Izuku’s quirk was nowhere to be seen.
Katsuki’s quirk was keeping everyone away.
Shouto’s quirk was preventing him from making close friends.
Ochako’s quirk was forcing her to be an actress.
Toshinori’s quirk was worthy of the title of Public Enemy Number One.

What's the price for a quirk?
In a society where dangerous quirks are automatically targeted and placed in a special environment... Where every quirk has risks and a price to pay... What happens when you suddenly get something you never wished for?

(An original story with different quirks, backstories and environment.)
Welcome!
First of all, I wanted to point out that I'm not native English, I'm doing my best, please forgive (or inform me of) any mistake I may make!

The characters are all of age and it's rated mature so yeah, in my country eighteen is the legal age so I'm sorry if in your country it's higher, you can change the age in your head if it helps. Same with school years, I really cannot account for all the countries so I'm using a random system of my choosing: high school ends at eighteen after five years and you enter university when you are nineteen. Sorry if it's confusing!

The characters are born and raised in a completely different environment than canon, so they will have a partially different personality. I tried to make them as coherent as possible with their own lives.
Hope you enjoy!
All right, maybe snogging a total stranger in a pub while drunk had not been a great idea.

Izuku was seated inside an interrogatory room, in the police station. The policemen had been constantly interrogating him for the past three hours. How had Izuku, who was registered on the National Album as quirkless, melted the skin of a man on the bus? Izuku truly had no idea what to respond to these accusations. It was true, but he had no idea how!

It had been a little past midnight and Izuku was riding the bus home, after having spent the night inside a pub with some school friends. He had a slight headache caused by the alcohol, something Izuku was not used to. When the bus reached his stop he got up and stumbled a little, accidentally he placed a hand on an arm of a man that was seated nearby. He apologized and started to walk away when the man started to scream in pain. The spot where Izuku's hand had rested was covered in horrible greenish bubbles that were rapidly spreading on the skin. Blood began to flow from the torn skin and the man got on his feet panicking. While everyone started to scream in terror the bus driver stopped the vehicle. Izuku, completely shocked, called an ambulance, the other passengers evidently called the police too.

Here he was now. Feeling awful, scared and guilty. The policemen didn’t find any trace of acid on his body, any container either, and the other passengers had testified that he only placed his hand on the man. Had he concealed his acid quirk until that day? Why had he attacked that man? Izuku could not answer any of their questions because he honestly had no idea.

“What you did was extremely serious and since you refuse to cooperate with us we have no choice. Your quirk, Acid Skin, is classified A in order of dangerousness and your lack of cooperation allow us to call the Task Force to deal with you. I hope you’re ready to tell them the truth.”

Izuku stomach did a backflip. A quirk he didn’t even know he had was classified A, the second level of potential danger, and they were calling the Government Task Force on him. His normal, peaceful future was flying away waving a hand.

After another half an hour, where Izuku actually thought he was going to have a heart attack from nervousness, the door opened and a young man, probably around twenty, entered the interrogation room. He sat on the chair in front of him, on the other side of the table, and started to observe him with his hands intertwined. The man had purple hair and eyes and a very penetrating gaze.

“I’m Shinso, 14th division of the Task Force, collecting information branch. Maybe you already know my quirk?”

In fact, Izuku knew. The Task Force components were really famous, after all, that was the condition of their employment. The Task Force was an agglomerate of all the most dangerous quirks of the country, the law-breaking ones. In order to reassure the population that the most dangerous people were kept on constant watch, the details of their quirks were made public making much more difficult for them to act unnoticed. Everyone was wary of them.

These people had passed a test and proved their loyalty to the country, the Task Force was the only place they could work while maintaining their freedom. All the others who failed the test were being kept captive in secret and protected environment. After Toshinori Yagi’s betrayal the Government had no mercy for everyone with an A or S level quirk.
Shinso’s quirk was Truth or Dare. Basically his quirk allowed him to know with 100% certainly when a person lied. After hearing a statement he could touch a person and if they caught fire they were lying. Shinso had been recognized as a level A since he was little, he hurt a lot of people without even having the intention. After he had received his classification he was strictly forbidden to touch another human being after they talked. Now, his quirk allowed him to do completely trustworthy interrogations.

“I’m going to ask some questions, if you don’t want to be burned you better be truthful.”

Izuku nodded multiple time, his stomach clutched. He was scared but not terrified, he was telling the truth from the very beginning after all. He was quirkless, or at least that’s what he had thought until that day.

“So, first question. Are you Izuku Midoriya?”

Izuku said yes, Shinso took his hand and no fire appeared anywhere.

“Very well, look like you are willing to cooperate and at least your identity is confirmed. Next question, did you attack that man on the bus with your quirk?”

“I-I guess I did, but it was unintentional! I didn’t even know I have a quirk at all! I guess I activated it by accident or something?” Izuku said trembling a bit, still no fire.

“I see… You’re telling the truth. That’s… unexpected. Are you a late bloomer? I thought all quirks became apparent before the middle school ages… You are eighteen, right?”

“Yes, sir. I don’t know, sir.”

“I understand,” Shinso let go his hand and got up, “in that case we can’t accuse you of aggression, but we still have a problem. Your quirk is level A, you can’t keep living as you did, you are obliged by law to take the test. You need to get your quirk registered and then we will give you some time to inform your family, but you need to take the plane to the test site as soon as possible. This year test is starting in two days, you don’t want to miss your chance and spend the next year on probation, right?”

Izuku didn’t know if he should feel relieved or not. He was not going to be imprisoned, but only for the moment. He followed the man outside the room where they were stopped by another police officer. Shinso started to explain the situation but he was interrupted by the arrival of other two men.

“Sorry to interrupt Mr. Shinso, we have observed the video of the interrogation and we have called an expert on quirks. Mr. Tokoyami’s Teleport quirk is really useful, good thing he is employed in our station!”

Izuku felt his heart skip a beat when he recognized the man that had yet to speak and was standing there looking completely bored. The long black hair, the little hints of an unshaved beard, the long white string of capture cloth around his neck and the yellow goggles on his eyes made him unmistakable. Aizawa was even more famous than Shinso as a member of the Task Force. Aizawa’s God Eye made him absolutely indispensable for the Government. His quirk allowed him to identify every person’s quirk on sight. Unfortunately it had a terrible price, every time he used it he was losing a tiny bit of eyesight, eventually he would become completely blind. That was the reason why he was wearing protective goggles, to avoid looking at someone by accident.

“We have heard that this young man has just discovered his quirk? A level A nonetheless! Mr. Aizawa is the person in charge of recruiting people for the test, technically he finished a month ago
and everyone is already at the test site but it’s better to clarify things now, right? Otherwise, we will let this young man hanging for a whole year!” the man smiled trying to be friendly.

“I see,” Shinso scratched his head a little, “I guess I’m not needed anymore. I’m returning to my office then.” he looked at him. “Mr. Midoriya, don’t worry too much. The test is much better than what people describe. As long as you honestly don’t try to hurt other people you will be fine.” he lightly slapped him on the shoulder and then made his way out of the police station.

“Well, Mr. Aizawa why don’t you take a look at this young man? You can use the interrogation room so you are sure to be alone with him.” the man smiled again and left them.

Aizawa entered the room without saying anything, still looking bored. Izuku seated in the chair once again and waited, he clenched the fabric of his pants. The older man slowly slid the goggles down his face letting them hang from his neck and after massaging his eyes a little he opened them. His eyes were black and looked painfully irritated. He looked at him for only a couple seconds before massaging them again. He slowly placed the goggles back in place before speaking.

“So, here we have a nice level S. No wonder you didn’t discover your quirk before. It’s quite rare and has a very interesting requirement to work. A Wild Card, hm?” his voice was tired and low.

Izuku had never heard of such a quirk before and now he wasn’t sure he wanted to discover what it was. A level S was never a good news.

“Your quirk has nothing to do with Acid Skin, at least not directly. Before you did that little trick on the bus did you do something particular? It may have been an accident I guess…”

Before that he was in a pub, drinking, he remembered feeling lightheaded and then his school friends dare him to kiss a guy who was clearly looking at him and flirting. Normally he would not have done something like that, it wasn’t like he was extraordinary modest, but kissing a random person was not on his character. He didn’t particularly feel like telling Aizawa that, though.

“Your quirk works on DNA assimilation. When your body absorbs someone’s DNA, that person’s quirk becomes yours. Which means that you can have as many quirks as you want as long as someone willingly gives you their DNA. You can’t steal a hair and eat it, the exchange must be consensual. The only thing that I can guess from that is that you have probably assimilated someone’s quirk tonight and now it’s yours. Unfortunately, my quirk doesn’t tell me how many you have… And that’s one of the reasons you’re level S. You can hold hundreds of quirks, including other S.”

Izuku was shocked. The saliva. That guy’s saliva. Acid Skin was his quirk. Had he not had the bad luck of kissing a level A quirk owner he would have never discovered something so terrible. Maybe one day he would have assimilated a quirk, a normal one, and started to use it as his own… But nope, he just had to be unlucky and assimilate a level A as his first.

“Well, we will see each other in two days on the test site. Don’t even think about escaping this. You’re a level S, your quirk can ruin the lives of many people and it’s a real threat to the nation.”

Aizawa got up and left the room without saying anything else. Izuku took a long time to recover the use of his legs, he got his possessions back and then left the police station walking slowly, head hung. All the heat had left his body, he felt tired and drained. In the span of a night he almost risked prison for aggression, then he was told that he was a threat to the nation. All because he simply kissed a random person in a pub. Izuku had never really considered himself unlucky, he had a normal family, a good health, slightly above average grades and some friends even if they were not really close. Maybe he could have been luckier but he was quite content with his normalcy. After all,
he had already seen from very close what a quirk can do to someone. Izuku reached his house feeling crushed, everything felt extremely unfair. What was he going to say to his parents?

Not really surprising his parents were in the living room, waiting for his return. He may have been eighteen but he still had the curfew at midnight and a half. It was four in the morning.

“Izuku! Where were you?! It’s way past our agreed time!” his mother stood in front of him with her hands on her hips. “I was scared! You didn’t even pick up your phone!”

“I thought you were a lot more mature than this, Izuku.” his father was still on the sofa with his arms crossed and a disappointed expression. “Even if you didn’t agree with the curfew it’s not a good reason to disappear like this and not answer your phone.”

His father was not exactly strict but when he decided something there was no way to make him change his mind. He decided Izuku’s curfew when he was sixteen and refused to listen when he was asked to postpone it a little after Izuku’s eighteen birthday. They had some discussions about this but nothing too big, Izuku in the end conceded the point with resignation. His mother didn’t really join the discussions, she was fine with her husband’s decision, Izuku knew that she was a bit apprehensive and didn't like the idea of him going out alone at night. Now, Izuku was forced to tell her that her beloved son was probably going to be imprisoned for life. Somewhere far from her.

He sat on the sofa, next to his father, his mother caught on her son’s mood and sat down on the other side, a worried expression on her face. Slowly he started explaining the events of the night, letting out only the kiss because that was still his business. After he finished speaking a long silence filled the room, both were frozen in place. Izuku felt a little pang of irritation because they were supposed to make him feel better, instead, they were taking it worse than he did. It was pretty irrational but he really wanted someone to tell him ‘everything will be alright’.

“I don’t believe it,” his father snapped out of it first, “there must be a mistake. I don’t know about the acid stuff but… You never manifested anything, it’s ridiculous, Aizawa must be mistaken.”

“Yeah, that’s right!” his mother jumped immediately at the opportunity. “There is surely a mistake! I won’t believe it unless a Specialist examines you! We are going to the Quirk Registration Office tomorrow!”

“But he is a Specialist…” his weak protest was ignored.

He needed to go to the Registration Office anyway so he just left them talk. After some time he finally could go up to his room and he threw himself on his bed still fully clothed. He pushed his face into the pillow and let out a sound of frustration. Not that he couldn’t see where his parents were coming from. Normally, you have years to prepare for the prospective of you son going to be a captive for the Government and both of them never had any experience with any of it. No relatives ever had an A or S quirk, not even a friend. His mother was a florist, her quirk allowed her to make flowers bloom during every season, his father was happily quirkless. He was happy because he could see the effect that the quirk was having on his wife. Ironically her quirk made her allergic to most flowers. She was basically constantly on medication and sometimes she would sniff and have red eyes. Having a quirk often sucked pretty badly, honestly.

Izuku had mixed feeling about them, sometimes he wanted to have a quirk, often he definitely didn’t want to have one. Well, so much for that. For sure, he never wanted an A or S. His frustration prevented him from having even a minute of sleep, he spent the rest of the morning rolling in his bed hugging the pillow pressed of his face. At nine in the morning his parents, formally clothed, called him and told him to get ready for the examination. He took a quick shower and dressed as best as he could, he had two beautiful black bags under his eyes.
They had to wait for three hours, seated in a waiting room full of screaming kids and their parents, before they could enter the examination room. Inside was a young woman with long blond hair, she was cheerful and overly chatty, definitely not a good match for them; they were tired, irritated, and in a bad mood. The girl licked a drop of his blood and confirmed the presence of a quirk. She laughed at the reaction of Izuku’s father who was looking at her a little scandalized. Izuku, instead, was considering that if he had done the same thing to someone he would have assimilated their quirk. A scary but fascinating thought.

After that the procedure was a bit more complicated. Only someone like Aizawa could precisely define the quirk type. Izuku was sent to another room where he was explained, more or less, how to activate an active type quirk, like Acid Skin. It took him twenty minutes but in the end he could conjure a thin layer of acid on his palm. He was surprised that he was not getting hurt himself. At that point Izuku was already resigned to his fate, even in case he was not a Wild Card he still had an A quirk. He sighed as he waited for his parents to calm down. The blond girl appeared again.

“I’ve done some research, Wild Card hm? Interesting quirk.” she had her hands inside her lab coat pockets. “If you don’t mind I would like to confirm it, there is a kid in the room right now whose quirk is Light Sphere. It’s a harmless quirk, the dimension of the sphere is pretty disappointing too, and the only contraindication is that it makes you sneeze when you activate it. Want to try and absorb it?”

Izuku was not feeling very comfortable but he agreed anyway, he was curious too. The kid willingly agreed to give him a hair and Izuku swallowed it not letting show his disgust. Then, together with the little kid, went into the test room and observed as the kid lighted up a very little marble of light in his palm. He tried the same and he suddenly had to close his eyes, he sneezed and when he opened them again he was looking at a very similar marble, it was only a little smaller still.

“Well, there you have it!” the girl cheerfully commented. “I think it's time to sign the Registration Form and send the data to the Album, right?”

Izuku and his parents, silent and pale, were sent to another part of the office. There was sitting a woman in her forties, very short and with an ugly bob haircut. She had an elbow on her counter and she was looking utterly bored.

“Yeah, right… S quirk, very impressive.” she looked everything but impressed. “So, as you may have already figured you are forbidden to absorb random stuff… If the Government wants you to absorb stuff they will let you know…” she handed him a paper. “Considering you quirk… let’s see… Ah, right… No kisses, no sex, no blowjobs or anything like that. You can forget to have an intimate relationship any time soon…”

Izuku was burning up, he wanted to hide beneath a rock for the next century. He absolutely refused to look in the direction of his parents as he signed the form.

“Well, I guess you can do protected sex?” she was scratching her chin. “I’m not really sure…”

“Yeah, right, thank you!” he quickly interrupted her.

He didn’t want to have this conversation with his parents right behind him, protected or unprotected alike! He handed the form back.

“All right, you are registered as Wild Card, with Acid Skin and Light Sphere absorbed. If you remember or discover something else that you may have, you have to communicate it to us or someone related. Aizawa has already insert you in the test for this year, someone will drop the plane ticket to you house sooner or later.”
During the drive home no one talked. Awkwardness and shock still running deep, Izuku was really tired.

Definitely, snogging a total stranger in a pub while drunk had not been a great idea.
Izuku slept for most of the noon, now that the immediate tension was gone he really was sleeping like a rock. He woke up at five when his mother, still looking very pale, brought him something to eat and the plane ticket for the test site. The flight was tomorrow morning, from the nearest airport. Izuku put the ticket on his desk and refused to think about it any further. He would have days to despair later. He decided to spend time browsing the internet in search for all the information he could find about the Wild Card.

There were only three known people with that quirk, two had served the nation until ten and five years ago, both were killed on service. The other didn’t pass the test and was held captive to that day. His mind was so very full of happy thoughts after that little search. While he was about to push the button to turn off the power he stopped realizing that he was not going to have any access to the internet or his computer for some time. If ever again.

That depressed him even further. He decided to run a quick research about his future ‘comrades’ not really hoping to find anything, one of the most important factors of the test was that you had to keep secrecy about your quirk after all. He was surprised when he got a hit. Then he wanted to kick himself in the ass real hard because, of course there was a hit. Even he knew this one! Actually, maybe he knew about this one better than anyone else.

He got up and put his face into the pillow, his scream got muffled by it. He had been so egoistic, so self-absorbed, so moronic to truly forget all about it. To think that six months ago it had been such an important factor in his life it had kept him distracted from everything else. But that time had ended and both of them had been true to their words. It was a closed chapter.

Except that it wasn’t anymore!

What was he going to tell him? How was he supposed to interact with him now? Sure, they had not parted on a bad note but…

His mother called him for dinner and she was just too sad for Izuku to ignore her any longer. He steeled himself and sat on his chair on the dining table. The meal was awkward, no one wanted to address the elephant in the room. It was only after dinner that his mother took his hand and guided him into the little greenhouse they had in the back of the house. She started to rearrange some of the floral compositions she was experimenting on, Izuku observed.

“Your father always asks me why I work in a flower shop. It would be much safer for me to work somewhere else entirely. It’s true, but for some reason I just can’t leave this quirk alone. I love it, you see? It makes me suffer, but there is so much beauty in it too. Admittedly, your quirk is quite different… But I’m sure, completely, definitely, absolutely sure that yours has some good uses too. There must be something that only you can do. So… don’t give up on it okay? Give it a chance before you decide! And give a chance to yourself too! I believe in you, I’m sure that you can do it!”

With tears in her eyes, she let go of the flowers and hugged him tightly. Izuku returned the hug in full. He would surely miss her. Together they went to Izuku’s room and started preparing his trolley. They filled it with clothes and other everyday necessities. All electronic devices were forbidden, so he could not pack his pc or cell phone.
“Write me a lot of letters, okay?” she hugged him again before leaving him.

His father didn’t come up to talk to him. Izuku could not sleep at all that night and morning came all too soon. He wrote a couple of text messages to his school friend right before turning it off. He didn’t want to talk about this with any of them. Downstairs his parents were waiting for him.

“I’m driving you to the airport.” said his father.

His mother hugged him one last time before sending him off with a tearful smile. His father didn’t speak during the drive. Izuku just stared out of the window feeling comfortable in the silence. Once they reached the airport they searched for the correct terminal.

“Well,” Izuku looked the floor, “I have to go now so…”

“Listen well.” his father interrupted. “It will take me a bit of time to fully accept all of this, I never thought… Anyway.” he breathed deeply. “You better come back, got that? You are a smart and dependable kid, there is no one else I would rather entrust an S quirk. It’s definitely in safe hands with you, understand?”

“I’m not a kid anymore, you know?” he smiled fondly.

“I know,” he hugged him, “and this is the right moment to prove it. I believe in you so I’m not worried at all. I’ll see you next year.”

“I’ll do my best.” Izuku nodded.

“I’m not asking for anything more than that.” his father nodded too. “But remember to write some letters for your mother, she will cry for days if you don’t.”

The plane was small, it was a private plane for this purpose only, inside was someone else from the Task Force that Izuku didn’t know. The man asked him his blood type and placed a hand on his chest, a red light pulsed all of his body. Izuku understood, the man was a Detector, he could detect every object on and inside his body. The discovery of the blood type of the target was the condition for the activation of his quirk.

“You’re clear, go sit somewhere.” he ordered.

Izuku remembered to have read once in a newspaper that someone tried to sneak a cell phone by hiding it inside his body. He didn’t particularly want to ask himself where they hid it. Anyway, that was the reason why the Detector was now important on this flight. After two hours Izuku identified the little island that hosted the test site. The plane was descending.

Izuku saw the faint light blue of the barrier, it was a dome that covered the whole island and a part of the surrounding sea. He knew that the barrier was actually a sphere, it continued beyond the ocean and it was passing through the ground below the island. There was no escape anywhere. The plane did three loops around the island getting closer, a little hole opened in it. The plane passed through and the hole closed immediately.

Izuku knew more or less the power of this quirk. It was like a glass panel, only unbreakable, and there was a light electric current on the inside. Basically, you could walk on it from the outside but you could not enter while touching the barrier from the inside would give you a light electroshock. The Government feared much more a potential escape than a potential infiltration.

The person who was managing the barrier was part of the Task Force. Actually, there were two people with Barrier quirks, brother and sister, twins, they were taking turns in order to keep it always
activate. In fact the barrier was up only as long as that person was awake, so they were doing 12h each. They had an escort of fighting quirks and were apparently trapped deep underground in a secret location to ensure that no one would be able to attack them. The Barrier quirk was a B quirk, yet their lives were still ruined forever. Izuku sighed as brace himself for the landing.

While he waited for the plane to completely stop he observed the large structure. It was not particularly high, probably two floors at most, but really extensive. The structure alone covered half the island and it was most unwelcoming. It emanated an aura that was screaming ‘prison’. As far as he knew, though, this was not the actual prison for failed A and S. It had a very serious appearance, it was all gray with no color anywhere, the roof tiles were black. Good thing the surrounding area was pretty green, with plants herbs and flowers too. After living with a florist for eighteen years it was unthinkable to live in a place without any vegetation.

The Detector signaled him to get off the plane and he emerged from the vehicle only to find Aizawa right in front of him. The man slid his goggles off and looked at him for a second before positioning them back into place.

“Looks like you didn’t escape to Hawaii,” his tone was flat and uninterested, “smart thinking. Now, everyone is already in the classroom, we were supposed to start the ‘entrance ceremony’ this morning but since you have just arrived we are starting before lunchtime. You go to the classroom and meet the others, I need to drop your stuff in your room.”

Izuku was wondering why did he need to move his trolley personally when Aizawa gave him a series of complicated direction for reaching the classroom. He was lost after the first three. As the plane was preparing to take off again he made his way to the front door. Taking a look at the building he saw something white in one of the windows of the second floor. He looked again, focusing better, and he could make out a figure, it was a girl with short black hair. She waved at him with a smile. He returned the wave hesitantly but the girl had disappeared. Feeling a chill down his spine he wondered if ghosts were a thing there.

The entrance hall was very spacious and very empty. White and gray were still the main colors and there was barely any furniture at all, not even bulletin boards. On the left was a set of stairs that led to the second floor. There were five black doors and two hallways on the left and right side. Right in front was a glass door that led to an external area. It would take a lot of time for him to memorize the layout of the building.

He took the corridor on the right and slowly and uncertainly passed beyond doors after doors, luckily there where nameplates on them. An infirmary, a dining room, a changing room, Izuku was really surprised to see some recreational lab too, like a music lab and an art lab. He reached a corner, the corridor was continuing on his left, but while he was about to turn he noticed the female bathroom door opening. A girl with short brown hair and a round face came out and stopped when she noticed him.

“Oh hello!” she greeted him cheerfully. “You are the new one, right? Well, I guess everyone is new, but you are the last one here!”

“Y-yeah, ah, hello!” he hurriedly greeted back. “Yes, I mean, I'm late, I guess… I was trying to find the classroom.”

“Oh, I can show you the way, I’m going there too after all,” he smiled at him in a friendly way, “Aizawa’s introduction is going to start soon. We were literally waiting for you!” She led the way down to the hallway. “This place is pretty big! Took me some time to get used to it! You know, we are here since Friday, so we had some time to familiarize a little. Ah, but don’t worry. No important information has been revealed yet, at least not in public, so you won’t be left behind. We haven’t
really spoken to each other either. That’s not really a rule but it’s not a good idea to potentially slip up something even before the test starts! But I know everyone’s face at the very least! By the way, I’m Urara, nice to meet you, and you are?”

The girl was incredibly chatty, Izuku was kinda surprised. Did this friendly girl really have a dangerous quirk?

“Midoriya Izuku, nice to meet you too.” he answered feeling a little overwhelmed. “Is there a girl with black hair in this test?”

The girl was observing him intensely for some reason.

“Hm? Someone you know?” she snapped out whatever thoughts she was having. “There is a ponytail girl with black hair. Is it her?”

“No, not really.” he shook his head. “When I entered the building I saw a girl with black short hair, even shorter than yours, from a window. I was wondering if it was someone you knew.”

“Hmm.” she tilted her head. “I wonder if it is someone’s quirk. I’ve never seen anyone like that in this place. She is not one of us and as you probably know only Aizawa is here beside us. Well, excluding the Barrier people and their guards.”

“Only Aizawa?”

He remembered that the man was moving his luggage personally. Was really him the only person inside the whole building? What about cooks, nurses, janitors? Then he realized, it was not a vacation, they were supposed to take care of themselves completely, weren’t they?

“Of course. It’s the first thing I checked when I arrived. It’s a very important information after all.” she sighed for some reason.

“Is it?” Izuku was not really following her.

The girl looked at him straight in the eyes for a long moment, then she smiled amicably, ‘not at all’ she said. Then she didn’t talk for a bit, she was lost in some amusing thought if he had to judge based on her little smile. After passing three more doors, one was called science lab, the other Task Force archive and the last one study room, she addressed to him again, cheerful as ever.

“The right wing of the building is the educational department. There is all you may want to study or experiment. There is an incredibly big library too, and of course the classroom is here. There is only one, so you can’t get lost!” she pointed at the door that was at the end of the corridor, it was the library. “The classroom is right on the left of the library, you can’t miss it.” she pointed the only door without a plate. “The left wing is where the other facilities are. On the center of the building there is an indoor gym and on the very back Aizawa’s quarters. I would say that it’s better if you don’t go there, he is always in a bad mood, you know?” she turned to face him right before reaching the classroom door. “I can show you around later if you want. I’ve got a feeling that we will have a lot of free time!”

Then she opened the door without waiting for his response. She called out to the people inside to greet him and went sit in one of the desks on the front of the room. Izuku stood on the doorframe for a bit while the others greeted him and commented on his tardiness. Izuku sent a generic greeting in response and took his time to look at each one of them walking slowly.

The Urara girl was seated in the first row on the left, in a double desk with a guy with black hair and square glasses, he looked really serious and stiff, his face didn’t seem used to smiles. In the second
row were seated two girls, one had very long black hair that was reaching her waist and was tied with a ribbon, she was listening attentively the other one who looked really chatty. The chatty girl had fluffy ginger hair, the soft curlies were resting on her shoulder, she had big, bright brown eyes that made her look very lively but she was acting much more masculine than you would expect from such feminine looking girl. On the last row were seated a girl and a guy, the girl was the one that Urara mentioned, the ponytail one, and she had a severe look in her face while the guy had his hair half white and half red, his eyes were of a very light shade of blue. On the right side of the room on the back was seated a guy alone, the other half of the desk was unoccupied, he was resting his head against the window and looking down at the hands on his desk. He was wearing black gloves, his quirk probably had something to do with that. He had red, messy hair and a face that somehow was communicating sadness, or maybe loneliness. The middle row, just like the last and the first one too, had only one guy. He had blond hair with some black strands, they looked like black lightning, he was wearing a headset and bouncing his head following some kind of rhythm. Weren’t they supposed to not bring technology on the island? Why was no one commenting on it?

The last person, in the front row, was the first one Izuku had actually noticed, he just wasn’t ready yet. He had not noticed him yet either, he was looking out of the window ignoring his surrounding. Izuku sighed, recognizing his usual behavior. It looked like coming here wasn’t going to change his attitude. Izuku wondered why the guy with the headset had not decided to sit next to any of the two. Probably because both had a ‘no getting closer’ attitude, it was clear that he wanted to stay as far away from them as possible. Izuku wondered if he was the only one in the room that decided to sit on the right side with the ‘dangerous ones’ because he was carefree, or because he had lost some kind of battle with the others.

In any case the right side was clearly the place where the unwanted were sitting. And it was where Izuku was going to seat too, apparently, there was literally nowhere else for him to sit. He didn’t really mind anyway, they could be scared of him but he sure wasn’t, seating beside a friend didn’t sound so bad either. He stopped beside the empty chair and called up to him.

“Katsuki?”

Behind him he could hear some surprised gasps and even a strangled cough, like someone had just choked on saliva. He ignored them. Katsuki turned instantly, shock clearly written on his face, then it became even more evident as he recognized him. He raised his right hand, pointed at Izuku, then at the walls and then he drew a question mark in the air. For a split second Izuku was taken aback, then he remembered. Right, Katsuki was still forbidden to speak. He would forever be forbidden to speak.

“What are you doing here?”

“Eh, things happened.” he seated down and shrugged. “Turned out I’m supposed to be here too, after all.” he tried to light up the mood a little.

Katsuki was still looking at him in shock but now there was a hint of disbelief too. He drew the question mark again. Izuku smiled when he realized that he could still get the general feeling of what he was signaling immediately.

“What?”

Before he could answer, not even sure of what he would answer in the first place, Katsuki started to search through his stuff and pulled out a notebook. The notebook. Izuku was hit by a light wave of nostalgia as he remembered just how many conversations they had with one of those. Katsuki quickly scribbled something with his messy calligraphy.

-Since when you have a quirk?! And an A or S?! Are you joking?-
“It’s kind of a long story,” he smiled awkwardly and lowered his voice to a whisper, “I’ll tell you more later. I just want to say that I’m not a danger to you or anyone here, even if I’m an S my condition is pretty ridiculous, there is just no way I’m using this quirk.”

Katsuki was looking at him like he just grew three additional heads. Aizawa entered the classroom before they could progress the conversation any further. When the man reached his teacher desk and started to clear his voice Katsuki slipped the notebook in front of him once more.

-Anyway, stupid, don’t give my name away so easily, you idiot! Don’t you know that the name is like, the most common condition for a quirk activation?! They probably already knew it since I was on the internet and stuff but still!-

Then and only then he connected the dots, the girl earlier, the way she was looking at him after he gave her his name… She tricked him into saying it, didn’t she? How great, he had been there for like an hour and he had already messed up completely. He wanted to go back home.

Chapter End Notes

Have you recognized them?
'Urara' called herself with a shorter version of her last name on purpose, you are not going crazy!
In this place they cannot use their names lightly so you have to get used to some nicknames I've come up for them.
If you have some doubts about some of the characters, maybe you have not recognized some of them, don't worry. You'll have all the time in the world to understand who they are.

Next chapter will be released May 21.
I wanted to give you a good feel for the story before I'm starting a serious releasing schedule.
Rules for a fair game

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Ah, so…”

Aizawa scratched his head with a sigh.

“Before any of you get any strange idea… The fact that I don’t see doesn’t mean that I don’t see. My
goggles have special infrared rays and heat detectors. Before any of you have the wonderful idea to
try and trick me I want to make clear that no one ever succeeded. I may have a disadvantage but I
know everything about your quirks, don’t pull any stunt. I’ve already sent enough people in
confinement because of something stupid like this.”

Izuku had wondered for a time how was Aizawa moving around with his goggles on, now he knew.
It made perfect sense actually, he should have thought about that sooner.

“Now, for the rules… First thing first, the most important thing is that you are out as soon as you
physically hurt someone enough to bleed. I don’t care if it’s just a little cut, if there is bleeding you’re
out. Obviously, even if there is no bleeding but the hurt dealt is big enough, let’s say a broken bone
for example, you’re out. Basically, I decide what’s too much, so just deal with it.”

This was a nice rule, at least Izuku didn’t have to worry about getting hurt. It meant that he could not
use Acid Skin but he wasn’t planning to in the first place.

“Second rule. You pass as long as you don’t get sent in confinement. Which means that if you’re still
in this, next year, you automatically pass. You may think that it sounds too easy, and it is actually,
but you are missing the point. You are here to demonstrate that you are trustworthy, that you won’t
hurt someone with your quirk no matter the situation. Furthermore, it would not be fair for everyone
if this test was any different than this. There are people here who are absolutely forbidden to use their
 quirks and have low chances of getting anything done.”

Izuku was really surprised, he had heard from Katsuki that the test was a fierce battle for survival,
how was this possible if all you needed to do was wait for the end of the year?

“Third rule. I’ve said that you can pass just by waiting… well, that’s not entirely correct. At least one
of you must lose, if you do absolutely nothing for a year it would not make any sense. Specifically, if
one of you get another, no matter how, to say ‘I surrender’ then you get to pass immediately. If you
surrender three times you’re out. To summarize, everyone who gets to make someone surrender
wins, while a person who surrounds three times lose.”

Now Izuku was starting to get a better idea of the situation. Everyone wanted to pass as soon as
possible to avoid the possibility to end in prison for the rest of their lives. All of them had quirks that
allowed them to pull some law-breaking actions. Izuku had a thought, what about Katsuki? His quirk
was made for this kind of situation, but was he allowed to use it?

“Fourth rule. You can use your quirk as creatively as possible. I encourage you to think of some way
of making a good use of your quirk. Obviously, there are some exceptions. First, the blond guy in the
first row, he is completely forbidden to use his quirk, no matter what. Second, the guy with red hair
in the last row, the same goes for him. Third, the guy with the square glasses, he can use it with
moderation. If you even attempt to break this rule you are gone as fast as the wind.”
Made a lot of sense. Everyone was nodding when Aizawa mentioned Katsuki, clearly everyone knew about his quirk and no one was surprised that it was forbidden.

“Fifth rule. For the whole duration of this test you are absolutely forbidden to reveal your quirk. Its name, its conditions, any direct information. You are out if you do. On the other hand, the others are permitted to guess or find out everything about it in any way they want. You are actually encouraged to find out as many as you can since it can make the difference between your freedom or your imprisonment. As long as the information doesn’t come out directly from the person’s mouth. Ah, clearly no writing either.”

That was why everyone was so incredibly suspicious of everything. Since they could only guess what information or thing could activate someone else’s quirk everything was dangerous.

“Sixth rule. Since your quirks are random as hell, everything would become a huge mess if I don’t implement some way to understand that you are being targeted by something. So, before using your quirk on someone, or multiple people, you have to send your target a Calling Card. They are anonymous, obviously, but at least the person that received it can stay on guard for any anomaly. If you receive a Calling Card you better do your best to avoid dangerous situations. After you send the card you have the next day, from midnight to the following midnight, to successfully attack your target. If you fail it’s not a problem, but you will have to wait a week before trying again with that person. You are free to try another one, though. If you don’t intend to use your quirk you can do whatever you want. Another important thing you have to remember is that a person who has surrounded can’t send a Calling Card for a month after that day.”

This was getting complicated. It was a good thing, though, to have some way to know in advance that you were a target. This whole test looked like a psychological war. The terror of an unknown, dangerous quirk directed at you…

“That’s it. I’m probably forgetting something… oh well.” he scratched his head again, completely uninterested. “I know everything about all of you and your quirks, but don’t even try to get information out of me, it would be stupid. I won’t interact with you much and I won’t even call your name. What information you want to share it’s up to you. You are free to use fake names, sell or buy information, cooperate with others, anything goes. You are even free to become all the best of friends and just not do anything, make someone surrender and then just live peacefully. Well, if you think that you can trust others, that’s it.”

The way he said that last part was so ominous that Izuku felt a chill down his spine. It seemed like he was sure that something like that would never happen.

“Now, leaving aside the whole test ordeal, it’s important that you understand why you are here. This is not a punishment but an opportunity, so you better take it for what it is. You don’t necessarily need to show off or prove your worth or anything like that, what you want to do with your life is your business. The only thing that’s absolutely required of you is a total respect for the rules and learning the importance of the law. That’s why here you have mandatory lessons in which you will memorize and understand every single one of them. You all have years of compulsory education on your shoulders so don’t expect me to give you lessons about math or literature. Whatever interest or career beside the Task Force you want to pursue it’s completely up to you, you will have a lot of free time. Do whatever you want.”

The class filled with animated whispers. It looked like the serious part of the introduction was finished.

“So…” Aizawa shuffled some papers on the teacher desk. “Aside from my private quarters, the whole building is at your disposition. You are free to use your personal room or pitch a tent in the
library, I don’t really care. There is no stupid stuff like curfews, you are all adults, take care of yourself. You will have to take care of stuff like laundry, cooking and so on, if you are not capable then learn, or find a way to make someone else do it for you. Don’t ask me, I survive on instant noodles.”

That earned a few chuckles. Aizawa concluded his speech saying that next to the blackboard was a timetable of the mandatory lessons and to knock on his door at any time to ask for a Calling Card to use or in case of emergencies. And to not bother him with anything else. He left without a word of farewell.

“A man of solitude, hm?” said suddenly voice next to Izuku’s desk.

The girl from earlier was resting on his desk with her head on her crossed arms, she was looking at him from below.

“Urar--ah…” he stopped himself just in time.

“Oh, it’s fine, you can call me that! I mean, it’s a fake name so there is no problem!” she smiled at him apologetically. “I’m sorry, you really didn’t know about the name policy, did you? I mean, you even called him,” she pointed at Katsuki, “with his real name without thinking twice! I was thinking that you had me figured out and that you gave me a fake name but I guess not. So, I’m telling you that I didn’t give you my real name, it’s my apology for tricking you, forgive me!”

She closed her eyes and joined her hands in prayer. Izuku was once again a bit overwhelmed. The girl was really chatty and now it was difficult for him to understand if she had always ulterior motives or not. He could see what Aizawa meant when he said that to was difficult to trust others here.

“Okay, it’s okay, it was my fault for not thinking about this sooner…” he smiled a bit awkwardly.

As the girl was opening her eyes and placing her hands back on the desk he heard Katsuki snort from behind him, he saw him scribbling something in his notebook.

“By the way, are you two friends or enemies? I mean, considering the fact that you call him with his first name in this situation it must be one of those two options!” her gaze was shifting between the two of them. “Judging by the fact that you are sitting together I would say friends, where did you two—”

Katsuki got up suddenly, put his notebook away and left without looking in their direction at all. They both followed him with their eyes until he disappeared beyond the door before looking at each other again.

“Not very social, hm?” she smiled.

“He can’t talk.” he was pretty sure that this was not an information that he was supposed to keep a secret.

“Oh, I know that, I think I know everything about his quirk,” she admitted casually, “but there are tons of other ways he can communicate with us right?”

Izuku didn’t answer, she was right but he had his reasons too. He gave up socializing really early in his life and now he just could not be bothered anymore. It took him a month to get Katsuki to communicate with him when they first met during high school.

“Hey, I offered to show you around, didn’t I?” she changed the subject, cheerful as always. “What
do you say? Think that you can trust me?”

Well, if she was going to put it that way how was he supposed to refuse? He didn’t want to be rude on the very first day. She waved at the others in the classroom who were starting to get ready to leave and waited for him outside of the door. She pointed at the library that was nearby and they started from there.

“I was wondering…” he hesitated a little but the girl didn’t seem to have too many trouble asking for information so he wanted to take advantage of that if possible. “I’ve seen that one of the guys had headphones, I thought that all objects from outside were forbidden?”

“Oh, no, those headphones comes from the music lab,” she tilted her head a little, “I guess that you can ask him if you want to use them. All things here are a communal property, so probably there will be trouble in case a lot of people want the same item…”

“Ah, I don’t really want the headphones, I was just…” he tried to justify himself.

“Collecting information?” she smiled at him. “I see that you’re starting to get in the right mindset!”

The library was pretty impressive, it was spacious, the ceiling was high and made of glass making the whole ambient well lit. It had an upper level that was accessible from two stairs in the right and left corners, the upper level had a balcony which let you see the area below. In the center there were three long tables, all over the place were positioned various armchairs. Izuku thought that it was even too beautiful for a place like this. He doubted that it was used to its full potential.

“Why is there a study room down the corridor if this place already fulfills that role?” he asked her.

“Hmm… That room is pretty small… Probably it’s for people who want to study alone,” she pondered. “This place is kind of open, there is no privacy whatsoever. The real problem will be when people will start to take books from here and hide them somewhere. Since there is no librarian, one can take what they want. If important study material gets stolen we will all be in trouble with Aizawa’s lessons…” she stretched her arms. “Ahh, this place is so perfect for losing faith in others… You don’t even have to try hard to make things difficult for everyone.”

Izuku was pretty impressed, in a bad way, by just how crafty her mind was. She already had a lot of ideas, didn’t she? They took a quick look inside the music lab and the science lab, then she said that she was getting bored and that he could look at the labs at his own pace. She grabbed his left arm and dragged him into the dining room. The room was divided in half, one half had a long wooden table and ten chairs with no other furniture, the other half had a small kitchen.

“This is what I wanted to show you, the kitchen.” she pointed with her finger. “Since we need to take care of ourselves, food is pretty important.” she smiled. “See that door over there? It’s the pantry, inside are stored most of the ingredients. Do you know how to cook?” she entered the pantry and he followed her inside.

“Well, some stuff, I guess…” he kept his answer vague.

She chuckled then stood up on tiptoes looking for something on the highest shelf, she started to jump a little when she could not reach it.

“Aww, think that you can reach the chocolate up there?” she asked him with a pout.

“No, I can’t, I’m barely any taller than you, how can I?” he answered a bit surprised, could she not see it just by looking?
“Right, I guess that you are around 170, maybe? I guess I’ll have to take a chair!” she brought a chair from the other room and used it as a stepladder. Once she had her chocolate bar in her hands she grinned satisfied. “Have you noticed? There are only canned ingredients here. Since we receive a cargo of objects only once in a while we need to cultivate our own fresh ingredients!”

She took his arm once again and dragged him to the indoor gym area. Call it gym was not entirely correct, it was more like a courtyard with a glass roof. The terrain between the two wings of the building was clean of grass and perfectly flat. It was basically a playfield create in an unutilized space. Beyond the playfield, on the very back of the building, was a space full of rows of vegetables and on the sides were two fruit trees.

“We can take this stuff whenever we want, but it would be best if we could find a way to make everyone cooperate to produce new ones.” she said with her arms crossed behind her back. “It would be bad if we were to remain without fresh food. Ah, by the way,” she pointed at the two windows right above them, on the second floor of the building. “Those are Aizawa’s windows. In case you need to find him, his quarters are there.”

