- a crack, really- and squeezes inside.
The small passages and tunnels that lead through the house don't all lead to Izuku's home. Some of them lead to other parts of the house, but he never goes there. It's dangerous. A human could see you. A human could catch you. Be careful, Izuku.

Izuku sighs as he enters his home. It’s very small and a draft blows through it on occasion, but it’s home. He’s managed to make it look nice enough, with a knitted rug on the floor and his food and supplies in a small niche, almost like a closet with no door.

Izuku collapses on his bed with a sigh. It’s a sponge that he borrowed from the kitchen in a fit of desperation after he grew tired of sleeping on the floor. It was soft as a cloud for the first few days, but his body had created a little depression in it that almost touched the floor. His blanket was a bit off an old kitchen towel. It has holes, but it’s better than nothing.

Izuku rolls over and blows out the candle, plunging the room into darkness. Shivering, he pulls the blanket over his head and sleeps, still thinking over the notes he took.

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Toshinori stares at the block of cheese, and the tiny, neat gouge taken out of it.

He could’ve sworn he’d gotten rid of his pest problem...
Izuku had messed up again. Yagi had grown suspicious, his eyes moving searchingly over corners and in cupboards. Luckily, he never thought to look behind the old, dusty jar that had been there for literally years, and the hole behind it. From there, Izuku watched fearfully as Yagi did his paperwork at the table, flinching whenever the man looked up sharply at the slightest scritching noise.

No, Izuku couldn’t venture out like this. It wasn’t even one big thing that had tipped his host off that something was wrong, but rather a series of little slip-ups that created a greater picture. Izuku was 95% certain that Yagi didn’t know about the existence of Borrowers, but many of the methods used to catch or kill mice could do the same for Borrowers.

Izuku had waited for a week, and his food supply ran out two days ago. He was hungry, and besides that he needed other things, like soap and thread.

The man finally left after about an hour to do...whatever it was he did. Izuku heaved a sigh of relief and ran to get his things. A wave of relief washed away the fear and kickstarted the gears in his mind, the object of his musings being his host.

Yagi was weird. He was thin as a literal rail and looked like a sunflower with his bright shock of aggressively blond hair. Izuku personally liked the color; it was almost, if not completely identical to his favorite hero All Might’s hair. Yagi had apparently had a surgery in the past of some kind, if the numerous medications were anything to go by, and nobody ever came to his house. Which was convenient for Izuku, of course, but also quite strange. Most human beans had at least one person over every once in a while, right?

The human bean (string bean would be more appropriate) seemed to be extremely unhealthy. He frequently forgot to take his medications. The first time Izuku had ever seen him cough up a lungful of blood, the Borrower almost had a heart attack right there- except Yagi simply cleaned up the mess and continued like nothing was wrong. Despite the fact that Yagi was a dangerous human bean and would likely hurt him given the chance, Izuku still worried about him. Sometimes, when he had to get aspirin or bandages from the medicine cabinet, he’d take some time to push Yagi’s
medications to the front of the cabinet, right in plain view.

Yagi also seemed to have extensive hero knowledge. While watching the news, he would sometimes mutter the names of hero moves under his breath moments before the hero even executed them. Izuku ponders this as he shoves extra rope into his bag and slips out of the crack in the tile onto the kitchen counter, running over to the sugar first.

When he was little(r), Izuku’s fondest wish was to make friends with a human bean. It would be amazing, he’d said to his mother- human beans were so big and strong! Human beans could protect Borrowers from anything!

Of course, his mother was quick to put that idea out of his head. Human beans were dangerous. Approaching one could and would get you killed, or worse- captured.

No one wanted to be captured by a human bean. The Borrowers who were captured were never seen again. Who knew what kind of tortures they had to endure?

(Don’t think about them. Don’t think about them. Don’t think about them.)

After The Incident, Izuku went from alarmingly bold to properly timid, almost too timid. He spent time waiting for the “right chance,” time that could be spent Borrowing, and ran back inside at the slightest noises or movements. Sometimes, he wouldn’t leave at all, despite supplies being low, and when he did leave, he Borrowed very little. Those years were deemed The Hungry Years in his mind- he was nearly always low on food. After about a year, however, Izuku began to come out a little earlier, go home a little later, and Borrowed a little more. Yagi, while not necessarily a distracted man, was not particularly observant when it came to little things going missing around his house.

Izuku hums a little as he flops on his belly on the counter over a slightly open drawer. Dangling his hook-rope over edge, he lowers it into the crack between drawer and counter, holding his breath when he snags something, and smiling ecstatically when he pulls his “catch” up. He got a button on his first try, the hook poking through one of the little holes in the center.