Izuku had a decent understanding of the right wing and the center of the building now, the second floor and the left wing were still a mystery. Reentering the building she started to show him the left wing.

“Let’s leave the second floor for later, there is where our rooms are and little else, on this wing, however, are the most useful things.” she led the way through the hallway on the left. “Here we have a big room for laundry, luckily the washing machines are easy to use.”

It really was big, there were ten washing machines and five drying machines. Some irons were stored on a shelf.

“I think we have a sewing lab too, so if you need to sew something you better try there. I don’t really know how we are supposed to get new clothes… I mean, I hope we are not supposed to stay in the ones we have for a whole year!” she rolled her eyes and proceeded further into the hallway. “Here is the storage room, but I think that a lot of people have actually started to call it ‘the convenience store’. It’s where most things are stored, like toothbrushes, shampoos…”

It really looked like a store, only without prices. The shelves were filled with every kind of everyday stuff. Further down the hallway was a supply closet with cleaning tools like vacuums and brooms. Then she stopped in front of a double door.

“Now, check this out!” she pushed the door wide open. “It’s a pool! We have a pool! This is not a vacation but they are surely treating us well, don’t you think?”

She looked very excited about this, for some reason. He supposed it was kind of different but... wasn’t the ocean right outside? Unless she wanted to swim on rainy days he could not really see her point. Picking up on his awkward attempt at a smile she pouted and walked down the hallway with her chest puffed out.

“I was going to show you the rooms but I guess that you can go alone if you’re going to be a meanie!” she turned to face him with a smile. “I’m joking, but you have seen the most important parts by this point. On the second floor are the rooms and two big bathrooms. We have individual shower rooms, but if you want to take a real bath you have to use the communal one. The two wings are divided by sex, the right one is for females the left for males. So the rooms are divided into the two wings and there is a bathroom for each side. Too bad they made only a changing room for the gym and one for the pool though… Why make a unisex changing room? Sheesh.” she paused for a bit tilting her head. “Yep, that’s about it. You can explore the rest on your own I think. I’m going
now, I suppose you have to take care of your luggage, right? I’ll see you around!”

She waved her hand and left him behind.

Izuku really wanted to shut himself in his room, he needed a moment to collect all his thoughts. When he reached the second-floor hallway he searched for his room. It was the only one without a number plate on the door. Since he was enrolled at the last minute they had not had the time to make a nice looking plate like they did for the others. He had to ask Aizawa if he could have one later, he didn’t particularly want to stick a piece of paper to the door.

The inside was very nice. It was spacious and it had a large window with a view of the ocean. There was not much in term of furniture, only a wooden desk and a chair, a low square table on a carpet, some shelves, a closet and a bed. A door led to a private toilet and shower room. Inside the closet he found some sheets and pillows. He needed to make the bed later. His trolley was on the floor.

Izuku took off his jacket and was about to start preparing the room when he noticed a piece of paper inside a pocket. He took it and opened it, recognizing the handwriting immediately.

-Come to my room later-

He felt a chill down his spine, he wasn’t really sure that he wanted to be alone with him. Considering… But he wanted to see him, too. He fidgeted, full of conflicting feelings. A part of him was telling him that in this place and situation he was better off focusing on what he was doing, more than on making things even more complicated. Another part, however, was reminding him that it was stupid to be afraid of confronting him. He had nothing to be ashamed of.

He wasn’t going to forfeit his only ally anyway, so even excluding everything else he still needed to go. Clenching the piece of paper he left his room and searched for Katsuki’s. He had to face a dilemma, he had no idea which number he had, why he had not written it on the paper? He had to knock on casual doors. First he tried the one on the left of his own door, inside was the red hair guy who opened the door just a little bit, Izuku apologized and asked him if he knew where ‘the blond guy’ was. He had to bit his tongue, he was just about to say his name again. The red hair pointed at one of the doors to his left and closed his door without a sound. As it turned out, Katsuki’s room was at only three doors from his, on the left, it was the number 4.

Katsuki opened almost immediately, he gestured him to come inside then closed the door with impatience. Izuku stood in the center of the room fidgeting a little, not knowing what to do with himself. The room was basically the same as his, same furniture and disposition. Only it was full of stuff, Izuku could see canned food and daily life objects spread all over the place. It looked like he was ready to enter hibernation. Katsuki threw his notebook at him without warning and Izuku could only barely catch it.

-So?-

A single word was written on it. Izuku sighed, obviously he wanted to know why he was there. He could not speak about his quirk, however.

“You know that I can’t tell you the name of my quirk or the conditions, right? I’ve already told you that it’s an S… The conditions for its activation are so unlikely that I never knew of its existence. I’ve literally discovered it two days ago. They told me that it was better to enter the test immediately instead of waiting another year… I didn’t have much time to get used to the whole situation… sorry if I’m making mistakes…” he gave his notebook back.

Katsuki frowned and plopped down on his bed, he scratched his head with the pen like he was
searching for the right words. Izuku knew that Katsuki was the type of person that wanted everything immediately, having to actually write down, with patience, what he wanted to communicate was a major pain for him. Apparently he had too much he wanted to say right now but he could not find a good way to do it, his frustrated expression was a clear testimony of that. He ended up scribbling a single sentence.

-I see-

Izuku could feel his own frustration matching Katsuki’s. During the previous years the notebook had been enough to convey what they wanted to say. Now nothing was enough to unravel this mess. Katsuki scribbled something again.

-Don’t just stand there, you are giving me the willies, sit somewhere!-

Izuku smiled awkwardly at his nervousness and sat down on the carpet clutching his hands together. This new position did nothing to ease their nerves, the silence was extremely uncomfortable.

What does one say when meeting their ex not-exactly-boyfriend in such a strange situation after six months?

Chapter End Notes

Do I spot a Persona fan around here somewhere? *looks away innocently*
I'll make some reference here and there but nothing too big, I hope no one is bothered by it!

Is everything clear? Did I explain the rules properly? I sure hope so.

Next chapter will be posted on May 28, see you soon!
In this chapter the first 'investigation' will start and it will be pretty logic-oriented. It will be much more fun to try and solve the mysteries together with Izuku and Katsuki instead of just waiting for the answers. Some quirks will be quite easy to spot, mostly because the owner is not trying to keep it a secret, others will be a bit more challenging. For some there will be simply little evidence to work with, I'll drop hints about everyone and every condition all over the place but they are easy to miss, of course, it's intentional. Try to collect clues and formulate theories about all of them. I'll be happy to read them if you want to share.

After a while, Katsuki took his pen again and started to scribble furiously. He kept going for several minutes, Izuku waited patiently, knowing that he would not appreciate any interruptions. It was like interrupting a person while they were speaking after all. When he finished, he tore off the page, rolled it and tossed it at his head.

-The doors don’t have a lock, so you better create one, if you don’t know how to do it, then learn. Start to pile up food as soon as you can, but try to be subtle about it. You never know when someone is going to take it all and you’ll starve. Aizawa takes a boat once a month to meet with the cargo folks to replenish the supplies for this place. You must be able to survive a month without new supplies, don’t expect me to give you anything if you are too stupid to think ahead. Also, find yourself a nickname, you can’t use your name anymore. And don’t give anyone ANY information, it doesn’t matter what it is, there are all kinds of weird quirks and conditions in this world. Don’t give away my information either!-

Izuku read it all and smiled a little. Katsuki was selfish and individualist but he was still going to look out for him. When he looked up he saw that he was writing again. After a moment, he threw that paper at him too.

-By the way, don’t misunderstand! This is a business contract I’m setting up! I’m not helping you! I expect something in exchange! You know that I can’t use my quirk or speak, and I’m shit at extracting information from others. I’m basically defenseless. So, I’m expecting you to tell me everything you find about anyone. EVERYTHING-

Izuku sighed, same old Katsuki. His way of asking for help was always so forceful. In a way, this was a good thing, though. It gave them both a good excuse for trusting each other without having to put emotions into play. Izuku was sure he could trust him, with or without a contract. He was never going to doubt him. He had always been the only one to trust him, despite everything, nothing was going to change. Ever.

“Yes, I accept, this sounds reasonable enough.” he tried to sound confident in himself. “I haven’t discovered anything useful yet. I’ll let you know as soon as I do.”

Katsuki nodded then wrote down something in a corner of a new page, ripped the piece and throw it at him as usual.
-You should stop talking to that girl. She is a hyena, scavenging for corpses-

“Wow…” Izuku was sarcastic. “What a nice compliment…”

Katsuki rolled his eyes and shrugged, Izuku could guess.

-Think whatever you want, but I’m right and you’re wrong-

“Anyway,” Izuku sighed dropping the subject, “about nicknames… I can be Izu, I guess… You can be… Kat?” he tried with an awkward smile.

Katsuki sent him a murderous glare and threw him a paper ball right between his eyes.

-Do you wanna die?- 

Izuku massaged the spot with an unimpressed expression. Another paper ball flew on the table in front of him.

-Go away, you’ve annoyed me enough for one day!-

Izuku picked himself up without hesitation and waved at him before leaving the room. He realized that they had not decided the nicknames, Katsuki could not blame him if he was going to call him with his name then. He immediately took his advice and went into the pantry to collect some food, not too much, but not too little. Then he went to the ‘convenience store’ to do some ‘shopping’, which entailed basically stealing an exemplar of anything that looked useful. It took him five trips back and forth to move everything, but by the evening, he was mostly set up. His room was now a little messy, but he could figure out something later, he was pretty tired and wanted go to sleep, especially since the next day he had class at 9 am. Apparently Aizawa hated waking up before eight thirty in the morning since all the classes were from nine on. Not that he was complaining. He liked the idea of sleeping a bit more than his usual time for school. He looked at the calendar on the wall. It was the first of April. He was supposed to start university the thirteen of April. Now his life had taken a 360-degree turn.

The bed was comfortable enough and he easily fell asleep. The alarm clock woke him up. The alarm rang differently from the one in his bedroom back at home, so he woke with a start. Then, as he took a glance around the dark room, he remembered that he was not at home anymore and collapsed on the bed again. He ruffled his hair a bit, not wanting to get up. For some reason that simple motion felt a bit strange, he turned his face, trying to adjust to the dark without turning the light on. Something was wrong.

He sat up when he noticed that the objects were different from the ones he remembered taking and they were placed differently. They were a lot more, too. Annoyed by the sound he moved to shut up the alarm clock when he realized something.

He had not brought an alarm clock in his room. It was clearly a mistake, a lack of insight on his part since he needed to go to class. Still, his quirk was not Telekinesis, the alarm could not had gotten into his room on itself!

He got up, his heart beating fast, and turned on the light. This was not his room! He was alone inside so the possibilities of having been kidnapped were not that high, unless they had locked him in to prevent him from going to class. Could he be eliminated if he were to not show up for class? He was starting to panic when he recognized the room. The paper balls from earlier were in Katsuki’s trash bin. What was he doing in his room?! He looked down and was hit by realization like a truck on full speed.

Katsuki was wearing a t-shirt and his boxers to sleep, just like--- WHAT WAS HE DOING IN
KASTUKI’S BODY?!

He ran inside the shower room to look at himself in the mirror and sure enough Katsuki’s face greeted him; it had an expression of pure shock that Izuku had never seen before. Panicking, he started to consider what to do, was Katsuki okay? The first thing he had to do was see if he was in his body, if they exchanged them somehow. He ran out of the shower room and while he was searching for some clothes he saw a black square on the floor. He hitched closer cautiously and after a moment he realized what he was looking at. It was a Calling Card.

Someone had slid the card from under the door to warn Katsuki that a quirk was going to be used on him. Izuku had no trouble see which one. If this card was here, then had he received one too, in his room? Izuku forgot that he was still in just boxers and ran to his room, the one without a number plate. He knocked strongly and repeatedly with his heart beating fast. The door opened way too late for his mental health and he was greeted by his own face. It was wearing a very annoyed expression, Izuku could immediately recognize Katsuki behind it. He opened his mouth, Katsuki’s mouth, to say something, probably to scream, but Katsuki slapped his hand on it with a murderous glance. Then he grabbed his arm and he pushed him inside the room rudely, closing the door with a bang. He stomped around the room until he found a piece of paper and a pen and he started to scribble furiously.

- Fucking stupid idiot! DON’T TALK! If you use my quirk and get me eliminated I’ll come for you, no matter where you are, and chop your head off! -

Izuku slapped a hand on his mouth, well Katsuki’s mouth, feeling a chill down his spine for how stupid he had been. Thankfully, he had not spoken yet, that was dangerous!

He observed, still frozen in place, as Katsuki scribbled some more. Izuku realized then, in his body Katsuki could actually talk, but he was still not going to, habit perhaps? Or maybe he had not realized that himself.

- You didn’t set an alarm! If you hadn’t knocked on my door I would have kept sleeping until who knows when! -

Izuku opened his mouth to apologize but he closed it immediately. He took out one of his own notebook and sat to write on the low table, Katsuki joined him on the carpet.

- Sorry! I forgot. More importantly! What’s this?! You received a Calling Card! -

Katsuki shrugged like this was not that big of a deal.

- Yeah, you too, it was right in front of the door when I woke up just now. Someone here has a Body Swap quirk. I don’t know how or why it’s you that I traded with, but it’s not that strange, calm down idiot -

Izuku reflected a moment and realized that he was right, there were much worse possibilities. Like they could have exchanged with a stranger that would use their bodies to say, ‘I surrender’. It was then that it hit him. They could make someone surrender by exchanging bodies! This was seriously a dangerous quirk to have for this test. But this person was not really bright, were they? Why not use this ability to exchange with themselves and score a win?

Exchange the body of two random people was not going to help them. The rule clearly stated that it was the person that made them say the right phrase to win, not the quirk user that made it possible. Katsuki could use this opportunity to win… If he wanted to betray him he could, he just needed to say the key words in front of Aizawa and it was done. Izuku peered at him nervously. Katsuki
returned the look and sighed deeply.

-I would like to use you to win but… People’s trust in me is already shitty as it is, winning this way would only make them hate me more. I don’t need this in my life. We need to figure out who did this and how to return to our own bodies-

-You’re right. By the way, I understand this test, but how come this is an A quirk? It doesn’t look dangerous, just awkward-

Katsuki sent him a displeased look.

-Then you are really stupid. You can make someone surrender easily like this, so what about the rest? You can use another person’s body to do anything you like. What about taking advantage of someone else’s girlfriend? Or kill someone? How would the victim and society know that it was someone else entirely? This is one of the biggest law-breaking quirk that you can imagine. It doesn’t leave any trace behind, only a quirk that recognize minds or consciences can see the difference-

Izuku felt indeed stupid, Katsuki was completely right, this quirk was dangerous no matter how you looked at it. Secretly, he felt grateful that the Government was making sure that a person like that could not go on a rampage in the middle of a city. It really sucked being imprisoned and all that, but it was truly reassuring to know that the problem was being addressed. He understood better Aizawa’s words now, this test was not a punishment, it was an opportunity to prove that you would not break any law, no matter what. He could understand Katsuki’s refusal to use this opportunity too. Leaving the test after a day and by using a cheap trick would only make him even more suspicious, especially considering his quirk. The suspicions would never really leave him.

-Why do you think this person targeted us?-

He tried to ask, changing the subject. Katsuki frowned.

-They didn’t target us. We have met the condition without noticing, that’s all-

Izuku inhaled sharply, surprised. It made a lot of sense. It was not a mistake made by someone stupid, it was a forced result. That person’s quirk probably activated unwillingly. They just happened to activate it by chance. Izuku felt his respect for Katsuki grow. He really knew a lot about quirks, he had lived his entire life waiting for this test. Yet, he was still willing to take some risks by trusting him. After all, Katsuki could say ‘I surrender’ in his body and win, but Izuku would not be eliminated unless he surrendered two more times. On the other hand, all Izuku had to do was literally speak and Katsuki would never see the sun again. The thought of having such a big responsibility made him shudder.

-We need to go to class. You can’t tell me your conditions, but at least tell me if there is something that I can’t do. I don’t want to activate your thing by chance-

Izuku grimaced, what was he going to say? To tell him that nothing he could do was going to activate it would only make him more suspicious and maybe he would feel like he was lying to him on purpose. Izuku sighed.

-Just don’t kiss anyone-

Katsuki stared at him with wide eyes, Izuku felt odd looking at his own face with that expression, it was half funny, half embarrassing. Then his expression changed, it was like he had been hit by realization. With a curious expression he wrote something.

-Is your quirk something like Charm? Can you make anyone fall madly in love with you by kissing?-
If this was true, then you would be madly in love with me by now-

The sentence was out of his pen before he realized what he was actually doing, he saw the results on his own face. Katsuki was blushing with an outraged expression, he started to hit him with the notebook on the head. Izuku tried to protect himself with his arms smiling and blushing a bit. Katsuki got up and started to point furiously at the t-shirt and boxers, then at the door. Izuku got the message quite well. He nodded then sneaked into the room number 4 to change. When he left the room again, fully clothed, Katsuki was waiting for him with his usual impatient expression painted on his face.

They reached the classroom together and sat in each other’s desks. Aizawa arrived after a while, way past 9 am. The lesson was about the basic branch divisions of the Government, he had already learned that in high school so he didn’t pay too much attention to it. In the meantime, he was thinking of a way to find the Body Swap quirk’s owner. No matter what he thought, he could not figure out anything, he simply didn’t know enough about the other people in the room. At the end of the lesson, Aizawa gave them a meeting for the following Friday and left without saying anything else. He was about to write something to Katsuki, a question probably, when we was suddenly distracted by the usual girl, Urara, and some other classmates. They were all converging in front of his desk, now occupied by Katsuki.

“Hi! How was the lesson? I realized that some of us haven’t introduced to you yet, since yesterday was the first day and all, so I convince them to!” she didn’t give Katsuki time to answer her. “As I already told you, please call me Urara! How should I call you?”

Izuku momentarily panicked, he could not answer at all, they could not know the vulnerable state they were in, it was Katsuki that had to do something. But was he capable of speaking in his body? He had yet to say anything. Katsuki looked like he was focusing for a moment, then spoke in an almost normal voice.

“I see, it seems like a good idea, I guess. You can call me Izu, I guess.” Izuku had no idea why he had to keep repeating ‘I guess’, but at least he had used the name he had chosen the day before.

“Izu! Cute name! C’mom everyone, introduce yourself!” she encouraged them with a smile.

The girl with the puffy hair raised her hand and spoke with a cheerful voice.

“Hi!! I’m Haru, nice to meet you!” she was almost singing.

“I’m Froppy, hi Izu.” said in a much more normal tone the girl with long black hair.

“You can call me Yao, nice to meet you Izu.” it was the girl with the ponytail that spoke this time, she had a business-like voice.

Then the guy with black lightning in his hair placed his palms on Izuku’s desk and leaned closer to his, well, Katsuki’s face. Katsuki leaned back with an annoyed expression.

“Yo man! You can call me Kami!” he smiled giving him a thump up.

“Kami?” said Katsuki with a sarcastic tone. “Like ‘God’? Narcissist much?”

Izuku, in Katsuki’s body, could not say anything even if he really wanted. Katsuki was going to ruin his reputation immediately, wasn’t he? He rested his face on the desk, covering it with his arms. That was the best he could do to hide his embarrassment. Then the guy with red hair and gloves passed near them and introduced himself as quickly as possible while running away from the classroom.

“You can call me Mishima.”
Everyone looked at the door where he had disappeared through. It was Urara, the first to comment it.

“Well, good to know, he had yet to say anything at all. Speaking of people that have not introduced themselves yet… Hey, you two, come here!” she called up to the guy with bicolor hair and the one with square glasses.

The bicolor guy approached them without saying anything while the other got up slowly, collecting all his school supplies, and went for the door without looking at them.

“Just call me ‘square glasses’ or something,” with that he was out of the classroom.

“Geez…” Urara looked somewhat bothered by him, but quickly reverted to her normal smile. “What about you?” she addressed the other one.

“Shu. I’m Shu.” he said in a neutral tone looking straight at him.

At him. Did he know Katsuki or something?

“I see, you have a cute name too!” Urara joined her hands. “Now we have everyone! Well except…” she sent a glance at him, or rather at Katsuki’s body. “What about you?” she asked in an uninterested tone, like she was asking more out of politeness than anything.

Izuku panicked, he could not answer. Was he supposed to write something? But what? Katsuki had not told him what he wanted to be known as. Katsuki, sensing his dilemma, frowned and answered for him.

“I think he would prefer to be known as his room number. Four.” then he got up. “Are we done with this introduction thing? I have things to do.”

Izuku started to collect Katsuki’s supplies and followed him out of the room as casually as possible. He didn’t want to give the wrong impression to all of them so soon. The others followed right after and then scattered in all directions. Katsuki was waiting for him near the study room with a displeased expression. He headed inside and sat at the table on the center of the room.

“We need to discover who did this or how.” he started while Izuku was seating in front of him.

“Let’s try and narrow down the possibilities. First, I can say with complete certainly that it’s not the one with the red hair, Mishima or whatever. I know him, we were often called together for interrogations and certifications… He is forbidden to use his quirk, it’s too dangerous. I don’t know if the others know about it, but he made sure to tell everyone to not touch him. We can exclude the square glasses guy, Aizawa said to use his quirk with moderation. This quirk can’t be moderate or not, so it’s something else. I know nothing about the others. If I have to guess, though, I would say that this is your little hyena friend’s quirk. She is the one that knows both our names, right? There is something that doesn’t make sense though…” Izuku tilted his head and drew a question mark in the air. Katsuki frowned deeply. “She knows our names and her own name… she could have exchanged one of us with herself, not the two of us with ourselves. Unless this is some sort of test… Maybe she wanted to confirm that they were indeed our names… Still, I would not risk it if I were her. Because if we now know her quirk, we can sell her off during the week so that she has to wait before attacking us again.”

Izuku wrote in the notebook.

-What do we do?-  

“Since I’m in your body now, I’m going to talk to her. If it’s not her she won’t suspect anything since she was being friendly with you. I suppose that your quirk is not useful for interrogation,
Izuku didn’t have much of a choice so he nodded, agreeing to his plan, a bit worried. Katsuki talking to people with his body was not a great combination. Katsuki left the study room alone, Izuku waited for a reasonable amount of time before getting even more worried and deciding to spy on him. He found them in the entrance hall.

“How do I know that you aren’t lying? You are suspiciously friendly with everyone.” Katsuki was saying to her in a slightly aggressive tone.

“Well, I can’t really prove it, can I?” she was shrugging. “A deal is a deal, however, so here is my information: excluding Mishima, square glasses and Four, the only other person who is avoiding speaking too much is Shu. All the others are trying their best to extract casual conversations from others. What I’m saying is, if you discover the conditions you can easily understand who it is. Because, if you are saying this it means that someone used Body Swap on you... I don’t think that you have a quirk that reveals other people’s power or you would have not asked me any of this, you would be confronting the real owner right now. So basically... If it’s something based on conversation, you can retrace your steps. It’s just the second day, you can’t have spoken all that much with everyone, right? Your priority should be to discover what triggered it, not who. When you discover the conditions tell me, okay?” she smiled brightly at him before turning her back and climbing the stairs to the second floor.

Katsuki made his way back toward the right wing and then stopped when he saw Izuku peeking out of the corridor. Izuku offered an apologetic look and they returned together inside the study room.

“Don’t behave like a stalker while being in my body, I don’t need that kind of reputation!” he said irritably while sitting down once again. Izuku bowed his head a little to apologize. “Luckily she fell for it.” he was serious once again. “I’m sure she didn’t suspect that it wasn’t you. She doesn’t think that you’re close to anyone yet to have exchange with them and still behave normally. She would have not spoken that way had she known that it was me.”

Izuku wrote in the notebook again.

-I heard something about a deal? What did you do?-

“I’ve just told her that someone here has the Body Swap quirk. I offered her a deal. Her information was useless though. She thought it was you so she gave some advice for beginners. I already knew that. I couldn’t ask for more considering that I was pretending to be you... Problem is, you said that you spoke only with her yesterday, correct?” Izuku nodded. “Then it has to be either something about the names or something about a non-verbal action. We need to test this.”

Izuku nodded repeatedly, completely captured by his reasoning.

-How?-

“When we wake up tomorrow if we are still in each other bodies then we can assume that this is an uncontrolled quirk. The owner has no control about it whatsoever. If they did, Aizawa would know they are violating the rule about not sending another Calling Card for a week. If so, it can’t be simply the knowledge of our names. It has to be something more complicated than that. Like a key word or a key action. Once we establish that, we have a good opportunity to discover the real conditions. You see, an uncontrolled quirk need the repeating of that action to stop working. Basically, we’ll return to our own bodies when we perform that action again. We just have to try until we get some results.” he concluded with a smirk.
Izuku was very impressed. Katsuki’s knowledge about quirks was astonishing. It actually sounded more difficult than anything, but Katsuki looked confident, like he was already sure that the answer would be in their hands in no time. Izuku was not that optimistic.

-What if this is a controlled quirk? What if it’s really about the name knowledge and this is just a test?- 

That successfully swiped the smirk off him. He looked away, irritated and then answered reluctantly.

“If so, we are screwed.”

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:
Controlled or active quirk:
It's a quirk the owner needs to focus on to activate. The owner can choose when to activate or deactivate it on their own free will as long as the condition is met. The price of this type of quirks has to be paid while activating the quirk or while using it, if they never use it they don't pay for it.
An example would be Detector or Barrier: condition -> activation -> use -> deactivation.

Uncontrolled or passive quirk:
It's a quirk that's always activated, independently of the owner will. As soon as the condition is met the quirk unleash its effect on the target even without the owner realizing it. Some quirk effects can be deactivated by repeating the condition, others are permanent. The permanent quirks are all banned from use without direct authorization. Since the quirk is constantly in use the price will be distributed for the whole duration of the owner's life.
An example would be God's eye or Truth or Dare.

Haru and Mishima are both characters from Persona 5, I chose their names to give them a little tribute. While you can guess who Mishima is (I have chosen the name that sounds closer to his) don't worry too much about Haru. The fact that you can't identify her is a clue on itself. Advice: Instead of trying to find her identity based on the 'lack' of physical appearance, I would focus on what quirk can create a non-canon appearance. Every character is canon, the fact that you can't identify her indicate that her quirk is something related to identity.
She can be anyone.

Next Chapter: June 4th.
Alliance

Chapter Notes

Hi!
I just wanted to say that in the last chapter there was a clue to understand who the owner of the Body Swap quirk is. If you want to try and guess who it is on your own this is your last chance, go back and search for it. If you'd rather have the answer immediately then keep reading ;)

-Screwed?!-

“Yeah well… I said that we can sell the quirk knowledge off… But it’s not like we have any proof that it’s her, or any way of contrasting it, right? We are defenseless. She will easily score a win with one of us and that’s that. We can’t really do anything to stop her.”

Izuku paled.

-So we just have… to admit defeat?-

“This is your fault! You told her your name!” he spat.

-Well, she already knew yours!-

“Well that’s… it’s still your fault! You confirmed it by saying it in the classroom!”

Katsuki’s patience had reached its limit; he got up and left the room without turning back. Izuku knew that he was just tense and a bit worried, but it was still so not fair. He picked up the notebook and shut himself in his room, his room, the one without any number on it. He let himself fall on the bed and sighed deeply. Katsuki was always like that; he would lose his patience after a while and snap at him. Still, he was always able to come around after a while, this time he would too. Putting that aside for the moment, he tried to make a to-do list. First, he needed a lock for the door. Katsuki had said ‘learn’ but how? Izuku had spent a fair amount of time pondering when he finally reached a solution. He could not install a lock on the door, it was simply too complicated. But he could find a way to tie a chain on the handle, couldn’t he? He went into the storage room once more to fetch a thin chain and a small metal hook. Maybe it was not the best, but it could work. He needed a drill too though…

There was no drill there. Unsatisfied, he returned to his room and tried to tie the chain somewhere else, but there was nothing useful. In the end, he just pushed the low table against the door with a sigh. He needed to find a way to attach the metal hook to the wall somehow. Giving up for the day, he tried to change into his pajamas before realizing that this was Katsuki’s body. To put his pajamas on Katsuki’s body… He shook his head to get rid of the embarrassing image and went to sleep in his shirt and pants.

The next day he woke up still in the wrong body. He sighed with relief, this was an uncontrolled quirk. They were ‘safe’. Tired of eating cold food, he brought a cup of instant noodles to the kitchen to warm it up. There he found Shu, who was chopping some vegetables. He opened his mouth to
greet him before remembering that he was still in Katsuki’s body and he could not speak. Shu looked
pained for a second, as if he was afraid of being attacked. Izuku raised his hand in greeting trying to
look casual. Shu acknowledged him with a nod. They stood in silence, side by side for a few minutes
before Izuku’s noodles were ready to go, with steam coming from them. He was about to leave the
kitchen when Shu stopped him.

“Urara is preparing a calendar for us to help take care of the vegetables.” he said.

Izuku nodded again, he didn’t have paper with him and even if he had had some, it was still out of
character for Katsuki to thank someone. He would take care of this calendar thing when he found a
way to return to his body. He didn’t particularly like the idea of interacting with the girl in this body.
When he returned to his room, while he was setting the noodles on the table, he noticed a paper ball
in one of his pants pockets. His heart skipped a bit after reading the message inside, thinking that it
may have been Katsuki’s.

-I’m sorry-

Paper balls were often associated to him, but after a moment, Izuku realized that it couldn’t be.
Katsuki had never written ‘I’m sorry’ even when he was apologizing. He always found some
convoluted way to avoid that specific phrase. The more he examined it, the more he was convinced;
this was not Katsuki’s handwriting. Katsuki’s Y had a straight line, like an arrow, this one had a
curvature. The double Rs were well defined, Katsuki’s R were an unintelligible mess. This was a
message from the Body Swap quirk owner. It was a good person, after all, Izuku was relieved, and
he had a pretty good idea of who it was too. It almost looked like they wanted to be uncovered.

It was only later in the evening that Katsuki finally knocked on his door. He had his arms crossed as
if he was still trying to give himself an air of superiority, even if both knew that he was offering a
truce. Neither of them mentioned it. Katsuki seated on the carpet still with his arms crossed.

“It’s an uncontrolled quirk.” he stated daring him to say anything.

Not that Izuku, in Katsuki’s body, could actually say anything even if he wanted. He just nodded
opening the usual notebook that Katsuki had brought with him. He spread out the message that he
found earlier on the table. Katsuki looked at it with a raised eyebrow.

“What’s that?” he asked.

-A message from the owner of this quirk-

“You know who it is?!” Katsuki’s interest perked up.

Izuku hesitated a moment, should he tell him his suspicions or not? They were in this together so
obviously he should, but he was afraid that Katsuki would overreact and do something wrong. Izuku
was pretty sure that he was not a threat, but it was only his gut feeling. He didn’t have any proof and
trusting his instinct in this situation could be dangerous. Should he let Katsuki decide what was best
for both? He was the one with the brain and experience… Izuku shook his head.

-I have an idea-

“Really?” he looked doubtful. “Let’s hear it.”

-At this point I’m sure it’s not Urara, so we can exclude everything that I told her. I didn’t talk with
anyone except you and Mishima that day. And I’ve exchanged body with you. I think that it’s
something that I’ve told you. You should try to repeat everything I said that day in front of all of
them. If I’m right it should work-
Katsuki thought about it for a moment.

“You are right. This person must have witnessed or heard the condition. Quirks work based on either knowledge or on direct contact with the condition. If you fulfill a condition away from their eyes or ears, it won’t work. This plan will let us return to our original bodies, but it won’t let us know who or why. On the other hand, experimenting with a word at a time will take ages. I guess we will have to be content with just that.” he looked unhappy but resigned.

They gathered all the things Izuku had said to him that day and wrote them on the notebook for Katsuki to read them aloud the following day before the lesson could start. When they took a break, Katsuki noticed the chain on the desk.

“Are you trying to create a lock?”

-Yeah, and I’m failing. I can’t find a drill-

“You are really hopeless.” Katsuki sighed. “You are supposed to use sealant silicone; you can’t make a hole in a wall that doesn’t belong to you.”

Now that he mentioned it, it seemed very obvious. They went together inside the storage room and he showed him the correct silicone to use. Then both of them worked until the chain was somehow acceptably fixed. After that, Katsuki returned to his room, Izuku ate dinner and prepared to sleep. He wanted to return to his own body as soon as possible so he could take a shower. He suddenly wondered if Katsuki had taken a shower in his body or if he had changed into his own underwear. Izuku, feeling overheated, immediately tried to forget all of those thoughts.

The next morning, the fourth of April, was the perfect day to recreate the first-day scenario. At nine there was again a lesson from Aizawa, they would be all gathered in the room and it would be easier than searching and having a one-sided conversation in front of each person one by one. That would be incredibly suspicious. Izuku wanted to test his theory and try to repeat the conversation only in front of the person he was suspecting, but there was no way to do that without Katsuki’s cooperation. He didn’t feel like throwing him under the bus after they had apologized. He decided to apologize to him, knowing the exchange, and not to Katsuki. So, he wanted to at least try and talk to him before selling him off to Katsuki or the others. Izuku was aware of the fact that this was not how teamwork was supposed to go, but his conscience just would not let him betray that person’s offer of trust.

They met outside of the classroom and reenacted all perfectly. Izuku sat in Katsuki’s desk first and Katsuki entered the classroom last. When Katsuki called up his own name, like Izuku did the first day, he heard someone inhale sharply but he was not fast enough to see who. Some of the people in the room were observing them with confusion and curiosity but none of them made any particular move. The rest of the day was uneventful, Katsuki and Izuku waited for anything to happen but nothing changed. Katsuki told him that probably something would happen after they slept, just like last time.

He was right. The next day they woke up in their own bodies, finally. Izuku’s body has fallen asleep in Katsuki’s room so that’s where Izuku awoke. Apparently, Katsuki had had his same idea; he was still in his pants and t-shirt. Izuku didn’t know if Katsuki had taken a shower in his body and he didn’t want to know either, there were things that he’d rather they remained a mystery forever. He preferred to focus on the fact that now, he only had one t-shirt that was not all wrinkled, and he would have to do laundry later. Izuku was about to leave the room when Katsuki knocked on the door. He let him inside and Katsuki started to scribble on his notebook.

-It worked-
Izuku nodded. Now that the critical situation was resolved, he wanted to try to speak to his suspect. Maybe he would not confess, after all it was against the rules to reveal their own quirk, but his gut was telling him that he would gain something from it.

-Too bad we didn’t get to discover who it was, well as long as this isn’t a threat, I guess it’s fine-

Izuku left him, a number of tasks to complete ahead of him. There was no class that day so Izuku took a long shower, ate a warm toast in the kitchen and turned on the washing machine. While he was waiting for it to finish washing, Mishima showed up, they looked at each other for a moment. Izuku raised his hand in greeting, not sure if it was a good idea to speak all things considered, and the other mirrored his move a bit hesitantly. Mishima broke eye contact and went to prepare the washing machine further away from the one that Izuku was using. When both machines were running, an awkward atmosphere settled in the room. They were both sitting on the waiting bench without speaking or looking at each other. Mishima started fiddling a little with his gloves.

Part of Izuku wanted to start a conversation or something because ignoring someone like this was just wrong. But on the other hand, the one that he identified with Katsuki’s face, it was telling him that he spent three days in fear of a quirk, he didn’t particularly want to start all over again with a completely new quirk. Katsuki had said that he knew his quirk, and it had probably something to do with touch, if the gloves were an indication. But was it worth the risk? Maybe it was just him; he had been raised differently from the kids with dangerous quirks. No one taught him how to be rude to people to avoid risks. He wished he had asked Katsuki about this guy’s quirk. In the end, he never got to make a choice.

“Yo! Look who it’s here!” the voice belonged to the guy that wanted to be called Kami, the one with blond hair.

Both Izuku and Mishima jumped, startled by the sudden appearance. The guy strode into the room, then loudly prepared and turned on the washing machine next to the one that Izuku was using. Then he just plopped down right next to him, placing an arm on his shoulder casually. Izuku tensed up at the unexpected physical contact. Mishima’s expression was expressing a similar emotion, only stronger. It was as if he could not believe that someone would just boldly touch someone else. Izuku had mistakenly thought that everyone would be too wary of others to openly try something, but he realized his mistake. True, it was a risk, but most quirks could not work unless you were bold enough to steal knowledge or try a direct move. Katsuki would probably kill him if he was going to fall into a trap so easily. He discretely distanced himself a little, Kami noticed.

“Geez, all of you! You are all too cautious! This atmosphere, too! Looks like someone is going to drop dead any moment!” he laughed at his own comment. Izuku could not decide if he was being genuinely open or if it was a farce. Mishima surely didn’t seem to have appreciated it, he paled and looked down at his hands. “I understand that you are all a bit tense, but seriously, no one is gonna get hurt, Aizawa will prevent that! Take this vacation for what it is!”

Suddenly Mishima, who until that moment had tried to become invisible, raised his head and stared at him with hard eyes.

“How can you say that? You know nothing of mine, his, or anyone else’s situation. Don’t go and put all of us into the same category. Just because your quirk is probably something that doesn’t hurt people, don’t underestimate the others!” he got up and left the room, abandoning his laundry behind.

They both stared at the door he disappeared through for a moment before Kami shrugged.

“Man, that’s why I love my quirk so much. It’s so much easier to understand what people are thinking with it! I’ve never understood people without!” he winked at him.
Izuku was staring at him with wide eyes and his mouth open. *Had this guy just revealed his quirk to him? Just like that?*

“Are you… is your quirk Telepathy?” Izuku asked him.

Kami smirked.

“Close, but not quite!” he winked again. “My quirk is actually a gigantic mess! It’s difficult to use and it creates more problems than it solves!” for some reason he looked totally proud of it.

Izuku’s washing machine finished its work right at that moment and Izuku collected the damp clothes before putting them inside the dryer. Izuku returned to the bench, not knowing if he wanted to try to pursue the conversation from before or not. Kami decided for him.

“By the way, have you spoke with Urara?” he asked. “She is trying to make us all cooperate over the food. Not only the vegetables, she wants us to have the meals together as well, to share our cooking skills or something. What do you think, wanna participate?”

Izuku didn’t make any promises, he wanted to speak with Katsuki first.

“I’ll talk to her later.”

Kami nodded. Izuku gathered his laundry as soon as the machine stopped and left the room without adding anything else. He was about to reach his room, when he saw Shu entering his. They met eyes in silence, neither of them moved. After a while, Shu spoke.

“What do you want to come in?”

Izuku raised his arms full of dry laundry.

“I need to put this away, can you wait for me?”

Shu nodded. Izuku hurried to his room and dropped everything on his bed. Shu had left the door open for him. He observed his room for a bit while sitting in front of the low table. Shu’s room was much emptier than his and Katsuki’s and it was neater too. Had he not thought about gathering supplies or did he not need them?

“I’m sorry about the trouble my quirk put you through.” he bowed his head a little.

Izuku was surprised that Shu had just lowered his defenses so much, so suddenly. Yet he really could not think of this as a trap, after all, he clearly knew about the exchange and only the owner could have known. Izuku knew his secret, but Shu had nothing on him. How could this be a trap?

He raised his hand in a pacifying gesture.

“No, it was no trouble really! I was just surprised, that’s all!”

“Even if you had to exchange body with that guy?” Shu was observing him curiously. “I guess you are not on bad terms, since you two are on first name basis, but still, I cannot see him as a very tolerant person.”

“Ah, I can see why you would think like that, but he is not that bad, really.” Izuku scratched his head a little.

“I see, I suppose you know better.” he changed the subject. “Anyway, you know my quirk, I have nothing on you. You can sell information about me if you want, I can’t stop you. The only thing I
can offer you is an alliance; if you want, I can use my quirk for your benefit, in exchange for your silence. Actually, to be fair, if you sell my information, it’s very likely that you would be in danger, not me. Once the quirk conditions are out in the open anyone can use it at will. If you form an alliance with me I’ll tell you how to avoid the danger.”

Izuku thought very seriously about what he was implying. He spoke as though he had a disadvantage here but that was only a superficial view of the situation. Shu was implying that leaking his quirk would be more damaging than the opposite. Either he was lying to scare him or… he thought back to the little message, ‘I’m sorry’.

“Why are you proposing an alliance to me instead of just using your quirk to your own advantage?” he asked him.

“Because I don’t like the fact that people can use me to hurt other people. I’ve seen enough of that already. I’m here to prove my reliability, letting everyone take advantage of my quirk is not proof of that. It’s completely out of my hands as soon as everyone knows it.” he was very serious.

“What are your conditions?” Izuku tried.

“If you form an alliance with me I’ll tell you everything.” no luck there.

“Why not Four?” he tried again.

“I don’t trust his quirk. It’s too dangerous.” he answered without hesitation.

“He is not allowed to use it.” this was becoming way too tense for Izuku’s liking.

“Then he is useless, isn’t he?” Izuku froze at that. Harsh. Shu dropped his gaze and sighed. “No, actually, he can’t use my quirk because he can’t speak. That’s the real reason. You can, he can’t. Forming an alliance with you can be beneficial for both of us, I’ll let you use it as you wish, he simply can’t work with me. Have you made up your mind yet?”

Izuku was with his back against a corner. Shu had him exactly where he wanted; if he were to refuse an alliance, he was going to be afraid of his quirk forever. On the other hand, he could not betray Katsuki, no matter what. He could ask Shu to make an alliance with him too, even if he could not work directly with him. Izuku had no guarantees that he would accept and even if he did, he had not asked for Katsuki’s permission. Still, a part of him was telling him that Shu was not a bad person and having such a versatile quirk on their side could be actually a good thing. He took a deep breath and confessed.

“Actually, I’m already in an alliance with Four… So, if you want to work with me, you have to work with him too.” he tried to sound firm.

“I see…” the silence stretched. Izuku was starting to worry. Shu suddenly sighed. “I don’t really know if he is trustworthy or not, I really don’t like his quirk. But it’s true that he can’t use it, so I guess that it’s fine. In exchange, I want to know your quirk too, Izu. I’ll offer you all the information about my quirk and some insurance for the both of you, so I want the same in return. I was going to let you keep your quirk a secret, but if you are his friend I can’t really trust you completely.”

Izuku’s mind immediately found a solution for this new problem. He was surprising himself, when had he become so cunning? Then another thought hit him.

“How are you going to tell me your condition if the rules forbid you from say them?”