(“Hah! Got one on my first try! Let’s see you two beat that!”)

Shaking the bad thoughts away, he slipped the button into his bag, then shifted the cover on butter dish to grab some. He’d just wrapped some plastic cling-wrap around his hands and reached in to
grab some when the door opens.

Yagi steps inside, slipping his shoes off and for a brief moment, the Borrower and the human exist in the same space, one staring with eyes stretched wide and the other preoccupied with disentangling himself from his overly large coat, locking the door behind him.

Something distant tells Izuku to run, hide, get away, but he is frozen blank, staring at the human bean inches away from him.

Yagi turns and looks up and his blue, blue eyes fall upon Izuku and do not move.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry!

Ok i lied
Chapter Summary

In which Toshinori has a headache.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Toshinori’s keys hit the ground. It sounds very loud to him. A loud clatter, louder than anything he’s ever heard (which is a lot, considering that he sometimes finds himself working alongside Present Mic when the voice hero deigns to step out of his radio center and yell at the villains who are messing up his broadcast).

What.

That...that looked like a person. On his counter. That looked like a tiny person.

Shock fogs his mind, making him reel for a moment. When he gets his senses back, the person--if that is what the small thing was--is gone. He didn’t see where it went. Stooping, he picks the keys off the ground with trembling fingers, then sits down for a moment.

It’s true that in Toshinori’s career as a hero, he’s seen a lot of weird shit. He’d once seen a villain who could make dreams--not daydreams, but real dreams--come true. That had been weird. Of course, he’s seen size-changing Quirks. But a tiny person standing frozen on the edge of the butter dish--in the middle of his house--

hhhhwhAT THE SHIT.

Shaking slightly, Toshinori fights past the disbelief and replays the memory. He hadn’t gotten a good look at the creature--all he remembers are the little arms and legs, simple clothing, and the knowledge reverberating around the inside of his head that it was a person.
Toshinori spends a week locked in a furious internal struggle. He feels split in half, and both of the voices yelling at him are his.

Toshinori 1: Are you a moron?! Of course that wasn’t real! You were hallucinating or something! Getting so worked up over an illusion or some shit, honestly, you pathetic old man.

Toshinori 2 waits patiently for 1 to finish, then pipes up, quieter but no less intense.

Toshinori 2: That was real. You saw it-them. You saw them. That person--whoever they were--they were real. They still are.

If only he could remember something about the face, the clothes, if he had more detail, he would believe 2 a little easier. He almost doesn’t want to believe it, though, because what would that mean for him? For them, whoever they were?

A week of this. It’s utter torture, because he’s constantly checking corners without realizing it while mentally yelling at himself for being an asinine old fool, constantly trailing off in the middle of sentences or zoning out while his inner voices do battle. Fans and colleagues asking him if he’s alright when, distracted, he nearly loses an arm to a villain. A whole damn week of trying to find the whatever-the-hell-it-was while simultaneously trying to convince himself it wasn’t real. None of this is done to any real effect other than giving him a monster headache.

By the time the week’s finally finished with him, Toshinori’s all too willing to give up and pretend the person either didn’t exist or just up and left.

1: Even if that was a person (and it wasn’t), they would have left by now. Right? Right. Enough. Enough of this, no more. You have a life outside of this... anomaly.

2:

Toshinori drives the struggle from his mind as best as he can and focuses on his work and his life, trying to ignore the little pang at the thought that the little creature was really gone.

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staying up so late and smiles, a little sadly. Years have passed and he still misses the hell out of his old sidekick.

The house is not entirely silent, but it is quiet. Toshinori leans back, letting his burning eyes slip closed. He doesn’t want to fall asleep in his chair or he’ll have a backache as well as the lingering prickle in the back of his skull.

So Toshinori does not sleep. Instead, he tips his head back and listens to the little noises his sleeping house makes, allowing his mind to wander from topic to topic, person to person to a vague outline, simple clothing, hands wrapped in clear plastic and holding a small handful of butter, frozen almost comically with one leg dangling over the edge of the butter dish, about to jump down--

_ugh daMNIT_

Toshinori 1: OH FOR FUCK’S SAKE, YOU CRAZY IDIOT! I ALREADY PROVED 2 WRONG! IT WASN’T REAL!

Toshinori 2:

The man winces and reaches up to rub his temples, focusing on the noises in the house and wondering grimly who would be left if he kicked both voices out (though, if he was honest, 2 had been much quieter and more patient than 1, at least before he was bullied into submission. 2 didn’t seem like he’d given up, though, more like he was...waiting for something to happen that he knew would prove him right.

Perhaps 2 was a result of his hero work, the feeling he got when something was about to occur.)

(The feeling that he had now--it was like the pressure on his chest that he got when a villain was about to attack. No--it was lighter, subtler, different. Something was going to happen. Something. Something...)
A shuffle of something moving. A click, followed by a decisive, ringing snap. A silence so profound Toshinori could almost hear the sharp inhale.

And then a wail of pain, high-pitched and crying, full of primal terror and agony. Toshinori’s chest constricts, hero senses leaping to the forefront as he accidentally bangs his knees on the table trying to get up too fast. Adrenaline hums beneath his skin, an electric response honed by years of hero work to the sound of pain in a human voice.

Gods in heaven, that’s a human voice, that’s a child’s voice--

(Something odd about it...the scream is quiet, even in the almost-silent house, yet the desperation in it suggests that the person is crying at the top of their lungs.

Almost as if they were very small…)

Toshinori finally gets his legs under him (he’s seven feet tall, shut up, go away, the weather up here is fine, thank you) and bolts into the kitchen, for indeed that was where the awful cry was coming from. The wail peters out, followed by a raspy sob, quieter but no less pained. It’s coming from the closet that he uses as a pantry.

(How would somebody fit in his pantry unless they were…?)

Skidding to a stop, he throws the door open so hard it cracks the wall.

The first thing Toshinori sees is the mousetrap, left over from when he was still convinced that he had pests. When the food had stopped disappearing, he had gotten rid of all the traps--except one, apparently.

The second thing he sees is what’s in the trap, and what he sees…

Toshinori 2: I told you.

It’s a person. It’s a tiny person, perhaps even a little smaller than his memory serves. As he stares at the little thing, fuzzy outlines begin to make themselves clear. The simple clothing, the little arms, tiny hands gripping the leg pinned under the metal bar of the trap.
The face that has been missing for so long: a fluff of green hair, round cheeks, small mouth quivering, big frightened greengage eyes, the light reflecting off the tears streaming down their--his cheeks. (Are those freckles under his eyes, eyes blown so wide that Toshinori can see the pain and utter terror in them?)

He’s so small, and so, so scared. Blood bubbles up and runs down his pinned leg, which is quite clearly broken. Toshinori snaps out of his daze and automatically reaches for the child. The boy doesn’t move, but his lips move soundlessly. Toshinori makes out the words “please” and “hurt”. It’s enough to infer what the child is begging.


The child stares at him blearily through teary, foggy eyes, then lowers his head in admission. With that, Toshinori reaches down and, curling the fingers of one hand around the boy to brace him, he pries the bar of the mousetrap up carefully with the other hand, as gently as he can. A part of him is still in shock, but he knows how to push past the fog and deal with the present; he’s been doing it for years. Easing the boy’s leg out from under the bar, he lets the trap snap closed again.

The boy shivers against his fingers, slumping against them. Toshinori can see a fine sheen of sweat on his forehead even from where he is. Frowning slightly, he tucks one hand under the boy and lifts him up close to Toshinori’s face. He stares at the tiny form cradled in one hand with nothing short of unabashed wonder.

The tiny boy’s much closer to him now, and Toshinori can make out some other details. The child is painfully thin and seems very weak, both from pain and from hunger. Tears balance on the lashes of his half-closed eyes and he is very pale, though that may be from shock. He appears to be about eight years old.

My gods, he’s just a child. Just a child. Toshinori reels slightly, feeling much the same as he did on that day a week ago, when he spotted the child initially. He would at least hope that the little stranger would be an adult, but this…!

He doesn’t have time for musings, unfortunately, nor for wallowing in shock. The boy is still bleeding slowly, his eyes closing as he falls into unconsciousness. Toshinori’s no Recovery Girl, but he’s been hurt enough that he knows what to do here, the only problem being how tiny the boy is. He’ll have to be very delicate and precise if he doesn’t want to take the leg off by accident.

Toshinori sets the boy down on a folded dish towel as gently as he can, then carefully, carefully sets the break and disinfects and wraps a bandage around the open wound. He’s suitably satisfied
with his work--it might not be a permanent solution, but it’s good enough to hold until he can figure out what the hell is going on here.

The whole incident lasts a thousand years, but when he looks up at the clock, it’s only 3:23, not even half an hour. Twenty-three minutes to grab his world by the roots and flip it upside-down entirely. And he’s still tired, his eyes stinging and burning.

The soothing darkness behind his eyelids feels good, a promise of rest, to step away from what happened here and the implications and to just sleep.

Toshinori can’t leave the boy, so he wraps the dishtowel around him carefully and sets an apple slice next to him for when he wakes up.

Only then does the hero yawn and put his head down on his folded arms, and the last thought he has before he slips into nothing…

...is that he hadn’t taken his meds all week. He had simply forgotten.