“Ah,” he smiled a little, “the rules don’t say anything about answering a question with a nod right?”
Impressive. Definitely, Izuku had still a lot to learn. He got up and left the room after telling him that he would speak with Katsuki. Izuku made his way to his ally's door and hesitated a moment. Was he capable of convincing him that this was for the best? Was it really for the best? Would he be mad that he took this initiative and ended up in a trap?

Katsuki was not going to be happy.

Chapter End Notes

The clue for Shu's quirk:
During the introductions, he was the only one that acknowledged the fact that Izuku was currently inside Katsuki's body so he introduced to him, not to Izuku's body which was now occupied by Katsuki.
“Shu. I'm Shu.” he said in a neutral tone looking straight at him.
At him. Did he know Katsuki or something?

Was this too difficult? I hope not!
In any case, we have yet to hear what his conditions are... there are plenty of clues for this, you can do it :)
Maybe you feel like I should have made this investigation a bit longer, that it was solved too soon... I had three reasons.
1- Shu has reasons. He was not planning to reveal himself but he had no choice.
2- The plot would become a mess had I not done it this way. As they start to interact more and more, possibilities for conditions open and I could not let Katsuki stay in Izuku's body for much longer.
3- Izuku and Katsuki doesn't know anything about anyone as of yet, if Shu had not come forward himself they would not have been able to solve this at all, they simply lack information.
You may feel like Shu is a wasted opportunity... but I wouldn't be so sure about that.

Next chapter will be posted June 11th!
Shouto

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Katsuki opened the door almost immediately with a frown already on his face. He let him in and they sat on the carpet as usual. Katsuki drew a question mark in the air before opening the notebook. Izuku took a deep breath.

“I found the owner of the Body Swap quirk.” Katsu’s eyes lit up with interest. “And err… He proposed an alliance with us.” he purposely let out the fact that the alliance was originally for him only. Katsuki frowned deeply and drew another question mark. Izuku understood that he was asking why. “He said that everyone can use his quirk as soon as the conditions are in the open… He wants us to keep it a secret in exchange for his cooperation in the future.”

-This doesn’t make any sense-

Izuku looked at the message on the notebook and tried to understand what he was trying to communicate. He could not see the point, then he met eyes with Katsuki who started to scribble some more, irritated.

-Why would he need an alliance? He can just take possession of your body and win. If he isn’t doing that, it means that he can’t. He has not met the conditions himself-

“No, I don’t think that’s it. I think that he doesn’t want to use his quirk at all. He seemed really serious about not wanting to take advantage of other people.” that was what his gut feeling was telling him at least.

-Or this is simply a trap-

Katsuki stared at him for a moment before adding something else.

-Do you feel like he is a trustworthy person?- 

“Why would you ask me this? You have clearly more experience than me about this kind of stuff.” he asked, perplexed.

-Quite the opposite. I have little to no experience with people. For me, everyone is an enemy. I can reason on quirks terms, but not on people terms. If you are sure that he really hate using his quirk and he is trying to win in a clean way… Then I’ll trust your judgement-

Izuku was speechless. Katsuki was always so difficult on everything, why would he think something like that? This was not the reaction he was expecting at all. Why was he letting him decide something so important?

“Why?”

Katsuki played around with the pen in his hand for a moment with a complex expression on his face.

-You are the only one that actually believed me when I said that I don’t want to use my quirk. You are the only one who gave me a chance. If you say that he is similar to me then okay. You are usually right about this stuff-
Izuku could not decide if he felt extremely fluttered or scared out of his skin. Katsuki was putting an incredible amount of faith on his shoulders.

-And I can read it on your face, that you have already decided to accept his offer, I’m not stupid-

He closed his notebook with something similar to a pout, but that couldn’t be possible.

Katsuki pouting? He got to his feet and gestured towards the door, moments later they were both seated on Shu’s carpet. The atmosphere was tense.

“So, I guess we have an understanding?” Shu asked after a while.

Izuku nodded, Katsuki only rested his elbow on the table with his face in his hand, and then he opened his notebook and started to scribble with his other hand.

-Not so fast. You want us to keep your secret, right? Give us all the details about your quirk THEN we have an understanding-

“Fair enough.” Shu sat straight. “I’ll tell you how to avoid activating my quirk unless you want to. I’ll offer insurance in case someone else tries to use it to their advantage too. Ask your questions.”

Katsuki didn’t waste any time.

-So, your quirk is Body Swap, it activates when you heard a particular voice command, correct?-

Shu nodded.

-The command is something that Izu said the first day. Was it my name?- 

Shu nodded two times. Sharp Katsuki. When had he figured out? Then he raised the notebook from the table and rested it on his lap where only Izuku could see it.

-I was right, he has not met the condition. He doesn’t know your name so he can’t switch with your body. But you were right too. He can possess me right now, but he won’t do it. He doesn’t want to abuse his quirk or mine. This means that he may be honest about the rest too, problem is: This quirk is useless for us. We don’t know the first name of the others either. But I can see what he means by ‘going out of his control’ now. Anyone can say my name at any time and they would exchange with me. He’s right, this is more dangerous for us than for him. To be honest, this alliance is more necessary for us. The hyena knows your name. You are doomed if she says it in front of him-

Izuku felt a chill down his spine. Katsuki was right; this was very dangerous for them. Who knows if she had sold his name off? He and Katsuki were both in a vulnerable position. If Shu was serious about this alliance, he was basically a savior to them. Shu noticed them communicate in secret, well, they were not really subtle about it.

“I know what you are afraid of, rest assured. Not only I don’t want to use it on any of you, I don’t want to be held responsible if someone switches body with Four and creates a disaster either. Sure, it would not be my direct responsibility, but Aizawa knows that I have this quirk. He would know that it was partially my fault.”

Izuku was really surprised by the complexity that every quirk in this place held. Everything had more deeps than you would think. Then he thought of a question.

“How can you speak about switching bodies? Isn’t it against the rules?”

-He is speaking hypothetically, as long as he doesn’t directly refer to it or the conditions, it’s fine.
Anyone can talk about their quirk as long as it’s vague or a hypothesis. You just have to phrase it right-

This rule had a lot more loopholes than Izuku first realized. Trust Katsuki to know all of them.

“So it’s fine even if you show it directly? Since you are not technically saying what it is?” he asked.

“Yes, remember what he said? ‘As long as it doesn’t come out of the owner’s mouth or pen.’ Some people would be unable to do anything if showing them was forbidden.” Shu answered. “Quirks like mine can’t really be shown though.”

-All right, enough about that. There are other conditions, right? For example the timeframe-

Shu nodded again.

-We switched while sleeping both times. Is that the condition?- This time he shook his head.

-Then it must be… midnight? Your quirk activate at midnight?- Shu nodded.

Katsuki snorted and wrote another sentence.

-Wow, your quirk is shit-

Izuku’s eyes popped out of his head when he saw it and instinctively ripped the page and rolled it into a ball before Shu could read it. He didn’t appear to have seen what Katsuki wrote, as he was observing them with a curious expression. Katsuki frowned at him and forced himself to change the wording.

-You quirk is pretty inconvenient-

“Yes, that is the truth. My quirk is dangerous and works in a complicated way. Often, I don’t ever realize that it’s been used, especially since its effects are so delayed. In my house, it was pretty common to be all over the place every midnight. It was very difficult to keep track of everyone. My siblings learned to use only nicknames after a while. For this reason, I had to keep my distance from everyone; I couldn’t even go to school since kids call each other with their first name all the time. My father, as soon as he realized what I was, made sure that I would not meet anyone besides family members. It was to protect my quirk secrecy for this test. He said to win by using it. I have a different opinion on the matter. Here we are all using nicknames precisely to protect ourselves from quirks like mine. Until I become a member of the Task Force and my quirk is revealed to the whole world, this is the only place where I can actually interact with people. I’m not leaving so quickly. I’ll use my quirk only if I somehow end up surrendering two times.”

-I see, now I have a clearer picture. But everyone knows my first name, they are not using it for now but this can change at any time. What do you intend to do about that? What is that insurance you talked about?- Shu hesitated for a moment. He was searching for the right way to phrase what he wanted to say.

“Have you ever heard of priority quirks?” he asked.

Izuku hadn’t. Katsuki started to scribble fast. He had.
-I see. Yours is a priority quirk. Then you can switch before someone else gets to, right?- Shu nodded once again. Izuku was lost. Katsuki noticed and rolled his eyes.

-Some quirks have multiple targets. Like this one, if he hears 100 names 100 people will exchange. Some of these quirks have a priority system to allow the owner a bit more control. No matter who meets the condition first, he is allowed to steal the spot. For example, if I were to say your name at midnight we should exchange, but if he says it too, it will be him who exchanges with you, not me. Got it?-

“Yes, that explanation is correct.” Shu agreed.

-Is this what you intend to do? If someone says my name you will use your priority to switch instead?-

“Precisely. If I hear your name, I’ll say it too. I’ll safeguard your body until the following midnight. About this… Does anyone knows your name, Izu? If I have to do the same for you, I have to know. By the way, I can’t safeguard two people at the same time, make sure that I never hear both names within the same day. I can help only one person in that case.”

Izuku bit his lip. Urara knew his name. Should he give it to him as well? The insurance sounded good, but it meant to fully trust Shu with his body. He could believe that he would not speak in Katsuki’s body, but what about his body? He was allowed to speak freely; Shu could go in front of Aizawa anytime and… Katsuki poked his side.

-You have to decide if you want to trust him entirely or not. It’s up to you, it was your mistake, you have to take responsibility-

Katsuki was right. His mistake, his responsibility.

“All right then… Urara knows my name. It’s Izuku.”

“I see…” Shu pondered a moment. “That girl is bad news. She is actively trying to make conversation with everyone. In this situation it’s very suspicious. I’m sure she needs some specific information to make her quirk work. In any case, since you gave me your name, I’ll give you mine. I’m Shouto. Shu is the nickname my siblings used.”

“Thanks for trusting me with it. Nice to meet you.” Izuku bowed his head a little.

“Likewise.” he bowed a bit too. “Now, I would like to know more about your quirk, so that our alliance is complete.”

Izuku had not forgotten this part of the deal, he had been thinking of a way out of this the entire time. He was pretty sure that he found a good one. He ignored Katsuki’s questioning look, there was no way he was going to say that he bargained his inclusion using his quirk as payment. He lifted the paper ball that was still in his hand, the one he rolled earlier and kept on purpose, and showed it to them. Then he made an effort to activate the Acid Skin quirk and melted the paper completely. Both of them stared at his hand speechless. They were not expecting that. Izuku had thought about showing the Light Sphere instead but anyone could see that it was not an A or S quirk. Acid Skin was well known for being an A rank, so it was a great camouflage.

“I… see.” Shouto looked a bit perturbed. “I was not expecting… this. If I end up taking your body, you have to teach me how to not activate it. My quirk does what it wants, so I’m not used to active quirks.”
Having reached an understanding Katsuki and Izuku left Shouto’s room and returned to Katsuki’s room. He immediately sat down on his bed and started scribbling with a frown.

-Acid Skin has nothing to do with kisses!-

“Yeah, well… I lied.” said Izuku while sitting down. “That’s not actually my quirk, it was just camouflage.”

Katsuki stared at him with his mouth open for two minutes making Izuku uncomfortable, then slowly grinned broadly.

-You’ve grown up a pair since the last time I saw you naked!-

“Wha-“ Izuku blushed a little. “Wait a minute…” he realized something. “Does that means that you didn’t see me naked while you were in my body?”

Izuku could not fathom what possessed him to say such a thing, he started to burn internally. His fantasies about what Katsuki could have done in his body were not supposed to come out in the open. Katsuki was tomato red and had an outraged expression on his face.

-What kind of logic is that?! I was joking, I didn’t mean physically growing a pair! What the hell! And who do you think I am?! A frigging perv? I don’t look at those things just because I can! Last time I saw you I had the right permission to see!-

There were tons of things to comment about that, but for some reason, his mind kept focusing on the two crossed words. He had the right to see him naked, hm? Katsuki scribbled some more.

-Wait a minute, what have YOU done in my body?!-

Okay, time for Izuku to go back to his room. He got up rapidly.

“I’ll see you Monday in class. Good night.”

He ran out of the room closing the door behind him, something hit the door from the inside, probably the notebook. Izuku locked himself in his room. It was not like he did something in Katsuki’s body, he had a clean conscience, but when Katsuki was in this particular mood, he would not believe anything he said, so it was better to just run away. He threw himself on the bed sighing before realizing something. He had forgotten about the laundry that was on the bed, now it was even messier than before. He sighed deeply. Luckily, he had two days before the next class. He had time to iron the clothes.

Izuku tried to distract himself all evening and next day, he ironed, cleaned the room, stole some other supplies from the convenience store and tried to organize things a bit better. He didn’t want to think about Katsuki and Shouto for a while, he needed a break from everything. His life had been a mess this last week. On Sunday, he met Urara in the hallway.

“Finally!” she yelled running toward him. “I’ve been looking for you for days! Where were you hiding?! I know that this is a test and all that, but we don’t bite! There is no need to escape!”

“Ah, I wasn’t really hiding… I’ve been just a bit busy, that’s all…” Katsuki and Shouto both were so wary of this girl, that he felt really tense talking to her. Izuku had not a clear picture of her yet. “I was doing the laundry, and cleaning my room… things like that…”

“I see, you are an organized person, good for you!” she nodded. “And you are hanging out with Four, so I guess you are not really lonely or anything.” she grinned a little. “Do you remember what I
told you about taking care of the vegetables? I’ve been trying to gather everyone to discuss it, can you come on Monday after class? We are meeting up in the library.”

“Yeah, sure…” he hesitated a little. “Should I invite Four too?”

“Hmm…” she frowned a little. “I guess? I mean… I don’t think he will want to help, but if there is someone he listens to, I bet it’s you. So, if you manage to convince him, sure, bring him too.”

Izuku was a little uncomfortable. He could not say anything since talking in this place was dangerous, but he really wanted to contradict her. It was always like that, everyone immediately assumed stuff about him, just because of his quirk. Katsuki surely was part of the problem, his attitude was keeping people away just like his quirk, but still, Izuku could not really blame people for being afraid of his quirk, it was a pretty bad one, but Katsuki was never going to use it on anyone, rules or not. They refused to give him a chance, so they would never discover that Katsuki had actually an iron morality. If he was keeping people away from him, it was mostly because he was too afraid of activating it by accident.

“I’ll ask him.” he simply answered.

“Great! I hope that everyone starts to get along soon! The atmosphere needs to lighten up a bit!” she nodded.

And yet, she wanted to exclude Katsuki from the get-go. What logic.

Izuku knocked on Aizawa’s door and the man opened after a long while, making Izuku start to wonder if he was not inside after all. The man looked really shabby, Izuku wondered if this was his quirk’s fault or more likely he was just a really lazy person. He could use a girlfriend.

“What? Is there some problem? Want a Calling Card?” he was very welcoming too.

“No, I was just wondering if my room doesn’t have a number at all… Can’t I have a number plate?” he tried to not get intimidated.

“Oh, right. I don’t have a number plate ready for you, I’ll ask for it. Or you can make it yourself, I don’t really care. You are number 7. If you don’t have anything else to say I’m going back to sleep. Bye.”

The man pretty much shut the door in his face. He was already knocking on Katsuki’s door when he realized it. He was number 7 and being the last one, he had surely the last assigned number. But the girls’ door had numbers from 1 upward too. So, if his calculation were correct there were 7 males and 4 girls. Entering Katsuki’s room, he sat down, ignoring him, and started to account for everyone. Izuku, Katsuki, Shouto, Kami, Mishima, square glasses. Six in total. Something was wrong there.

“Hey Katsuki. Why am I number 7 if there are only 6 males in the test?”

Katsuki’s expression went from really annoyed to pensive in a second. He scribbled like usual.

-You are number 7? It doesn’t make any sense. If, supposedly, one of the girls is actually a male or something, there would be only 3 rooms for girls. There are still 4 rooms for girls. It’s like we haven’t met someone, is there an extra person in this that we don’t know about? Are you sure you are number 7?-  

“I just asked Aizawa, I’m sure.”

-Intriguing. Have you told this to anyone?-
“You are the first one I tell anything to, you should know that.”

Katsuki hesitated for a moment, his expression conflicted.

-Don’t tell anyone, this is good information. Don’t place the number on your door and don’t show your room to anyone. They are probably going to assume that you are in one of the numbered ones-

“All right.” Izuku agreed. “Urara invited us,” not really ‘us’ “To the library on Monday. She wants to discuss the vegetables.”

-Pain in the ass-

Direct as always.

“Actually I think I’ll go. I think that interacting with them is dangerous, but that’s really the only way to acquire new information.” he tried to explain his point. “You are free not to come, if you want, I’ll tell you if I hear anything useful.”

-Then I guess I’ll go too. To keep an eye on danger for you-

“You don’t have to do that…” Izuku was perplexed. “Why are you so accepting? The same thing happened with the alliance. You asked what I want to do and then accepted it. Not that I don’t appreciate it, but… That’s so not you. Normally, you would never let me decide.”

It was not like Izuku was suspecting him to pull some trick on him, it was just seriously disconcerting. Katsuki had a really displeased expression on his face.

-You really have not realized it, have you? My life is in the palm of your hand right now-

Izuku felt irritation grown.

“That’s not true! Why would you say such things?”

-THINK ABOUT IT. No matter what conditions their quirks have, you surely can sell me to them. Or score a win yourself. Your presence is the biggest threat to me! It’s not your fault that you were sent here, but had I known, I would have never revealed so many things to you! I can’t defend myself from you in any way!-

“So you just figured that offering complete cooperation would buy my silence?” he got on his feet clenching his fists. “I would not sell you off for any reason in the world, but you don’t believe in me at all, do you?” Katsuki adverted his gaze angrily. “You only see people as gain or loss, that’s why you don’t have a normal relationship with anyone!”

He stormed out of the room and slammed the door to his own room shut. It took him an hour before the anger could dissipate and reason could fill his brain again. It was obvious that Katsuki would feel this way, time and time again, he was denied the opportunity to have a normal life. The test was his only opportunity, his only hope, for a better future. The Task Force had many eccentric people; it was common sense that an unique person would fit best with other unique people, right? Maybe Katsuki could have trusted him more, but who was Izuku to judge his life and feelings? He needed to apologize; his childish behavior would only make him more distant.

On the eight of April, Izuku tried to speak with Katsuki before the class started, but he had already left his room. When Izuku reached the classroom, Katsuki was already seated at his desk. He sat next to him and greeted him but he ignored him entirely.
“Listen, I’m sorry,” he lowered his voice a little but the classroom was too quiet, “can we talk about this, Katsuki?”

Katsuki’s head turned toward him in a snap and a cough was audible from the other end of the room. Shouto had heard him. Izuku slapped a hand on his mouth and Katsuki face-palmed.

-You goddamn moron-

Here is a fantastic fanart by Puolukka! Thank you very much again for this <3

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Page 2

Take a look at her Instagram as well! She is Sarumomoka!

Chapter End Notes

Body Swap:
This quirk activates when Shouto hears a first name. The exchange happens at midnight and it won't revert unless the now exchanged people say their own name. More precisely: the quirk interprets the name as an order to insert the conscience that says it inside the body that holds that name. For this reason Katsuki exchanged even if he said his own name and not Izuku's because the quirk doesn't *exchange consciences* but inserts them in a specific body of choosing. Nothing happens if you say the name of the body you are currently inside. Interesting fact: if more than one person holds the name the quirk simply won't work as the order is not clear enough.
This quirk is incredibly powerful, has a priority system and it's extremely unusual.
Normally the Body Swap quirk has a different condition and works in a different way.
Price: unknown.

Next chapter: 18th June!
Seafood barbeque

Inside the study room, after class, Izuku apologized to both Shouto and Katsuki multiple times while bowing his head.

“You don’t need to apologize to me,” said Shouto, “if you don’t mind exchanging bodies with him, then I’m not involved in this.”

-Same old idiot. Whatever. We don’t have class tomorrow anyway-

Izuku wanted to apologize for a lot more than just that, but he could not with Shouto present. He ended up asking him if he was going to the meeting in the library.

“I’m not sure… do you think I should?”

Why was everyone asking him to decide? They had both a lot more experience than he did and yet they were relying on him to decide everything. Selfishly, he told him to go, so he would have even more eyes keeping a look out for danger. Shouto nodded, but then Katsuki got up to leave.

“Aren’t we going to the meeting?” he asked him.

He stopped, scribbled on his notebook then showed it without looking in his direction.

-YOU are going. I’m not. Wipe your own ass-

He slammed the door as he left. Of course, Katsuki would still be mad at him. Izuku could feel Shouto’s eyes on him, he was observing him curiously, clearly unsure of what had just happened. Izuku massaged his eyes for a moment, sighing. This was a problem for later. Izuku and Shouto joined the others in the library; everyone was there except for Mishima. Urara was explaining a table setup that she had drawn on a big paper when she saw them and greeted them. Most people at the meeting, like Kami and Haru, were pretty energetic and talkative so Izuku started to relax bit by bit. This looked a lot like a group for a study project, something Izuku was familiar with. Shouto and square glasses looked more uncomfortable than relaxed as they didn’t say a thing. By the end of the meeting, Urara had assigned Izuku to the Tuesdays and Shouto to the Saturdays. They were to pull out weeds and water the plants on those days. Katsuki was excluded.

“All right, now that the vegetables are out of the way, there is something else I want to discuss.”

Urara rolled up the paper; she was going to hang it in the classroom later. “I have learned, by asking Aizawa, that we are allowed to fish in the sea and gather seafood if we can find any. However, there is the problem of potential food poisoning… Do any of you know how to recognize what’s edible? If not, maybe we shouldn’t bother; it’s not wise to risk our lives where there are no hospitals.”

“We have this library though, there’re surely volumes about fishes and seafood.” said Froppy.

“That’s why I had this idea! Why don’t we have a seafood barbeque once a week? We can share fishes and anything else we can find. We can cook them all together! Isn’t this a good opportunity to spend some time together like a real class? I don’t want to spend a year shut in my room too scared to stick my nose out of my door. Let’s be friends!” she smiled looking at each of them.

Kami, Froppy, Haru and Yao nodded; square glasses didn’t have any noticeable reaction. Izuku was
conflicted once again, this sounded like a great idea, he was not a great cook and he could already see himself getting bored of instant noodles, sandwiches, toast and snacks. On the other hand, Katsuki and Shouto both had expressed they had a bad feeling about the girl. Even now, Shouto was looking down on his laps, not saying anything. He decided to try and risk it, nothing would change if he didn't try to change it himself. He nodded.

“Well then! The majority voted in favor!” she got up with enthusiasm. “Let’s do it every Wednesday, all right?”

No one had anything to object, it wasn’t like there was much to do in this place, each day was basically identical to the previous one and the next one too. Only Aizawa’s lessons were helping to pass some time. Izuku knocked on Katsuki’s door to update him on the meeting. He opened the door, only a bit, enough for his face to be visible. Katsuki could be very childish if he wanted to.

“We decided to have a seafood barbeque every Wednesday. You coming?” Katsuki shook his head with an unimpressed stare. “All right, I have to take care of the vegetables every Tuesday.”

Katsuki disappeared for a moment inside, but he returned before Izuku could open the door fully and enter. He had his notebook with him.

-Which means that, tomorrow, I have to go in your place-

Right, they would exchange at midnight until the following midnight.

“I can go with your body if you want.” he offered.

-That’s a bad idea. They would wonder why I’m going in your place, if anyone saw me-

“Well then I—“ before Izuku could offer something else Katsuki slammed the door in his face. “Alright… maybe not…” he sighed.

The next morning he woke up in Katsuki’s room, in his body, as expected. Before he could get his bearings, someone knocked on his door, it was Katsuki in his body, with his usual displeased expression. He dragged him in front of Shouto’s door and as soon as he opened the door, he said ‘Katsuki’ then disappeared inside Izuku’s room without even greeting them. They followed him with their eyes and then looked at each other. Shouto bowed his head a little in greeting and Izuku offered him an apologetic smile. Shouto slightly bowed again, then closed the door; apparently he didn’t want company. Izuku wondered if it was Katsuki’s body that was making him unwilling to spend time with him. He returned inside Katsuki’s room and sat down, thinking about what to do for the day. He had nothing special that he had to do, maybe he could take a look inside the library for seafood books or something, but he didn’t want to do it in this body, similar to the situation with the vegetables, people would wonder why. It was better for him to remain in the room and wait for midnight. He scanned the room with his eyes in search of something to look at, anything.

Katsuki had staked a lot of random stuff, there was even a juicer for making fresh orange juice. Izuku could not remember, but he was not so sure that oranges were even available here. He had cooking knives, a toaster, and even a little portable stove. He really didn’t want to go to the kitchen to cook, did he?

Katsuki was above average in his cooking skill, so it was obvious he had thought about that thoroughly. There were three packs of toilet paper; Izuku realized he had to do the same, only because there was still paper in his bathroom it didn’t mean it was going to be infinite. He had a lot of writing supplies and spare notebooks, but that was pretty normal. Beside the desk was a tower of books, on closer inspection they were all from the library, they were textbooks for a lot of different
subjects. Izuku felt a little guilty but he started opening the drawers of the desk. Inside the first one, was a medical kit and a medical textbook. Izuku smiled, Katsuki was always prepared for everything, Izuku had only to learn from him. In the second one, was a photo album. Izuku opened it, inside were photos of Katsuki and his family when he was younger. Izuku was surprised that Katsuki had actually brought such a personal item to this place. However, it was not implausible; Katsuki loved his family even if his feelings were tainted by guilt. Izuku observed the photo of them on a beach; Bakugou Mitsuki had a black smear on her left cheek and Bakugou Masaru a black shape on his right shoulder, a little child’s hand. Katsuki was fully clothed, looking uncomfortable as he was in all the pictures where his parents were touching him somewhere. Izuku sighed sadly. Katsuki’s control over his quirk had gotten a lot better since he was little, but he would never fully get used to accepting physical contact after those incidents. What a heartless quirk.

He turned the pages mindlessly until he reached the last two pages, then he stopped, frozen in place. He recognized these pictures; *he was the one that took them*. One was the trip during the second year of high school, they were on a panoramic spot, Izuku had taken a commemorative photo of the two of them, Katsuki was looking away from the camera, only his frowning profile was visible. Another was in an amusement park, Izuku had taken a photo of the sign with them in front, or at least he had tried to, Katsuki had started walking away mid-shot and Izuku had turned to call him back, it was a terrible photo. There were others taken during the school trips, in all of them Katsuki was trying to leave or showing only part of his face. Izuku remembered all of them, he also had them at home, but they had been taken with his camera and Katsuki never asked for a copy. Had he stolen the camera to copy them from the memory card when Izuku was not watching? Probably. He should just have asked. Izuku would have been happy to give him a copy. Same old Katsuki.

This was not even nearly half the actual photos anyway. But, they were all of them together. Izuku had stolen a lot more shots of Katsuki alone and he had an annoyed expression in all of them, he hated being photographed. Izuku chuckled remembering just how many times he had written him that he would burn his camera someday. He turned to the last page and choke on his saliva. These were not *his* photos. There were shots he had never seen before. They were of Izuku alone, staring outside a bus window, sitting outside the baseball playfield, eating an ice cream in the amusement park and one of his sleeping face. He started burning up when he realized exactly when he had given him to opportunity to take a shot at his sleeping face. He had no idea Katsuki was sneaking pictures of him too! He was a lot better than Izuku at secretly taking pictures, he never suspected anything. The dimension and quality was different from the previous ones, these were taken with his phone camera. He slammed shut the book and put it again inside the drawer. For the rest of the day he tried to forget all about it with little to no success.

Wednesday, the ninth of April, Izuku, again in his own body, went down to the West side of the little island. The Northern side was entirely occupied by the building, just beyond was a high cliff. The Southern side had the area where the planes were landing and the cliff was surrounding the whole East side from there. Only the West side had a slope that ended directly in the sea with a little beach. It was seriously an exaggeration to call it beach, but at least it was flat and soft, contrary to all the sharp rocks that were everywhere else, like landmines. There were already Kami and Urara, he was splashing in the cool water in a swimsuit, while the girl was examining a grill that looked pretty old. She had a swimsuit on too, but the lower part of her body was covered by a long, colorful beach pareo. Only after a while, he noticed square glasses sitting in a corner, far from everyone else. He was reading a book and was fully clothed. He didn’t even look up from it when Izuku greeted him. He wondered what was with this attitude of his. He still bothered coming to all the social events, but he behaved like they didn’t exist at all.

"Please Izu!" Urara suddenly pleaded. "Help me! I know nothing about grills!"
Izuku was not exactly an expert either, but he supposed he had helped his father set up the annual barbeque in their garden sometimes. However, he was not really sure that this grill was safe to begin with, it looked pretty dirty. While he was trying to make it look a little less poisonous looking, Haru and Froppy joined them. They were good friends apparently, they moved always together. Froppy had a top and shorts while Haru was wearing only a bikini, Izuku tried to not stare, the girl was pretty hot.

“What? I thought we were going to swim! Why are half of you still clothed?” Haru asked looking surprised.

“It’s April, I’m not sure the water is at a warm enough temperature right now.” answered Urara.

Haru pouted and then joined Kami in the water who looked overjoyed to be near a hot girl. In the following hour, Haru and Kami brought little shells they found on the rocks nearby and Froppy fished up three small fishes. Shouto and Yao arrived at noon both were normally clothed. The total amount of food was not even nearly enough of all of them, but it was an acceptable first try. Izuku tried to start the fire with some difficulties; at some point square glasses took his spot and easily created a nice layer of charcoal. He started cooking the fishes afterward, all in complete silence. Izuku really could not get a read on that guy.

The first seafood barbeque went quite well, they talked about fishes, seafood and the ocean mostly, but some even shared some details of themselves. Froppy said that she liked water and she preferred autumn over hot summers or cold winters. Her nickname was given to her by her friends because she was like a frog, always playing with water, jumping in puddles and going outside in the rain. Urara talked a little about her parents and hometown. Haru about her favorite type of swimsuit for girls. Kami chatted an incredible lot about his favorite food. Izuku was starting to relax a lot, he thought about maybe revealing something about himself, but Shouto’s coldness to the whole thing made him hesitate. Even now, the guy was seated with his head hung in silence.

“I thought I smelled roasted food…” suddenly a voice sounded from the other end of the beach. Aizawa was there, looking as shabby as always, even in the warm sun he was wrapped in oversized clothes. “I haven’t eaten anything properly cooked in a long while, is there anything left for me?”

They all looked at each other. That certainly had been unexpected. Truthfully, there was nothing left, but Froppy was still fishing and Urara hurried inside the building to gather some vegetables as a side dish. Eating together with the man was a bit awkward, but they were eager to get on his good side, so they tried to make small talk. Two more fishes were caught by Froppy and they roasted them for him, not even trying to claim them. The man wolfed down on them like he had not eaten in a month, while they were sending him some perplexed glances.

“He really needs a girlfriend…” Urara whispered in Izuku’s ear and he quickly hid a smile.

“To be fair…” Shouto mentioned later, while they were all returning inside. “He is already partially blind. I don’t think it’s easy for him to cook or take care of himself, I don’t think it’s right for us to look at him that way.”

He was right of course, Izuku felt a little guilty. Maybe they should implement another duty, to bring Aizawa a decent meal every day. Once he returned to his room, he thought about stopping by Katsuki’s and talk, but he could not think of anything important to say. And Katsuki was still irritated with him.

The following week was pretty uneventful, Izuku didn’t try to talk with Katsuki and he made no attempt either. Classes were still easy and a bit boring, the vegetables were looking healthy and everyone was socializing tentatively except for Katsuki and Mishima who were avoiding everyone
as much as they could. Shouto too was pretty reticent still, but Izuku started to forget about that.
Nothing bad was happening and everyone looked friendly enough. Maybe Shouto was just as
untrusting as Katsuki, it was not their fault, but they were simply biased. That Tuesday, Izuku took
care of the vegetables for the first time, it was actually Katsuki who did it the last time. Surprisingly,
Froppy was already there crouched down, examining some plants.

“Oh, good morning Izu.” she greeted him.

“Froppy, good morning… Today is my day, right?” for a moment he was afraid to have actually got
it wrong.

“Yeah, of course it is. Don’t immediately start to second guess yourself.” she smiled sweetly. “I just
love plants and water and I wanted to be sure you knew what you were doing. Am I bothering you?”

“No, no! Not at all! I was just surprised! I love plants too, but I normally take care of flowers, not
vegetables, so a hand is always welcome!”

He went to fill the watering can with water.

“The person that was in charge yesterday, Kami if I’m not mistaken, didn’t pull out the weeds…
Geez, so sloppy…” the girl started pulling weeds out with enthusiasm. They worked in silence for a
while, then Froppy started singing a tune Izuku did not recognize. “Can I ask you something?” she
asked out of the blue after she stopped singing.

Izuku hesitated a moment, unsure of what to do or say to avoid offending her, then he realized that
she must know how the test worked better than him.

“I don’t know if I can answer though.”

She nodded smiling, like he had just given the right answer.

“It’s a good idea to keep things to yourself, but don’t forget that we are all still kids and Aizawa
won’t let us use our quirks to do something nasty, so you can relax a bit. I’ve talked to all of them,
most don’t really have an objective here. Kami has already a spot open for him in the Task Force, his
approval is almost granted, he is basically having a good time while he’s here. Mishima and Four are
already well known by the Government. They can’t do anything with their quirks. Square glasses
has a quirk that hurts others. I don’t know anything specific, but that much is evident. Shu wants to
simply wait for the end without doing anything. I can’t guarantee anything about Urara, she is pretty
transparent in her attempt to get information, but at the same time, I have a feeling that she is not
actually a bad person. I don’t care about winning before the time limit and my quirk is not very
useful either. Yao is keeping to herself. Which means that the only person I’m not sure about is you.
My question is: What do you want from this test? Are you trying to win or just to survive?”

It was a pretty fair question actually. Anyone could lie about something like this, but he was sure that
Froppy was quite good at catching lies. The question was more similar to psychological test than a
real question. She wanted to know his personality. He squatted down next to her.

“True to be told, I had no idea I would take part in the test until very recently.” The truth was his best
option, especially since he really just wanted to reach the end intact, not to win. “I was not raised
with the knowledge of what to do in this situation. So, if you ask me what I want from this test…
Nothing. I don’t really want anything from it. I just want to reach the ending and go back home as
peacefully as possible.”

“I see… Do you want to be a part of the Task Force? To use your quirk for the Government?”
“Well, in the end the Task Force is just a bunch of part-timers right?” he scratched his head. “They get called when there is the need and then do whatever they want the rest of the time. So I guess I don’t really mind? I haven’t really decided what to do with my life after all.”

In any case, his quirk was not very useful the way it was now.

“I see!” she smiled. “You are just a normal kid! I never hung out with a normal kid before! I look forward to learning more about you!”

She got up and started to walk away humming again in high spirit. Izuku observed her completely confused, he had no idea what to make of this conversation.

“I’m just a normal kid…?” he asked the eggplant in front of him.

Chapter End Notes

About Katsuki not asking Izuku what quirk he has...
He trusts Izuku to know what he is doing, which may not be a good idea since he doesn't really know what he is doing and he is being a bit dense... Still, it's not like he can force Izuku to talk especially since we would not be able to distinguish between the truth or a lie.

If you like fanarts take a look back to chapter 6, I received a wonderful gift <3

Next chapter 25th June!
That week, the seafood barbecue started in higher spirit than last time.

The test had started two weeks ago and they had overcome the initial impression, so now, with the usual exceptions, they were interacting in a more natural way. Izuku was content with the current situation even if he was feeling uneasy about their refusal to include Mishima and Four in any activity. For a group of people who were talking about cooperation and friendship, they were abandoning them pretty easily. It felt too close to discrimination to comfort. For some reason, Izuku had started to think they were all people who had led pretty solitary existences before coming here. If that was true, then it should be easy for them to understand what discrimination felt like. Even Shouto had said he was happy to have finally met people his age who he could interact with but at the same time, he was avoiding some of them to a certain level. Izuku didn’t really like how things were developing, were Mishima and Katsuki destined to be alone, even among their comrades?

Izuku had a dirty conscience himself, he had somehow avoided Katsuki. Izuku, himself, was not sure of the reason why. Part of him was still thinking about the argument they had about trust, but that was not the whole reason. Izuku was feeling somewhat lacking, like he had yet to demonstrate his worth to him. If Katsuki was going to trust him so much, he wanted to offer something in exchange. That was why he had promised himself to talk to Katsuki again only after he had gained some useful information. But it was just an excuse. The real reason was another one. It was not possible to build any kind of relationship without ignoring the elephant in the room.

They had to talk about their past together and figure out what they really were for each other. Last time they saw each other, the terms of their relationship was clear in their minds, or more precisely the terms for the end of their accord, but they never took into consideration the possibility of meeting again. They were not supposed to meet again after the end of high school. At the very least, not before Katsuki had taken the test and his destiny would be set in stone, as much as destiny can be set in stone. For this reason, they had always kept a certain degree of distance between themselves. Both were aware that Katsuki had to go away, there were no other options, it was the law, and so neither wanted to make a promise. They never acknowledged their relationship in an open way or talked about feelings. For everyone, they had always been only friends and that was the definition they used too. Had Izuku let Katsuki decide, they would have not even reached that level, he had always been adamant about keeping other humans away, but Izuku was just as stubborn. He forced his way in without Katsuki’s permission.

And here they were now, with a confused relationship that was impossible to define.

“So…” he tried a bold move. “It looks like everyone here knows Mishima’s quirk… How come?”

“Oh, how strange, since you are friend with Four I thought you, of all people, would know!” Urara was the first one to react. “Those two are the ones the Government keeps a special eye on. You surely already know Four’s quirk and Mishima’s is almost just as famous. Those two know each other, so I was sure he had told you too.”

“No, he didn’t…” he was not going to attempt to explain their complicated relationship to them right now, if ever.

“Wait! You all know?! I don’t know either!” finally Kami snapped out of a trance.
“That’s pretty normal.” to everyone surprise it was Shouto who started to explain. “Four’s quirk is worldwide famous. It’s unique and extremely powerful, but he still went to a public school all his life causing panic all over,” Izuku grimace remembering some of the stories Katsuki had told him about grade school. “His fame is overwhelming. The Government decided that it was safe after confirming that he could not do anything to anyone as long as no one were to touch him. In addition, he has a good control over it, something that Mishima doesn’t have. Mishima’s case is completely different. He killed seven people already and he was confined inside a special facility all his life.”

“He what?!” Kami yelled on top of his lungs.

“His quirk,” Shouto continued unperturbed, “Is Virus. His body is a container for a deadly virus that spread into the victim’s body as soon as a direct contact is made. He killed his parents immediately after birth and the doctors and nurses too. When they identified what was happening, it was too late, the Virus spreads slowly and there is no cure. His quirk is not rare, in Africa and South America a lot of kids are born with it, the only difference is that they kill them on the spot to avoid problems. Mishima is lucky he was born here, not many nations do a test like we do. In term of dangerousness, he has the top spot, but in term of raw power his quirk is not so impressive, he can only spread a very limited quantity of it at a time, which is why it takes the victim so long to die. Four’s power is something else, not even the barrier around this place can stop its effect and his situation is far more complex.”

“Holy cow!” Kami was still yelling.

“How do you know so much?” Urara looked at him suspiciously. “Not only the quirk, you know about all the details and more. It’s not normal.”

Shouto closed his eyes for a moment then he opened them again and answered.

“My father is the chief of the Department for S Rank Quirks Regulation.”

The mood dropped two feet underground and they all tensed up.

“Does this means you know all ours quirks?” asked Urara, she didn’t look very friendly anymore.

“No, only the ones of the people who were directly in my father's influence. Four’s and Mishima’s plus some others of people I don’t know. As you all know even the S rank quirks have some sublevels of dangerousness. Mishima and Four are considered unofficially ‘SS’. S are the quirks that hurt people physically or mentally, but Mishima kills and Four lasts for a long period of time so these two are a step higher. Normal S quirks can cause damage for a limited period of time or to a limited area so there is no need to keep them under strict control like SS. Even if another S is here right now, I wouldn’t know. As for A rank quirks, they are just law-breaking, they don’t hurt people. I know nothing about them.”

They relaxed a bit, but some of them looked like they weren’t sure if they wanted to believe him or not. Izuku was inclined to believe him even if he had no proof.

“We sure have some peculiar people in here, hell, Virus! I knew there was something strange about him, but not this!” Kami crossed his arms. “Now I see why he was so mad when I called this a vacation, maybe I should apologize.”

“Personally, I fear Four’s quirk more, a single mistake and your life is ruined!” said Haru sitting on the sand. “At least death is death, once you are dead it’s over!”

“Yeah, that’s very helpful Haru… They are both bad in my opinion.” Yao frowned. Izuku could not
keep a straight face, he really hated the fact that everyone immediately assumed things about Katsuki. If even a mistake were to occur, he still would never use his quirk, so their lives wouldn’t be ruined at all. Izuku’s expression must have been more open than he thought because Yao stared at him.

“You are his friend, right? Can you tell us more about him?”

Now they were all staring at him curiously.

“Yes, no, yes, I mean, yes! He is my friend!” caught off guard, he blurted out something incoherently. “We were in the same class during high school.”

“How was he at school? Did he attend classes?” asked Urara interested.

“Yes? Of course.” what kind of question was that?

“So he didn’t skip class? He didn’t insult the teachers?” asked Haru getting closer.

“No! Have you confused him for a delinquent?!” Izuku was baffled, what mental image did they have of him? “He is a good student! He had excellent grades!”

“Seriously?!” Kami was over reacting about everything. “I totally thought he was the type to beat up everyone! Did he bullied you?! Are you being blackmailed?!”

“No…? What? Why?”

“Idiocy aside, he really was a good student?” Yao asked again. “I can’t imagine him having a normal life or a normal conversation with someone, I mean, he can’t even talk.”

“Well…” she was not wrong about that, but they were being overly dramatic too. “He had some problems interacting with people, that’s true, but he always listened in class and does everything he had to. He wasn’t a rebel or anything, he was only a little less social than most.” a lot less social.

“And everyone was cool with him being there?” Yao didn’t seem convinced.

“No… not really. Everyone mostly avoided him. He didn’t take part in P.E. either, to avoid accidents.” Izuku felt somewhat defeated for some reason.