Chapter End Notes

My tumblr is abyssal-glory, if you wanna yell at me...
the early bird gets the worm (wake up wake up wake up)

Chapter Summary

In which Izuku wakes up.

Chapter Notes

This took 2 weeks longer than it should have!! D: I'm sowwee!!

To make it up to you, this one's a bit longer than the other ones. :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toshinori wakes up slowly, with the expected neckache from sleeping in such an odd position. He keeps his eyes shut, but can feel the table beneath his folded arms. He must have fallen asleep here while doing paperwork, but why did he have the feeling that he was forgetting something…?

Toshinori 2: (big eyes small hands mousetrap tears blood fear pain)

Toshinori barely restrains himself from bolting upright, but his eyes snap open and look wildly at where the dish towel and its occupant lie.

Or rather, where they should be. The towel is open and empty, the apple untouched next to it. Toshinori panics for a second, sitting up, because if he remembers everything correctly (he does, and he will never forget it for as long as he lives), the tiny boy’s leg was completely broken—absolutely not a wound he should be standing on. Could he have left? Where even does he live?

Consumed by both musings and worry, Toshinori looks over absently at a rustle. The boy is standing a little over two feet away from him.

They’re frozen for a minute, staring at each other, an eerie mirror of their disastrous first meeting, if it could even be called that.

The boy doesn't say anything, just shifts his weight a bit and stares at Toshinori. His eyes are much more clear than last night, though still fogged slightly with hunger, and they gaze at the man with a
startling intensity, as well as suspicion.

Toshinori does not know what to do. There are so many questions he wants to ask, but it is clear that his guest is distrustful of him. He supposes it makes sense. Toshinori is tall even for most people--he must look like a positive colossus to this child.

And yet. And yet, this situation is not so different than hostage scenarios. Not so different from talking down frightened victims. Toshinori runs through the options.

Not much left to do except talk. He swallows back a mouthful of blood and opens his mouth.

“...hello.”

Toshinori 1: Smooth.

The kid looks at him like he spoke in Dutch. Symbol of Peace and Justice, my ass. Apologize, you buffoon.

“I'm-- uh , I'm sorry for scaring you last night. I thought that I had gotten rid of all the traps from when I was having pest troubles--I think it was mice.”

Toshinori 1: Real smooth.

“That was me.”

“Huh?” Toshinori's head snaps up to look at the boy.

The kid shuffles his feet, wincing slightly at the movement, and stares at the ground. “I was the one Borrowing your stuff. It wasn't...it wasn't mice.”

Toshinori stares at him. “Er.”
Hey, in his defense, he’s just shocked that the child can speak, even if his voice is so small and raspy that he can barely be heard. The boy sounds almost...hesitant. Afraid, even. It’s a new experience for Toshinori, having people being afraid of him, especially children.

A jarring thought occurs to him. Does this kid know about his hero identity? He doubts it, since he never comes home in his hero form. Still, there are some definitive giveaways that could cause the boy to make the connection.

...then again, he’s clearly younger than ten. Toshinori decides that it’s safe to assume, then, that everything’s fine, but also to tread carefully.

It is then that he notices that his mouth is hanging open. He quickly snaps it shut, taking in the child’s appearance.

“Did you say borrowing?” he asks. The boy looks up, and nods slowly.

“It’s...how we survive,” he says reluctantly. “I wasn’t gonna tell you, but...you did save me. I thought I owed it to you.”

(We? There were more of them?)

Toshinori digests all of this silently, nodding slowly. Then he reaches over and picks the apple slice up, studying it. It’s most definitely untouched. He looks at the boy again, harder. He looks much too thin (pot, kettle), and it occurs to Toshinori that the kid might not have been able to...“borrow” anything since their meeting at the beginning of the week.

He gives the kid a sharp look. “Why didn’t you eat this?”

“It could have been poisoned,” the kid shoots back.

Consternation flares in his chest. “Why would I go to the trouble of poisoning you after I saved you?”

“The ‘Never accept anything from human beans,’ ” the boy recites immediately, as though it’s
something that has been drilled into him from birth.

Toshinori stares. “I’m sorry, did you just say ‘beans’?”

The boy stares right back with his big green eyes. “Yes. That’s what you are. Human beans.” He says it like it’s obvious.


“No, you’re beans,” the kid says, big eyes wide and stubborn.

“Beings.”

“Beans!”

*I physically cannot believe I am having this conversation with a tiny person in the middle of my kitchen right now.*

“...right, yeah. Okay. What’s your name?”

It's the boy’s turn to look taken aback. “My what?”

Toshinori reminds himself that alien terms and smallness aside, he's still dealing with a child, and a wary, distrustful child at that. He needs to be patient with the boy and accept that he's not going to act exactly like a normal human being.

“What's your name, my boy?” Toshinori says, trying to keep his tone gentle.

The kid stares at him, hard. Toshinori tries not to fidget under the surprisingly sharp gaze, gazing levelly back. The boy drops his gaze first, shuffles his feet again, twists his hands, then looks up.
Toshinori gives the boy--Izuku--a smile and extends his index finger, curled slightly. Izuku looks at it in bewilderment before realization flashes across his little face and he reaches up to shake it gingerly. “It’s nice to meet you, little Midoriya. I’m Yagi Toshinori.”

Izuku nods knowingly and Toshinori is struck with an errant thought. “But you already knew that, didn’t you?”

Izuku jolts and looks at him, then slowly nods again, looking a bit shameful.

Which would mean he’s been living in my house for some time.

Toshinori leans back in his chair and gives the tiny boy a long thoughtful look, then nods decisively, picks up the apple slice, and bites off a tiny chunk of it--barely a corner, really. Izuku looks utterly lost.

“There,” Toshinori says after swallowing. “Now do you believe it’s not poisoned? Surely you can make an exception in this case, little Midoriya.” He decides then and there that that’s what he’s going to call the kid, considering since he doesn’t look offended, just bemused and wary. Izuku nods slowly.

“I-I guess so. You wouldn’t….poison yourself, that-that’s counterintuitive. And human beans eat more than Borrowers, so the bite you took would h-have to be enough to kill me and it didn’t affect you, so….”

Toshinori can see the boy’s trying to reassure himself, so he simply nods and holds the apple out. Izuku hesitantly takes it, grunting a little under its weight, then tears into the slice the second it hits the table.

“Feel better?” Toshinori asks once he’s done.

Izuku looks up, a flush of color rising in his freckled cheeks and his eyes clearing of any residual fog. He looks much better now, much more awake. “Huh? Oh! Y-yes, much better... um.”

Izuku twists his hands together, mumbling to himself again. It seems to be a nervous tic of his, the
muttering, which is frankly rather adorable. Actually, *everything* about the little thing is adorable, and Toshinori finds his lips lifting into a smile—a real, honest smile, not the fake grin he plasters on when he is in his hero form. It always takes so much effort, to smile all the time—it had been a while since he last smiled for real. He tests out the feeling again, and he likes it and resolves to try and do it more often.

Toshinori’s jerked out of his thoughts by Izuku looking up and saying, “You...want...you want information, right? Who I am and what I am and h-how long I’ve been here and...and stuff.”

Smart kid. “We-e-ell, to be fair,” Toshinori drawls slightly, “You did tell me who you were. I *do* want to know what you are and what your story is. I’m sure it’ll explain how long you’ve lived in my house and why, in time.”

Izuku swallows, looks down at the table for what feels like the eightieth time (seriously, why is he so nervous? It’s not like Toshinori’s going to *squish* him or anything), then nods and sits.

“Okay. Alright. *Uh,* first of all, I’m not a human. I—I know I look kind of like one, ex-except my height *uh* obviously, but I'm--we--we're called ‘Borrowers.’”

“May I inquire as to why that is?” Toshinori prompts gently when Izuku hesitates.

“Oh! Right. It’s because we ‘Borrow’ from human beans. That's how we survive. We-we never take anything big--we, *um,* Borrow things you won't miss, like soap and paper clips...a-and butter.” They both wince at the memory of their disastrous first “meeting.”

“So you ‘Borrow’ from us when we're not around...if that's true, then why haven't you attempted contact with humans yet?” Toshinori asks, genuinely bemused.

Izuku stares at him like that’s the most ridiculous thing he’s ever heard. “Isn't- isn't it obvious? You'll kill us! Human beans are our biggest enemy.”

Toshinori stares back. “You don't know that, my boy. There could be someone out there that would help you like I did.”

Izuku shakes his head sadly. “I used to think that too, but...” He looks away.
Toshinori’s seized with a terrible thought. “Where are your parents, little Midoriya? Did one of us...that is, did a human…”

Izuku seems to catch on. He shakes his head.

“I don't...I-I don't know where my dad is. He left us a while ago...maybe four years? Hold on…”

Toshinori fails to suppress a grin as Izuku slips into muttering again. He’s already enamored with this child, as adorable as he is, and utterly fascinated by how small and yet how... detailed he is. It truly is like looking at the world’s most perfect miniature.

“...fffff four years later, yeah!” Izuku brightens considerably at having figured this out. “He left four years after I was born.”