“But you consider yourself his friend?” Froppy was listening attentively.

Izuku took a deep breath. He had to be careful not to give any potentially dangerous information, but at the same time, he felt compelled to defend him the best he could.

“No one wanted to sit next to him, no one wanted to do study groups with him… During the first year there was a lot of displeasure every time he was assigned to work on something with someone… At some point, I decided to offer myself as a volunteer. After that one time, the teachers automatically assigned me to him every time, I was seated next to him all the years and they made sure we would always be in the same class. Everyone considered me his babysitter. I didn’t mind, the first year was a bit difficult since we were strangers, but later it was just natural. After he warmed up to me, we have become normal friends, that’s all.”

He had given them the shortest version ever of the story, but it was all true, that was how everything began. They were all staring at him. Izuku tried to keep a straight face, even if he was feeling like he was under some kind of pressure. There was nothing strange in what he said, was there?

“Wow, you’ve got guts! You have some serious balls, man!” Kami was so easily impressed.
There was nothing strange about him, right? He had only done a normal thing, anyone would have done the same—Well, all right, maybe not.

They decided to bring some fish to Aizawa who appreciated them and approved of their plan of having a seafood barbeque every week. Later in his room, Izuku thought about his conversation with the others; about how much they were afraid of Mishima and Katsuki and they way they looked at him. Katsuki was right, he was always right. Most people would never accept him or anyone like him, they just didn’t trust them, they were too afraid. Izuku could not understand their feelings at all, but he had to accept them. And he had to show some real balls and talk to him again too.

The morning of April 20th, Izuku jumped out of bed with only a thought in his head: Today is Katsuki’s nineteenth birthday! He felt the stupidest person alive, how could he have forgotten something so important until that very moment? To think that he had even celebrated them with him for four years! He still remembered the small parties that Katsuki’s parents would prepare for them, only for the two of them. Izuku was Katsuki’s only friend and his parents both loved him, they would always try to convince Izuku to stay at their house as much as possible and to spend as much time as possible with him. Katsuki always ended up threatening them of death if they kept bothering him like that. Izuku was always embarrassed, but in a good way. He never even thought of taking Katsuki to his house, he was pretty sure both his father and mother would not be ecstatic with his choice of best friend. Or almost-boyfriend-something even.

The parties had always been very calm and relaxing, completely different from all the others Izuku had attended during his middle school years. Katsuki’s mom would cook all their favorite dishes for them and they even had a big cake. If Katsuki ever missed other people’s company he never gave any sign. Izuku had always had the suspect that if Katsuki had been a female they would have asked him to marry her already. That was just how much they loved him. Every time Izuku would be reminiscing about these times, he would blush with deep embarrassment, but these were all fond memories for him.

And now, here he was. Without a present to give him. Izuku immediately realized that he could not just ‘go somewhere and buy something’. That was not an option here. Furthermore, to just get him something from the convenience store was a terrible idea. Katsuki was organized, he surely had already taken all he needed and grab the first random thing was not very thoughtful either. There was really only one option, he had to do something for him with his own hands. A handmade gift. Problem: He had zero ideas and little time.

He left his room trying to think, there were some labs in the right wing of the building, but what could he do? He could not sew, a science experiment didn’t sound like a good gift. Music? Art? Izuku was pretty incompetent in both subjects. While he was walking around without a true objective, he met Froppy.

“Hi Izu. How are you?” she smiled gently.

“Hi Froppy, I’m alright, I’m trying to find a good idea…” he figured it couldn’t hurt to say that much.

“An idea?” she tilted her head.

“Yes, for a gift. I’m realizing that I’m terrible with creative stuff. I can’t exactly buy something in here.” he scratched his head with an embarrassed smile.

“I see… Hmm…” she put a finger to her lips. “I’m probably biased, but I would use the vegetables or fruits and herbs if I were you. It’s for Four, right? I can’t imagine him liking something useless.”
Izuku hoped this wasn’t giving her strange ideas, like he was courting him or something. But he could not say anything about his birthday. Izuku could see Katsuki’s expression if he knew he had just told them his birthday. She could probably speculate that a birthday was involved, but he never said it was needed for that same day.

“I’m not very good at cooking though. He is better than me at the very least, I can’t give him anything he can’t make on his own.”

“Well, it’s still food, he can still eat it.” she thought for a moment. “What about jam? The cherries on the tree are just ready to be harvested. In a couple week they will start to rot, it’s best if we use them right now! And since the season just started no one will miss some cherries, you can take them without any issue.”

“This is a good idea Froppy, but I don’t know how to make jam… It sounds complicated.” he was probably not capable of making something like this even with a recipe.

“I can help you! Let’s make a lot of jars, some for me and some for him, how does this sound?” she nodded. “I was going to make some for me anyway.”

“Even if there is some in the pantry?” Izuku had seen some kinds of jam in there.

“Yep, even if. Industrial jam is always worst than handmade one!” she smiled happily.

Having reached an agreement, they took a ladder from the utility closet and Izuku climbed up with two baskets. It took them two hours, but in the end, the baskets were full of beautiful cherries. They sat down in the kitchen at the table and started to remove the seeds inside, opening them in half.

After that, they put the fruits in a big pot and Froppy taught him the right consistency the fruits had to have. She worked them with a fork creating a nice looking puree and she weighed them.

“Now you have to add half their weight in sugar.” she explained putting everything inside the pot again. “After that, we just have to wait, all the liquid must evaporate and the result should be dense enough without actually burning.”

They started to wash and prepare the used jars that Froppy brought from her own room.

“How were the other students treating you after you befriended Four?” she asked out of the blue.

Izuku hesitated a moment, she was very interested in him for some reason, he didn’t want to doubt her, but what if she was just trying to obtain the information she needed to activate her quirk? That or she was just a lover of interesting stories.

“There were mixed reactions.” he decided to answer her without entering too much into details. “At first they were friendly toward me, then I started to interact openly with him and they were confused. They were treating me like some kind of strange animal, they were curious and scared at the same time. They would ask me a lot of things, but at the same time they would never include me in any events or group activity. I think they thought of me as an intriguing anomaly. Some even started to try befriend me only to hear from me stories about Four. Since he would not interact with them, they thought that asking me instead was a better idea. They wanted to hear from me that he was a terrible person, I guess. Their questions were always petty and malicious like ‘Has he ever tried to mark you?’ or ‘How many people has he marked?’ or ‘What’s the worst thing he ever did with his quirk?’. At first I was overwhelmed, I had no idea what to tell them. Even if I tried to defend him, they would just keep thinking what they wanted. Then I learned from Ka-Four that the best idea was to fake ignorance about everything. I started giving stupid responses and they started to treat me like a poor idiot that had been captured by the big bad monster. I stopped paying attention to them during the
third year. I always thought that having a single, deep relationship was better than having a lot of superficial ones. Kat-Four then told me to keep a neutral relationship with them, since he would not be there for me forever and I would end up alone, so—" 

Izuku stopped realizing just how much he had been rambling. She smiled.

“Yes, you can call him by his name with me, you know? I already know it and my quirk definitely doesn’t work on names.” she took a look inside the pot. “Do you ever regret your decision? To befriend Four and ignore the others?”

“No, never.”

There were no doubts in his mind. Katsuki withdrew from high school earlier than everyone else, he wanted to spend some quality time with his family before joining the test and he was a good student, so passing the exams earlier had been easy for him. After Izuku lost all contact with him, they had gone to Italy for a long family vacation, he tried to spend more time with his classmates but none of them could hold his attention for long. Katsuki once had said that having to deal with an S rank quirk made you mature far earlier than the rest. Izuku understood only then what he had meant. His school friends were so boring and immature compared to Katsuki. Katsuki had a difficult personality and was not easy to deal with, but his mind was far sharper than all of them combined.

Now that Izuku had met others with A ranked and S ranked quirks, he could say with certainty that something was truly different in them. Even during normal conversations these people would make him stay on edge, always wondering what they were thinking. They were truly a world apart from all the normal people. After ending his relationship with Katsuki, he had a period of disorientation. He felt far too old compared to his peers, and he somewhat felt deprived of his youth. He closed up the time with Katsuki in a box and tried to live like everyone else. Forgetting about him was unfair, but Katsuki himself had told him to do it. To live his life and forget about him.

Izuku forgot and went ahead without him. Or at least he was telling himself that much. Deep down, really deep down, Izuku was scared. He had always known that Katsuki would go away and that getting too attached to him was a bad idea. Izuku was scared of getting hurt.

Katsuki accepted him by his side, first as a friend and later as the confusing thing they were now, only after he made absolutely clear that they had to part way forever at some point. Katsuki had always known he had to take the test and his chances of passing it were very slim. He never said it out loud, but Izuku understood anyway, Katsuki was very pessimistic about his future. He had given up on long-lasting relationships from the very beginning. In his own strange way, Katsuki was trying to protect him by putting a time limit on their time together. Izuku agreed to it, first because he was not invested enough to think he would suffer from a sudden parting, later because he egoistically wanted to be protected from the pain. ‘Forever’ and ‘love’ were too big of a word, especially with the possibility of Katsuki being imprisoned for life just around a corner.

Katsuki disappeared without saying goodbye and Izuku forgot about him.

Those were the terms of their accord.

Those were the terms Katsuki decided during their second year in high school.

Those were the terms Izuku accepted so he could avoid facing a difficult situation.

Those terms had protected them from suffering.

Now those same terms were making it difficult for them to interact.
But had he ever regretted forming this bond and living these moments?

No way in hell.

Chapter End Notes

Virus:
This quirk is highly irregular. It's already evident since birth, like only a couple other quirks in the world, and it's something they host in their body, instead of being a strange power. The owner can wear gloves to protect the others from contracting the virus but of course every inch of naked skin is dangerous. There is no concrete application for this quirk so normally people who possess it just stay out of everyone's way.
There is the possibility of stopping and cure the virus before the person dies but only if taken very early and only by using a Cure quirk that's very, very powerful. This Cure quirk is quite rare so the probability of surviving is slim.
Price: ???

Next chapter will be posted on June 29th!
Yes, it's not a Monday so remember this!
“It’s ready.” Froppy asked for his help and together they filled the jars with burning hot jam.

“Perfect, now we just have to wait for it to cool down, you can decorate the jars if you want. You can take some decorations from the sewing lab.” she smiled again. “I hope your friend likes it! Do you mind if I ask one last question?”

“Sure, if I can answer…”

“What are your feelings towards Katsuki?”

“Wha-?!” Izuku almost dropped a jar, his cheeks started to burn. “What do you-?!”

“I’m sorry, my bad!” she chuckled. “Was I too direct? What I meant was more along the lines of, are you two going to work together for this test? Are you two still friends? Allies?”

Izuku could not understand how these questions and the other one were related at all. He felt like she had asked in a way that was easily misunderstood on purpose.

“I… Well, we are not enemies. But, we’re not… Close either.” he hoped this was an acceptable answer.

“I see, I hope the gift will help you then!” she smiled handing him the basket so he could put the piping hot jars in it. “I’ll see you around!”

She left with her basket full of jam. Izuku started to make his way to the sewing lab hoping that he didn’t make a mistake by talking with Froppy. He was in the entrance hall when Kami jumped on him from behind and gave him a big slap on the back.

“Yo, Izu, pal!” he grinned.

Izuku had no idea when they had become pals. This person was an anomaly between anomalies. He had almost dropped all the jar on the floor.

“Kami?”

“I need your help! I tried to talk to Mishima, but the dude is hiding in his room and won’t come out even if I’m calling him!” he crossed his arms. “Do something!”

“Why me?!” Izuku had no idea what he was thinking.

“Because you successfully tamed another wild beast, right? Four must have been a tough fight!” Izuku’s jaw dropped. “You’re the expert here!”

“No…?”

“C’mon don’t be modest! I need your help bro! Help me, you already did it once!” Kami pleaded him.

“Why do you need my help? Why do you want to do something like this?” Izuku was not saying he
shouldn’t, he was simply dubious. Why was he so interested in Mishima? In a place like this, Izuku had some trouble believing that people wanted to make new friends without a good reason.

“Ah, how do I explain this…” Kami scratched his head. “My quirk permits me to understand people better. For me, it’s like second nature, when I meet a new person, I want to understand them. Normally I don’t pry with people who don’t enjoy my company, but this is different. I was raised with the conviction that everyone needs some degree of socialization; everyone wants others to understand them! I’ve explored enough minds to tell you this with certainly. I don’t have to become everyone’s best friend, hell, I don’t want to become everyone’s best friend. Sounds tiring. But ignoring and isolating someone is a big no-no! So! I gotta talk with him!”

It was something Izuku was not expecting to hear. Especially from a guy that looked like a complete airhead. Izuku wondered if this was a trap of some sort when he suddenly remembered something his mother said: ‘I love this quirk, I just can’t leave it alone’. Izuku knew that a quirk could make your life different from anyone else’s. A quirk could teach you a lesson nothing else could, sometimes. Was the same even for A and S ranked quirks? Maybe it was not that these people were trying to use their quirks because they wanted something in exchange, but because it was in their nature? This guy’s quirk was something similar to mind reading, he probably used to do it all the time before coming here. Maybe because he couldn’t use it freely now it was making him react this way. For him, seeking out people was not something special, it was just normal.

“But why you didn’t try to talk with Four as well?”

“Because he doesn’t needs me to. Four is not alone, he has you.” Kami answered like it was the most natural thing in the world. Izuku was deeply stunned. How easily he had said something that sounded so… big. He felt himself blush a bit, he made it sound so, so… intimate too. Kami laughed loudly. “Man, are you blushing?!” he slapped him in the back again. “C’mon pal, help me!”

Izuku was too flustered to give him any other answer than a nod. Before he even had time to fully process the situation, he was in front of Mishima’s door, his basket of jam still in his hand. He tried to plead with Kami with his eyes, but the guy just gave him a thumbs up and a smile. He turned to face the door again trying to think of something. Izuku seriously had no idea what to do to get him to talk, he knew nothing about him. He tried to look at Kami again, but suddenly the guy knocked on the door in his place, not wanting to wait for him to take the first step any longer. Kami hid, flattening himself against the wall, Izuku stared at the door panicking. After a moment, which felt very long to Izuku, the door opened an inch and Mishima peeked out from the inside.

“Ah! Hello! Ah…” Izuku looked around in search of a conversation topic, but he could not find anything, his mind was empty. He went for the only thing that was not empty, his right hand. “Do you want some jam?!”

Mishima stared at the jam, then at him, then at the jam again. He stood there unsure of what to do next.

“You… don’t have to give me anything… Why?” he was confused and he had the right to be.

“N-no reason! I just thought it would be a good idea to give some presents, hm, to know each other better?” Izuku was internally scolding himself, this was Katsuki’s present, why was he giving it away like this? Why was he in this situation in the first place?

Mishima opened the door, fully.

“I see… Thank you?” he stood there unsure of what to do next.

Izuku had no idea himself.
“Oh! What a coincidence! To meet you guys here!” yelled Kami suddenly making them both jump.
“It’s such a great idea, Izu! A gift for us! You’re such a nice guy! Hey Mishima, why don’t we all go into your room and taste this nice gift, yes?!”

Kami grabbed Izuku’s arm and pulled him inside the room, Mishima backed down in a hurry with complete panic on his face. Izuku was kicking himself mentally. Great, he could say goodbye to Katsuki’s gift. Kami took the basket from his hand and placed it on the little table similar to the ones in all the other rooms, then he grabbed a jar and yelled.

“OW! This thing burns!” he let go the jar in a hurry; it fell right off the table and onto the floor, smashing into pieces.

They all stared at the stain on the carpet in silence.

“Ah! I’m sorry!” Kami turned to face Mishima and started to laugh awkwardly.

“Yeah, of course it’s hot, it was freshly made!” Izuku could not stop himself from showing his irritation.

“Are you two trying to attack me or something?!” Mishima yelled backing away into a corner.

Honestly Izuku could not blame him. This was a disaster.

“No, no! I’m sorry we are no—“

Kami interrupted him.

“You don’t have to worry.” suddenly Kami’s tone was serious, he was staring Mishima straight in the eyes. Mishima stared in return. “We won’t ask anything from you. Everything is fine; you don’t have to try so hard.”

Silence filled the room, no one moved. Izuku looked at them both without knowing what to do or what was happening. It was almost like Kami had read his mind but that was not possible, right? He had to send a Calling Card before he could do that. Right?

“At least help me clean the mess you made.” Mishima sighed deeply and started to pick up the broken glass with his gloves.

Just like that, the atmosphere shifted instantly, Izuku was stunned. The two of them started to chat, well Kami was chatting and Mishima was listening, and cleaning up. They were much more relaxed than before. Izuku rushed to help them, as he did not have a better response.

“By the way, why do you have all this jam Izu? Were you preparing for hibernation?” Kami asked him when all the glasses were collected. They had to grab a broom and roll the carpet into a corner.

“I thought it was a gift?” Mishima asked, still looking at Kami, with an eyebrow raised. “You two were tricking me from the very beginning, weren’t you?”

“My bad, it was my fault!” Kami smiled broadly. “But it turned out for the best, right? So you forgive us?”

“It’s not like I’m avoiding you because I hate you… Even if you’re kinda bothersome,” he was still talking with Kami, “I was trying to be considerate and be out of everyone’s way…”

“Well, no one asked!” Kami said with confidence, then he became perplexed. “I hope?”
“No, it’s just something that I know it’s on everyone’s mind and…”

“No offence, but the expert on minds here is me!” Kami puffed his chest. “Wanna know what’s on everyone’s mind? Let’s go and see!”

“What?!”

Kami grabbed him by the shirt and started to drag him out of the room.

“C’mon Izu, we need you!” he called him.

Izuku grabbed his basket and hurried behind them, confused as ever. They were standing in front of Shouto’s door when Kami stole the basket from him and knocked. Shouto opened the door and stared at them in surprise.

“Here!” Kami grabbed a jar and gave it to him, Izuku observed the exchange with dismay. “A present from Mishima, with the hope of becoming the best of friends!” Kami smiled again.

Shouto wrapped his shirt around the jar. It was still burning quite a bit. He stared at them all in total confusion. Mishima blushed a little, embarrassed to be recognized as the leader of the expedition even if he really was not. Shouto stared at Izuku the longest, a question clearly written in his eyes. Izuku had seriously no idea what to say to him. Kami waved a hand in goodbye and dragged the two of them in front another room that Izuku could only guess was square glasses’. The scene repeated, square glasses’ expression didn’t change much. Then Kami tried knocking on Katsuki’s door. Izuku wanted to ran away, for some reason showing up at his door in company of those two and with what was supposed to be his birthday present was unbelievably embarrassing. Katsuki didn’t open the door, he was probably out. Kami shrugged and started to drag them toward the right section of the building.

“Wait, wait!” Izuku finally snapped out of the trance he had fallen. “Are you going to give away all my jam as present for everyone?!”

“Yeah!” Kami smiled without a care in the world.

“But… It’s my jam!”

That was not a clever rebuttal but it was the only thing he could think of. Mishima sent him a look of pity, which only multiplied Izuku’s embarrassment.

“So what? Don’t be selfish! What were you going to do with all this jam anyway?!”

Izuku wanted to ask him how wanting his jam back was selfish but he stopped when he saw Froppy and Urara talking in the hallway of the girl dormitory. They stared at them then at the basket, then at them again.

“Here! A present from Mishima! Let’s all be friends!”

Urara accepted the jar, confused; Froppy stared at him with an eyebrow lifted. Izuku wanted to hide under a rock and never come out. He prayed strongly the girl would just play along because he was going to die from embarrassment otherwise. Izuku hid his face in his hands.

“Thanks, I already have my own jam but consider the offer accepted.” she smiled sweetly.

Froppy bowed lightly while holding a big, thick red book in her arms, then turned to enter her room. By the time Kami had given the jam to Haru and Yao, Izuku was completely drained of energy.
Unfortunately, for him the worst was yet to come. Kami dragged them again in front of Katsuki’s door, in the basket was the last jar. This time he opened the door. Katsuki stared at them, moving his gaze slowly from one to the other as if he was judging them all.

“Here! A present from Mishima! Let’s all be friends!” Kami repeated once again.

Izuku started to feel hot with embarrassment. This was not how this was supposed to go!

“Ah, Bakug-I mean, Four, Happy birth-ah…” Mishima interrupted himself several times but Izuku understood him all the same.

Kami stared at them with confusion while Izuku quickly cooled down. Mishima not only knew Katsuki’s last name he knew his birthday too. Izuku had no idea they were such good friends. A feeling of irrational irritation grew in Izuku, it was like Katsuki had kept this a secret on purpose or something. It was stupid, Katsuki was free to have as many friends as he wanted, but Izuku could not help but wonder why he never mentioned him before. Katsuki took the jam and held a hand in front of himself while bowing his head just a tiny little bit.

-Thank you-

Then he sent a glance in Izuku’s direction for a split second, for some reason Izuku thought he looked almost angry, and slammed the door in their faces. Izuku had no idea why, but he was feeling like he had just helped a love rival score a solid plus ten points.

Which was beyond ridiculous.

Now he was out of jam jars, he had no present to give him.

Kami and Mishima were continuing down the hallway without him.

“There we go! See? It was easy!” Kami was speaking cheerfully.

“No, it was embarrassing.” Mishima deadpanned.

“Buuut, you don’t regret it right?” he sent him a big, radiant smile.

“I guess not…” Mishima looked away.

“I knew it! Look, from now on, we are best friends, okay? As such, I must give you a nickname of my own! Hmm…” he thought for a moment. “All right, from today onward I’ll call you Shishi!”

“Please don’t.”

Kami laughed loudly. They were continuing on their way, they didn’t even noticed that Izuku was not following them. Izuku sighed deeply; only glad that he could slip away now. He waited for them to be far enough, then he sneaked into his own room, sitting on his bed with a sigh. It was already six and he had nothing to give Katsuki for a present. After that little show earlier, he was not even sure he could look at him in the eyes right now. His plans were all ruined. In the end, feeling like the worst coward, he slid a note under Katsuki’s door. It was really the worst present ever.

The next day they met in the classroom, Katsuki didn’t give any particular indication of having read his note, but he probably did. Kami, in the meantime, changed seat, now he was seated next to Mishima. The two of them were apparently pretty compatible or something. Izuku observed Katsuki staring out of the window. He wondered if he had eaten the jam, the one he thought was Mishima’s present for him. Izuku could not help but feel irritated again, but he could not tell him, ‘Hey, that was
actually my jam!’, how pitiful that would be?

After class, Katsuki left without doing anything, like always, but this time Izuku was not going to let him go. This cowardice had gone on for far too long already. He caught up to him.

“Ka-Four! Err… Happy birthday. For… yesterday.” he said after making sure no one was around to hear. Katsuki turned towards him for a second, then kept walking ahead with a frown on his face. “I’m sorry, all right? It’s not that I forgot, I tried to make you a present but… It didn’t work… So…”

Katsuki stopped and pulled out his notebook, scribbling something messily.

-Do you think I care about that? I don’t care-

He tried to get away again. Izuku decided to abandon the subject and try with something else.

“Ah, I discovered someone’s quirk! More or less… Don’t you want to hear it?”

He tried to bait him with something he was sure he was interested in. He was sorry to throw Kami under the bus like this but; on the other hand, he was not exactly being secretive about it either, so Izuku figured it was okay. With this information, Katsuki surely would forgive him. He stopped and started to write, placing the notebook against the wall with an annoyed expression.

-Whatever. You don’t have to tell me-

“What?! But you told me to give you any information I had!” Izuku could not believe his eyes.

-That was when we were allies. Now we are not, I’m just going to stay in my room all year and if I get eliminated it’s none of your business. Goodbye-

Izuku was outraged. He grabbed Katsuki’s arm before he could try to walk away again. Katsuki slapped his hand away angrily. Izuku grabbed him again, more tightly.

“Will you stop this?! What’s your problem?!”

Katsuki was furious, he started to scribble with so much violence he was tearing the paper in places.

-Apparently, my problem is that I cannot have a normal relationship with anyone, SO, I’m going to stay in my room!-

Ah, Izuku had say that, hadn’t he? He tried to apologize before, but then he said his first name and a lot of stuff got in the way… Izuku had almost forgotten that he had said that. He fidgeted, feeling filled with guilt.

“Look, I’m sorry about that. Too many things happened to me lately, I haven’t been able to keep all my emotions in check, but I didn’t mean that. I mean… You are truly too guarded, but it was extremely unfair of me to say that to you. I just wish we’d have a normal relationship right now, okay? I don’t want you to rely on me because you are scared that I’ll reveal your information to people. I would never do that Katsuki, you know that, don’t you?”

Katsuki was still refusing to look at him, but he looked a bit calmer.

-I don’t even want a normal relationship anyway and you are better off without me-

“Don’t be like that, I already told you years ago that’s not true. Let’s go to your room and talk okay?” he proposed squeezing his arm just a bit.
Katsuki rolled his eyes faking annoyance, Izuku could see that he was just exaggerating.

“You have always been quick to invite yourself into my personal space-

With that last message, he closed his notebook and started to walk again. Izuku walked by his side with a little smile, Katsuki had forgiven him. Inside his room, they took the usual position; Katsuki was seated on the bed and Izuku on the carpet. Trying to be as subtle as possible, Izuku searched for the jar of jam with his eyes, he spotted it on Katsuki’s desk, still closed and full. He was not sure if he was feeling relieved or disappointed. A paper ball hit him.

“What was that idiocy yesterday?-“

“Ah, Kami forced me to try and get Mishima to talk with everyone. The rest was... Not something I was expecting.” he shrugged, trying to close the discussion.

“Is Kirishima’s quirk the one you wanted to tell me about? I already know what it is-

“No, it’s Kami’s.” Izuku tried to stop himself from asking but he could not resist. “Kirishima...?”

“Mishima, Kirishima Eijiro. He chose something that was somewhat similar to his real name-

“I see...” he tried to bit his tongue, he really tried. “Are you two close? He knows your birthday...”

Katsuki raised an eyebrow.

“We have met each other hundreds of time in the examination waiting room since we were six years old. If we had been two different people, I guess you could have called us childhood friends. Why?-“

“No reason!” he shifted position slightly, changing subject. “Kami’s quirk is something related to mind reading.”

Katsuki played with his pen for a bit, thinking.

“Conditions?”

“No idea.” Izuku shook his head.

Katsuki frowned then shrugged; he closed the notebook and threw it aside. He let himself fall backward on the bed, still playing with the pen. Izuku recognized his habit. Katsuki would do this every time they were in his room, back at home, when he was tired of writing or had something in his mind. He would stare at nothing ignoring completely Izuku’s presence. There was a time when this habit of his, made him uncomfortable. He would fidget for long, interminable minutes, wondering if he was better off going home. That time was long gone. During the last year they had been together, Izuku had taken the habit as an opportunity to sit next to him to relax and sometimes observe him. He decided to do just that.

He sat down lightly on the bed, trying to disturb Katsuki as little as possible. Contrary to what Izuku was expecting, Katsuki actually snapped out of his concentration and stared back at him. Izuku remembered this was something he had done only two times before, the first and second time Izuku had tried this. The first time, Katsuki had been taken by surprise, he had stared at him with wide eyes. Izuku’s courage had dissolved and he went back to sitting on the floor. The second time, Izuku had stood his ground. They had stared at each other for two minutes, and then Katsuki had looked away, accepting this new fact. Izuku was not expecting him to react like this was the first time again. He raised an eyebrow slightly tilting his head, asking him what was wrong.
Katsuki immediately looked away, his expression guarded. In the long silence that followed, Izuku slowly realized. The first time they had done this they were in a very particular and delicate phase. The phase where they were both aware of their attraction to each other, but neither was speaking up. They sealed the accord shortly after. Afterward, it was normal for them to be close. This habit had not been strange. But now… Now, the accord had ended and this was not normal anymore. It was not strange either, it was just that neither knew if they were allowed this or not.

Izuku hated this uncomfortable feeling of not knowing. He took a deep breath, gathering his courage.

“Katsuki, we need to talk about us.”

Chapter End Notes

I'll give you a little explanation about how I intend to use the titles. Unfortunately this will be a bit spoilery for people who start the story later but I'll use as a title both the quirk names and the participants' names. In other words, I'll use the name of the quirk as a title in the chapter where Izuku discovers its existence while I'll use the participant's full name in the chapter where the characters get kind of a spotlight or they get the most amount of backstory or characterization. It won't be necessarily immediately after their quirk is found out, though, so you better keep a close eye on the titles as they may be actually clues in some ways. Oh, when I use the full name in the title it's never a lie, you can believe me. (It's not ironic or sarcastic xD)

Next chapter: 2nd of July
Katsuki’s expression became even more guarded.

“I can’t stand to be here with you and not know how I am supposed to behave around you. Katsuki, let’s discuss this like adults, okay?” Izuku tried to sound gentle.

Katsuki sat up and shook his head frowning; he reached for his notebook again.

“No? Why not?”

-Because there are no guarantees for either of us. I’m not going to make any promise in this situation-

So, the problem was still the same.

“What if we don’t make any promise? If we just deal with what comes?” he tried, not really sure if it was a good idea.

-Do you want to talk like adults? Very well. No, because we will just hurt each other, nothing good will come from this-

“You don’t know that!” he protested.

-Stop behaving like a little kid and start to use your head! There is nothing between us now and there will probably never be again. The time to be adolescents has ended-

“So what I’m supposed to be? A friend?” Izuku clenched his fists, irritated.

-An ally-

“So we aren’t even friends? Just acquaintances? After five years?” Izuku could barely contain the anger in his voice.

-It’s for the best-

“I disagree! Don’t just decide what’s best by yourself, we are going to leave this place together and then…” then what?

-What would you rather be? My friend?-  

Katsuki looked angry. Izuku was angry himself. How clever. Katsuki, as always, was refusing to put his emotions and feelings into play. He had turned the question back at Izuku, just like last time. Last time it had been Izuku’s responsibility to take a step forward and Katsuki was using the same excuse this time too. Izuku was tired of being the one to always push things forward.

“I don’t know, but I really want to know your true feelings for once! Don’t put always everything on me!” he was almost shouting.

Katsuki’s expression filled with frustration, he jerked the pen on the paper without accomplishing anything, as if he wasn’t sure whether he wanted to write something or not. In the end, he wrote two words.
The hell do you mean ‘I can’t’? Of course you can.” Izuku said in disbelief.

Then what about you?!

Then what about you?!!

They stared at each other angrily. This was going nowhere.

This is stupid, go away-

And this was Katsuki solution for everything. Go away.

Izuku’s frustration was raising at an alarming speed. He contained himself, however. To start acting immature like him would only complicate the situation further. He took two deep breaths, calming himself down. When he turned to face him, Katsuki was turned in the other direction, staring at the wall.

“Friends?” he tried, sounding as neutral as possible.

Katsuki took a long time before turning around, and he still was not facing him. He did a very generic shrug. It could have meant anything. Izuku refrained from commenting. He needed to change the mood and fast.

“I have an idea, I think we should cook something for Aizawa, once in a while.”

That caught Katsuki’s interest.

You mean like, trying to bribe him?

“No, I meant like, trying to be nice.” Izuku frowned.

Katsuki rolled his eyes.

-Boring. Pain in the ass-

Yeah, yeah, c’mon, get up! Izuku jumped to his feet and pulled him up with him.

They prepared a very basic lunch box and went together to deliver it. Katsuki almost had to be dragged out of his room and he had a very annoyed expression, but in the end, he resigned himself and started to follow him. They knocked on Aizawa’s door and the man opened after a while, mumbling something.

“What? Calling Card? Emergency?” right, those two were the only allowed categories, hmm?

“We brought you a lunch box.” Izuku skipped the pleasantries, he had a feeling Aizawa would appreciate that.

The man took the box from his hands and started to smell it. He nodded.

“Yes, this is an emergency, well done.” he closed the door.

Katsuki and Izuku stared at the door for a while.

“So… food is in the emergency category, hmm?” Izuku scratched his head.
Katsuki shrugged, but Izuku saw him holding back a smile.

After that day it became a habit, they would meet in Katsuki’s room, prepare something to eat for Aizawa and spend some time together. Nothing special happened, except that one day he received a Calling Card and he spent the day in his room, just to be safe. They ended up talking mostly about the lessons or the others stuck here. Izuku would take care of the vegetables once a week and take part in the seafood barbeque, which had become a habit as well. Even Kirishima Eijiro was now taking part in the event, Kami brought him there. A month rolled by before Izuku realized. He was feeling like he had gone back to the past. This familiar routine was something the two of them had instituted back during the third year of high school, and now they had regressed back to that time.

Izuku was kinda happy and at the same time kinda not. A part of him was relieved to have gone back at the time where everything was easy. The nice, calm and relaxing year before the fourth year, where their feelings started to change. But at the same time their feelings had already changed, pretending to have forgotten all about it was awkward and probably not really normal either. Under the apparent content, Izuku was feeling restless, he was unsure of his own feelings and Katsuki was not helping at all. Was it really okay to be ‘friends’ again? Was that really the ‘adult answer’ Katsuki was searching for? Wasn’t this more like running away?

Izuku could accept this, if the feelings of one of the two had changed again, but he was not sure if that was the case. Katsuki was refusing to address the problem, like always, and Izuku… Izuku, maybe, had grown up a little. Two years ago everything looked clear, he knew what he wanted, or so he thought. But were his feelings even real? If he was capable of putting them into a box immediately after Katsuki had left? He had never read manga for girls, but even so, he knew that normally love was described as something that hunts you down no matter where you are or what the obstacles were. He was pretty sure that if this had been a manga for girls, they would have promised eternal love and to meet again after the end of the test. But they never did that. Izuku had never asked himself these questions before, maybe he really had grown up a bit. After thinking about this for some time, he realized something crucial. Maybe, before pry into Katsuki’s feeling, he should understand his own feelings. Only after having reached a conclusion, a real conclusion, then he could face Katsuki and any consequence there would be.

Maybe he needed to start reading manga for girls because he had no idea how to know for sure what he was feeling for him. Maybe one of those would help. Or maybe not. Speaking of people who had a hobby of reading, Froppy was reading the giant red book Izuku had saw her holding on Katsuki’s birthday. Well, to say she was reading it would be an overstatement. She was literally living with that thing glued to her hands. She had even started to ignore Haru and Urara just to read. She brought the book everywhere, she even had it at the beach during the barbeque. One time, Izuku had tried to sneak a peek from behind her shoulder, to see what it was, but he saw nothing. Literally there was nothing. The page was blank.

Her eyes were moving, following lines of text that didn’t exist. She was even turning the pages occasionally. The pages were really thin, this book looked like it could contain more than five thousand pages. What was she doing reading a book without any words? The answer was obvious; this had to be a quirk of some sort. Excluding the possibility that she was simply crazy, but that didn’t seem the case. Izuku absolutely no idea what kind of quirk it could be.

It was the third Wednesday of May when Izuku tried to convince Katsuki to go with him to the beach again. Nothing was going on, everything was calm and almost boring, there was no reason for Katsuki to be holed up in his room like this. Katsuki was not thrilled with the idea. He kept insisting that he didn’t need anyone. Katsuki had always been a very solitary person, and in this place Izuku could even see a logical reason to be, but… At the same time, Izuku thought Katsuki had to try to open his heart a little more from time to time. He didn’t have to hang out with people he didn’t trust,
it didn’t have to be the seafood barbeque or taking care of the vegetables or anything. He could try spending some time with Kirishima Eijiro, since he already knew him from before and he knew his quirk. Izuku wanted to be a part of his life, but not to be the only person to ever interact with him. At least before, he was still seeing people at school, communicating with the teachers and with his parents. Izuku wasn’t sure that it was a good thing for Katsuki to completely isolate himself like this. They could try spending some time with Shouto too, he did seem like a decent guy and they knew his quirk too. There were options…

Katsuki, in the end, agreed to go to the seafood barbeque with him. When they reached the beach. They paced their arrival ten minutes apart as to not create suspicion as Katsuki suggested. The others were really surprised to see him. However, it was not a good kind of surprise. No one said anything, no one tried to send him away either, but the carefree mood that had been established over the last weeks was shattered.

Katsuki, perceptive as ever, noticed some of them trying to cover some of the naked skin. To protect themselves from him. He went to sit further down the beach, on the opposite side that square glasses always took. No one tried to speak to him. Izuku had no idea what to do; they already knew they were friends… So if he spoke to Katsuki, it was to be expected. On the other hand, Katsuki didn’t want them to know he was his ally for this test, as well as his friend. But to just leave him alone like that… He had brought him there to socialize, he had to be the one to initiate. He waited to fill his plate and grabbed one for Katsuki as well. He sat down next to him and handed the plate with a smile. Katsuki took the plate and wrote with a finger in the sand.

-Go back-

Izuku shook his head and wrote down as well.

-No-

Katsuki started to munch on a fish with an angry expression. Izuku could not hold back a chuckle. The others were staring at them. When Izuku looked at them they quickly averted their glance elsewhere, not wanting to be caught staring. Izuku sighed deeply. Katsuki was still munching on the fish, he had noticed for sure, but he was not going to help him, as usual. The prick was always leaving all the decision-making to him. Tired of the ridiculous situation, Izuku grabbed Katsuki’s wrist and dragged him on his feet, towards the grill and the others. They immediately stared back at them, surprised.

“You… touch him?!” asked Haru in a high pitch voice.

Urara was frozen in place; square glasses only looked at them for a moment, and then went back to his plate. Froppy did the same. Shouto’s face darkened for only a second. Yao brought a hand to her mouth, but then she caught herself and recomposed herself in a hurry. Kami on the other hand, was looking with curiosity. Even Kirishima was staring at them with wide eyes. Or maybe, all thing considered, he was the most surprised of them all.

Katsuki slapped his hand away, freeing his wrist. He stood there hesitantly for a moment, then frowned and walked away from the beach. Izuku felt his frustration grow and tried to follow him when Kami spoke.

“So, you two are a thing!” he sounded way too cheerful about this.

“How did you reach this conclusion?! Based on what?!” Izuku fought a blush.

“No way Bak--Four would let himself get touched by a random person!” it was Kirishima who
answered. “And you trust him a lot as well!” he looked very impressed.

Izuku felt almost pity. Right, Kirishima was just the same. No, he was even worst. For him, physical contact with a person who had a touch-based quirk must have felt like the biggest proof of trust on Earth.

“Wait, I thought his quirk would activate at contact…” Yao intervened. “How come you are not marked?”

Izuku sighed. It was always like this, everyone always only knew the worst part of his quirk.

“It’s not like that,” he shook his head to empathize the point. “It’s not a passive quirk. It doesn’t always remain activate. He has to activate it himself. The problem with this is that his quirk is so powerful, it is activated with a minimum stimulus. It took him years to fully learn how to not activate it accidently. It does still happen from time to time, but it’s mostly when he starts panicking. As long as you don’t catch him by total surprise and scare him he will not mark you.” he tried to sound as firm as possible.

“Which means that you really trust him a lot!” Urara nodded two times.

“Wow, to think him of all people would have a boyfriend!” Kami put his hands behind his head smiling.

“He is not my boyfriend!!” Izuku yelled losing his fight against the blush.

Well, he was not lying…

“Kids, keep it down, will ya?” Aizawa came out of nowhere. “I still need my ears.”

The conversation died right there. Izuku took advantage of Aizawa’s interruption to slip away. He needed to talk to Katsuki, but he was not sure what to tell him. Should he apologize? It had been a bad idea to bring him along at the beach after all. He knocked on his door, he was sure that he would find him in there, but he was wrong. Katsuki didn’t answer at all. Even when he was mad, he always answered by returning a knock on the door that signaled ‘I’m in, but I don’t want to see you’. He was not inside.

Izuku walked around the building without a purpose. He had no idea where Katsuki could be. He had all the food he could ever wanted stored inside his room and even a way to cook. There was a shower room, so he wouldn’t leave his room to shower either. Maybe he was short on supplies? He looked into the ‘convenience store’ but no one was there. He tried the kitchen and the labs, but by that point he was not really hoping to find him anymore, he was just wasting time. He didn’t find Katsuki anywhere, but he found Froppy.

She was in the library, still reading her red book, seated in a corner. He looked at her for a while, wondering if he was allowed to ask her what she was doing. Probably not, if this was her quirk. Still, she was not keeping the book a secret. If she didn’t want to be questioned about it, she would read in her own room. He took a step closer, still unsure but willing to try. She raised her eyes.

“Ah, Izu. You are curious about this book, right? Don’t worry, I’m almost finished with it. I’ll lend it to you soon.”

“Lend it to me…?” that was surprising.

“Of course. This is yours after all.” she said very casually.
"Mine…?"

Izuku was absolutely sure he never had a book like that one in his whole life. And how could she ‘lend it’ to him if it was his? Shouldn’t it be more like ‘return it’? Izuku was greatly confused. The girl was once again immersed in her reading and didn’t respond. Izuku wondered if he should insist or not. He decided to leave; she said she would lend it to him, so they were going to talk again another time. Probably.

Unsure of what to do next, he tried Katsuki’s door again. This time he was inside. Katsuki opened the door and Izuku sat on his usual spot on the carpet. This time though, Katsuki sat at his desk. Izuku observed him for a while, he was writing something, or drawing maybe. From that angle, he could not see what he was doing exactly. After sitting in silence for far too long, he decided to get up and see what Katsuki was doing for himself. He peeked from behind his shoulder; Katsuki was drawing a map of the island. Izuku wanted to ask him what he was doing, but decided to approach the other subject first.

“About what happened on the beach… I’m sorry. Don’t worry though. Now I told them that it’s safe to hang out with you, things should go all right from here on out.”

Katsuki pulled out his notebook from behind the map.

-It doesn’t matter. I already told you. I don’t need anyone-

Izuku sighed, containing his irritation the best he could.

“Don’t say things like that. There is no need for you to be alone, is there? Even Kirishima is now part of the group and his quirk is more dangerous than yours! If you don’t like or trust some of them, no one is forcing you to hang out with all of them, but you can’t hate everyone. There must be someone you like!”

Katsuki played with the pen for a little.

-You don’t understand. But it’s not your fault. Just leave it be-

Once again, Katsuki was making him terribly irritated.

“You don’t need anyone, so you don’t need me either, right?”

Katsuki grimaced and scribbled quickly.