Toshinori nods, a little sadly. He never truly understood why people left their families... waitasecond.

“Hold on,” he says suddenly. “You said he left four years ago?”

Izuku nods like he's not sure where Toshinori's going with this. “Uh huh…”

“When you were four years old, correct?”

Izuku nods again.

Toshinori openly gapes at him. “You're eight?!”

“Ye-es…” Izuku says slowly. Toshinori gapes, then drops his head into his hands and fights the urge to scream into them. Eight. He’s so young, too young to have that kind of mortal terror in his eyes, to feel his leg breaking because of a human trap. Eight years old and...alone?
Toshinori looks up, his curiosity piqued once more. “You mentioned your father; what about your mother?”

Izuku freezes. Goes completely rigid, and stares right through Toshinori and through the back wall and the air and the trees, reaching with his gaze for someone lost.

“...she….sh…”

All of a sudden, Toshinori knows what he’s going to say. He knows-

“Sh-she’s de-....”

The boy chokes on the word and closes his eyes, swallowing, but tears still leak out from the corners of his squeezed-shut eyelids and a sob tears its way out of his throat before he clamps his hands over his mouth and cries wetly through them.

It always hurt Toshinori, to see people cry, to see people in pain. Worse still is the pain that comes when they sob over the family members he could not save. And while he knows that the Borrower woman’s death is not his fault, he still feels a deep, piercing ache in his chest at Izuku’s pain.

He wants to reach out. He wants to help him, wants to tell him that everything will be fine, that he’s not alone anymore-

But all Toshinori does is reach out to stroke the shivering child’s back with the tip of his finger, as lightly and gently as he possibly can. Izuku jolts and trembles for a moment and Toshinori almost pulls away, but Izuku leans into the touch before he can apologize, curling into it like he hasn’t been touched in years.

(He hasn’t.)

Toshinori lets out a breath that ruffles the Borrower’s hair slightly as he continues to rub tiny circles into Izuku’s back and holds his breath, hoping that Izuku hasn’t noticed the steam curling from his forearm. He hasn’t, of course; he’s outright sobbing now, and Toshinori gets the feeling that this is not the first time that Izuku has cried over this--but it is the first time he’s told anyone.
Toshinori 2: ...he’s alone.

_Oh, how lovely. You’re still here_, Toshinori thinks with a grimace. Izuku sniffs and leans further into his hand, curling up against his palm, and Toshinori holds his breath as he very slowly, very gently curls his long fingers around the tiny, frail form.

They sit that way for a bit.

| - • - |

Izuku scrubs at his red-rimmed eyes furiously. “S-sorry.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for, my boy,” Yagi says gently. He looks even more careworn up close, now that Izuku’s sitting right in front of him (and a part of him is still screaming _getawaygetawaygetaway_, but he holds his ground. Yagi could have killed him many times over by now, and he hasn’t yet. That’s got to stand for something.

Plus, he pulled his hand back the literal second Izuku had displayed any kind of fear. Izuku's back is warm and kind of tingly where the tips of Yagi’s fingers had rested.

Years of hiding and telling himself that human beans are bad don't go away that easily, but plain and simple logic is telling Izuku that he's not in danger, not anymore.

So, against his better judgment (or maybe his worse) he decides to trust this human. Not completely, but enough to tell him what happened to his mother on the day of The Incident.

Because that's what Yagi wants, to know why he’s alone. He’s trying valiantly not to show it, but mingled curiosity and concern clash on his thin face, the desire to know what happened.

Izuku sighs and rolls up his sleeve. Yagi inhales sharply. “What did that?”
His arm is covered with two pink, jagged scars that run from his wrist up to the inside of his elbow. The scars are raised a bit from the exposed scar tissue, and the skin is puckered slightly on either side.

“A raccoon,” Izuku explains, and his voice is no longer light and stuttery, but heavy and monotonous, divorcing him from emotion, “killed my mom when we went outside to Borrow.”

He stares at the table. Doesn’t meet Yagi’s eyes. Doesn’t look at his stricken face. “I-I wasn’t alone before...I had two friends. They lived with us--Katsuki’s parents died, and Hitoshi...I don’t know what happened to him.

The raccoon...I think it mistook us for mice, or something--or maybe it was crazy. I don’t--I don’t know--”--his voice cracked as the mask slipped a fraction--“- I don’t know why.”

Izuku hiccups, sniffles, wipes his now-streaming eyes. “It s-separated us, and killed my m-mom...I got lost f-ffor a week. I don’t remember...m-much...I think maybe I was s-sick or something, or hungry. I-I ended up in your house, when you were away.”

The room is silent but for the little gasps of the Borrower on the table. Yagi almost reaches for him again, but hangs back. Izuku appreciates the space. He looks up at his host, waiting.

Izuku: S-so that’s my story.

Yagi:

Izuku: So, uh ...do I....I mean, should I-I leave?

Yagi: No.

Izuku gapes at him. Yagi’s gaze is soft but firm, and his tone leaves no room for argument.

“Regardless of whether or not you were, ah , ‘Borrowing’ my things, you are still a living thing. No, more than that--you’re a person , if not a human, and my...my job revolves around protecting people.”
What is Yagi’s job? He’s gone for hours at a time, sometimes days, coming home smelling of dust and sweat, bandages going up and down his arms.

It’s not Izuku’s place to pry. Yagi—no, Yagi-san, he deserves the respectful suffix—will tell him when he feels like doing so. It’s the least he can do, to repay his host for sparing his useless life and taking care of him, for understanding, and now, apparently for letting him stay…?

Izuku swallows. “So I can…I can stay?” Yagi-san nods, smiling gently.

“I understand you’re still scared of humans. We’ll take it slow, alright? If you need me to back off and give you space or to do something for you, just tell me.” He gives Izuku a moment to digest this, then adds, “and, my house is still completely open to you.”

What.

Yagi-san’s chuckle sounds suspiciously like a snicker—probably at the look on Izuku’s face. He might even call it a giggle. “Yes, my boy, you don’t have to Borrow anymore if you don’t want to—don’t give me that look, you’re a tiny orphan who’s had to learn to be self-sufficient at far too young an age. I can give you that much, at least.”

“So does that make you my wealthy benefactor?” Izuku blurts out then immediately colors all the way to his fingertips and pulls his collar up over his head as Yagi-san explodes into deep, booming laughter. “HAHA! I suppose it does, Little Midoriya!”

Eventually the laughter subsides somewhat, enough for Yagi-san to ask, “Where did you even learn what that means…?”

And Izuku opens his mouth again, like an actual dingus and mumbles, “I saw some human beans watching Annie once…”

It takes a few minutes for Yagi-san to calm down after that mental imagery, and by the time he has Izuku has deduced that 1) this human bean is about the biggest dork Izuku’s ever seen and 2) he’s not going to hurt Izuku.
As he waits for Yagi-san to try to take a breath without bursting into more helpless peals of laughter, a tiny, unseen smile forms on his face, still hidden under his collar.

Maybe he won’t have to hide anymore.

Chapter End Notes

ok nevermind this is terrible i don't know how to explain borrowers im sorry
The Fucking Couch

Chapter Summary

In which Izuku is sleepy and Toshinori has a lot of feelings.

Chapter Notes

ha ha ha!
ha.
i am. so late.

there is an explanation and the explanation is computer and motivation both said no.
my sincerest apologies. i'll try to do better in the futureeeeee

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toshinori doesn't ask much more. He can see clearly how exhausted his tiny guest is--and, after a closer look, he's also likely still in pain, if his slightly pinched expression is anything to go by.

Toshinori knows that look well. That is the look of someone who knows how to hide their hurting. The only reason he had picked up on it at all is because he makes that expression so often. Almost every day now, and his scar the usual culprit, prickling with ache if he stretches his left side just a little bit too far. (Or if it's about to rain.)

He makes that face every day for the people he saves, for the heroes he works with, for the media clamoring for his attention. Toshinori knows how it feels. The pain. Ever present.

That look. That look is not a look that belongs on a child’s face, and yet here he is, trying to figure out how much ibuprofen one gives to an eight-year-old boy the size of one of his fingers (if that, even--his fingers are very long).

“Why were you standing on that leg?” he chides gently. “It’s broken. Standing on it will only make it worse--and it must've hurt like blazes besides.”

Little Midoriya hesitates and looks down, faltering.
Because--because I didn't want to seem weak. I didn't want you to think getting hurt would make me--make me...seem...vulnerable. You know?

I didn't know you were nice.” He looks up pleadingly, silently begging Toshinori to understand.

He does. Even if the villain seems much stronger than you and you know you can't win, you make sure the villain doesn't know that too. You puff out your chest and toss back your head and smile (that smile! That lying smile!) and proclaim to the villain and the bystanders and the whole damn world that you are here. That you will remain here, that you will not die.

(Because if you say it enough times, you might just begin to believe that you can cheat death over and over for the sake of...of...everything. Everyone.)

(Shut up, damn it. Shut up. Stop thinking, stop talking, stop.)

Toshinori takes a deep breath and wipes his thoughts from his mind.

“And...and I'm...used to it anyway. I could have--handled it,” Midoriya continues, oblivious to the clanging thoughts in his host’s head. Toshinori latches on to the boy’s words, grateful for a distraction but distressed at the meaning of them.