-Don’t make me say stuff that neither of us will like, are you a masochist? Are you going to storm out my room like last time?-

Izuku would have liked to throw another tantrum like last time, but no. He had to grow up, didn’t he? Especially since he wanted to be mature enough to confront this situation like an adult. It was maybe best to drop the subject… Or maybe that would be just running away? Why was everything involving Katsuki always so complicated? Izuku had long ago deluded himself that he had understood him, but now he recognized that he had parts of him that were protected by countless barriers. Maybe Izuku was not capable of understanding him. Maybe they were hopeless to begin with.

“What are you doing?” Izuku pointed at the map he was drawing.

Katsuki looked for a moment, bothered by the change of topic, but then decided to answer.
After I left, I decided to look around, I had yet to explore the perimeter of the island and I have a feeling this could be useful someday. Since the weather is getting better and the water is warming up, I think I’ll try swimming around-

“This is not dangerous right?” Izuku was just a bit worried.

-No, as long as I don’t touch the barrier-

Katsuki was a good swimmer; there was no way he would drown, that much was certain. Katsuki was good at everything that didn’t involve socialization.

“Can I come too?” he asked, not really enthusiastic, true to be told.

-You would just slow me down-

Usual merciless Katsuki. In a way, his honesty was refreshing though. With Urara and the others, he was felt like he had been thrown into a delicate piece of crystal ware, one wrong move and everything would be shattered.

“All right… Be careful.”

Katsuki just rolled his eyes, Izuku left him alone with his drawing.

It was May 20, a Tuesday, after Izuku had taken care of the vegetables, Froppy knocked on his door. She was hugging her book to her chest.

“Hi Izu. I’ve come to give you this.” she handed him the book.

He took it a bit hesitantly, his eyes widened when he realized that the book was completely weightless. She chuckled at his expression. Slowly, like she was doing something very important, she placed a fingertip on the cover then lifted it. A string made of light followed her finger up in the air, spiraling and contorting on its ascent. Froppy took a step forward and then suddenly touched the tip of Izuku’s nose. Izuku jumped, startled, and closed his eyes when the light blinded him momentarily, his mind was already panicking. Had he fallen into a trap of some sort? Out of the blue, the book started to weight a ton. Izuku stared at it as soon as he recovered his vision. Now it weighted just as much as it looked. The girl took a step back and crossed her arms behind her back.

“There, now you have acquired the right to read it. I made sure to materialize it for you. Don’t try to give it to someone else, without my permission, no one can read what’s inside.”

“What is this Froppy…?” Izuku’s heart was beating faster from nervousness.

She just smiled.

“I finished reading it just tonight, today Haru invited all of us girls to the pool, so I wanted to finish it before that. Ah, but don’t plan on coming, I don’t think the other girls are going to be happy about that. I know that you are not the type to peek, but the others don’t know. And you may want to take a look at that book anyway. When you’ve finished we can talk.”

The girl walked away waving a hand. Izuku brought the book inside and place it on the table. Should he read it? What if this really was a trap? Should he talk with Katsuki first? Maybe her quirk would activate if he opened the book? But if that was the case, then why would she read it for so long? No, something had to be written in there for sure. Izuku wished his quirk was God’s eye so he could stop being scared of everything. Well, less the blinding aspect.
He left the book in his room, carrying it around was a hassle and could be dangerous. He decided to go and knock on Katsuki’s door. After a quick explanation, he dragged him back to his room and showed him the book. Katsuki stared at it with his arms crossed and a frown for a while. He opened it. Izuku jumped on his feet, trying to stop him. What if that thing was dangerous?! Normally Katsuki was much more cautious that this! They both stood there, unmoving, staring at the open book and waiting for something to happen. Izuku could only see words, it was a legitimate book.

Katsuki frowned more deeply then pointed at the book, made a motion to indicate the whole page and then shook his head.

- _There is nothing in there_ -

She had not lied, the book was for him only. And nothing bad was happening, at least not yet. Maybe he should try and read it.

“She said it’s for my eyes only… I can see words written in there now.” Katsuki didn’t respond “I think I’ll try to read it…”

Katsuki frowned more deeply then shrugged; he got up and made his way to the door. Before leaving, he pointed at himself then pretended to knock on the door.

- _Call me if there are problems_ -

Izuku smiled, grateful. Katsuki closed the door after him. Izuku sat down and opened the book to its first page.

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_The Book of Memories_

_Izuku Midoriya_

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Chapter End Notes

This quirk was not difficult to spot at all, considering that Froppy never made a mystery of what she was doing. I'm not going to tell you anything about this quirk just yet, hope you are looking forward to next chapter!

July 9.
Chapter 1

“Izuku Midoriya was born on July 15 inside the hospital named…”

Izuku jumped away from the book. It was just the first sentence and he was already panicking. There was just no way… Could this really be a book about his entire life? The title suggested as much but… Was Froppy’s quirk one that let her concretize people’s memories? That was just crazy… Had she read the whole book? Then…

In a panic, he skipped to the second chapter.

Chapter 2

“The first day of kindergarten Izuku cried the whole day. It was the first time he was separated from his mother for so long and…”

Izuku took his head in his hands. This was exactly what it looked like. It was a book full of stuff about him and his life. It was supposed to be composed only of memories but the narration was in third person and some things didn’t make much sense. Like the fact that he was born on July 15 was more of a fact than a memory. He skipped directly to the last chapter and sure enough, it was all about the test. Everything was written inside precisely, every conversation, every moment. The last page was a transcription of the conversation he had a few minutes ago with Froppy. Only the very last event, him talking with Katsuki, was missing. He returned to chapter two, skipping to a random page.

“Izuku started to play with the mud. He made a round cake and decorated it with green leaves of the nearby trees. It was 4:26 pm when his father interrupted him and scolded him for all the mud he had splattered across his clothes.

“Izuku! Look at the mess you made! Your mother is going to cry when she sees you like this… Geez… Come, we need to at least wash those hands…”

His father dragged him to the nearest fountain where…

Izuku hid his face in his hands whimpering. This contained everything, didn’t it? Every single thing he did in his life. Including all his secrets. And now, Froppy knew everything as well. This was a real disaster. He was completely naked, stripped off of all barriers. This was even worse than mind reading! Was she going to tell everything to everyone? Or maybe she wanted to blackmail him. He needed to talk to her. He was about to leave the room when he remembered that the girls were supposed to go to the pool that day. He had to wait until later, maybe around dinnertime. In the meantime, he took another look inside.

Between chapters two and five, it was all about his time in kindergarten. The ones between five and fifteen were about grade school. Izuku only read a sentence here and there, not really wanting to re-read about all his classes and conversations with other children. The little that he read was enough to
make him glad he was grown up. He had been such an embarrassing kid, overly enthusiastic about everything. The other kids were always put off by him. Izuku could now see why, not even he himself would want to hang out with his child self. He had always sensed that he was in a different phase compared to all the other kids. In kindergarten, he had been timid and introvert, not used to having company. In grade school, he finally started to behave like a social little kid, too bad the others were already leaving this phase. The girls were shocked that he was not ‘making a distinction of gender’; for them a male trying to play with them was a scandal. The boys were already out of the ‘let’s play tag’ phase and they wanted to only play soccer or basketball and they kept telling him he was being ‘childish’. Izuku clearly remembered feeling always out of place, for his entire life. He was growing up too slowly compared to everyone else.

The chapters between fifteen and thirty were about middle school. During that period of his life, he had already abandoned his childhood, but his hormones were nowhere to be seen. While the girls were acting strange, giggling and teasing him for being a nobody, the boys were constantly talking about girls. Izuku didn’t fit into any category. The girls were like aliens and the guys were too obsessed. During that period, Izuku had yet to realize why he was not interested in girls at all. Since he was not interested in guys either, at that moment, he was just out of the loop. The first hints of his sexual orientation appeared during the last year of middle school. There was a guy, the basketball captain, that was making Izuku’s heart beat faster whenever he saw him. Izuku was not a sports type, but during that period, he had seen all the matches. Not that he was watching any of the matches. He still had no idea about any of the rules of that sport. Of course, the guy was straight and even had a girlfriend. Izuku never even thought about confessing, he was just fantasizing. He was not feeling ready for a relationship in any case.

High school started on chapter thirty-one. Izuku’s cheeks became warmer. What would it be like to read about him and Katsuki in a book? Surely weird. Izuku observed the book. The high school chapters were half the total amount of pages. Izuku had not realized the high school years were so long and full of stuff. Maybe he should have realized it.

It was almost dinnertime and he really wanted to talk with Froppy. He took the book with him, not wanting to leave it alone in his room, even though no one would be able to read it. While he was leaving the room, a thought hit him. No one except for Katsuki knew where his room was, yet Froppy had knocked on his door. The girl had read it in the book. Didn’t that mean she knew about Shouto’s quirk as well as their alliance? She knew everything.

He found her in the dining room; she was eating some fresh vegetables. She smiled when she noticed him. Izuku placed the book on the table and sat down, taking a deep breath. What was he supposed to say?

“I’m not going to tell anything I read in there to anyone, you know?” she said, clearly she was expecting this. “Every person has a forbidden action. Just like you can’t absorb DNA without permission, I can say anything about what I read in my books.”

Izuku stared at her, she was calm and collected, it didn’t seem like she was lying. Could he trust her though? This was a very serious matter.

“Let me get this straight. Your quirk let you concretize a person’s memories in a book that you and only you can read… But you can give others permission to read. Yet you are forbidden to tell anyone about the content?”

“No, I’m forbidden from giving permission as well, with the exception of the real owner of the memories.” she played with her food. “You have nothing to worry about. If you don’t trust me we can go and ask Aizawa, he will confirm this. Or you can take a look inside the Task Force Archive.
Did you know? There are thousands of folders about every quirk the Government has ever come across in there. Mine is no exception. You can confirm it in there too. My quirk is greatly loved by the Government. I can extract a full confession out of criminals without even having to get close to them.”

“Was it you who sent me the Calling Card the day after we made the jam?” he asked, confirming his suspicion.

“Yes, that was my Card.” she confirmed it easily.

“How does your quirk work exactly?” he wanted to know the conditions. Froppy pondered for a moment, still playing with her food. She then showed him three fingers.

“Three conditions?” she nodded. She showed the first finger and pointed at the clock. Then she made a counter clock gesture. Staring at him, she pointed at his head. Izuku tried his best to understand. “The past? Something from the past? A memory from the past?” she nodded.

Izuku tried to think back.

They started to wash and prepare the jars.

“How were the other students treating you after you befriended Four?”

So that was how she fulfilled the first condition! She raised the second finger. She pointed at the clock again, this time without any other gesture and then pointed at Izuku’s chest. At his heart.

“A feeling of the present…?”

She nodded with a smile.

“Do you mind if I ask one last question?”

“Sure, if I can answer…”

“What are your feelings for Katsuki?”

“I… well, we are not enemy. We are not… close either.”

Izuku took his head in his hand. Was there even a single thing that was not dangerous in this place? She showed three fingers and pointed again at the clock. This time she did three rapid spins clockwise and pretended to sleep.

“A dream for the future?”

Again a nod.

“Do you want to be a part of the Task Force? To use your quirk for the Government?”

“Well, in the end the Task Force is just a bunch of part-timers right? I don’t really mind? I haven’t really decided what to do with my life after all.”

He had been the biggest idiot. Katsuki was right; he was incapable of taking care of himself. He should really stop talking with these people. He was tripping over every kind of trap was on this island. Katsuki was going to be so mad when he was going to discover he spilled all their secrets…

“So… what is this exactly? Are you trying to blackmail me? Do you want me to surrender? Why
have you chosen me? Except for the fact that I’m clearly an idiot.” he scratched his head with auto-
commiseration.

“No, of course not. What is the point of blackmailing you with information I cannot divulge?” she
tilted her head. “This is probably difficult for you to comprehend but… I’m materializing books
because I love to learn about people. I never wanted to keep this a secret; I would reveal my quirk to
everyone if I could. I simply wanted to know more about you. I’ve read many books in my life and
for me, this is only natural. The concept of privacy doesn’t tell me much. I understand that people
want to keep some things a secret, but mostly it’s something they feel like they should be ashamed
of. Except when I read about killers or criminals most people tend to keep things like love,
experiences, desires and dreams a secret… I found most aspects of humans to be endearing and
heartwarming not repulsive. There was nothing bad in your book Izuku, not even close. You have
nothing to be ashamed of, on the contrary! No one would have accepted Katsuki the way you did. I
admire your courage.”

Izuku blushed a little; the last thing he was expecting was to be complimented. He really was nothing
special; his life was pretty normal and boring.

“You must have been bored while wasting a month on my life.”

It was true; she had wasted a month on his boring life. She chuckled.

“There is no way I’m ever going to be bored while reading a book.” then suddenly she was sad.
“You know, right? Every quirk has a price? My price is my own memory. I can only remember
things for two years. I don’t remember a single thing about my years in middle school or grade
school and most of high school is lost as well. If I were to meet an old classmate, I would not
recognize them. You know, if this test were two years instead of one, I would forget completely my
parents as well. I remember them only because I have created new memories with them every day.
My mother once said the grave in our garden is for a dog we used to have when I was little. I’ve seen
pictures of him, in some we are even hugging and playing together. Yet I have no recollection of him
whatsoever. As far as my memory is concerned, he never existed at all. Can you see now? Can you
see why I love reading books so much? I love reading about you when you were a kid, because I
don’t remember what it feels like. I don’t remember ever being a kid. Reading about life from
someone else’s perspective is the only way… It’s the only way I can… I can prove I even existed at
all.”

Izuku had not expected this at all. It was only logical; such a powerful quirk had to have a big price.
This was a hell of a price. He felt ashamed of himself. It was true that she spied on his secrets
without permission, but were his secrets so important in the first place? He wanted to protect himself
and Katsuki from imprisonment, and he didn’t want to put Shouto in a bad position as well, but aside
from that… Was his relationship with Katsuki even something to keep a secret? Why were they
trying to keep it a secret? Was there really a reason? The test? Izuku’s parents? Weren’t they just...
Running away from problems like kids?

“There is only one book I cannot read… mine.” she smiled sadly. “But maybe in three years I can
read your book again and see who I was. I can see myself in other people’s book. Because… I
exist… right?”

“Of course you exist!” he said strongly. “Read my book as many time as you like!”

Maybe he was running a bit too much and giving too much trust, but the same thing had happened
with Shouto. In the end, he had been right in trust him. His instinct had told him that he could trust
Froppy and now he had to choose. He was going to trust her as well.
“Here, you can have it back.” he handed her the book, but she didn’t take it.

“Have you read it all?” she asked instead.

“No…? Why should I? I already know these things…” he answered, confused.

“You know them… But are you sure you remember them?” she smiled sweetly. “In this book I can’t see your thoughts, it’s not like I can read your mind but… I know that you are struggling because of unresolved feelings and fears. Are you sure you really remember everything? Maybe this won’t help you, I can’t see the future. But often people tend to find answers when looking deep inside of themselves. At least, that’s what my mother always tells me. I think it’s true. Remembering who you were, may tell you who you are. Maybe.”

She got on her feet and brought the plate to the sink to wash it.

“Give it a shot. If you want.”

Izuku left the room with the book hugged to his chest, deep in thoughts. He supposed she was right, only, it was so embarrassing to read back through his history with Katsuki… Or maybe Izuku was just running away, scared to discover something he didn’t want to remember. He remembered all the facts, but… When had been the last time he had stopped and actually reminisced about them? He had not done it since the day they separated, thinking it was going to be forever. Izuku was still protecting himself, selfishly.

After locking his room, he placed the book on the table and took a deep breath. This was going to take quite a while, probably the whole night. The next day was the seafood barbeque, but he would skip it for once. This was more important. He opened the book at chapter thirty-one. He rapidly skipped through a lot of the pages, the first part of the first year was pretty boring. Reading a word here and there he remembered feeling a bit curious about Katsuki, the most solitary student he had ever met, but mostly not wanting to be dragged into problems. He wanted a normal school year; he wanted friends and good grades. Izuku remembered the others gossiping about Katsuki, saying a lot of bad stuff behind his back. At the start of the year, he immediately discovered Katsuki’s quirk, after all even the teacher had made sure no one would get to close to him. They started the year by asking everyone not to touch him.

Izuku, contrarily to most, had no real interest in his quirk or what he was doing with it. Therefore, he was one of the few that didn’t know all the details of it even before seeing his face for the first time. Of course, it was impossible to ignore it for long, and he was not trying to avoid this information at the same time. He was just not actively searching for it. Izuku didn’t really understand why a person would feel compelled by morbid curiosity to learn all about his past. For Izuku, as long as he was not trying to hurt anyone, there was no reason to hate him or gossip about him. Katsuki was just minding his own business. Ignoring everyone, not communicating with anyone. On the contrary, Izuku would often notice a look of irritation on his face when people tried to question him or tease him. He really didn’t want anything to do with anyone.

As weeks passed by, Izuku would find himself more and more drawn by him. Not by his quirk, that was still of no interest to him, but by him. Katsuki had always had a special aura around him. He was like an adult trapped in a room full of kids. Everyone was actively trying to get on his nerves, but his ability to maintain self-control was of steel. He was listening to the lectures, taking notes, writing essays… All while ignoring taunts or pranks. But he didn’t have that ‘victim’ aura, he was not pitiful. On the contrary, he was looking at everyone from above, thinking ‘everyone here is so fucking stupid, I’m not going to bother with them’. He really didn’t look like he was faking it, that he was running home, crying in secret. No, Izuku was absolutely sure that he was genuinely thinking that. He really thought of himself as the best in the room. That attitude could have seemed arrogant and
disrespectful, but the more Izuku thought about it, the more he realized that Katsuki was right. They were bulling him for no other reason than the fact that Katsuki really could not defend himself. He had done nothing to deserve the bullying, nothing at all. And the fact that his spirit was not breaking, was only making them more and more aggressive.

Katsuki would show sadness sometimes. It was so very subtle that Izuku was sure no one really noticed it. His expression did not change, he wasn’t doing anything particularly special, he was just... softer. Like he was dropping the attitude a little bit. Izuku, who at that time was already half a stalker, to be fair, had noticed it would often happen after a study group or a project. If Izuku had to put the feeling he was getting from him into words, it probably would have been: ‘Why is no one mature enough to do a serious study session with me without acting stupid and immature?’ That was what, ultimately, five months into the first year of high school, pushed him to volunteer to work with him. It was mostly a challenge; he wanted to prove he could be that mature person. Izuku never thought he had done it because he found Katsuki pitiful or a broken thing to fix. It was truly a challenge; he wanted to see what a strong person like Katsuki would think of him. He was not trying to help him; he was trying to measure himself to the standard of a person he was practically admiring.

Of course, he had forgotten to take into account Katsuki’s personality. Offering to volunteer rubbed him completely in the wrong way. Normally the guy was calm and acted superior. However, at that time and for the first time, Izuku saw his immature and irritable side. Katsuki was sure that Izuku had some ulterior motive, he either wanted to get him off guard and do something bad or he was pitying him. The first thing Katsuki ever communicated to him was ‘I don’t want your pity or your help!’ It was written on a little piece of paper he had torn off his favorite notebook. Katsuki had slammed the paper on the desk next to his own; the one Izuku had temporarily occupied to work with him. Izuku at that time was not yet familiar with him and his irrationality. Katsuki was often like this, he would desire something and when that thing was in his hands, he would reject it. His quick change in attitude had successfully put him off and the first cooperation attempt ended pretty poorly. In the end, Izuku had to do all the work on his own, Katsuki refused to communicate with him or help him.

The next week had been uneventful, Izuku had returned back to his regular desk, a bit disappointed. The failure had convinced him that maybe it was best to ignore Katsuki. If he wanted to be alone so badly, then Izuku would not interfere. Or at least this was what he was thinking until the teacher dragged him into the faculty office to ask him, or more precisely to plead him, to sit next to Katsuki for the rest of the year. Apparently, many parents had complained about their child being forced to sit next to the ‘dangerous element of the class’. Izuku had not told his parents anything about Katsuki at all, so the teacher was convinced Izuku was a pure soul or something. Being caught off guard, Izuku had no other choice but to accept. He was not truly opposed, only a bit scared; Katsuki was probably going to react badly this time too.

When he returned to the classroom and sat at his new desk, Katsuki stared at him with hard eyes. The treatment went on for over ten minutes; Izuku was doing his best to ignore him, after that, Katsuki decided to ignore him as well. The strange atmosphere lasted for more than a week, but Izuku was getting progressively more and more used to this new situation. After a while, he stopped being nervous around him and started to observe him again, a bit more discretely. What truly changed the situation was the curiosity of the other classmates. The first week they would observe them from a distance, not sure of what was going on. Prior to that day, every time a teacher would ask someone to sit next to Katsuki, it was a public display of unpleasant groaning and complaining. The appointed student would complain, try to escape, or to trade duties with someone else. That was the first time someone sat next to him without saying a word of complaint. They built up courage and decided to ask Izuku what was going on. First, he had volunteered to work with him and now he was seated next to him. Izuku initially thought about telling them that it was the teacher that had asked him to do so, but then he noticed Katsuki discretely watching them. He wanted to know as
well. A strange feeling had risen in Izuku’s chest at the sight. Why should he confirm their suspicions about Katsuki being a terrible human being by telling them he had been forced to, when he could actually prove the opposite? Not wanting to create problems for himself was one thing, being intentionally cruel was another.

“Four classmates were surrounding Izuku’s desk, the others were spying on them from afar. Even Katsuki was watching them while faking disinterest.

“Hey pal, who forced you to sit next to him? For how long?” asked Yamada.

Izuku was silent for a moment, then answered in a neutral tone.

“No one forced me. I just noticed that this seat is giving everyone problems. I don’t really mind sitting here, so I decided to offer. The teacher accepted, so I’m staying here for the rest of the year.”

That earned a lot of appalled looks, Katsuki’s eyes were wide open.

“Are you sure you know what you are doing…?” asked Yamada again.

“Yes, I’m sure, why?” Izuku tried to look surprised.

The others exchanged a look, not sure how to confront the situation.

“Well, as long as you’re sure…”

Izuku nodded, faking obliviousness. He tried to look at Katsuki, but he had already opened a book and was ignoring him once again.

Izuku skipped two pages; he knew what he was searching for.

“Izuku showed the exemption note to the P.E. teacher then joined Katsuki on the edge of the gym, where the guy was always sitting and observing the others exercise with a bored expression. Izuku greeted him with a nod and tried to focus on his classmates doing laps. He didn’t notice at first that Katsuki had brought a notebook to the gym. He was surprised when he was suddenly hit by a paper ball in the arm. Turning towards him, he noticed Katsuki staring with a displeased expression, Izuku picked up the paper ball from the floor, confused.

“What do you think you are doing? Trying to be my white knight in shining armor?”

Izuku stared at the words.

“I’m sitting next to you. Does that qualifies?”

Katsuki sent him a murderous glance and then wrote aggressively on his notebook. He turned it toward Izuku when he finished.

“Then stop doing it.”

“I can’t stop sitting next to you, you know that someone has to.”

“I don’t need your help.”

“I’m not helping you, I’m doing this so the class is quieter, and you should appreciate this too. You hate the commotion they always make when something is about you, right?”

Katsuki tried to write something three times before rolling his eyes and dropping everything. He
hugged his knees and looked away from him, resuming his ignoring tactic.

Izuku smiled fondly. Yes, that was the first time Izuku had actually ‘won’ against him. After that, Katsuki accepted his presence. He was still ignoring him completely, but he didn’t try to send him away or to treat him poorly. As time went on Izuku was less and less scared of him. He started to gather his courage.

Maybe, just maybe, he could interact with him on friendlier terms.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:
The Book of Memories is a materialization of someone's memory in the form of a third person point of view narration of events. It doesn't contain the thoughts, the impressions and mental process that person was going through during these moments. The owner of this quirk can materialize only a book at a time, that includes the book that is currently in other people possession. The book itself can only be read by the owner of the quirk at first but it can be materialized for others as well, by connecting the materialization directly to the body in question. The book updates only when it's in the owner's hands so it stops every time it's dropped by them. Once the three conditions are fulfilled the owner can materialize the book as many time as they want but only for a year, then the conditions are no longer valid (the present feeling is too volatile). The three conditions must be fulfilled by hearing them directly, so recordings, writings or photos are no good. Even shared memories don't work (for example she can't use the past memory for Katsuki as well as Izuku and since he can't speak she is completely unable to materialize his book). The three conditions may seem strange but this quirk is unofficially called 'the storyteller quirk' because it's like a person that learns an interesting fact and create a story around it, the only difference is that the story is actually composed by actual, accurate facts.
Price: The long-term memory of the owner of this quirk last only two years. Everything that's further away than two years and a day vanishes.

Hi! I wanted to thank you all for everything, the support and love for this story makes me very, very happy and more motivated to write! Don't worry, I don't plan on dropping this story anytime soon and I'm always way further into the story than what you actually see, writing with time to spare, so that even if a catastrophe hit I'm prepared.
Just a reminder: the tag 'probably very long' was not a joke. I'm fully aware of myself, I think 'I'll write 25 chapters' and a month later I'm like 'yeah, I'll probably stop around 35... yeah... probably... maybe'.

Next chapter 16 July. Be prepared for a long journey into the past, it's going to last some chapters :P
It was after the seventh month that Izuku had started the operation ‘befriend Katsuki’.

Once he had realized that he had nothing to fear from him, not his quirk nor his personality, he decided to try to have conversations with him. It was mostly small talk that Katsuki was ignoring, but Izuku was stubborn. A lack of response was much better than outright anger in his book. Izuku was not sure what he was trying to do. Or why he was trying to do this. He was not particularly convinced that Katsuki would be a good friend to have or anything. There just was no reason at all to avoid talking to him or spending time with him, and if Katsuki was not going to send him away, why stop?

The first attempts had had no result whatsoever. Katsuki would just stare at nothing in particular. Izuku was pretty sure he was listening, but maybe he was excluding his voice, as well as his presence. During the second week of attempts, everyone was starting to look at him like he was an alien, Katsuki’s demeanor had changed slightly. Instead of completely ignoring him from start to finish, he would sigh dramatically every time Izuku started talking. He was probably thinking something along the lines of: ‘why is this idiot still talking to me?’ The change had made Izuku cheer internally; it was proof that he was actually listening. The second change had been the following week, Katsuki had changed tactic again. Every time Izuku started a topic, Katsuki would turn towards him and stare at him with a bored expression. ‘For how long are you going to keep talking to me?’ Katsuki was probably trying to make him feel unwanted, but it had the opposite effect. Encouraged by Katsuki’s attention, he would blab cheerfully for much longer, smiling and feeling very satisfied of himself for no reason at all. Meanwhile, all of his other classmates were totally weirded out by him.

Izuku stared at the last page of chapter thirty-two with a fond smile. Looking back at it now, Izuku had looked like a girl getting finally the attention of her crush. He had been such an awkward adolescent. On the other hand, had it not been for that, they would have never developed anything, so Izuku was grateful for his old awkward self.

Chapter thirty-three described the last two months of the first year of high school. As the first month after the first attempt at conversation rolled around, Katsuki finally realized that none of the previous tactics was going to stop him from talking. The first ‘answer’ he gave him was a little piece of paper with ‘I don’t care, shut up’ written on it. It was rude and short, but it was still a response. Of course, Izuku never stopped. Over the next days, the little sheets of paper consisted of mostly things like: ‘Again? I told you I don’t care’, ‘You are too chatty’, ‘Do you ever stop talking? Do you talk even when you sleep?’, ‘I’m getting a headache’, ‘Why do you think I care?’, ‘I don’t wanna hear about what you did yesterday’, ‘Is there a way to make you stop?’.

Izuku chuckled amused, reading back made it clear that Izuku really won over Katsuki by exasperating him. The last message for him before the start of the summer vacation had been: ‘Finally I can let my ears rest.’ Izuku chuckled again, this was just the beginning! Katsuki had no idea at that time, but the teacher had called Izuku to the faculty office the day prior to congratulate him on ‘surviving’ for so long sitting next to Katsuki. Then he tried to sugarcoat Izuku as much as possible, he wanted to put them in the same class and ask Izuku to sit next to him again. Izuku agreed without hesitation. The teacher was almost reduced in tears of gratitude. Izuku had tried to keep a straight face on the last day of school, he really wanted to see Katsuki’s reaction when he found out
that he would be seated next to him again.

Izuku skipped chapter thirty-four, he had no interest in the summer vacation. He found what he was looking for in chapter thirty-five.

“*Izuku had reached the classroom a bit earlier than usual, but the desk next to his, Katsuki’s desk, was already occupied. Katsuki immediately spotted him and after a moment of surprise, he frowned deeply. Izuku slowly sat down looking perfectly at ease. Katsuki was still staring at him. Slowly and deliberately, Izuku turned to greet him cheerfully. Katsuki immediately pulled out his notebook and wrote in a hurry.*

-You again?! For how long do you intend to sit next to me?!-

“You better resign yourself; I’m sitting next to you for the next four years.”

*Katsuki opened his mouth then he closed it with a sigh and dropped his head on the desk with a loud thump. Izuku chuckled.*

Izuku laughed. Seeing Katsuki admit defeat had been one of the most satisfying experience in his life. He had been capable of getting under his skin after so much effort. Izuku had been extremely proud of himself.

The first two months had been mostly them having bad communication. Katsuki started to work with him on school projects and they even studied together. The messages he was willing to write to him were always short and not very friendly, but they were still something. Izuku was trying to make conversation about other things, but Katsuki was not very cooperative, mostly answering that he didn’t care about music, movies or books. Izuku tried asking him what he liked doing in his free time, but he had no luck there either. It looked like Katsuki was going to accept him as classmate, but not as friend.

One day Katsuki came down with a fever during class. The teacher immediately called Katsuki’s mother to pick him up, as if he had something dangerously contagious. Izuku asked to stay with him to keep him company while waiting in the hallway. They were still together when his mom arrived and she was incredibly surprised to see his son with a classmate, or a friend as she immediately thought. She was incredibly excited about Katsuki finally making friends; she even ignored entirely her son signaling her that this was not the case. Izuku, feeling a little sly, confirmed that he was his friend. Katsuki’s mother made a little squeal of happiness and immediately invited Izuku to their house as soon as Katsuki was recovered. Katsuki rolled his eyes and sighed heavily but that was about it.

It was three days later when Izuku finally had an opportunity to go to Katsuki’s house. He felt a bit nervous. The house was rather big while pretty average, the Bakugou’s family looked almost well off while still being almost normal. Katsuki’s mother greeted him with a lot of enthusiasm dragging him inside and offering tea. Katsuki, wearing his casual clothes, climbed down the stairs looking bored and dropped on the sofa on the opposite side of him, not looking at him. Izuku sipped his tea feeling a bit tense. Katsuki’s mother chatted with him asking him about school while Katsuki was ignoring both with his face rested on his hand. It was only after he finished his tea that Katsuki’s mother invited them to go upstairs and hang out in Katsuki’s room. To Izuku great surprise, Katsuki didn’t protest but got up and made his way up. Izuku hurried behind thanking Katsuki’s mother who responded with a nod.

Katsuki’s room was very spacious. The room had some pretty strong color for sheets and curtains, and was surprisingly tidy. Izuku had thought Katsuki would be a messy type of person. The only thing that was stood out was the pile of notebooks gathered on his desk. Some looked new and
others looked old. Katsuki was probably communicated a lot with his parents unlike with him. Katsuki signaled him to sit at the low table in the center of the room while he picked up a notebook that looked new. Katsuki sat down on the opposite side of the table, opened the notebook to the first page and started to play with the pen. Izuku, who was new to this strange atmosphere, waited with his breath held. What was Katsuki going to write?

“After writing for a moment he slid the notebook toward him.

-You must be completely crazy to come here. Haven’t you seen my mother?-

Bakugou Mitsuki has a black smear on her cheek, Izuku had seen that.

“I have. She’s your mother; you probably were very young, weren’t you?”

Katsuki tapped his finger nervously and grabbed the notebook back.

-So what? Do you think that can change anything? Do you even know what my quirk does?-

“I know, more or less. Your quirk is called Mark of Submission; you can mark someone as your slave for life and then order them to do anything you want with your voice.”

-Indeed. I just need to place a finger on a person’s skin to mark them and they are my possession for the rest of their life. I marked both my parents when I was too little to control this shit and now I can’t take it back. Do you understand now? I’m dangerous, you must be crazy to be in the same room as me-

“You refuse to speak because you can give them orders even from far away. Am I correct? In this case I don’t think you can be blamed for anything, you’re doing your best.”

-Doing my best… Like that is going to solve anything-

Katsuki looked away sighing, and then started to write a long paragraph. Izuku waited patiently for him to finish.

-Mark of Submission is a unique quirk, before they had some ‘slavery’ shit quirk registered, but it was a lot more complex to activate and it worked only if the slave was within hearing range. My quirk is unprecedented in its category; never has a quirk so powerful and easy to use been registered before. I am an active type quirk that can be activated by will, but while most active quirk require years of training to activate perfectly when the owner wants, my quirk is so powerful even a little fluctuation out of range in my emotions can make it surface. When I was little I marked my mother completely by chance, the bleak smear would not go away no matter how many times she washed her face. I spoke and she started to behave weirdly. My father was obviously scared by all this and brought us both to the hospital nearby. They separated us, thinking that as long as my mother could not hear my voice she would not react by whatever force was driving her. They were wrong. As I was asking my father where they had brought her, she started to physically fight them to get to me, since I was asking about her. Distance never mattered at all; my slaves can hear me even if they are on the other side of the planet. I don’t personally remember anything about that day, I was too little, but they told me everything when I was a bit older. The Task Force arrived, they exanimate me and treated my mother like a guinea pig. They tried to make me eliminate the smear by touching her again, but it only got bigger. After that, they called for Aizawa, who was one of the newest member of the Task Force and he said that my quirk was something he never saw before. Of course, that caused massive hysteria. It’s been quite a while since a new quirk had been discovered. They took us and brought us to some laboratory or something, made me go through a lot of tests, tried to do a bunch of things… In the end, my quirk is not very complicated, they got all the conditions and usages
quite quickly, but they wanted to test the extent of its power. They tried to separate us very far away, and make me say things like 'bite yourself' and all that nice stuff to see if she would harm herself, which she did, by the way.

Izuku continued to read with a massive weight on his stomach.

-They made me mark another man too, some random person I never met again, just to be sure it was all like they thought. They let us go only three days later. By that point, I was so stressed and instable, I was basically throwing tantrums all over the place making my mother instable as well. My father bought a special spray that momentarily mutes your voice so I would stop making things worse. It worked for my mother, but I was still very restless. While he was trying to make me take the spray, I ended up marking him as well. After some time, everything calmed down, but we were in a very big mess, by that point. My quirk is evil, like, extremely evil. I can order someone to kill themselves and they would do it, no question asked. Can you imagine the disaster I could cause with a completely casual joke? Can you imagine what would happen if I were to say something like ‘break a leg’? Can you tell me what are you still doing here?

With that last sentence, he stared hard at Izuku who was feeling sick, but not because he was disgusted by him. The classmates had already been quite vocal about Katsuki’s quirk and he even knew that some people were calling him ‘The Child of the Devil’ because the mark was black and ugly. Yet, nothing he wrote had convinced him it was best to get out of there.

“Are you still taking the spray?”

Katsuki looked away, displeased.

-Why do you care about that? What difference does it make? I can’t understand if you are stupid or what-

“It doesn’t make any difference, I was just asking. I was wondering if you have any problems at school.”

-I wasn’t supposed to go to school. People like me don’t get to go to school. My mother insisted, she said she wanted me to have friends. Well, that didn’t work. I wore gloves and used the spray for grade school but my quirk had appeared in the news and everyone knew me. A new quirk is always treated like a scientific breakthrough, especially if it’s a big one like this one. Supposedly, it’s to help the population discover other kids with this same quirk before something bad happens. Because of that, I always had a disadvantage even among the other S rank quirk owners. In addition, the period I discovered my quirk was the same period as Yagi Toshinori’s mass murder. S rank quirks were feared even more during that year. I told mother that I could be homeschooled, but she insisted. I don’t blame anyone for keeping their distance from me, I would have done the same if the situation was reversed. I don’t even like the other S rank quirk owners all that much. I don’t need friends anyway. This bring us back here, why are you still in here?

“I can be your friend, I don’t particularly care for your quirk. I’m not afraid, I’m sure you won’t mark me.”

Katsuki’s stare was hard and angry; suddenly he raised a hand and extend it closer and closer to Izuku’s face. Izuku remained perfectly still, knowing that this was a test for him. Katsuki stopped right before he was about to touch Izuku’s nose. Katsuki ruffled his hair, annoyed.

-You are most definitely an idiot. Do you have a quirk?

It was the first time Katsuki ever asked him a personal question.
“No, I’m quirkless.”

-Then you really cannot understand how I feel. Lucky you, by the way-

“Yes, I’m lucky and yes, maybe I don’t understand… But, that doesn’t change the fact that I know you don’t like your quirk. You are not dangerous to me.”

-Do you realize that I just need to go to a very crowded area and touch a bunch of random people for a minute and I would have an army of soldiers ready to die for me, yes?-

“Your potential to do bad has nothing to do with your actual dangerousness.”

-Why do you even care about me? You don’t need me-

Izuku didn’t answer.”

Izuku recalled not knowing the answer to that question. Katsuki was right; there was no need for Izuku to go out of his way to reach out to him. Nevertheless, Izuku still did it. After that, they talked for a bit about school work, Izuku gave him the missed assignments and then went home. He didn’t say anything to his parents, only that he had gone to visit a sick school friend.

Izuku still had no idea what brought the two together exactly, what compelled him to reach out to him again after that day. During that time, Katsuki called it ‘intuition’, he would say that Izuku had a good judge of character. Personally, Izuku didn’t believe it, for him, it was more like fate, like he was destined to meet him and be attracted by him. Katsuki didn’t believe in fate, so he never told him, he would just laugh at him.

After that day, Izuku had appointed himself as a friend; he didn’t care if it was one-sided. They started talking about things aside from school during breaks and recess, but Katsuki was not very knowledgeable about a lot of things. Now that he had dropped his attitude a bit, Izuku could see that he really didn’t know much about movies and places, it was not simply a refusal to talk. After some effort, Izuku discovered why, Katsuki didn’t believe it, for him, it was more like fate, like he was destined to meet him and be attracted by him. Katsuki didn’t believe in fate, so he never told him, he would just laugh at him.

Izuku started to invite him to places, but Katsuki would flat refuse every suggestion. After a bit of thinking, Izuku realized that Katsuki was too prideful to accept something he considered charity. Izuku changed his approach, instead of saying ‘do you want to go see a movie?’ he would say ‘I want to see that movie, accompany me’. It didn’t really work, so Izuku started to consider if he really didn’t like the idea of going out or if the problem was Izuku’s company. To his surprise, he actually found some place he was willing to go. Izuku told him that he needed a new pair of shoes and Katsuki wrote him that he needed some as well. At the mall, Katsuki instantly delegated Izuku to do all the talking, while he was faking indifference from a distance. However, Izuku quickly spotted the spark of enthusiasm in his eyes, he looked a bit like a kid. After gathering all his courage, he asked him why he was so happy to be there. Katsuki sent him an annoyed glare but then wrote, ‘Because I never went shopping without my mother before. And to buy clothes with your mother at 15 is just too embarrassing’. Izuku had to hide an amused smile. Katsuki hit him with the notebook.

Izuku was really happy that day. Maybe Katsuki was not ready to trust him with a more fun oriented outing, but he was still relying on him a tiny little bit. They were taking baby’s steps.
He reached chapter thirty-seven, reading only a sentence or two here and there, it took them quite some time to move from that phase. They sometimes met outside of the school and ran some errands together; Katsuki was getting more and more used to Izuku, even proposing some places he needed to go. Sometimes they would end the day in Katsuki’s room. They would do homework together and Izuku would lend him music and movies so they could share opinions. Half-way through the school year, while in Katsuki’s room, after they had exchanged some messages on the notebook about the last movie Izuku had recommended him, for this first time Katsuki left Izuku alone at the table and went to lie down on his bed. He was playing around with the pen, and not looking at him while concentrating deeply about something. Izuku had no idea what caused this sudden change, so he just waited in silence for some long, interminable minutes for Katsuki to snap out of it on his own.

As ten minutes passed, Izuku wondered if he was better off leaving him alone and going home, since he was in a strange mood. He was staring at the door, trying to decide, when he felt Katsuki’s eyes on him again and he saw him sit up, staring at him with a serious and dark expression. He got up and grabbed his notebook, sitting back on his bed again.

“Katsuki scribbled something quickly.

“We can’t be friends.”

Izuku rolled his eyes; he spent all of this time thinking only to reach this conclusion?

“Well, care to say why? I think we are getting along just fine.”

“Do you know what the Test Certification for A rank and S rank quirks is?”

“Only vaguely... If I remember correctly, every year the people who celebrate their eighteen birthday and have an S rank or A rank quirk have to take a test to enter the Task Force, something like that?”

“I guess you can summarize it that way... During childhood, we are considered the responsibility of our parents, so whatever quirk we have it’s up to them to control and educate us. Only some of us are periodically checked to ensure we have not gone rouge. But as soon as we become adults, we are responsible for our actions and they don’t trust us to stay put forever. Before Toshinori Yagi, the test was only for S rank quirks and it was a lot more forgiving. You just had to train and study to become a useful member of the Task Force; if you could pass the final exam, you were considered a free citizen. Even the Task Force was a lot lousier than it is now, they were not called on for every single little thing. Now they handle even arguments, it’s stupid. If you were to fail the final exam, you had to wear a special transmitter that allowed the Government to follow you around and catch you in case something bad happened. Ever heard of ‘innocent until proven guilty’? This was before. Now the Government thinks the opposite, we are guilty until proven innocent. We have to work to gain our freedom-

“I see, you have to take that test too?”

“Of course. The current test is a real battle, not all of us can gain freedom. They select only the most capable, trustworthy and useful for them. The people who fail are sent into a special prison for life. A single mistake during the test and you’ll never go back home. It’s a fierce battle for survival. What I mean is-"

Katsuki played a little with his pen before completing the sentence.

“-is that I’ll go away. Like, forever probably. It doesn’t make any sense for us to be friends. I’ll go away and we will never meet again, even if I win I’ll be busy with the Task Force. There is just no way we can go back to seeing each other after the test. You are wasting your time here. It’s already
half way through the second year and you don’t have any friends, you only hang out with me… I’m
scaring everyone away from you and you don’t even realize it. Don’t you see how they look at you?
And I know they keep harassing you to know more about me. You are really wasting your time. Stop
this masochistic attempt and go back to your normal life. I’ll be in the school only until the first half
of the fifth year in any case, so in three years from now, I’ll disappear. Go and make some actual
friends-

Izuku stared at him for a moment before smiling.

“Why are you assuming that I had a normal life anyway? Who told you I had friends before I met
you? I’m not saying I never hung out with anyone before, that would be a lie, but it’s not like my
social life was so lively before all this. Honestly, I’m having way more fun now than before. And in
three years a lot of things can change, you know? Are you afraid that I would get lonely without you
or something? Don’t worry, I don’t live my life for your benefit, I’m just comfortable with what I
have now. I can still change my mind at any moment.”

Katsuki snorted, annoyed by Izuku’s insinuation.

-So what, are you proposing we can be friends for three years and then stop or something? Are you
sure you’re not going to cry in your sleep as you lose your only friend?-

Katsuki smiled with sarcasm.

“Pretty sure. And, okay, if that makes you sleep better at night, then all right. You are very self-
centered to think that I have such strong feelings for you. It’s not like I want to marry you.”

Katsuki snorted again.

-I sure hope so because I don’t want to marry you either. And you are pretty self-centered as well to
drag me in this to have ‘more fun’. Sure, whatever, if you want to be my friend so badly then go for
it. Just keep in mind to not get attached to me. This ends in three years, whether you like it or not-

“Don’t worry about me, I can take care of myself.”

-Then we have our contract, you better not forget-”

Chapter End Notes

Happy birthday Izuku! (Yes, I'm a bit late, oh well)

Do you want me to do a double release this week? Since we are kind in the middle of
something?
Personally I think this chapter and the next one work better if they are close so I
wouldn't mind release that one too!
If you want, let me know! I can release again one on the 20th.
Or if you think you can wait the next release will be on the 23th!
Izuku stared at the last page of chapter thirty-seven with a sigh.

Looking back on this conversation they had made him feel sad. He had forgotten having said these words until he re-read them. He remembered the contract and the terms but… He had been pretty selfish and sassy, hadn’t he? During that time, he enjoyed Katsuki’s company, but his feelings for him were pretty shallow. He was someone Izuku admired a bit and wanted to know more and spend more time with… But, he could not say he had his best interests at heart. At that moment, he had felt compelled to play hard to get as well. In his mind, he refused the possibility of being hurt by Katsuki’s disappearance. It was one of these things a kid would say, like ‘when I grow up I’ll never be like my parents’, then most of them ended up like that without even realizing. In the following years, Izuku sometimes would regret having agreed to the contract. It was mostly when he was having a lot of fun, when he was looking at Katsuki and seeing the most interesting person in the world, when Katsuki would surprise him with little thoughtful actions. At the same time, Katsuki would constantly remind him, almost once a month, what had become like a personal motto of his: Don’t get attached to me. Therefore, every time Izuku’s pride pushed these feelings and thoughts away, he was going to honor his word and not get attached to him. He would not feel sad. He never once asked himself what Katsuki felt.

After they sealed the contract the following week, they had their first school trip. With the contract in their pockets, they stared to treat it as an excuse. Since neither had deep feelings for the other they could stop tiptoeing around and just hang out as much as they wanted. After all, nothing they could do would hurt them, right? Katsuki stopped pretending that he didn’t want to have fun and started to boss him around all over again, choosing places he wanted to see and dragging Izuku along. Izuku decided to use him to experiment all the things he never had opportunity to do; things that one would do with a close friend or even a best friend. He tried to take a lot of pictures with the two of them, but failed completely after the first one at the panoramic spot. Katsuki hated being photographed, so Izuku ended up collecting a lot of partially blurred shots of Katsuki trying to avoid the camera. He dragged him to share food; he even bought two of those stupid souvenirs with their initials. They were two little bottles filled with sand and the initial was swimming inside. Katsuki threw his away at the first occasion.

Time flew by and the first birthday Izuku and Katsuki spent together was almost a surprise. Izuku was visiting, as was his habit, for the third time that week, when Katsuki’s mother stopped them before he could go up to his room.

“Mitsuki invited him to sit on the sofa in the living room.

“Izuku! It’s so nice to see you again!” she said cheerfully.

Katsuki wrote on his notebook.

-Like you don’t see him almost every day-

“Oh, don’t be a party pooper Katsuki! Oh, about parties…!”

-Oh no. I know where this is going. No, mom. Just no-
“Soon it will be Katsuki’s sixteen birthday! I was thinking you could come and have a little party with us, maybe? If you are free on the 20th?”

-No, Izuku refuse. Just say no-

“Do you already have plans??” she was looking at him with a pleading expression, pursuing her lower lip.

-Stop looking like a puppy! And you, say you are busy-

“Ehm… I don’t know, I don’t think I have plans, but…”

Izuku looked at Katsuki with a confused expression.

-No, I don’t want to have a stupid party, say no!-

“Hm, on second thought I think I’m really free that day.” Izuku smiled. “I’ll be honored to be at Katsuki’s birthday party!”

-Well, then, fuck you-

Izuku chuckled.

Izuku chuckled. Seeing him being so opposed only made him want to say yes even more. And Izuku could not see a reason to refuse to celebrate Katsuki’s birthday. They went see a movie together and when they reached Katsuki’s house that day his mother and father were there. They had prepared a whole banquet with all of Katsuki’s favorite dishes and some of the things Izuku had mentioned. Most of the food that Katsuki liked was spicy, so Izuku’s mouth was burning by the time they finished eating. Izuku had bought Katsuki an entire collection of a TV series he liked as a present. During the third year of high school, things got complicated. While outside of school they had become very close friends, at least by Izuku’s standard, during school, Katsuki behaved very moodily. Some days he would be as open and sassy as ever, other days he would be almost distant, trying to spend some time alone. In the meantime, their classmates were becoming more and more malicious about his friendship with him. They were assuming things, trying to preach for information and sometimes Izuku would get pushed by a hand on his back. He never turned fast enough to see who it was; he never knew if it was only one person or not either. As some cowardice acts of bullying started to occur Izuku finally realized what was going on. Izuku was only getting a little portion of the actual cruelty; Katsuki was getting most of it. Paying more attention, he found out that Katsuki was more distant during days while he had disappeared somewhere for some time, or days in which he signed him ‘I don’t have my notebook’. Izuku should had realized sooner that he would never go to school without a notebook.

Following him around while he was ‘disappearing’ he caught the bullies red handed. Very careful not to touch him, they stole his notebook and reduced it to shreds. How many notebooks Katsuki had already lost in this stupid way was never confirmed. The threats and insults they were throwing at him were something else. They were capable of doing this only because Katsuki could not respond or fight back at all. But Izuku had always thought they were being really stupid, how could they not realize that Katsuki had only to snap and they would become slaves in a moment? Sure, Katsuki would pay with his freedom for this but it was still a possibility after all. Izuku could not see at all why they would pester a person for being dangerous by threatening him, it was nonsense.

“Hey! What are you doing, leave him alone!” Izuku said leaving his hiding spot.
The bullies looked around, worried that Izuku may have called the teachers, then they threw Katsuki’s notebook at the end of the hallway and walked away. Izuku went to pick it up and hand it to him.

“How long has this been going on? How come you never told me anything?”

Katsuki led the way to a solitary stairway that led to the roof and after sitting on the steps he started to write.

-There is nothing to say, they are just being stupid. They can’t even touch me anyway-

“But you could have said something to the teachers! It’s not good to just take the bullying without fighting back!”

-I’m just a pain for them, they just want me to stay out of the way, if I’m going to complain to them, they are just going to suggest I leave school. My mother would not be happy with any of this and this will become a major pain-

“But this is totally not fair! You can’t let them win!”

-Win what? They are just kids, let them have my notebooks if they want them, they can’t hurt me. Ironically, my quirk protects me from actual physical bulling. There is no need to be so worked up about those brats-

“The insults don’t get to you? How can you not be affected by them?”

-What you don’t get is that this is the norm for me. It was like this since grade school. It’s you who has a strange idea of how the world works. There is really no use in getting affected by this, let it go, you should fight for yourself instead-

“What?”

-I know they are bothering you as well… Instead of wasting your breath trying to help me, especially since I don’t need any help, you should find a good way to deal with the situation yourself. My advice would be to do what my mother does. Play dumb. When they ask you something just say ‘I dunno’ and ‘I have no idea’. Your reputation won’t get any higher, but at least they will just think that you are stupid. My mother always says it’s best to be underestimated and live a peaceful life than to pick fights-

“Then why don’t you do it yourself?”

-With me, it has the opposite effect, they get even more pissed and I don’t want to risk doing something that will compromise my freedom. For me, it’s way better to just ignore them entirely. They can’t touch me and my parents love to buy me hundreds of these notebooks so it’s not a big deal. If they are pissed with you, they can punch you. I don’t need this in my life. And it would be better for you if you keep a neutral relationship with them. When I’m gone you will need to be able to go back to them-

“What if I don’t want to go back to them?”

-Just leave the door open for yourself, you never know-”

Izuku abandoned the book for a moment and sat on the bed. Katsuki had been right in the end; he had taken advantage of the open door later on. In the next two years, Izuku balanced Katsuki and his classmates while in school, leaving both doors open. It had not been easy, but it wasn’t too difficult
either. But now, Izuku realized that by doing so, he had basically given up on the possibility to get the bullying to stop. Katsuki endured that alone. Couldn’t Izuku do more for him? Probably, but at the same time Katsuki never mentioned anything again, only reminding him from time to time to keep the relationships neutral. Had Izuku taken advantage of Katsuki’s reassurances to mind his own business and abandon Katsuki to deal with things alone?

Yes, he had.

Izuku ruffled his hair. Had he changed so much in so little time? Why was looking back at things now making him more and more convinced he had actually been a bad friend for Katsuki? Taking everything for granted? Sure, Katsuki was a strong person, but still, Izuku should have tried at least to be of some support for him, right? The more he read, the more he felt like he just went and took what he wanted, ignored the rest, and then escaped at the first opportunity. It was not like that, was it…? It was only because the book didn’t show him what he thought at that time, right?

For some reason, that didn’t seem right either.

He went back to the book feeling determinate. They had been together for almost four years; there was no way that he could not find something positive he did for him in all four! Having the first birthday party of his life together counted for the first year, right?! Well, he surely could not count ‘having protected him from bullies’ in the second year. He skipped through a lot of pages, he knew what was in these, other movies, other bullying incidents, other afternoons at his house. They were, by that point, sharing their interests and doing everything together, except when Izuku was home with his parents, he was with Katsuki every day. There was no need to re-read all of that.

Chapter forty to forty-three were skipped. He scanned chapter forty-four searching for something, there was a special event during the first week of summer break that Izuku was sure would be helpful. He found it at the fourth page of the chapter. It was a camping outing Katsuki’s mother organized for the whole family, Izuku included obviously, Mrs. Bakugou had already ‘adopted him’ into the family, he was even included in the family album. Surprisingly, for someone who was always indoor, Katsuki loved mountain trips. Izuku had never been camping before, his mother was too anxious and his father preferred vacations that were more relaxing. Convincing them had not been too hard, he only had to promise his mother he would call her every morning and evening. Izuku would escape from the Bakugou family to call her; he was embarrassed to be treated like a little kid in front of them. Katsuki would surely mock him if he found out. Or maybe not, after all, his mother was always sending him texts when they were out. Sometimes Katsuki had an expression like he wanted to throw his phone in the nearest river.

Katsuki and Izuku would take off on their own; now that Katsuki had a companion, he was no longer waiting for his parents to keep up with him. They were going all out in exploration and climbing. Izuku was barely capable of keeping his balance, let alone being enthusiastic like him. During one of these explorations, Izuku lost his footing while crossing a river and Katsuki caught him by the wrist, stabilizing him. When Izuku’s balance was restored, Katsuki realized exactly what he had done and let him go immediately, almost panicking. Izuku examined his wrist, but there was nothing there. Katsuki had not marked him. Even if Izuku told him that nothing bad had happened and everything was fine, Katsuki was clearly beating up himself over it. Out in the open they could not stop and start a written conversation, so the mood became awkward until they returned to the tent. Once inside Izuku immediately said what he was thinking.

“’I’m not marked and I’m perfectly fine, stop worrying about me, there is really no reason to react so badly.”

-You don’t get how big this mistake was! I acted on instinct, it was very lucky my training worked
and I didn’t lose control of my quirk. I should never touch someone, no matter the situation! It’s too big of a risk!-

“You can touch me, I trust you to not mark me.”

Katsuki ruffled his hair in frustration.

-You don’t get it! YOU DON’T GET IT AT ALL! This is not about trust. I-should-not-touch-anyone-no matter-what. Got it?!

“But you can control your quirk now, can’t you? Why do you need to avoid it at all costs if you can avoid using it? I think it’s the opposite, you should practice with me, so you’ll be even more confident that you can control it.”

-Practice?! For what?! You’re completely crazy!-

“For when people will stop being scared of you and you’ll be able to hang out with people normally. I’m sure you’ll meet people like that someday.”

Katsuki rolled his eyes.

-Here comes Nostradamus... That won’t happen-

“I told you, I trust you... C’mon, try to touch me!”

Katsuki stared at him with his mouth half opened and then he shook his head. Izuku extended his hand towards him with an encouraging nod. Katsuki shook his head more strongly. Izuku took his hand himself and tightened his grip when Katsuki struggled to get his hand free. Katsuki stopped moving, staring at him with a sneer. Izuku shook hands with him a couple of times, smiling.

“See?”

-You are an idiot. Did I already say that?-

Katsuki stared at him with his eyes half-lidded and Izuku nodded again to encourage him. Katsuki looked away and then sighed deeply, ruffling his hair. Katsuki looked at him again with a more serious expression and raised his hand unsure of what to do with it.

Izuku remembered well what happened after that. Izuku was expecting him to take his hand or something, but that was not what Katsuki had decided. Slowly his hand reached Izuku’s face; he froze on the spot, confused. Katsuki placed his hand on his right cheek, gently and left it there for a second. Izuku could not read Katsuki’s expression at that moment. He remembered feeling his heat rising, his tension growing.

It was not as if Izuku had forgotten his sexual orientation until that day, he had not, Katsuki was quite good looking, and he had looked at him that way sometimes. But he had always taken for granted that Katsuki was straight, he never once gave him any indication of interest. Izuku was inexperienced, so he started to double guess himself immediately. Surely, he was getting this completely wrong, there was no way that Katsuki was trying to communicate something like that to him. Immediately, Izuku’s thoughts had started to wander in forbidden directions unwillingly. But, they were supposed to be friends, if Izuku was not capable of having a male friend without seeing
him as a potential lover, this would become a problem down the road. He could not ruin his first real friendship like that.

Now that Izuku knew with certainty about Katsuki’s interest for him, since that day or maybe even before, he could see clearly that Katsuki had actually tried to make his interest known. But Izuku’s confusion prevented him from understanding and acting upon their interest. It took them almost a year to get past that point.

Izuku quickly skipped past the next chapter, reaching the fourth year of school. Reading back now, Izuku was able to see all the little hints both he and Katsuki let slip right and left, but living that moment in-person was different from reading it in a book. He read the moment where he first decided to sit next to Katsuki on his bed while he was ‘meditating’. It had been on impulse, he had thought something along the lines of ‘I want to see what happens if I cross this barrier’. The first time as soon as Katsuki’s eyes fixed on him he lost his courage and sat back on the floor. The second time he stayed, not running away anymore. From there, things escalated, the tension in the air was becoming heavy and soon both had a clear idea of what was going on but neither wanted to make the first move. For once, surprisingly, it had been Katsuki the first to take the initiative.

They were seated together on the bed; Katsuki got up suddenly with a frustrated groan and started to pace the room with his hands in his hair.

“Katsuki? What’s wrong?”

Katsuki groaned even more strongly, dropping his hands. He grabbed the notebook and scribbled furiously.

-You. You are the problem. What the hell are we doing?!-

“I… we are not doing anything. What do you mean?”

-I mean this! You are making me going crazy! What are we?!-

“We…?”

-Let’s not beating around the bushes. You like me right?-

Izuku chuckled. Katsuki had decided to use Izuku as a scapegoat to avoid putting his own feelings into play. He could see it even back then; still, he had appreciated it a lot. If that had been left it to Izuku, he would have never said anything at all. It had been very surprising to see him to take that initiative, but Izuku was not complaining.

“I…! Yes, yes, I do.”

Izuku looked at his hands feeling shy and embarrassed. There was no need to hide it any further, but that didn’t make it easier. Katsuki sat back on the bed next to him.

-Good-

“Good, what’s good? What?”

-Well, at least I’m not crazy. I was starting to think I needed to see a doctor-

“Ah… okay?”

-So, what are you going to do about that?‐
“About… me liking you…”

Katsuki sent him an unimpressed glare.

-Maybe YOU should see a doctor. Are you capable of making a full coherent sentence or not?-

“Well, sorry! You caught me off guard! Hm, what are we going to do… You mean like… If we are a couple…?"

Izuku asked, feeling silly, Katsuki had helped getting the cat out of the bag, but now he was as uncooperative as ever. He stared at the notebook for a while, searching for the right words.

-We are not a couple, remember? I’m going away next year? But, if you want, we can be friends with benefit or whatever you want to call it. An expansion on our accord? We can see where this is going, but without obligation. If you want to try. But you are free to change your mind, this is like an experiment. No feelings involved-

“So… I like you, but I’m supposed to date you without involving feelings? How does that even work?"

Katsuki grimaced.

-If you can’t, it’s fine. I don’t want to make a mess, I want to leave without having to worry about you or anyone else. It’s just that I hate to dance around things for months, this was too irritating. You can forget about it and go back being my friend or whatever. If you think your feelings are going to get hurt, you better go away now, before it’s too late-

“You are as catastrophic as usual. I’m not going to die with a broken heart. I just said that I like you, I find you interesting and you’re attractive, it’s not like I’m in love with you or anything! I can do this!"

Izuku stared at the sentence for a while. He remembered what he had felt at that time. Pride, fear, embarrassment, confusion. Izuku knew he had not been in love with Katsuki, he was not lying, but at the same time, he was forcing himself to think he was feeling only that much for him. In reality, Izuku had no idea what his feelings were actually, hell, he still didn’t know what his feelings for Katsuki were. It was certainly more than friendship, but was it love? Had it ever been love? Probably not.

-All right, but I have another condition. When I’m gone, promise me you’ll forget all about me. Don’t search for me, don’t wait for me, don’t do anything. Just live your life as if you never met me at all-

Izuku had never loved him. There was just no way, he would have felt much strongly after reading Katsuki’s condition. He would have not been able to accept or actually do it. Instead, Izuku accepted and kept his word, no problem. They separated and that was that. Izuku realized something for the first time. For a period immediately after Katsuki left and he found himself lost and confused, he thought everything had been Katsuki’s fault. It was Katsuki’s fault their relationship had started under such strange pretences because he immediately forbidden him to get attached. It was Katsuki’s fault that he could not fall in love properly. It was Katsuki’s fault if now he was lost now, because he had promised to not wait for him. It was his fault if their last year had become a strange mix of pain and half-truths.

Nothing was Katsuki’s fault.

Izuku simply never loved him; he just used Katsuki’s accord as an excuse. If he really had loved him
he would have suffered for it a lot more and he would have not accepted any of this in the first place. What he had felt for Katsuki was something a bit more intense than physical attraction and nothing else. He never was attached because he never was attached, not because Katsuki forbid him. That was just stupid, how could he have deluded himself that much? What had been that last year? A relationship without feelings?

Had he *used* Katsuki?

First, he made in him the best friend he never had and then the lover he never had. He shaped Katsuki to take exactly the form he wanted him to have. He took everything he wanted and hoped for from him. He never asked Katsuki ‘what are your feelings for me?’ or ‘are you getting attached to me, do you consider me your friend? or ‘do you want me to do something for you?’ or ‘what can I do to make you happy?’.

Had Izuku ever given back anything he took from him?

Was Katsuki aware of the fact that Izuku used him like this?

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:
Mark of Submission places a black mark to symbolize possession. It's an active type and once a person is marked is considered by the quirk as an extension of their own body, for that reason every order has to be obeyed, no matter where that person is. Katsuki Bakugou is the first one to ever had this quirk and as such the quirk is still highly unstable. It's very powerful as well since the Barrier cannot stop it either. The mark is permanent.
Price: unknown.

Of course the next chapter will be on the 23th.
Bye!
Izuku got on his feet and started to pace around the room feeling out of breath.

How could he not realize it earlier? He had used Katsuki for four years without worrying at all about him. It was all about him: Izuku. Him feeling lost, him feeling lonely, him feeling curious of the strange classmate, him feeling prideful, him feeling in the mood for making friends… Him, him, him, it was all about him. How self-centered could a person get?

He had no idea what Katsuki thought about him or felt about him, because he never asked. He just assumed things. He just assumed Katsuki was happy to be his friend and lover. Maybe he had had another reason entirely. Maybe Katsuki was just as lonely as he had felt. But at least Katsuki always worried about him, warning him he was going to go away and warning him to not get too hurt because of him. Wasted effort, Izuku had barely being affected by it at all.

Izuku ruffled his hair, frustrated. What now? What was he supposed to do now that he realized just what a shitty human being he had been?

He looked the alarm clock, he had thought about talking to Froppy since she was the only one besides Katsuki that knew about all this, but it was way past midnight. He had read for much longer than he thought. He could not talk to her until morning. He could talk to Katsuki, he was sure he would open his door for him even during the night, but he had no idea what to tell him. He paced around the room for more than twenty minutes, but he could not calm down. He already knew he was not going to sleep that night. Waiting in his room for the entire night was going to be torture and he still had some chapters to read. Having calmed down a little bit he sat down again, ready to feel even worse.

Chapter forty-six was after the events of that afternoon. After that day, things fell into an awkward stage where neither of them had no idea what to do next. Katsuki was not very eager to start touch him, considering his quirk, so they were hanging out together pretty much the same way as before. Especially since they had to keep emotionally uninvolved, it was not like they could start sweet talking each other or do lovely-dovely stuff. They weren’t doing anything different from before, their conversations was hung in the air, but beyond that nothing was out of the ordinary.

Izuku in the end decided to move things along himself taking Katsuki’s hand one time they were sitting next to each other. Katsuki jumped and stared at him, almost afraid. As always, touching was a delicate thing. Katsuki looked away but let him hold his hand. They just sat there watching the movie, tense like statues. When it was time for Izuku to go home, he was feeling irritated, the situation was stupid and it was not progressing at all. At the very least, Izuku decided to kiss him on the cheek, before going. Even before Izuku could touch Katsuki’s cheek, he was already taking a step back looking shocked.

Izuku massaged his eyes, they had been the hugest dorks ever. This was embarrassing; he almost wanted to burn the book. Destroy the evidence. He could not believe Froppy had read this assembly of clumsiness. To think they had been both seventeen, this looked like something a thirteen would do. No wonder they were both socially awkward.

Their first kiss had been even more awkward. They were both irritated because of the situation and they basically kissed out of annoyance towards the other. They had just entered Katsuki’s bedroom.
after they had gone out to eat hamburgers and they had seen a couple kissing at the table next to theirs. That atmosphere, right next to them, had worsened their mood considerably. The kiss arrived after their only fight.

Now that Izuku was reading back, he realized that Katsuki’s temper had been very bad since even before the accord. Of course, part of it was the frustration caused by the lack of progress in the relationship, but another part was surely caused by the fact that he had no more time. The test was going to start very soon and if things were left to Izuku’s pace, they would never get anywhere. As was predictable, Izuku at that time didn’t understand. They fought. Izuku told him that if he was dissatisfied in him he could find someone else. Katsuki was very, very, mad. He started to write on his notebook in an extremely big writing, he would have shouted if he could.

It had been Izuku, completely following instinct, that initiated the kiss. He was annoyed and wanted to prove something, that he was interested in him like he said or that he could do it if he wanted. It had not been a sweet kiss or a long one for that matter. They just pushed their lips together and grabbed each other on the first place they could, hard, as if they wanted to hurt the other more than anything. They soon broke the contact and they just stared at each other still irritated and breathing hard. Katsuki was the first one to break the eye contact. Izuku calmed down considerably after that, realizing that he was still squeezing his arm he loosened his grip. After a long moment of silence where Katsuki was still looking down at his feet, Izuku placed his free hand on his right cheek and turned his face so they could look each other in the eyes again. Katsuki stared back almost challenging and they kissed again. This time the kiss actually worked, they went for it much slower and sweeter. In the end, they spent the whole evening kissing, getting a little more used to it each time.

After they overcame that barrier, things went a bit better. They returned to a more neutral state, but Katsuki’s room had become their secret lair, every time they were in there alone, with the door closed, they would spend some time messing around a bit. They were still progressing very slowly, but only because Katsuki was not used to being touched, so every time they were doing something new, he needed some time adjusting. Izuku didn’t want to read all his awkward attempts at doing something vaguely sexy, so he skipped parts here and there.

With time, Katsuki’s impatience grew again. The time for him to depart was getting closer and he was getting more nervous as the deadline was approaching. As he was becoming more nervous, he was becoming bolder. Things escalated very quickly one day, when only a week separated him from going on a vacation with his family that would last until the start of the test. Izuku had no idea that was going to happen, Katsuki had not told him yet, not until that same day.

“-I’m going away next week-

“Hm? Where?”

-Where doesn’t matter. The point is that next week I’ll be going and we won’t see each other anymore-

“But… it’s still more than six months from the start of the test, you won’t come back here at all?”

-No, I already told you. This is it-

“Well… then…”

-I’m not leaving without having had sex at least once. I don’t want to remain a virgin for the rest of my life-
Izuku choke on saliva, coughing loudly. Katsuki just waited for him to stop staring at him hard, not baking down at all.

“W-what do you mean, y-you’ll have all time to have… to do things after the test. It’s not like you’ll never get another chance!”

Izuku was panicking, not sure of how to react to any of this.

-Not if I fail. If I’m sent to prison I won’t-

“W-well, think positively! Why should you fail?!”

Katsuki frowned.

-So I’m getting that you don’t want to have sex with me?-

“That’s—I’m…”

-Whatever, if you don’t want then whatever-

Katsuki looked away and refused to answer him again. When Izuku tried to shake him by the shoulder, he shook his hand off without looking at him.”

Shortly after, Katsuki thrown him out, but Izuku himself was not complaining. His request had been so abrupt and unexpected that he had no idea what to do in any case. First, he told him that he was going away soon and then that he wanted to have sex. The next two days had been really awkward. Katsuki refused to look at him and Izuku had no idea what to do at all. He had to decide if he wanted to have sex with him or not, he knew that much, problem was that he was not sure. Part of him was telling him he wanted to try, he was a bit curious and if there was someone he wanted to have his first time with, surely that was Katsuki. The other part was telling him that this was too sudden; he was not ready to make this decision with this pressure on him. It was almost like he was being forced or something. He knew that it was not true, they had been ‘dating’ for a while and he was not regretting it at all, but at the same time Katsuki had been the one to drag things on for so long, in some way it felt almost unfair that now he was forced to rush things along.

In the end, though, he realized something pretty obvious. Katsuki was trusting him with something very important. A person like him could very well go his whole life without having a human relationship, yet he had willingly accepted Izuku in his life more and more. He realized that Katsuki had discarded the idea of having any of this before knowing him. The first times they interacted, he made that very clear. For him to say ‘I don’t want to remain a virgin for the rest of my life’ was a roundabout way to say that Izuku awoke in him such desire. Katsuki had surely accepted some time ago the fact that he was going to remain virgin for a long while or maybe forever. It was Izuku that made him change his mind.

This realization made him come to a conclusion. There was nothing to fear, Katsuki was not asking out of pure curiosity or in a casual way, he was being serious. He could have present it a little better though, that was for sure. With this in mind, he went to his house the next day, three days before he was going to leave. He had already told his parents he was going to spend the night and he relied on Mrs. Bakugou to let him stay. He was proven correct; Katsuki’s mother was delighted to have him for the night. If she sensed something, she never showed any sign, but sure enough Katsuki’s parents decided to go out for dinner that night, so maybe they did sense it after all. Izuku had tried not to think about it.

Katsuki was a bit annoyed when he showed up in his room without warning or invitation, but since
his mother had already gave Izuku her blessing, he could not behave like a little kid and throw him out. Katsuki tried to ignore him but Izuku didn’t let him this time.

“”Look, I’m sorry about last time, but you know? You caught me off guard, you literally threw everything at me out of the blue.””

Katsuki sighed, abandoning his annoyed aura.

-Yeah, I know. That was my bad-

Izuku stared at the paper, surprised. Katsuki rolled his eyes.

-I was nervous. I just took it out on you. My bad-

Izuku smiled, satisfied.

“It’s okay. I know you are having a hard time lately. Anyway… I thought about your proposal…”

Katsuki suddenly blushed, as if he had made the proposal while he was in an odd mood and now that he was back to normal he wanted to take it back.

-You don’t have to if you don’t want-

“Yeah, I know. Like I said, I thought about it. I’m… okay with it… if you still want to…”

Katsuki’s expression was difficult to read.

-No, like, you really don’t have to, I’m not sure this is a good idea in the first place. You know that my quirk activates when I’m not in control of my emotions. It’s best if we don’t risk it, I’m not sure I can keep myself in check-

Izuku felt a spark of affection in his chest. Katsuki had had time to second-guess himself and now he was holding himself back again out of consideration towards him.

“It’s okay. You know I trust you and I know you trust me. I’m sure everything will be fine.”

-Did I already tell you that you are completely crazy?-

“Yep, a bunch of times.”

-Good. It’s true-

Izuku chuckled, taking Katsuki’s free hand. ”

Izuku remembered that night perfectly, down to the littlest details. They kissed, slowly, taking their time. They discarded their shirts and Izuku was the one that had to take the first step, caressing him and kissing his neck, since Katsuki was scared of touching too much naked skin. They were both inexperienced and Katsuki was especially tense so it took them quite a while to relax and set a more suitable mood. When Katsuki had finally started to reciprocate, caressing his back lightly and kissing him on his lips more deeply, Izuku was overcome by a wave of heat that made his head light and fuzzy. He pushed Katsuki down on his bed lightly and placed a leg between his. Katsuki finally reacted with passion, grabbing him and holding him as close as possible. He broke the kiss and started to tease the sensitive skin between the neck and the shoulder with his teeth, without actually biting. Izuku was already completely taken in by the atmosphere by that point, he grabbed Katsuki’s arm to keep himself grounded and moaned in the pillow feeling a bit ashamed of himself for having
reached that point so quickly. He was happy to feel, at least, that Katsuki was in a very similar predicament. Their lack of previous experience was probably a blessing, since both were easily excited by every single little thing.

Katsuki took control of the situation, he inverted their position on the bed, taking Izuku by surprise and making him squirm a little with embarrassment. The way Katsuki was looking at him, he would never forget. Discarding the pants and boxers had probably been the most embarrassing part, by the end they were both bright red but not dissuaded at all from their intent. At least not until it was time to get serious.

“Katsuki stopped and shaking his head he sat back, distancing himself a little. When Izuku looked at him, confused, Katsuki grimaced and started to explain something with the movements of his hands. First, he pointed at himself, then he made a circular motion toward his head and a grabbing motion with the other, he shook his head again. Izuku translated it to:

-I don’t think I can control myself enough, my head’s spinning, I can’t touch you-

Izuku felt a wave of irrational irritation. He grabbed his wrist and dragged him back on top of him, rudely. He opened his mouth to explain, but decided not to. Katsuki could not speak or write at that moment, it was not fair for him to have such a big advantage. He was going to communicate with gestures as well. He knew Katsuki would appreciate it. He placed Katsuki’s palm on his stomach and then shrugged.

-Even if you mark me, I don’t care-

Katsuki sighed deeply. Looking at him Katsuki moved his lips slowly, talking without using his voice, so he could read his lips.

-You really are crazy. Aren’t you scared?-

Izuku shook his head with a smile and answered the same way.

-I’m nervous, I’m tense, but I’m not scared. I trust you-

Katsuki nodded, still looking in his eyes.”

Izuku closed the book.

He didn’t need anything else from it. Everything that happened after that was something he wanted to remember on his own, even if maybe he remembered something wrong. That was a precious thing and nothing was going to taint it. He just hoped that Froppy had had the decency to avoid reading that part.

The next morning they had woken up together, they had slept in Katsuki’s bed next to each other. Now Izuku knew that Katsuki had actually secretly took a photo of him sleeping, the thought made him blush a little. The morning was a bit awkward but not all that much, it could have been a lot worse. Izuku was pretty surprised to notice just how much of a good mood Katsuki was in. He had never seen him smile that much.

But that had been their last day together. They didn’t say goodbye, they didn’t mention anything about the night prior and they didn’t promise anything. They just dragged the day as long as possible, not really wanting to separate. The worst part had been when Katsuki had gathered all the stuff Izuku had lent him: Movies, CDs and games. Once Izuku had been back home, alone, he had felt a weight in his stomach and a pain in his chest, pushing him almost to tears. But he didn’t cry. It could have
been worse. *It should* have been worse.

It was daybreak. Izuku had not slept a second and he didn’t care one bit. He ate breakfast, remembering that he had skipped dinner, and then with calm, wasting some time to let her wake up normally, he reached Froppy’s room and knocked on the door. The girl opened the door after a moment, not even asking who it was, maybe she was expecting him.

“Izu?” she saw the book in his arms. “Have you finished reading everything already? It took me a month!”

“Hi Froppy, yes, I have.” he gave the book back to her but she just touched it and it disappeared in a hundred of light sparks.

He almost wanted to ask her if he could enter to talk, but he remembered that this was a girl’s room, not a place he was should just casually to enter. Froppy smiled.

“You can enter, it’s fine, I don’t mind. But if you are uncomfortable, we can go somewhere else.”

“Ah, well…” Izuku wanted to talk about Katsuki so he could not do it in an open space, risking to be heard, but at the same time he was not sure that entering her room was the right choice either. “I want to talk in private, so…”

“C’mon in.” she opened the door completely for him. “This is not my room back home, I don’t have any secrets in here!” she chuckled a bit.

Izuku sat on the carpet, noticing that the girls’ rooms were identical to the males’. Same furniture, same disposition. Froppy was a very organized girl. She had a lot of stuff around, just like him and Katsuki, but it was all neatly organized and everything looked placed in a way that was almost decorative. Color contrasts, little colorful bottles placed everywhere like ornaments, little potted plants planted inside empty cans… She was recycling the used containers in many different ways. She was truly a friend of nature.

“Where did you find the little plants? I don’t think there is a gardening lab around here?” he asked her.

“Oh, no, these were all in the fields surrounding the building. I gathered them on my own.” she answered with simplicity.

“I see… You really love them. We have something in common.” he smiled.

“I know, I would like to meet your mother one day! She did a great job teaching you to love greenery!” she smiled back. “So? Is there something in particular that you want to ask me?”

“Yes, am I really a horrible person?” no use in trying to reach this point by talking in circles.

“I’m sorry?” she tilted her head a little.

“I mean… I’ve spent four years with Katsuki and I never bothered asking about his point of view on things. I was his… lover? And I didn’t even love him in the right way. I’m a horrible person.” this was not a question anymore.

She pondered the situation in silence for a bit, playing with a mug on her table.

“My book doesn’t contain the thoughts of the person, only impartial facts. I don’t know what you were feeling during these moments, only you do. But one thing I can say. You probably took things
with a bit too much lightness, I never read anything about you two talking about feelings or trying to understand each other better. On the other hand, he told you not to at the very beginning, I don’t think this was entirely your fault. This could have been better, but who am I to judge?” she pondered another moment, Izuku waited for her to continue, not sure if he was hoping to be reassured or criticized. “I don’t think you are a horrible person, what you did probably saved him… Ah, I’m not saying this because I know, of course not, I can’t materialize his book and even if, it would not contain his thoughts. It’s just a feeling I have. I have a feeling that he was so grateful to you, that he didn’t really care about you not asking him how he was feeling. Could you have done better? Sure. But you could have done a lot worse too. At least you were there for him.”

“Should I apologize? Tell him everything? Is this a good idea?” he looked down at his laps.

He could confess everything, that he probably used him, that he never really loved him, that he was not terribly sad when he went away… But was that really the right thing to do? If Katsuki was not feeling anything in particular for him either, this could just be a bother for him.

“I…” she suddenly chuckled. “I think you mistook me for a love expert! It’s not like I have any experience!”

“I’m sorry! I’m bothering you aren’t I?!” suddenly Izuku realized that he was talking with her like they were old friend and he could trust her completely.

He really was a trusting fool, Katsuki would grimace at this and call him crazy as always. Thinking about Katsuki made his chest hurt with guilt. Maybe not confessing, but something had to be done for sure.

“No, that’s not it!” she was still chuckling. “Look,” she tried to go back to being serious, “when I meet a person I forgot all about and they try to make me remember by telling me a lot of details… I get often really bothered by it, you know? I think ‘It’s not my fault I don’t remember you, don’t push this on me!’, but then I realize. Most of the time, they are not trying to make me feel guilty, uncomfortable or inadequate. They just want me to recognize them, to say ‘I’m glad to see you again’. Even though I don’t remember and I never will. Isn’t that very, very selfish? Aren’t these people being selfish with me? They are not trying to help me; they are trying to help themselves. But at the same time, they remember me. Me and all the of things they are trying to make me remember. It hurts sometime, but if they remember me… Doesn’t that mean that I mattered to them? Even if maybe only a little. I mattered. Isn’t this the same? Maybe you were just helping yourself, but still. Thanks to you, I’m sure Katsuki felt like his life was not in vain. At least to you, he mattered.”

Izuku was speechless. This, he could have never ever thought in his whole life. Katsuki could not have felt this way, right? It hurt too much to even think of it this way.

“About what you should do…” she said after a long silence. “What do you want to do? If you feel like you should apologize then sure, go for it. But would this really solve anything alone? I think it would be more important to try to do everything you think you should have done. I’m not telling you have to love him if you don’t, but at least try to be a better friend, all right?”

“You are right… You are absolutely right… I should have realized this much even alone… Gosh, I’m such an idiot.” he shook his head sadly.

“Hm, why don’t we go to the Archive? I have something I want to tell you in there anyway.” suddenly she was serious.

Izuku followed her to the Task Force Archive in silence, not sure of what she wanted to say to him. Considering her expression, he was pretty sure this was not about Katsuki. She closed the door after
him, so they could be alone. The Archive, which Izuku had yet to explore, was a little room completely filled with filing cabinets in alphabetic order.

“In this room there are written records of all the quirks the Government ever came across. There is everything, conditions, effects, prices, and even a list of people who possessed the quirk at any given moment. Of course, it’s dated until the last year test, so we are not included. If you know any quirk, here you can get more information.”

“Okay, this is very interesting, but why have you brought me here?” he asked.

This place really was something else; he could learn a lot about quirks in here and be a little more useful to Katsuki. He was going to take a good look around later.

“Because I read something in your book that made me wonder. You don’t know anything about your own quirk, do you? I have not read anything about you researching it. There is a file about it here. I think you should take a look at it. There is something that’s bothering me about you and Katsuki.”

“Something that’s bothering you about us…?” now he was really confused.

“Your quirk works on DNA assimilation…” she looked away. “Leaving aside what you two did that night…” Izuku should have blushed, but for some reason he was feeling cold instead. “You two kissed multiple times…”

Izuku was feeling faint. He already knew what she was going to say. It was something he should have realized himself yet he had not. But if this was true, why hadn’t he found any sign of it on him?

“Izuku… I think you have absorbed Katsuki’s quirk without realizing it.”

Chapter End Notes

Aaaand... here we go!
Next chapter we are finally going to learn all about the Wild Card.

With this chapter we are officially closing the first part of the test, the next one is going to be... complex.
My personal advice would be to pay really close attention to everything that will happen from now on.
In these 'flashback' chapters there was nothing useful for the future, but many things have already happened in the background...
If you think you don't remember old parts so well maybe you should take a look back, but it's on you of course!

See you on the 30th of July!
“Izuku… I think you have absorbed Katsuki’s quirk without realizing it.”

The sentence hung in the air for a long time.

Izuku knew she was completely right. They kissed multiple times and not only that. There was just no way he had not had access to Katsuki’s DNA. Why had he not realize it earlier? Well, Izuku was not sure of when exactly his quirk first manifested… But at the same time, he knew that most quirks were developed during grade school, there was no way his quirk was developed in the last six months. He remembered during the examination when he was asked if he remembered having absorbed anything in the past, but at that moment, he was too confused to think properly. He should have realized it later, when he fully accepted what was going on. But the test had started and so many things had happened since then… But more importantly, Katsuki’s quirk was powerful and unstable. If he really had absorbed it, why he hasn’t he activated it before? He touched plenty of people after they first kissed.

“Wait… maybe not, is… is my quirk active or passive? Maybe I didn’t absorb it!” he tried to explain, his heart speeding up with nervousness.

“You really should have taken a look at the information about your quirk, I know that you were distracted and you got roped into this so suddenly, but you put everyone at risk.” she sighed. “Your quirk is passive. It’s always active. You absorbed it without any doubt.”

“But I never marked anyone! How is this possible?!” he tried to keep the panic from showing.

“That too, has to do with how your quirk works.” she opened one of the drawers and took out a file. “To put it simply: your quirk is always activated so all the other quirks you absorb are kept at bay by it. You have to consciously stop the Wild Card and activate the other quirk. You were really lucky, this saved you from a huge disaster. I cannot imagine what could have happened if you accidentally marked someone and said some random command carelessly. You wouldn’t even be here right now.”

Izuku’s heart was pounding painfully in his chest. He had to sit or his knees would give out. She sat down on the opposite end of the table sliding the file towards him.

“Read this. Alone, or with Katsuki if you want… But do it. It’s for your own sake.”

He took a deep breath. He definitely had to read this file. He was going to read this with Katsuki, he had to tell him the truth, especially since he was now involved in this mess. Of course, Izuku could be very careful and makes sure that he would never activate Katsuki’s quirk, but it was his right to know everything. He tried to calm down and think.

“Should I steal this file? To make sure no one will read it and get information about my quirk?” he asked her.