“Used to it? How do you mean? Are you used to broken bones?” Toshinori says worriedly from the counter, trying to finagle the knife to cut a small sliver of a painkiller pill without cutting his freaking fingers off.

“Not broken bones, exactly, just...hurting. In general.”

Toshinori stiffens, the knife coming to rest on the cutting board.

Midoriya takes it upon himself to explain hastily. “It's not--I'm not, like--I don't get hurt very often or anything, I just... uhh …”

He lapses into silence for a moment, then perks up.
“You remember your old couch?”

Toshinori feels like he's got the mental equivalent of fucking whiplash. “My--my what?”

Midoriya waves his hands impatiently, like he's trying to shape the air into a couch. “You know! The old brown one? With the springs?”

_Oh, gods. That couch._

The Fucking Couch was probably thirty years old by the time Toshinori got rid of it. He's had it since he graduated and for some unholy reason insisted on lugging the thing with him whenever he moved. It was cracked leather and ugly when it was new. Pretty comfortable at first, but with time the springs poked through the leather and jabbed him whenever he tried to sit down. Eventually he got rid of it and felt his whole house give a little sigh when he did, like it was relieved.

“I'm-- _uh_ --yes? That couch sucked,” he added making a face. Midoriya giggled, then sobered.

“A month before you got rid of it, I was Borrowing. I took a shortcut across the couch, but it was dark and my flashlight burned out and--” he glances up at Toshinori.

“I got cut,” he finishes lamely, in a small voice. “By a spring. The end was sharp.” And so saying this he shifts the shoulder of the part of his shirt that's not covering the raccoon scars and displays a small, pale scar. Not much to look at, except…

_Gods. Oh, gods. Those are stitch marks. He was all alone--did he have painkillers--did he have to sterilize it and stitch it himself--_

“I had some ibuprofen that I Borrowed from the medicine cabinet,” the tiny boy says softly. “It hurt, but not...not that bad.”

_Oh. Oh, my boy…”_
Toshinori’s heart aches. He turns and brusquely slices off a corner of the pill, deftly catching the bigger half before it skitters off the counter.

“So long as I am here, that won't happen again,” he says, making his tone gentle, as Little Midoriya is still wary of him. “I don't know how much of this you should take,” he adds doubtfully, eyeing the sliver of ibuprofen. Midoriya looks at it carefully, then takes it from Toshinori's outstretched finger and snaps it in half, then snaps one piece into smaller pieces and swallows them dry. “I did some math for medicine since the couch thing,” he explains. “'Cuz I didn't take enough ibuprofen because I didn't wanna poison myself.”

Toshinori watches, nodding, then takes the other half. “You should sleep now, my boy,” he says, putting the half on the counter for later. “You're exhausted. Did you eat enough?”

Midoriya shakes his head. “I'm still hungry, but I should take it slow. Can I...can I eat when I, uh, wake up?” he asks, suddenly shy. Toshinori nods and smiles. He's remarkably perceptive for a child his age, and smart too. The shyness is adorable in its own right, but Toshinori hopes he'll be comfortable around his host soon, even if he is a human “bean.”

Little Midoriya gets a dish towel to sleep in, with another tucked under his head for a pillow. Swaddled in the towels and dwarfed by them, he seems very small and depthlessly young, with just his sleepy greengage eyes and shaggy, curly mop of green hair poking over the edge of the “blanket.”

“I like your new couch,” Midoriya says sleepily. “It's bigger. And there's more space to hide things under there.”

_Uh. “Does that mean there are. Things. Under my couch?” Toshinori asks carefully._

“Just some little things,” the boy assures him. “Notebook-making supplies, extra soap, non-perishables, water flask. For if I get stranded, or can't go back to my home.”

Toshinori almost asks him where his “home” is right then and there, but manages to hold back because the boy is so tired he can barely keep his eyes open anymore.

_Ah well. Questions for later, I suppose._ A part of him feels relief that the two parts of him that previously battled for dominance now seem to be in agreement again, silenced by the new arrival. And another part of him feels quietly excited for what's to come, the questions to be answered, the
knowledge to be gained.

And deep down, a small, small part tells him that it's good that Midoriya and Toshinori found each other, because from the looks of things so far, it looks like they need each other.

_It will be nice to have someone to look after_, he thinks, running the tip of one finger very gently over the child's incredibly soft green hair.

Chapter End Notes

we have almost reached the end of the Plot and are going to begin on the Fluff. soon. i promise. :D

End Notes

wELP. IT POSTED TWICE.

I deleted the other one, so if you're confused, this is the one I'm updating now. Sorry for any confusion!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!