“No, that’s a bad idea.” she shook her head. “It’s much easier to spot a missing file in all these files. If it’s missing someone will obviously think someone has that quirk. Hidden between all the others here is the best defense strategy. Don’t take it.”
“I see… That makes sense… I’ve been making one mistake after another lately…” he sighed.

“Don’t be like that. Nothing terrible has happened yet and you are learning every day. You are going to be fine, don’t worry too much.” she smiled sweetly.

He took a deep breath, trying to calm down completely. He tried to change the subject.

“Can’t you use your quirk to learn all of the others’ quirks? Can’t you read about everyone? I mean, I know you can’t reveal what you read, but…” he wasn’t sure what he was trying to gain with this question, but he knew that Katsuki would be displeased if he didn’t even try.

“No, I was not able to get any other book. Four, Mishima, square glasses and Shu don’t talk. Yao won’t reveal anything about herself. Haru and Urara talk a lot… and yet I can’t materialize their books… The only explanation is that everything that they’re saying are lies. And… I don’t want to read Kami’s book.” she looked away, hesitant.

“Hm? Why?” he really was curious about this. She had said she loved to read stories.

“I knew Kami from before… I mean, not really, I never met him, but we are both pupils of the Task Force. We… already worked there, sometimes. Both of us are already guarantee a place, it will be very strange if we are eliminated. Our quirks are needed; we are both from the Collecting Information Branch. I have a feelings he doesn’t know me, when I first introduce myself to him, he didn’t give any sign of having recognized me. Anyways… His quirk lets him see other people’s thoughts. As you know, my books don’t contain thoughts. I’d rather keep things this way, I don’t want to read about all the thoughts he’s ever read in his life. That would be awkward.” she hesitated a moment. “You’ll forgive me if I don’t tell you the name of his quirk. It’s not to be cunning, I just don’t feel comfortable divulging other people’s information. It’s my rule and even when my quirk is not involved, I’d rather not to do it anyway. I read that he already told you a part of it, but not the name. With the name, you could read the file and know every detail so… Sorry.”

“All right, don’t worry, you told me more than enough. Thank you Froppy, you really helped me a lot!” he smiled at her.

“Asui Tsuyu.” she said.

“What?”

“My name. I’m Tsuyu. You can call me that! Well, maybe not in front of Shu. You know…” she chuckled.

“O-oh! Thank you, thank you for trusting me!” he bowed his head.

She laughed lightly and got up.

“All right, I think it’s time for me to go and for you to read some stuff and maybe talk to Katsuki, yeah?” she made her way to the door. “I’ll see you another time; if you need my help you can call me anytime.”

Izuku stared at the file on the table gathering all his courage, which was not much. Katsuki was going to have a heart attack. He was so sensible about his quirk; he could not imagine how badly he would react thinking that he had accidentally absorbed it. For a split second Izuku thought that it was just like AIDS, a sexually transmitted disease, but then he scolded himself. What a terrible way to put it, like Katsuki had transmitted him a disease or something. ‘Be a better friend’ said Tsuyu. He was already starting great. He had to tell him everything and look as positive as possible. Izuku was not really scared of the fact he had the quirk itself, that was stupid. He was not going to use it anyways,
what would he do? Create an army of slaves? The problem was the heavy responsibility that he had now. Knowing that he could accidentally create a big incident, just like Katsuki.

It was ironic, he had to understand Katsuki’s feelings better, what better way than to have the same quirk? His same curse?

He took the file and got up. He was going to take it out of the room for a little while, he would put it back immediately after telling Katsuki the truth. The best way was to just let him read everything straight from the file itself, there was no risk of violating the rule like this. He took a depth breath and knocked on his door. Katsuki opened the door after a moment, Izuku thought he was maybe still sleeping and he was right. Katsuki was still in his shirt and boxers; he opened the door just a tiny bit, as to not let anyone see his attire. When Izuku smiled awkwardly at him as a greeting, he disappeared, undid the lock and fully opened the door. Izuku closed the door behind him noting how he was not bothered to be seen like this by Izuku. Well, of course, but still it was a detail Izuku had never noticed before.

They sat down, like usual, but this time Izuku decided to sit right next to him, instead of choosing the other side of the table, as he normally would. He placed the file on the table earning a questioning look from Katsuki. He ignored it and opened it, showing him the title ‘The Wild Card’. Katsuki, who wasn’t stupid, understood and with wide eyes pointed at Izuku asking him for a confirmation. Izuku just nodded, his throat squeezed. They started reading in silence.

The Wild Card

This quirk, while it may not be necessarily rare, is quite unusual and difficult to identify. Given its nature, it won’t work unless the owner is somehow involved in a chain of accidents. If not identified by a quirk specialized in recognizing other quirks, the owners tend to spend their whole life without ever finding out. It’s a passive quirk, which by definition means that it’s always active, that require a sample of DNA to work. The DNA can’t be just taken casually or by force, it must be a consensual exchange. The most common way to activate this quirk is by kissing or having a physical relationship with the owner of another quirk. Once the sample is absorbed by the Wild Card, whichever quirk the DNA contains will be absorbed as well, giving the Wild Card owner total control over it, like it was their own from the beginning. Of course, if the Wild Card absorbs the DNA of a quirkless person, nothing will happen.

While absorbing quirks may not be so difficult, especially in an adult, this is not enough to reveal to the world the presence of this quirk. The Wild Card, being passive, doesn’t permit any other quirk to be used in a spontaneous way by its owner. The owner needs to learn how to properly activate the absorbed quirk by taking the standard lessons provided to people whom possess active quirks at an early age. With a normal mental state, the owner has a very low chance of activating it by accident, as they need to consciously try to activate a quirk they don’t know they possess. The cases of very early identification comes from children who ate their brother or sister’s hair, or ate some of their saliva, and then tried to use a quirk while playing. Normally, once childhood ends, people tend not to try to activate something they don’t think they possess, so it often becomes unnoticed until a later stage of life, if ever.

One of the most common way of discovering this quirk is when the mind is altered by foreign substances, like medications, drugs and alcohol, or when the subject is exposed to extreme stress or emotive instability. In this case, it’s very possible to activate one or more quirks by complete accident, it’s not uncommon for the Wild Card to create confusion when first
discovered. As a quirk, in itself, it could be considered a B rank, but its potential marks it as an S rank. The Wild Card can absorb any quirk at any given time, if the condition is met, which can potentially result in having an even more powerful version of some of the most dangerous quirks. For example, a Wild Card owner can use a defensive and an offensive quirk at the same time, if trained enough. No person has ever possessed more than one quirk except for Wild Cards. Considering that, as of now, there has been no maximum limit identified. Its potential is tremendous and this is rightfully considered one of the Top 10 most dangerous quirks in the world.

Izuku stared at the first page, feeling all of his blood in his veins turn cold. This description was very, very pessimistic and tragic. It was almost as if they were describing a super villain of a manga, overpowered and unstoppable. Izuku supposed that, maybe, if he had create an army of slaves and asked them to give him one hair to eat, he could potentially being unstoppable… But otherwise, it sounded a bit unrealistic. Well, unless you were the type of person to kiss everyone, just because. He refused to look at Katsuki, he could very well feel his stare creating holes in his skull, and turned to page.

The second page was even worse, if that was even possible. It was a very detailed list of all the people who possessed it, when and how they discover it, what they did with it and how they died. Izuku didn’t read all of it, but got a general gist of it. Even if they were much older than the others, many were just normal people who found it by accident and then took the test and then just normally served the country. Some others were criminals whose details Izuku didn’t want to explore too much. Katsuki stole the file from under his nose, forcing him to look up. He started to move his lips, forming a very clear sentence for Izuku to read. It was a big, fat:

*What the actual fuck?*

Izuku laughed awkwardly.

“Yeah… They are really describing it like it’s the supreme quirk of evil, huh?”

Katsuki opened his notebook and started to write as if his life was depending on it.

-PLEASE TELL ME THIS IS A JOKE! PLEASE!-

“Ehh… not really…”

-PROVE IT, PROVE IT TO ME RIGHT NOW!-

Izuku could remind him that maybe he didn’t have any quirk that he could show him, but he knew it was not the right time to discuss logic. He tore Katsuki’s page, raised his palm and conjured a very little puddle of acid, Izuku noticed that it was getting a bit easier to activate it. It was not a good thing, he didn’t want to risk activating Katsuki’s quirk by accident, if this was getting to easy to do, it would only be a bigger problem. Then, after throwing the half-melted paper in the trash can, he sneezed and conjured a little Light Sphere, to prove to him that he had more than one quirk, as told in the file.

Katsuki was staring at him with his mouth open. Clearly, his brain had not caught up to reality. After a moment, he wrote again.

-DNA, kissing… Please, don’t tell me this includes me, anything but this!-

“Ehm… I have never used your quirk, so I’m not fully certain, but…”
Katsuki rose to his feet and grabbed his face in his hands; he let out a long, frustrated growl. It was so rare to hear Katsuki emit any kind of sound that Izuku needed a moment to collect himself. He stood up as well.

“It—it’s fine! Really! I won’t activate it by accident, you read it right? I can activate it only by really wanting to and—“

Katsuki’s growl grew in intensity.

“Really! It’s fine!” he tried to touch his shoulder to reassure him, calm him down, something, but Katsuki avoided his hand and started to pace the room like a lion in a cage. “It’s not that bad! Trust me! It’s fine!”

His growl got so loud and Izuku grimaced at the noise. He decided to shut up because this was clearly not getting through to him right now. He just stood there in silence, waiting for him to snap out of it. After other three complete laps of the room, Katsuki threw himself on the bed and growled once more into the pillow. His voice died down at least, surely because of the lack of habit, and they just stayed in silence for a while. Izuku sat next to him on the bed, waiting for Katsuki to collect his thoughts.

The silence lasted a while, but in the end Katsuki sighed deeply, still with his face pressed in the pillow and then sat up. He looked defeated; a look Izuku could not ever remember seeing on him. He reached for his notebook and started to write sloppily.

-This is entirely my fault. I’m being punished for having been selfish-

“You are talking of being selfish? The selfish one in this story was me. You… you knew, right? That my feelings for you were not all that deep?” he asked, feeling ashamed of himself, but certain that being honest right now was his best option.

Katsuki looked away for a moment, an unreadable expression on his face, and then started to write again, more carefully this time.

-So? You did what I asked you to, to not get attached to me. That’s fine. No, that’s good. You did the right thing. You always worry about the stupidest things and not worry about what you really should. Do you realize that this quirk can ruin your reputation? Not to mention your whole life?- 

“You are exaggerating! Sure, Mark of Submission is a bad quirk, but as long as it stays in me, buried away deeply, there is no problem!”

-No, you don’t get it! Don’t tell me you can absorb whatever you want and not tell anyone, because I don’t believe you! I’m sure you have to register everything you have, including this! Now, can you imagine what would happen if you register this? Let me reenact this scene for you.

Izuku: Oh, good morning Mr. Aizawa. I just wanted to say that I may have, accidentally, absorbed THE MOST FUCKING POWERFUL AND DANGEROUS QUIRK IN THE WORLD, but it's all good, right?

Aizawa: Sure! No problem! I’ll just add this to your file and forget about this forever! Thank you for your honesty Izuku! 

And happily ever after. NOT-

Izuku could actually not contain a chuckle at this; Katsuki could be stupidly funny if he wanted.
“I get what you are trying to say but—“

-No, I don’t think you really get it. Let’s assume you pass the test, no problem. Once you’re in the Task Force, your quirk will become of public domain, which of course includes everything you’ve absorbed. Once word get out that you have this, people will not look at you the same way, ever again. This is seriously bad Izuku-

“Well yeah… Whatever.”

Izuku was a bit worried about his parents’ reaction to this, but about all the others? He could not care less. No one was ever as important as Katsuki in his life. And now, they were tied even closer.

-It’s not whatever, I never wanted you to ha-

Katsuki scratched his head, not completing the sentence.

-Don’t tell anyone-

“What?”

-Don’t tell anyone, you are not going to use it right? Forget it, don’t ever think about it again. Don’t tell anyone. No one will know if you never use it. It’s not possible for Aizawa to see it, or for anyone else. Just don’t tell anyone. It will be a secret between the two of us-

“A secret between the three of us…” Katsuki send him a confused look. “Froppy knows. She was the one that made me realize that I have it. I’ll tell you all about her quirk later. But… are you sure this is a good idea? I’m going to break the law if I do this.”

-I know. Not to mention that Shu can take your body and activate it by accident or something. I KNOW. You think, I don’t know how bad this is? I know. The choice is yours of course. But… if you never use it, there is no reason for you to carry this weight. And no one will know you broke the law. You just have to be extra careful of Shinso’s True or Dare-

“Why are you insisting so much on this… Unless… Is there something you are not telling me? About your quirk?”

Izuku’s intuition set off a bad feeling and Katsuki’s reaction was rather telling. He jumped a little and immediately looked at the door, as if he was expecting to see Aizawa or someone to tell him that he broke a rule. He started to write in a very confused way.

-The Government has already mine, I won’t give them another one-

Izuku stared at the page, but Katsuki quickly tore it off and rolled it up.

-Melt this-

“What?”

-HURRY-

Izuku took it and melted it with difficulty; he was scared out of his skin. Suddenly this was starting to feel like a conspiracy movie. Was he really going to break the law and hide something so big? Well, he was unaware but technically, he had already done it for more than a month…

-This conversation never happened-
“What?”

-If you want to tell them, do it. This conversation never happened-

He got up and gave him his back; he went to pick up the file on the table.

-Let’s go to the Archive. We can finish reading this and research some other stuff, if you want. You can tell me about Froppy’s quirk-

He was clearly trying very hard to change the subject. Still scared and worried, he followed him outside of the room; his legs were a bit unsteady. When he was passing through the hallway, he looked outside of the window. Seeing a bit of green and sunlight would help him feel better. He was reminded of the fact that he had not slept at all. Now he was getting really tired.

While he was looking outside of the window and walking slowly, he felt a strange sensation, like something was amiss. Not wanting to lose Katsuki, he sped up a bit to catch up and when he did, he looked through the next window. Yes, something was amiss…

He stopped and looked again. Focusing more on the details. Katsuki noticed and stopped to look at him.

“Kat-Four…”

Izuku saw him, with the corner of the eye, doing some gesture, but he could not stop looking outside of the window. A surprised voice commented on the strange phenomenon from the ground. Katsuki walked up to him, joining him at the window.

They had been in there for some time, so for Izuku that view had become normal, granted. Suddenly, now that he was not able to see it anymore, he had a strange feeling in his stomach.

“Four… The Barrier is gone.”

Chapter End Notes

The price will be discussed next chapter. Maybe :P

If you have any doubt about the Wild Card you can ask, I won’t write another glossary because this is supposed to be the glossary!

Thank you all for all the kudos, comments and support! :) Next chapter: 6th August.
Prices

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“The Barrier is gone.”

Katsuki placed his hands on the glass; they couldn’t believe their eyes. The Barrier was not supposed to be switched off. Ever.

The voice outside had reached the inside, as now it was clearly recognizable as Yao’s.

“The Barrier! What happened to the Barrier?!”

Of course, no one in their right mind would think of this as a chance to escape. It was one of the worst idea one could ever have. So, instead, this was really worrisome, as it may mean that something bad was happening. Like maybe someone was breaking a rule? Aizawa appeared shortly after everyone was already starting to gather in the entrance asking many questions.

“All right, all right! Let’s all calm down! Nothing is going on, I just received a call, the guy that is maintaining the Barrier got a strong stomachache and the Barrier got destroyed for a moment. His sister is going to replace him any moment, there is no need to panic!” he shouted to be louder than all of their voices.

The commotion died down and everyone started to look around, confirming that everyone was still in there and nothing was going wrong.

“Has this ever happened before?” asked Urara.

“Yeah, some times. They are still just humans, they get sick at times. Now, please, resume your lives like nothing happened, get a move on!” he turned and left.

Izuku again found himself alone with Katsuki after a short while. They looked at each other for a moment then Katsuki shrugged and made his way toward the Archive again. Izuku tried to shake off the bad feeling he was having, that had surely nothing to do with them, it was just a coincidence.

Once they were safely hidden inside the Archive, Katsuki opened the file and read it again from the beginning. In the meantime, Izuku searched for Tsuyu’s file; the Book of Memories had to be somewhere for sure. And indeed it was, the Archive was in alphabetic order so it was not a difficult thing to find since he had the right name. He looked inside the file and everything was absolutely identical to what he had experienced or what Tsuyu had told him. There could be no doubt about her quirk now.

Katsuki dropped the file on the table with irritation.

“What’s wrong?” Izuku asked him.

-There is no price. The price for your quirk is still unknown-

Izuku inhaled sharply. He had completely forgotten about that as well. His quirk was passive and quite powerful, surely, it had to have some price and it had to be something taxing. Not only that, what about the prices of the other quirks? Would he pay those too?
“How is this possible? My quirk is not unique; many people had it before. They should know it by now. And what about the prices of the other quirks?”

-You have to pay those as well, but only when you use them. The passive quirks in your body becomes just like actives so the price for those are just the same: you pay when you use-

“Okay… I know the price of the Light Sphere but what about Acid Skin? And… yours?”

Katsuki’s eyes shifted for a moment before he started to write again.

-Mine is unique. As such, no one knows it, not even I. I’ll probably discover it later in my life. Acid Skin I think I know, but you better search for the file-

“Oh, I see. I had no idea. I’m sorry, I never asked, did I?”

-It doesn’t matter. Regarding why no one knows the price of the Wild Card… I can only assume that it has something to do with the fact that no one has survived past the age of thirty. They probably never had the time to discover it. Most of these people were killed in strange circumstances so…-

“Oh, well now. This is not extremely worrisome at all.” Izuku said with sarcasm.

-Well at least I can tell you one thing; they probably didn’t die because of the quirk price-

“How do you know that?”

-Because only one quirk has a type of price, it can’t be a repeat. I already know a quirk that asks for your life in exchange, so it can’t be yours-

“Is it Kirishima’s?”

-No, his price is the strangest of all. Instead of being harmful, it’s actually a prize. Kirishima’s health is absolutely perfect. He’ll never get sick, not even a flu or appendicitis. He’ll die of old age someday being completely healthy until the very end. Well, if no one kills him, that’s it-

“Wow!”

-Prices are directly related to the quirk, so if the quirk is a virus the price would be the impossibility of having any other physical infection or alteration. Does that make sense? If I remember correctly, Acid Skin price is to become more and more allergic to chemical substances. I wouldn’t use it too much if I were you, you risk of not being able to use shampoo or soap for the rest of your life-

“Wow that sucks!”

Izuku gave the file for the Book of Memories to Katsuki who read it with great interest and he checked on the Acid Skin price. It was just like Katsuki said. While Katsuki was still reading, he tried to think about what to read next. He knew that Kami had something along the lines of mind reading, but without the name, he could not really check on the conditions or anything. He could read about Telepathy, sure, but it was probably going to be useless. The only other quirk he knew was Shouto’s. He reached for the file about Body Swap and started reading. After the first paragraph he stopped, completely confused.

“Katsuki?”

“Hm?”

“The Body Swap conditions are: birthday, blood type and the size of shoes. This has nothing to do
with the first name! Even the usage and duration is completely different!”

Katsuki took the file and read it for himself with a frown, and then he sighed.

-His quirk is what we call a ‘mimic’. It has an effect very similar to a more common quirk but in actuality, it’s something else entirely-

“Are you saying his quirk is not Body Swap? That he lied to us?” Izuku could not believe what he was discovering today.

-Yeah, I’m saying exactly that. But don’t panic. I’m actually pretty sure he didn’t do it to mess with us. We already established how his quirk works; he probably used the common name for simplicity. I know, this sounds awfully optimistic coming from me, but I think I’m right. He knew that we could confirm his quirk whenever we wanted by coming here. There is no way he committed such big mistake. And I had my suspicions all along. I didn’t know the exact conditions, but I knew that it was pretty much impossible for a Body Swap to work so easily, it’s complete madness to think it works only on first name. Only very powerful quirks have a single and very easy condition, like yours or mine, most have two, three or even four or they are very specific and difficult to do. If Body Swap were so easy to use, the world would be a complete mess already. I knew something was fishy the moment he said how this works-

“I had no clue whatsoever.”

-Yeah, I know. You are lucky you have me-

Katsuki froze suddenly then tore the paper and rolled it. Izuku knew that he realized too late how cheesy that line had been.

“Yeah, you are right. I’m very, very lucky I have you.” Izuku smiled gently.

Katsuki blushed slightly.

-Forget it, shut up-

Katsuki collected all the files and put them back where they belonged.

-More importantly, are you sure we can trust Froppy? She has a lot of dirt on us-

“Yes, I’m pretty sure. She told me her name, Asui Tsuyu, and she knows about Shouto’s quirk. This is major proof of trust. We can just use Shouto’s quirk to score a win on her any moment. Not to mention, you can ask Aizawa if you don’t trust the fact that she can’t share what she read.”

Katsuki shrugged and stood up, pointing at the door. He was telling him it was time to go, there was nothing else to do there. The others were probably at the beach, today was Wednesday so the seafood barbeque was in session, but Izuku was too tired to go. He had not slept at all and the day had been pretty difficult so far. He just wanted to sleep and have a fresh start the next day. They separated in front of the rooms and Izuku changed into his pajamas and just went to bed.

When he woke up, it was still very late at night. He remained under the sheets, feeling a lot more awake and thinking back at everything he had read in the book. He had to accept the past, there was no way to change that and Katsuki wasn’t really mad at him. That could be interpreted as him not really caring for their relationship in the first place, but Izuku knew that it was a bit different. Katsuki was just taking his responsibility, since it was partially his fault. He was not hypocritical enough to place the entire blame on Izuku.
This was fine, but the problem was still there. He had to learn from the past and also to not to make the same mistake again. But how could he know for certain that he was so fixed on Katsuki not because he was simply the most convenient ally? Was he still using him, even now? Was there even a way to distinguish between selfless feelings and selfish ones? Was he thinking that he wanted to nurture this relationship because it was the easiest?

Why wasn’t there a simple way to determine these kind of things? Was this what it meant to be an adult? To dwell in these complex feelings? Everything seemed so much easier before.

He prepared for class with a lot of time to spare and he was the first one to reach the classroom. The others arrived one by one and the majority of them greeted him with a smile. Tsuyu nodded in his direction, Kami grinned at him and waved a hand. The only ones that basically ignored him were square glasses and Yao. The guy was very standoffish, so there was little to be said about that and he had had almost no opportunity to talk with the ponytail girl. She was social, but only when they were in a group, she didn’t want to talk when it was with a single person. Maybe she thought she was safer in a large group rather than alone with someone she didn’t know well. Izuku could not really blame her for that.

Now that he was thinking about it, what he found really surprising was the fact that even if this was the feared test, he was making more friends in here than in five years of high school. Even if he couldn’t say that he could completely trust any of them, and they were all keeping him on edge, he was still felt a much stronger connection with them than any of his old classmates. Maybe it was really true that he was meant to be in this test, together with the others A and S ranks.

The lesson was pretty boring as usual. Examining every single law, detail after detail, was not very exciting in Izuku’s book. After the end of the lesson he was about to leave, and maybe spend some time with Katsuki, when Urara intercepted him.

“Hey, you skipped the barbeque yesterday! Did something happened?” she asked.

“No, I was just tired, I ended up staying awake for much longer than I should have the day before. Why? It’s not like it’s mandatory to come, right?” other people had already skipped once or twice before.

“No, no, of course not! I just thought that maybe something had happened. I remember you telling me about a…” she looked around to see if the others were all already gone. “A Body Swap quirk. I think that’s one of the most difficult quirk to handle in this test. Since no one was gone I suppose you could protect yourself somehow, I was just wondering if you ever ended up discovering who it was.”

Ah, of course, she was hunting for information. Izuku had almost forgot about it, but it was true, she had told him to tell her when he found out more about the Body Swap quirk. Well, he was not going to betray Shouto, that was for sure.

“No, sorry, I didn’t find out anything in the end. I traded bodies, but then nothing happened and after I while I just returned to my body. Nothing has happened since then. So, really, I have no idea.” he didn’t like lying but betraying was even worse.

“But that’s very strange! Who did you trade with? They were probably the one, right?” she was surprised.

“Not really, I exchanged with Four.” and Katsuki’s quirk was famous, there was no doubt there.

“What…? Now, that’s bizarre! Why would someone want to make you two trade bodies? Unless this is an uncontrolled quirk… but Body Swap is not uncontrolled, you have looked in the Archive,
right? The conditions are very specific!” she insisted.

“Yeah, I know, but I haven’t told the useful information to anyone. So, as you can imagine, I’m very confused.” he hoped that was enough to end the conversation and stop her questions.

“I see, so that’s why you could not figure out who it was, hm.” she looked deep in thought.

“What about you? Got anything useful?” if she could just come out and ask for information why could he not do the same?

“Hm? Oh, no, not yet. This test sure is complicated, right?” she smiled then wished him good day and walked away.

She really was a bit too forward and she didn’t want to give out any information either. Izuku sighed, a bit annoyed by her attitude. In a way, it was almost refreshing the fact that she was not exactly hiding her intent, but on the other hand it made every conversation a real pain. He returned to his room and threw his school stuff in a corner. He took a shower and had just finished changing into something more suitable for the weather, which was getting warmer, when someone knocked on his door. He opened just a bit, leaving the chain in place and was surprised to see Katsuki on the other side. He was looking around and Izuku remembered that they were supposed to fake that he was staying in a numbered room, so Katsuki was worried someone might see him outside of this door. He quickly let him in, but it was a bit odd seeing him in his room, even back home they would always meet in Katsuki’s. Maybe it was out of habit that Izuku was still going to his room to hang out rather than inviting him to his. Katsuki looked restless.

“What’s wrong?”

Katsuki showed him a Calling Card.

-I received this. Just wanted to tell you. Just in case-

A feeling of anxiety bit Izuku’s stomach.

“Do you… want to stay in here? So maybe it’s less likely someone will find you and attack you?” he proposed.

Katsuki pondered the question for a moment.

-It’s for tomorrow, not today, we can stay together tomorrow I guess-

“It does actually start at midnight… You can… stay for the night, if you want.” Izuku blushed a little, knowing that this proposal could very well be taken the wrong way.

Katsuki looked troubled.

-I guess. I can sleep on the floor. I’ll come by later-

He opened the door and left, but as soon as he was in the hallway, he froze on the spot. Izuku spied over his shoulder to see what he had saw and he found Kami.

“You two are always together aren’t you?” he grinned a little. “I had no idea this was your room! It doesn’t have a number, why are you in there?”

Izuku panicked, not sure of what to say. Katsuki covered for him.

-Since he arrived later than everyone else did Aizawa didn’t prepare a plate for him. Why do you
“Whoa, easy! I don’t want anything, I was just wondering! Geez, I’m going, sorry to bother you!” he scratched his head and walk away down the hallway, toward the entrance.

“Well, great. We lost this advantage-

“Yeah, but… I don’t think Kami is a bad person, I don’t think he will tell this to everyone.”

Katsuki rolled his eyes.

-No one is a bad person in your opinion it seems-

“Ah, well, I mean… Froppy told me that she and him have already a spot in the Task Force, he probably doesn’t need to do anything to win.”

-I guess, but you never know. Anyway it’s not like we can wipe his memory and asking him to keep this secret would make him question why. With a bit of luck he won’t realize why we were doing this. He is an idiot-

Izuku fought a chuckle.

“Now… you never know, right? Maybe he is the most intelligent of all of us!”

-Sure, I’d like to see that-

“I’ll see you later then?” he asked, changing the subject.

Katsuki joined him at nine at night; he had brought a futon with him. Izuku wondered if he had already predicted something like this or if he had to take it from the ‘convenience store’ for the occasion. They didn’t communicate much, Katsuki only reminded him to be careful about potential dangers the next day. Izuku had already received two Calling Cards, Shouto’s and Tsuyu’s. In Shouto’s case the difference was immediately evident, in Tsuyu’s case, he never got to discover what had happened until a month later. It was impossible for this to be her work again; she had not spoke with Katsuki at all. And it was unlikely that this was Shouto’s either. So this was surely going to be a brand new quirk they knew nothing about.

The night was completely uneventful, so was the morning. And the afternoon, and the evening.

-I’m going back to my room-

“But it’s not midnight yet.”

-Yeah but it’s already 10 pm, there is no need to spend another night in here. They probably searched for me in my room and didn’t find me. Whatever quirk it was, it must have been something that only works if I meet them. I won’t open my door to anyone until midnight so don’t worry-

Izuku actually didn’t mind him spending another night in his room, but he could not force him to stay, and if Katsuki was feeling pretty safe, it probably meant that he was by this point. He still spied on him until he disappeared inside his room, when the door closed, he sighed with relief and returned inside his own room. It was only twenty minutes later that someone knocked on his door, Izuku’s heart skipped a beat and he asked who it was without opening the door. No answer came from the other side, but they knocked again. It was probably Katsuki again.

“Geez, you scared me. Why did you come back?” he didn’t want not to sound welcoming but really,
he was already on edge.

Katsuki showed him the notebook.

-Forgot something-

He let him in and Katsuki started to search for something on the floor.

“What did you forgot?” he could help if he had just told him from the start.

Katsuki sat down and started to write on the little table using a pencil.

-A pen, but I don’t see it anywhere, I must have lost it somewhere else-

Oh, that happened many times in the past. Katsuki had always at least three pens with him all the time and he would often lose one somewhere.

“Well, it’s just a pen, no big deal right?”

-No, but in this place, there is no telling how many pens there are. I don’t want to run out-

“Do you want one of mine?” he proposed reaching for his school supplies.

-No, it’s fine, I still have some. By the way, do you think it’s possible that I’ll be attacked by the Body Swap quirk?-""

“What? What are you talking about? Why would Shouto attack you now of all the times? He could trade with you anytime if he wanted. Why wait until now?” had something happened that Izuku was not aware of?

Katsuki hesitated a moment.

-Right. Of course. It wouldn’t make sense, it’s just that he is the only one I could think of-

“Of course not, you would have exchanged at midnight if that was the case. The Calling Card was for today. Why would you even suspect him anyway?”

-I know, I know. It’s just that nothing has happened, so I was getting a bit anxious. I’m sorry I wasted your time. I’m going now-

He closed the notebook and left Izuku’s room, Izuku wished him good night again, closing the door. It was already 11 pm; there was no way he was going to be attacked so late. He changed into his pajamas, and just to make sure, he waited for midnight anyway, but Katsuki didn’t come back.

The next morning, Izuku knocked on Katsuki’s door as soon as he woke up, just to double make sure.

“Everything is fine, right? Nothing happened, right?” he asked as soon as Katsuki opened, he clearly had just woke up, he looked like he was in a bad mood, but that was not so unusual.

Katsuki sighed, irritated.

“Hm-hm.” he answered in a bored tone.

Izuku realized, Katsuki had not slept well that night and Izuku had woke him up. At six in the morning.
“Ah, sorry, you wanted to sleep in until later! Sorry! I just thought I should—“

Katsuki closed the door in his face. Izuku didn’t need the notebook to understand this message.

-It’s too early in the morning for me to deal with this shit-

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is a challenge to you all!
The identity of the person that sent the Calling Card can already be guessed if you pay close attention to everything I said to you during these 16 chapters.
I'm going to give you a starting point, then you'll have to do the rest with your own logic, you have a week to try and solve this!
The starting point is... something that's been said/done/wrote in this chapter is a hint that was previously hinted in ch5.
If you can find that hint you can see something in a different light in this chapter here.
That may help.
You go from there!
You can find the identity and a vague typology of the quirk that's into play, it won't spoil the next chapter in a bad way, it can actually help if you reach the right conclusion on you own.
Otherwise, the next chapter can almost fall on your heads like it's out of the blue, even though it's not.
Good luck!

Next chapter August 13th!
It had only been two days after Katsuki received the Calling Card that Izuku woke up in a strange position inside an unfamiliar room.

He was in a sitting position, with his hands behind his back and with something on his face. In an instant, every trace of sleep disappeared and he tried to move. Except he couldn’t.

He tried to struggle as much as he could, but there was no result. His hands were tied very tightly on the back of the chair with a rope and his legs were tied as well. Not to mention that he could not call for help either since there was a piece of cloth in his mouth. He could only shake his head and a strand on long hair fell on his face.

*Long hair?*

He stared at it, the length and the way it was cut… it was unmistakably Urara.

What was he doing in Urara’s body and why was he tied up?!

This was the work of the Body Swap, or whatever its real name was, that Shouto had. Did this mean that now Urara was in his body and it was very likely that she was going to surrender in front of Aizawa in the next few moments? It was a little past midnight and he could see it thanks to the moonlight on the wall clock, yes, this must have been Shouto’s quirk. But why? Had he decided to betray them?

No wait… the girl knew his name all along. It was not so farfetched to think she just happened to say it in front of him… No, that didn’t make sense! She must have known about it beforehand, otherwise she would have not tied her own body up! Wait, tied her own body up? But that wasn’t possible! She must have had an accomplice! Was it Shouto?

This was terrifying. Honestly terrifying.

He tried to struggle as hard as he could, but the best he could accomplish was to make the chair fall and him with it. Enduring the pain of the fall, he tried to calm down and stay put for a moment. Minutes were passing by slowly, they felt long like days. He tried to think again. Why didn’t he receive a Calling Card?

He soon realized his mistake. A Calling Card had to be delivered before the midnight, but nowhere was it written how many minutes before the midnight. The first time he traded bodies with Katsuki they woke up with the Calling Card on the floor. This must have been the same. Izuku fell asleep before midnight and didn’t see the Card at all. Izuku really needed to stop going to sleep so early.

As time was passing, he started to fully calm down. Now that he was thinking about this rationally, this was not that bad. Urara was going to score a win and he was going to surrender this one time, it was a pain, but nothing irreversible. He still needed to surrender two more times before he was eliminated. At midnight at most, Urara would get her body back and leave the island. That was not a big deal. It was the opposite; if the girl was going away he didn’t need to worry about her again.

The real problem was Shouto. If he really betrayed them… there was no limit to what he could do. He could sell his name to everyone and then let them all score a win on him just like that. There was
no way for him to defend himself from a quirk like this. He had been a fool, giving his name away like this. He never should have trusted anyone, well except for Katsuki and maybe Tsuyu. As soon as he was back on feet, he was going to say Shouto’s name in front of him and score a win himself!

No, he could not do that… That would mean leave Katsuki behind. He couldn’t do that.

Damn.

There were voices in the hallway. Izuku raised his head to listen better.

“Let me go! Don’t you know how to treat a lady?!”

Izuku wanted to scream for help. ‘Open the door! Free me!’ he wanted to scream.

The door opened.

Katsuki’s eyes immediately found him. He dragged and threw Izuku’s body into the room. Immediately after he approached Izuku, now in Urara’s body, untying a knot. Shouto entered last and closed the door behind him. Izuku’s body, well Urara, got up and tried to get past Shouto, but he blocked the door with his body. Katsuki in the meantime had untied one of his leg and got up with the rope in his hands. Without hesitation, he grabbed one of the arms of Izuku’s body and tried it to the leg of the bed. Urara resisted fiercely, she scratched Katsuki’s cheek. He hissed, but finished the job tying the other arm as well.

“Stop touching me, goddamnit!”

Katsuki ignored her and after making sure the knot was solid, he returned to Izuku, this time he was a bit more gentle and slow in his work. Shouto was the first one to start explaining.

“Sorry for the delay Izu. Catching her had not been easy, she fought back quite fiercely. Ah, by the way I’m sorry, I think I punched your body at some point.” he bowed his head.

“You sure did.” answered Izuku’s voice.

As soon as Katsuki freed his mouth, he started to ask questions.

“How did you find out that it wasn’t me? How did you know it’s her? How did you—“

“Easy.” interrupted him Shouto. “She’s the only one who knows your name, and since she said it in front of me I had no doubt. I’m sorry for all this, I thought about exchanging myself instead, but since it was your body that said it, I was really unsure, but at the same time why would you say your own name out loud in front of me, so I thought about—“

Katsuki made a frustrated noise then abandoned the second knot to write something.

-Idiot, you aren’t making any sense! Wait a minute, will you?-“

“Yeah, sorry.”

Izuku was confused to say the least. When Katsuki and Shouto had started to interact like this? They looked like friends or something now. To think that they basically never talked before.

“T-this is not another strange trick right…?” just to be sure.

Katsuki grinned.
-Good, it’s a legit question. Finally, you are starting to use your head! No, it’s not a trick. I’ll explain everything, or even better SHE will explain everything since some things I still don’t understand-

Katsuki finally freed him completely and Izuku got up feeling all sore. Not to mention he was in a girl’s body and it was very strange.

Katsuki sat at the desk and wrote for a few minutes.

-So, starting from the part we know, Shu was in his room yesterday at 10pm when someone knocked on his door and said ‘Hi, it’s Izuku!’. He opened and saw you, you two talked, but Shu had his doubts because why would you say your name out in the hallway? So, he thought about exchanging, but he was unsure because it was you yourself who said it. But that was not you, right? That was her all along, her quirk must be something that let her assume others’ appearance or something-

“Yeah, I didn’t talk with Shu at 10pm yesterday!” Izuku confirmed.

“I thought so.” Shouto nodded. “As I said, I was unsure of what was best, maybe this was some strategy or something. So I decided to ask Four if he had any idea of what was going on. But he had no idea. We tried to think and the only explanation was that either you were being very careless or someone was using your appearance to pull some trick on you. Considering that this someone must have known your name and you only said it to Urara, the list of suspects was very short to begin with. So we agreed not to exchange and wait to see what would happen. We were both in Four’s room, waiting for midnight to arrive. At midnight, we saw you leave your room so there was not more room for doubt. Urara was in your body and wanted to surrender in front of Aizawa. So we caught her and now we are here, this is the part of the story we know.”

-The part of the story we don’t know is how she was able to assume your appearance and what quirk she has. So you better talk, because you are not going anywhere anytime soon-

The last part of the message was for Urara.

“Why would I talk?” she refused to face him.

-Because if you don’t, we are going with your body in front of Aizawa and we are all going to score a win, one after the other. Do you want to be sent to prison?- Urara stilled, only realizing this now. There were three of them, maybe she could accept to let one of them score a win but surely not three.

“But what I’m wondering…” asked Izuku while she was considering her situation. “Is why she didn’t use my appearance to simply surrender.”

“It doesn’t work like this. Aizawa knows her quirk; he would knows that’s just her in disguise. His quirk will tell him as much.” Shouto explained.

Right, of course. Aizawa could see the real identity of the person before him by using his quirk.

“All right, all right, I’ll talk. But then let me return to my body, I promise not to bother you three again.” she said with a sigh.

Katsuki frowned then wrote quickly.

-You better tell us the truth, because we have a way to discern between lies and truth. We have one of these quirks on our side-
Izuku understood. Katsuki was referring to Tsuyu. Urara’s expression, on Izuku’s face, hardened. She observed them all for a long moment, studying them. So she was planning to lie.

“Is this your quirk?” she asked Izuku.

-We’re the ones asking questions, not you. Do you want to lose?-

“I get it, I get it, very well then, my loss!” she sighed in frustration.

“What’s your quirk?” asked Shouto.

“You got a detail wrong. My quirk doesn’t let me take another person’s appearance, my quirk is called Doppelganger and let me create lifeless dolls with the appearance of people. I control them and-“

“No, it’s not possible. My quirk doesn’t work if a quirk materialization talks. My quirk only works if it senses a consciousness behind it.” Shouto interrupted her.

“If you’d let me talk…” she sighed dramatically. “I can create these dolls and then I can transfer my consciousness into them. So it works perfectly since I actually ‘live’ inside them for a period of time. The downside is that this means that I have to leave my body behind. This is a huge weakness since I cannot live inside my dolls for more than three hours, no matter what happens to my real body I have to go back. Normally I tie my own body somewhere or hide it so that no one can take it.”

“Tie your own body… Is this what you did this time too?” so there was no accomplice?

“Yes, of course. I created a doll and then after doing the transfer I took my own body and tied it up. Easy.” she shrugged.

-Okay, conditions? How did you get to create Izuku’s doll?-

“Three conditions. First the full name, of course he told me this himself, right, Izuku Midoriya?” she grinned. “Second is the weight and height measurements.”

“How did you get those? I didn’t tell you!” Izuku protested.

“No need. That condition is super easy to fulfill. I just need to get a rough estimate by looking and then try every single digit until I find the right one. The third condition is one of their favorite food.”

“And how do you know that?!” he was absolutely sure he didn’t say that either.

“You are a very boring person Izuku. You like hamburgers. What an unbelievable boring favorite food. I was absolutely surprised when your doll actually appeared, I was sure I needed to try to think a lot more food.” she grinned again.

Izuku was starting the get really frustrated with her attitude.

“All right, this explains how you managed to appear in front of me and use my quirk.” Shouto intervened. “But how were you able to find out about it? You knew the conditions too.”

“I just asked Izuku.” she answered with nonchalance.

“No, you didn’t! I told you I had no idea who had that quirk and what the quirk actually was! Don’t lie!” Izuku shouted.

This was surely not his fault! She could not make the other two think he had betrayed them!
“Are you really sure? ‘Toc-toc it’s me Izuku, I forgot a pen, can I come in?’” she smiled maliciously.

Izuku’s head was spinning. There was no way… That time…

“Geez, you scared me. Why did you come back?”

_**Katsuki showed him the notebook.**_

-Forgot something-

“What did you forgot?”

-A pen, but I don’t see it anywhere, I must have lost it somewhere else-

-By the way, do you think it’s possible that I’ll be attacked by the Body Swap quirk?-

“What? What are you talking about? Why would Shouto attack you now of all the times? He could exchange with you anytime if he wanted. Why wait until now?”

-Right. Of course. It would not make sense; it’s just that he is the only one I could think of-

“Of course not, you would have exchanged at midnight if that was the case. The Calling Card was for today. Why would you even suspect him anyway?”

-I know, I know. It’s just that nothing has happened so I was getting a bit anxious. I’m sorry I wasted your time. I’m going now-

Only then, Izuku remembered something.

Katsuki _never_ wrote the word sorry. Never.

Katsuki was staring at him, asking a silent question. Izuku had no idea how to explain this. But… he never mentioned anything about names…

“How did you find out about the first name condition? I never said that!” Izuku was boiling with frustration.

“Maybe you are not very observant, but… As soon as I discovered that this was his quirk, I tried to think back. The first day you said Bakugou’s name and he,” she gestured toward Shouto, “cough, then after that, you said the same things as the first day another time. Some days later he coughed again when you said his name a third time. It was a gamble, sure, but I was confident in my chances. And I could always try again if that didn’t work.”

“You…! How do you know K-Four’s last name?! Have you used his doll to get information out of me?!” Izuku was really starting to get scared by this girl.

-Wait, wait! Are you two saying that she has my doll as well?-

Katsuki was starting to realize the implications of their conversation.

“Yes, of course,” she shrugged. “When I realized that there was a big chance that Izuku actually had the knowledge I was looking for, I tried to think of a way to make him talk. I was sure I could get you to say it if I had used his boyfriend.”

Izuku was out of breath, Katsuki was gritting his teeth.
“H-how did you know about the fact that he loses a lot of pens?” he asked, looking for an excuse to start doubting her.

“I have no idea what you are talking about. I just figured, since he writes all the time, that he had to have a pen always on him. That’s why I brought a pencil with me. To keep up the act.”

Izuku realized now the discrepancy. If Katsuki always had three pens with him there was no way he would suddenly start to use a pencil. Especially since Katsuki hated using pencils. First, he didn’t had the patience sharpen it, and then because when he was angry he would just break the tip by using too much force. He could not have lost three pens in one go. It was so stupid. He had missed so many signals!

“You didn’t answer. How did you obtain Four’s information?” Shouto steered the conversation toward the right path again. “I can understand the measurements; you just tried them, but what about the rest?”

“His full name was on the internet, obviously. About his favorite food, I just asked a friend of his.” she answered easily.

“I never told you anything like that!” Izuku was seriously starting to wonder if he had let slip a lot of stuff without knowing.

“I said ‘a friend’ did I say it was you? Bakugou has another friend in here, right? I just asked Mishima. Or Kirishima, to be precise. I got as much information as I could when I was outside. I knew that you two knew each other since you were little, I figured it was worth a shot.” she shrugged once again.

-I never told Kirishima my favorite food. And even if I had, he wouldn’t tell you!-

“No, in fact you did not. But you two have eaten together a lot of times. When I asked, he said he didn’t know what your very favorite was, but that you liked spicy food. Apparently, you were putting ketchup on everything. Ah by the way, you are not that original yourself! Curry?” she raised an eyebrow.

Katsuki was trembling with rage.

“So you just… asked him about his favorite food and he answered? I don’t believe you!” Izuku didn’t want Katsuki to be mad at Kirishima, surely there must have been an explanation…

“You really are choosing the worst possible friends Bakugou.” she smirked at him. “Kirishima is just so not used to having friends, he doesn’t know how to keep secrets while talking to people who give him a tiny bit of attention. He answers just about anything that Kaminari asks! You should have remained alone your whole life, this way maybe you could’ve-“

Katsuki slapped her, silencing her. She remained silent, shocked, for a few seconds before grimacing.

“Do you realize you are hitting your boyfriend’s face, right?!?”

Katsuki scribbled for a second then showed him the notebook.

-My bad Izuku-

“No problem. Go for it.” Izuku answered shrugging.
She was a girl but right now she was in a boy’s body and she was kinda asking for it.

“Who is Kaminari?” asked Shouto.

“Who else but the other idiot could use a short version of his own last name?” she rolled her eyes, trying to create as much distance as possible from Katsuki.

“Kaminari… Kami?” Shouto insisted.

“Yeah, of course, who else?”

“So you asked Kaminari to ask Kirishima about Four’s favorite food?” Izuku could not believe this was possible.

“Of course not! See what I mean when I said you chose the wrong friends? They are all idiots.” she winced when Katsuki raised his hand again. “Okay, okay, calm down. Of course, I didn’t ask. I just used my doll of Kaminari.”

“You-?! How many dolls do you have?!” Izuku could not believe the girl was capable of getting so many information in only a month and a half.

“These are all. I couldn’t get any other name. That condition I cannot fulfill by just guessing around.” she answered.

“All right. How did you get his information?” asked Shouto.

“His measurements I just guessed, as always. He told us all his favorite food the first time we had a barbeque.”

Izuku had to admit that she was right. Kami was always chatting all the time and that day he just gave them a whole list.

“Yes, he talked about that. What about the name?” Shouto insisted.

“The idiot thought it was okay to shout in the airport just because the test had not started yet. He and some of his relatives were chatting so loudly… They were shouting… Ah, I can’t say his name, can I? I don’t want to go into his body for any reason.” she grimaced.

“I’ll cover my ears, Four, write it down for me. Okay?” proposed Shouto.

Katsuki shrugged.

“As I was saying, they were shouting ‘Denki’ this and ‘Denki’ that… And I got the last name when one of them referred to the other as Mr. Kaminari. Of course, this could have not been his last name but when he said he wanted to be called Kami… well, you know.” she looked unimpressed.

“So you just stole his name like that.” Izuku was not impressed either.

“Well, you knew Bakugou’s name since the start, does anyone has anything to say about that? I didn’t think so.” she just brushed off his protest.

While they had finished speaking, Katsuki had wrote down Kaminari’s first name down for Shouto who stopped covering his ears with a nod. It was a bit unfair to give him this information since his quirk was the one there that worked with it, but apparently, Katsuki had decided it was okay to trust him.
After that, they were silent, pondering on the situation while she was looking away, Katsuki was writing.

-So, to summarize, you got Kaminari’s doll, used that to talk with Kirishima, and got my favorite food out of him. Then with my doll, you spoke to Izuku and got information about Shu, with that you used Izuku’s doll to talk with Shu and got his quirk to activate. Right?-

“Yeah.” she answered, bored.

“And with Izu’s body you were going to surrender in front of Aizawa.” Shouto completed the story.

“Yeah.” she answered again, she was looking away still.

“No, wait a minute.” Izuku was feeling like there was something wrong somewhere. He tried his best to pin down what it was. “You didn’t need to use Shu’s quirk if what you wanted was just that…”

“I’m sorry, I don’t follow.” Shouto was looking at him.

“If you just wanted to make someone surrender, you could have done it way easier just by asking. Like… You could have asked me to surrender using Katsuki’s body. You know… when he received that Calling Card… I actually thought about just surrendering for his sake and getting this over with… If you had tried that, I’m pretty sure I would have agree…”

Great, now he could feel Katsuki’s displeased stare on him.

“I… I could not risk it. You could have said no, how was I supposed to know what was on your mind! And even so, maybe you two had already talked about this and for me to say anything, would have given away the fact that you weren’t talking with him. Of course, I could not have done that!” she answered a bit too hurriedly.

Now Izuku was sure, there was more to it.

“Not really. You could have asked after I gave you the information you needed. You could go back to your body and not use Katsuki’s doll again. You still had mine and Kaminari’s. You could have still activated Shu’s quirk if you really wanted to!”

“That’s stupid! I wouldn’t want to risk you informing your friends of the possibility of a fake person!” she opposed to the idea very strongly.

“No, actually Izu is right.” Shouto intervened. “You orchestrated this whole gigantic plan with my quirk as your objective. You were going for that from the very beginning. If not, you could have used Kami’s doll to do something else. I’m certain there were other opportunities, like Mishima himself. You could have used his trust in Kami for doing something nefarious; instead you only wanted Four’s information.”

“You don’t know that, maybe I tried and you just don’t know about it!” she reasoning was logical but her delivery was too weak, as if she had just thought of that on the spot and was not really sure it was a good idea.

“Actually, now that I think about it, you probably created this strategy from the beginning, since I told you about the Body Swap quirk during the second day! I’m absolutely sure that with a quirk like yours, you could have gotten some dirt on someone easily… No, you wanted to use Shu’s quirk at all costs. Why would that be?” truthfully their deduction was not rock solid, this may be just an overkill, but still, the way she was actually starting to panic a little was rather telling.
“I can’t think of any benefit for using my quirk instead of her own…” Shouto was muttering to himself.

-Aizawa can see if it’s a doll created by her… But, can he see who is inside a body? Shu?-"No, now that you mention it, no. Before the start of the test, he spoke to me. He said ‘If you are going to use your quirk and surrender using someone’s else body you must prove that’s you inside that body so you’ll have to answer a question only you know’. So, that’s probably true for everyone else as well. He would ask a question to identify the conscience inside the body. He can see quirks, but not souls. But what of it?”

-What I’m saying is: she can surrender in Izuku’s body without letting Aizawa know it’s actually her that’s inside. He would think it’s Izuku-

“Okay, but what would be the point? She can’t win if she doesn’t tell Aizawa it’s her.” insisted Shouto.

Izuku understood and it let him out of breath. There was only one explanation.

-There would be no point. Unless she was going to surrender for someone else’s sake-

“That must be it! She was going to use me to give a win to someone else!” Izuku yelled confidently.

Urara didn’t answer in any way, she was just staring away from them.

“No, no, wait a second!” Shouto was not convinced. “Why? If she wanted to surrender for someone else, she could have done it all by herself! That person could pretend to have captured her and she could just surrender. Easy as that!”

-Maybe. Unless-

Katsuki never got to finish writing his sentence.

“No, I would have never accepted that. She knew. That’s why she chose this ridiculous roundabout way.”

A voice came from the door.

“She was not exactly trying to trick you all, or Aizawa. She was trying to trick me.”

Chapter End Notes

There are a couple of things that may not make sense to you, so I'm going to explain here as an extra:
First, Uraraka was able to say everything about her quirk personally because of a loophole in the rule. The rule states that the information can’t come from the owner's mouth but that was Izuku's mouth so it's fine!
Second, how was Uraraka able to find Izuku's room using Katsuki's doll? (I'm talking about when they talked about the lost pen and so on).
I know it's not obvious but have you noticed, Kaminari spotted them leave Izuku's room.
But was that actually Kaminari? ;)


Uraraka was patrolling the hallway using Kaminari doll all day exactly in the hope of spotting something useful like this.

I hope this wasn't too much. I know it's very full of dialogues and stuff, it may be difficult to follow...
More details on her quirk are coming up next :) 
August 20th.
“She was trying to trick me.”

Square glasses was standing in the doorway with his arms crossed and a frown.

“You? Wha-“

“What are you doing here?!” yelled suddenly Urara with Izuku’s voice.

“What did you do this time? Body Swap into someone else? Smart, but clearly not enough, even they caught into it. And I’m sure I would’ve caught on as well. You know I can recognize you regardless of whatever form you take, right?” square glasses reached them and stood in front of Izuku’s body.

“What is going on here?” asked Izuku, confused.

“Me and this dummy grew up in the same neighborhood, we know each other all too well. She knew I would’ve recognized her no matter what doll she would use so she tried using a real body instead.” square glasses had his arms crossed.

“If you would have recognized her no matter what body she was going to use, why did she think that this could work?” asked Shouto.

“Because I can make sure it’s her with my quirk. Because dolls don’t feel pain, they are just materialization, while a real body can feel pain. She was going to throw me off by using my own quirk against me.” he sighed.

“Hey! Don’t tell them your quirk! What are you doing?!” she was a lot more agitated now than through all the interrogation before.

“I already told you. I don’t care if they know what my quirk is, I’ll take care of myself. I don’t need your help. This must be the twentieth time I told you this. Stop-trying-to-help-me.” he was staring her down hard.

-Well, so what’s your quirk?- 

Katsuki didn’t really care about their situation, if he could get as much info out of this as possible, he was not going to complain, Izuku knew.

“Explain to him.” square glasses just ordered her to talk in his place since he could not tell them himself.

“What? No! No way!” she was not having any of it.

“You do realize that they have your body hostage, right? You put yourself in this mess, you should be grateful I’m pulling you out.” he was completely calm.

“How? By selling yourself off? Stop being stupid! I’m not doing that!” she looked really angry.

“You know very well how much people get suspicious after they heard about your quirk. They
won’t let you walk away from this without giving them something in exchange. I won’t let you fail like this when you were trying to help me, even if I’ve forbidden you. Now tell them. Hopefully, since my quirk can’t fool anyone, they will let me became a hostage in your place.”

Okay, Izuku was now very confused, but was starting to feel a little bad too. All this talk about hostages…

“Okay hmm… We can just… all return to our bodies and then go on our separated way?” he tried to propose.

-Yes, you two need to trade back, but I still want his information as well and I’m really curious to know if you have any way to swear you’ll never use our dolls again. Because I don’t want to be afraid of being stabbed in the back for the rest of the year-

“All right, tell them my information. About how to recognize her… When you meet a person she has a doll of, try to pinch them. The doll doesn’t feel pain, you should be able to tell right away. Even if she can fake the reaction, I’m sure you can distinguish between real and fake pain if you focus. Does that help?” square glasses stared into Katsuki’s eyes.

-I guess-

He shrugged. Urara clicked her tongue and obeyed square glasses, annoyed.

“His quirk is called Pain Memory. It works in two phases. First, he needs to be hurt, it doesn’t matter how. Then he needs to touch his target in a maximum of two hours. To explain this more simply… He memorizes the pain he felt and can give it back at any target in the course of two hours.”

“So… to give an example…” Izuku tried to think.

“For example,” interrupted Urara with a sigh, “If I punch him he will memorize the pain he felt because of the punch. Then he will keep it in mind for two hours. He can touch you and give you the pain I caused. Of course he can give the same pain to other people as well, it doesn’t deplete after one use, only in time.”

-What’s the utility of this quirk?- Katsuki didn’t look very impressed.

“It’s not like every quirk can have a utility. I’m just a fighting type, they can use me to inflict a huge amount of pain to criminals to make them lose consciousness so they can’t escape. Or, alternatively, I work perfectly under torture. That’s a possibility as well.” he explained with a cold voice.

Izuku was feeling a bit sick. That huge amount of pain… He had to feel it himself before he could pass it onto someone else. How was that even acceptable? Surely, he was not hurting himself on purpose…

-I need proof. You two are clearly working together. She could have just made up a quirk at random-

“Sure, why don’t one of you punch me? I would like to not risk this with Four, however.” square glasses immediately agreed.

“Err…” Izuku hesitated. He didn’t want to punch anyone. “What about a simple pinch?”

“No, that’s a bit too light. You would not be able to feel much with just that.”
Katsuki took a step forward and slapped him with his notebook. His glasses flew on the floor, and he crouched down to pick them up with a sigh.

-Does this works as well?- 

“Ka--! Four, ask before you slap him!” Izuku scolded him.

“Yes, this works as well. Well then, who wants to feel the pain I memorized?” no one answered him. “I cannot prove anything if no one offers.”

-I would, but it’s best not to mix two touching-based quirks-

“All right, I’ll do it.” In the end, it was Shouto who offered.

Katsuki held his notebook in front of square glasses’ nose.

-Hey you. You better not be plotting anything, because otherwise your little girlfriend here will suffer some real consequences!-

Katsuki stared hard into square glasses’ eyes. He just nodded and offered a hand to Shouto. Shouto took it and winced back immediately.

“Strange, right? My quirk doesn’t reproduce the blow, only the pain. You could feel my pain, but distributed all over your body equally. It’s less intense than it would be if it was all focused in one place, but it’s disconcerting to feel pain all over your body at the same moment, I know.”

“So it’s true Shu?” asked him Izuku, a little concerned.

“Yeah, I think so. I definitely felt the pain and nothing else is happening.” he was checking his body with suspicion.

-All right then. I guess you are kinda respecting your word. But I can’t say that I completely trust anything you two said. For this reason, I want both your first names. Then we’re good-

“That’s the condition for the Body Swap, correct? Of course. I figured you wanted to use your ally’s quirk in the most efficient way. My—“

“STOP! Why are you telling them everything?! This way we cannot do anything anymore and we are completely at their mercy! Stop, why did you have to get involved?! I can take care of myself!” Urara shouted at him, angry.

“As I was saying,” he ignored her entirely, “my name is Tensei. Is this what you needed?”

Urara looked away, clearly pissed.

“Yes.” Shouto nodded. “Just remember not to let anyone say it in front of me or you would exchange bodies.”

-Well then. We still need miss hyena’s name. C’mon, say it so you and Izuku can exchange again-

The girl looked at Tensei like she was searching for approval and he nodded urging her to answer.

“It’s Ochako. Uraraka Ochako.” she said in a defeated tone.

-Of course I hope you don’t expect me to just believe it and go away. We are keeping you tied there until midnight. So we’ll see if you lied-
“I’m not so stupid! I knew I wouldn’t exchange back if I told you a fake name! That’s my real name!”

- Me and Izuku are staying here until midnight. Don’t even try to convince me. Shu, you better go.

You cannot predict when they will say a name and completely screw with us. I want you out of hearing range for now-

“Yeah, I guess…” he looked at them a bit, unsure, then walked away and closed the door behind him.

- What are you going to do?-

Katsuki asked Tensei.

“No offence, but I don’t trust you two alone with her tied up. I’m staying as well. We can just each take a corner of the room and wait patiently.” he proposed sitting down on the floor next to the door.

After a moment, Katsuki went to sit in the opposite corner, staring at the two, making sure they weren’t doing anything funny. Izuku considered the situation for a moment and just decided to sit next to him. It was only three in the morning; there was no way he would wait for almost twenty-one hours in silence in a corner alone. That was very, very boring. After he sat down, he caught Katsuki staring at him with a strange expression.

“What?”

- You are a girl right now. It’s strange-

Izuku remembered just then. The body felt strange, of course, but since he was in there since three hours ago, he had got used to it. But true, he was a girl right now, so maybe he should not sit so close to him…

- Whatever. Do you think they were telling the truth?-

“Tensei and Uraraka? I think so. You mean that there is no proof? You think they lied? Tensei proved his quirk… I guess there is no way to prove Uraraka’s?” Izuku whispered.

- Yeah, I think square glasses said the truth. What he said matches to what Aizawa said about using his quirk with moderation. One of the rule is to not hurt anyone; in that case, it makes perfect sense to ask him not to hurt anyone too much. A little bit of pain is acceptable, but nothing on the scale of broken bones. That goes for him, just like it goes for us-

“So, what exactly concerns you?”

- Well, we didn’t try using his name to Body Swap. It’s not like I want to risk this, so I guess I’ll let that slide, but there is a good possibility he lied about that to protect himself. On the other hand, we can’t really prove her quirk for now. We have to wait for the midnight and then ask her to create a doll in front of our eyes. Basically, we have to risk being in the presence of who knows what quirk until midnight. Let’s be careful-

“And that’s way you asked Shu to leave, right?”

- Yes. If he could use his quirk in a controlled way there would be no problem, but since he can’t, I can’t risk creating a bigger mess by adding his quirk to the equation-

“Okay. This looks like it’ll be a long day…” Izuku sighed.
Hours passed by, the next time someone said anything, it was already breakfast time. Izuku got up and decided to ask everyone if they wanted to eat something. They all looked at each other with uncertainty. Izuku realized a moment too late his mistake. No one could leave the room. Urara obviously couldn’t, Tensei didn’t want to leave her alone with them and if either Izuku or Katsuki were to go, only one person would remain in the room, creating a clear disadvantage. If Katsuki was to going grab something to eat, Izuku would remain alone in this girl body and Tensei could overwhelm him easily. If Izuku were to go, Katsuki would remain there alone and he could not scream for help if something happened.

“I get it, I get it. I’m going.” Tensei got up and volunteer.

“What, are you abandoning me?” she pouted, well, Izuku’s face pouted.

“You’ll be fine for a moment with them.” he left after asking everyone’s preferences.

Luckily, he returned after only ten minutes, the atmosphere in the room had been getting more and more tense by the minute. They ate in silence in their corners and Tensei had to feed Urara. Since she was in Izuku’s body, he actually had to feed his body. Izuku observed himself getting feed by Tensei with a grimace, that was seriously incredibly embarrassing. Even Katsuki didn’t look happy about it.

The next problem came an hour later.

“Hmm…” Izuku fidgeted with discomfort.

“What?”

“I…” Izuku took a look at the other two, who were staring at him. He lowered his voice as much as possible. “I have to go to the bathroom.”

Katsuki just stared at him. Izuku grimaced again. This was not his fault and yet he was getting the short end of the stick!

“In a girl’s body?”

“Well…! I can’t help this! I have to go!” he tried to explain feeling embarrassed as hell.

“Is something the matter?” asked Tensei.

“I… need to use the bathroom.” there was no use hiding it, the bathroom door was right in front of everyone.

“IN MY BODY?!” Urara shouted.

“Well…! What should I do?!” Izuku felt hurt in his pride.

Why was everyone treating him like he wanted to go pee in a girl’s body?!

“Don’t you dare!! Keep it in!” Urara shouted at him again.

“K-keep it in?! Would you rather I pee myself, no, yourself?!?” Izuku was shouting as well by this point.

“No! Keep it in, I said! I don’t want you alone in the bathroom, who knows what your intentions really are? You perv!”

“What do you think I’m going to do?! I’ll be back in a moment!”
This is your fault! You drank too much! That was on purpose, wasn’t it!"

“What?! Of course not! I don’t even like girls, why would I—“

Katsuki slapped his head with the notebook shutting him up.

-I can go with him to make sure he won’t do anything if that helps-

“NO! It doesn’t help! Two males! Even worst! Don’t either of you get even close to that bathroom!!” she was screaming even louder.

“For heaven’s sake! I feel like a kindergarten teacher! You are all acting like little kids!” Tensei got up again, complaining. “I’ll accompany you; this way there won’t be any problem, correct?”

-Aren’t you another male?- 

“…I don’t count…” he said with a sigh.

-Ohh. Is that so-

Katsuki smirked. Urara growled out of frustration. Izuku scratched his head embarrassed.

“Well, are we going or not?” Tensei was finally showing signs of impatience.

“Ah, whatever, but when you are finished I’m going to the bathroom as well! As revenge!” she yelled.

-Hell, we really need a kindergarten teacher; we really are a bunch of stupid kids!-

That actually got a chuckled out of Izuku. They were all adults, he was just going to use the bathroom, and this was getting ridiculous.

It was indeed embarrassing to pee in a girl’s body and with a stranger watching… He just sat down not looking anywhere at all and doing everything as fast as possible. After he finished he washed his hands feeling very tired all of a sudden. When they returned to the room, Katsuki searched his eyes for a second and Izuku nodded to confirm that everything was fine.

-Well then. Do you want to go next, girl? I’ll go with you-

Katsuki raised an eyebrow at her and she growled in frustration again.

“I’ll hold it for now…” she was grimacing.

Katsuki shrugged. After the end of that particular experience, the rest of the day was a bit easier. Everyone went to the bathroom at some point and they all went as a pair. Shouto at some point checked on them to make sure they were all still alive and then brought them lunch and dinner. When it was almost midnight, he waited outside in the hallway, just to be sure.

Midnight arrived and passed. It was the first time Izuku exchanged while being conscious. As the clock signaled midnight, his vision became dark for a moment and he felt like he was flying, but it was not a good sensation. He was feeling like he was falling from a great height, his stomach was tied in a knot. Suddenly he felt as if he was really heavy and he could see clearly again, he winced, the sensation of returning to his body was really disconcerting.

Izuku wanted to check his body all over, but his hands were still tied. Katsuki immediately opened the door, letting Shouto know that everything worked out. After that Tensei asked Uraraka if she
was okay and Katsuki started to untie Izuku. When he was able to stand up again, he stretched and nodded at Katsuki who was still staring at him, as if he was trying to confirm if he was actually him. He could understand. It was impossible to see an actual difference from the outside.

“It’s me, everything is fine, don’t worry.” he smiled.

He nodded back and then looked at the other two talking in the corner.

-All right then. I want to see the girl create a doll. If you can prove this to me, I’ll be satisfied-

She clicked her tongue, annoyed.

“Whatever. You already know my name anyways. So really, there is no use hiding anything anymore.”

She stood in the center of the room and closed her eyes focusing. After a moment, a little globe of yellow light appeared next to her and started to grow until it had a human shape. The light subdued and in the next moment, there was a perfect replica of Katsuki standing there. The doll had the eyes closed and was completely still; upon closer inspection, it was clear that it wasn’t even breathing. It was not alive, it was just a replica.

“There it is. Now you can see it clearly right?” she said, bored.

-Yes, now enter it, just to be completely sure-

Izuku was not very enthusiastic about this plan, but it was important to establish just how much truth she had said.

“You’re a pain in the ass. Not that I disapprove, at least you know the risks, not like your friend. Move from there, I’d rather not leave my body while standing, I don’t want to drop dead here and risk having my head split open.”

They moved as she requested and she laid down on her bed with an annoyed sigh. After she closed her eyes, she frowned for a moment and they all waited in silence. Suddenly all the tension disappeared from her body and she stopped breathing. At the same time, the replica of Katsuki opened his eyes and placed his hands on his waist with an annoyed sigh.

“Happy now?” the doll said.

Izuku and Katsuki jumped, not expecting Katsuki’s doll to talk.

-You can talk with that?- Katsuki was a bit perturbed.

“Of course. It’s just a doll, it doesn’t have any quirk. I never heard your voice, so I guess I can just trust my quirk on this one. Is this your voice?”

-I have no idea-

“Yeah, me neither… I never heard his voice…” said Izuku.

“Whatever, it’s not important.” the doll walked to the lifeless body on the bed and grabbed one arm raising the body up a bit.

Uraraka’s body was completely limp.
“This quirk is a real pain in the ass. See? Now that I’m here, my body has become the doll. Completely useless. To have to tie up my own body just to make sure no one messes with it while I’m not looking... Ugh. Not to mention that someone can just steal it and sayonara! Really! At home, I have a cage I put this into, so I’m sure no one can steal it. This is really a pain.”

She dropped her own body back on the bed and turned to them, who were looking at her kinda in disbelief.

“Can I go back now?” the doll crossed its arms.

-Yeah. And don’t create my doll ever again-

The doll shrugged and closed its eyes. After a moment, it was destroyed in a million pieces and Uraraka opened her eyes again. She climbed off the bed looking annoyed.

“So, are we clear?” she crossed her arms just as the doll had done before.

Izuku was still feeling really weirded out but what she said.

This girl was weird.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:
Doppelganger creates a lifeless doll of someone the owner has fulfilled the conditions. The doll is anatomically perfect, there is no difference between a real body and a fake one, even the internal organs are included. When there is no conscience or soul inside the heart is still and the blood doesn't flow, but when there is something inside the heart starts and it's lifelike. The difference between a soul and a conscience is important, a conscience controls the doll like a 'remote control' but never really connects with it, since there is no physical pain and if the doll is damaged or destroyed the conscience simply returns to the owner. A soul, instead, is a whole essence of a human being, as such if it's somehow inserted in a doll it can connect with it completely, making the doll actually alive, physical pain included. If a doll is destroyed with a soul inside the soul actually dies, as it cannot return automatically to its real body.
Price: when the owner posses a doll the roles get reversed. The body becomes the doll while the doll becomes the body.
If the reversal lasts too long, more than three hours, both perish. If the real body is destroyed the doll gets destroyed as well, effectively killing the owner. Which means that protecting the real body is of vital importance.

Next week, Monday, I'll be on vacation sooo... I'll release the new chapter Sunday instead! :D
See you on the 26th! :3
“Yeah. I guess. You are clear. Just don’t try this trick ever again-
“I wouldn’t. Now Ten--he knows what I was trying to do, so there would be no use.” she answered.
-Unless you want to use the trick for yourself-

“Look… I know you don’t have to believe me, but I would never leave the island without him.”
while she was saying that she looked away embarrassed. “So… as long as he is still here, you can
believe that I will not leave by myself.”

No one had anything to say about that. No one had proof to contradict her.

“All right then. I think we can leave now… right?” Izuku was very, very tired.

“Yes, I think we have proved her quirk and identity extensively.” Shouto agreed with him. “His
identity is a bit more dubious, but his quirk is pretty much proved. I think we’re fine.”

They both looked at Katsuki to ask for his opinion. Katsuki sighed a little and nodded.

“Finally, I was getting really tired to see your faces.” Uraraka was pouting.

-Yeah, same. I had to look at your face for hours to talk to Izuku. It was terrible-

Izuku chuckled a little, he was so tired that he was feeling a little silly.

They left the room finally and for Izuku it was like breathing again after a long apnea. They reached
the male section of the building and separated from Shouto. The guy bowed his head slightly and
entered his room leaving the two of them in the hallway. Izuku wondered for a moment about going
into Katsuki’s room to talk, but he was very tired and wanted to take a shower. He nodded at
Katsuki and started to make his way to his door but was stopped. Katsuki had grabbed his short
sleeve and was staring at him.

Izuku stared back, Katsuki gestured at his door. Izuku resigned himself and nodded, following into
his room. He was about to sit down to have their talk, like always, but he was stopped by something
surprising. Suddenly, very suddenly Katsuki was hugging him.

Izuku was frozen in place. He could feel Katsuki’s arms around his back hugging him tight, grabbing
the back of his shirt. Katsuki had dropped his head on his shoulder. Izuku felt his warmth. Realizing
that he had remained there, frozen in place like an idiot, he regained control of his arms and hugged
him back. They remained like this, standing still, for an indefinable amount of time.

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him back. They remained like this, standing still, for an indefinable amount of time.

Izuku was so stunned because Katsuki never hugged him. During the first period of their friendship,
Katsuki basically never touched him and when they were almost-lovers they barely touched and only
with a reason. Katsuki never touched him casually in an affectionate way. This was not of that kind
either, certainly there was a deeper reason, but still it was the first time he hugged him at all, for any
reason.

Katsuki sighed and broke the hug. He picked up the notebook and started to write like always. Izuku
almost missed the Katsuki-doll that could talk. Not because he didn’t like this Katsuki that could not talk, but because he wanted Katsuki to be free, really free. But that was not possible. The Mark was permanent.

-Are you okay? We kinda hurt your body, does it hurt somewhere?-

“No, I’m fine. Don’t worry, I’m just a bit tired, I just want to sleep for a bit.” he tried to smile in a comforting way.

-This is all my fault, I could have spare you all this, but I consciously decided to use you as a bait. When Shu told me about the strange occurrence of you saying your name I had a feeling that this was going on. I could have made him say your name and spare you from everything, but I chose not to do that to get a shot at uncovering someone’s quirk. It was terribly risky, I knew that, and yet I did it nevertheless. You could’ve gotten very hurt. I’m sorry-

“I’m sorry”? Are we sure you are not Uraraka?” he tried to joke.

-Yeah, you’d better be really careful from now on. When you meet me… we have to choose a password or something-

“Sounds like a great idea. And really… don’t worry, I was scared, but knowing that you were there to rescue me was really comforting. I can’t imagine how scared I would have been if I was alone in all this. So, thank you for looking out to me as usual.” he smiled again.

Katsuki looked away, it was almost like he was pouting.

-Whatever. About the password-

“What about… I could give you a nickname, what do you think about Kacchan?” Izuku bit his lower lip, waiting for the reaction he knew it was coming.

-Fuck you-

Izuku chuckled.

“All right, sorry! We need something that only we know and that it won’t be any good clue for anyone so no favorite food or anything.”

Katsuki sat on his bed and played with the pen for a while.

-October 14th-

“What’s that?” a date?

-You are an idiot-


-Whatever, just say that and I’ll write it-

“No! Tell me!” now he was really curious.

-More importantly-

Katsuki stopped writing and looked like he was fighting something. Izuku waited, knowing that he was trying to decide something important.
All this ordeal proved, without a doubt, is that we should not split up for too long. I think it would be better to just stay in the same room indefinitely.

Izuku’s breath was caught in his throat. He was definitely not expecting this. Katsuki loved his independency. Katsuki grimaced seeing his shocked expression.

-I’m not going to assault you in your sleep-

“Yeah, that was definitely what I was worried about.” he dismissed it. “Are you sure? I will bother you…”

-Well, try to stay out of my way as much as possible-

Izuku sighed with a smile. Of course, that was his answer. Any other person would have reassured him, but not Katsuki. Katsuki was clearly not any other person.

“Okay, that’s fine by me. This room or my room?”

-This one. I still want to try keeping the secret behind your door number for as long as possible-

“All right. I’m going to gather my stuff then, okay?”

Katsuki nodded and Izuku quickly left the room to enter his. He collected all his stuff in a moment, but then remembered about the shower he wanted to take. He didn’t want to take it in Katsuki’s room, so he decided to do it as fast as possible in his own room first. After the shower, with his hair still damp, he reached Katsuki’s room again and entered.

Katsuki got up and frowned. Izuku started to place his stuff around noticing that Katsuki had already prepared the futon for him.

“Thank yo-“ Katsuki slapped his head with the notebook. “What?!”

-Password?-

“Ohh! October 14th? I forgot…” he answered without thinking.

Katsuki slapped him again.

-Yeah, I knew you would forget right away! That’s the first thing you need to say! If I have to write you about the password all the time everyone will realize that we have one!-

“Yeah, I get it, sorry!” he said sarcastically.

Katsuki clicked his tongue.

-Whatever, just remember it from now on. Why did you take so long by the way?- 

“Were you worried?” Izuku asked without thinking.

Katsuki reacted strangely, like he had just realized that himself.

-Do you realize that most of the times I let you out of my sight, something happens to you?-
He looked offended. Izuku decided not to pursue this discussion, the answer was clear enough.

“I was taking a shower before bed; sorry it was on the spur of the moment, so I didn’t tell you.”

-I see. Well, I want to go to sleep now-

He threw his notebook on the table he had pushed on the side to make space for the futon and then he discarded the sweater he was wearing, the one he was always wearing when he was leaving his room, and remained in his shirt and pants. Then he threw himself on the bed pulling the blanket over his head to isolate himself like a child would. Izuku smiled and prepared to sleep himself. He was so tired, he fell asleep immediately without any effort and didn’t dream.

He woke up the next morning and he immediately made sure to be in the right room and in the right body. He never ever thought he had to do something like this in his whole life but maybe he needed to start doing this every day from now on. Katsuki was already awake and was staring at the ceiling with a frown.

“Good morning…” Izuku yawned and turned to face him.

Katsuki looked at him only for a second then returned to his contemplation. They had class that day, so Izuku searched with his eyes for the alarm clock and saw it was only half an hour before the start of the lecture. They needed to go. He got up slowly and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth. When he returned into the room, Katsuki had already his sweater on and was waiting for him near the door.

“Are you going to brush your teeth?” he felt silly asking.

-You realize that we haven’t eaten breakfast yet, right?-

“Oh…” great, now he was feeling even more silly.

Katsuki rolled his eyes.

-Let’s go eat in the kitchen, since there is two of us, I doubt they will attack us and we didn’t receive a Calling Card either. I need to replenish food anyway and if I made my calculation right yesterday, Aizawa went and got new stuff-

“Okay, sure!”

They left the room, ate in the kitchen, went back to Katsuki’s room to brush their teeth, Izuku for the second time in half an hour, and they reached the classroom just a minute before Aizawa. He scanned the room and confirmed that both Tensei and Uraraka were still in the test, no one did anything overnight. The lesson started and Izuku was already bored of learning about laws. It was really a boring subject and he didn’t want to become a lawyer either. At the end of the lesson, Katsuki slipped his notebook in front of him.

-Let’s go to the Archive and read about the two new quirks we discovered-

Izuku nodded in silence, and Katsuki rolled the page and put it in his pocket, just in case someone was spying on them. They left the room together, not even trying to hide their connection anymore. Half of them already knew anyway. Tsuyu, Shouto, Uraraka and Tensei, and probably even Kirishima and Kaminari knew. So basically the only ones they could partially be sure that didn’t know were Yao, Haru and maybe… the mysterious extra number.

They reached the Archive and closed the door behind them after confirming that it was empty.
Katsuki searched through the files until he pulled out two of them. He read the titles: Doppelganger and Pain Memory. Katsuki took the Doppelganger one and sat down to read. Izuku took the second file about Pain Memory.

Pain Memory

This quirk is not rare but uncommon. It's usually discovered easily and very early in life. Kids tend to be usually involved in small fights or dangerous activities that can have, consequently, the memorization of pain. It’s highly unlikely for this quirk to remain unnoticed beyond grade school. This quirk works in two phases: First, the owner needs to get hurt. The method is irrelevant, it can be an accident, self-inflicted or caused intentionally by someone else. The pain is memorized in the left side of the brain and the owner will retain that memory for two hours. It's important to notice that the pain does add up, which means that the owner memorizes pain and for the next two hours they can add more and more to it, but it does still last two hours. This active quirk allows the owner to transmit the pain to another person by touch. Being active, touching a person with this quirk is not dangerous as long as that person is not actually trying to hurt you. The pain memorized doesn’t deplete with use, but only with time, which means that it can be used on a countless number of individuals during the two hours.

This is a textbook example of an S rank quirk, as this quirk hurts others. What’s interesting to note, is the fact that the pain doesn’t get distributed by replicating the exact damage. The pain is transmitted directly to the nerves, without causing physical damage, for this reason it’s impossible to prove that this quirk has been used on someone. The pain is distributed equally through all the body, which means that the pain is diminished, but at the same time it’s even more surprising since it’s something very close to an electroshock. This quirk tends to be used to torture people, as it's impossible to trace it back.

The price for this quirk is the absence of coagulants in the blood of the owner. In other words if the owner gets a wound that causes blood loss they need to get treated immediately or they will eventually die from blood loss.

Izuku took a quick look at the list of names, but he doubted there was anything useful in there. The information on the file were pretty consistent with the one Tensei gave them. He dropped the file on the table and waited for Katsuki to finish his file. When he finally did, he dropped the file as well and grabbed the one that Izuku had just finished. Izuku took the one about Doppelganger and read it for himself. He could trust Katsuki to know everything, but he wanted to obtain more knowledge so he could help him more. Every time he was alone he would end up in some trap, not only because he could not predict the future, but also because he didn’t know anything about quirks.

The file contained the same things they had gotten out of the girl. So she told them the truth about most of it, if not all, there was still the part where he asked Kirishima about Katsuki’s favorite food to confirm.

“They told the truth.” he broke the silence.

“Yeah, at least for the most part. We still didn’t see her creating yours and Kaminari’s doll, so there is still that possibility—

“Yeah, I think I’ll talk to Kirishima and Kaminari and ask them if they know something about all this.”
“You sure you can do it without being too suspicious?”

Katsuki grimaced.

“I’m not good with socialization and Kaminari talks too much for my standard—”

“C’mon, let’s go!” Izuku got up and extended a hand to Katsuki with a smile. “You don’t have to do anything if you don’t want, just be there, okay?”

Katsuki rolled his eyes and got up without taking the hand. They reached Kirishima’s door and Katsuki was the one that knocked. The door opened a little and Kirishima peeked outside. When he saw Katsuki, he opened his door fully, clearly showing a sign of trust, and only then he saw Izuku. He looked a little surprised, but not much else. He probably drew whatever conclusion he had reached that day at the beach.

“Hi Mishima, we just wanted to chat a little, think you can let us in?” Izuku noticed that he was alone so they could not talk with Kaminari just yet.

“Oh… Okay, I guess it’s fine.” he let them in and they sat around the table. “Is there something wrong?”

“No, not exactly. How are you doing in the test? Has anything happened to you yet?” maybe this was a question a bit too straightforward, but there was really no way they had come to his room just to talk about the weather.

“Ah, are you asking if I got any information or if I discovered anything? No, not really. I think people are too afraid of my quirk, so no one tried to attack me or anything. Especially since they can’t touch me for anything, either torturing or to activate something is out of the question.”

-But you got Kami’s information, don’t you?- Izuku scolded Katsuki with a glare, that was way too direct! Kirishima stared at his hands deep in his thoughts for a while.

“Yes, I do… But I’m not telling, sorry. It’s not that I think you’ll do something bad, but I just want to keep his secret.”

-I’m not asking you to break your promise, even if the guy doesn’t really seem the type to keep any secrets himself, but whatever. I just want to know if his quirk is easy to activate and if it’s somehow dangerous for me. And I’m not going to ask about this for free, I have an important information for both you and Kami. You need to tell him this- “I see. All right then, if there is something I need to know it must be important. Tell me, if you do, I’ll tell you something about Kami’s quirk.” Kirishima was clearly used to communicate with Katsuki as he was keeping up easily.

-First, the girl, Urara, can create dolls of people, her quirk is called Doppelganger, and she has fulfilled the condition for Kami’s doll. Or so she says. Do you remember him ever asking my favorite food?- “Favorite…” Kirishima was taken aback by the amount of information. “Now that you mention it, we talk about food quite often. But there was one time he asked about you. I don’t know your favorite food so I just told him you like spicy food… Why?” now he looked worried.
That was her doll. You gave this information to her so she could create my doll to mess around with Izu.

“Really? I’m sorry, I-I had no idea! I found a little strange that he would ask about you, but he often jumps from one topic to another so I just… I’m so sorry, was this bad?” he looked between the two.

-That’s fine, we solved the problem. But from now on you must choose a password to use with Kami, to be sure it’s really him. Be careful, the girl cannot know this or it’s useless so choose something difficult and be subtle about it. Me and Izu now use a password too, but I think we should choose another to use between us as well-

Izuku wondered why he didn’t tell them to use October 14th as well.

“How about Enji like the first name of the one responsible that was in charge of examining us when we were meeting?” proposed Kirishima.

-That’s quite close to your real name, don’t you mind?-”

“No, it’s fine. Since it’s so close it will be easier to remember.”

-All right then, remember to be subtle, if you use it in front of everyone it’s useless. Now that this is taken care of, what about Kami’s quirk?-”

“Oh right. Now, his quirk is not very difficult to activate, but there is no danger for you. Besides the fact that he has to send you a Calling Card, for it to work you two have to face each other and he has to say something out loud. You’ll notice immediately if he is trying to do something, it’s not something you can miss.”

-I see, that’s good enough, thank you-

“No problem. I want you to succeed as well, Bakugou. Ah, and you too Izu.” he bowed his head a little. “You two are nice people. If someone really has to be eliminated, I hope it’s someone bad.”

It was just then that someone knocked on the door and Kirishima opened to reveal Kaminari on the other side. Katsuki discretely wrote in his notebook for him to see while the others two were busy with greetings.

-And here comes the idiot-

Izuku elbowed him and Katsuki ripped the page rolling his eyes.

“Ooh! Look who’s here! Izu and the elusive Four!” he yelled, looking past Kirishima’s shoulder. “What brings you here?”

-More importantly, did you receive a Calling Card?-”

Izuku understood that Katsuki wanted to confirm that Uraraka sent him a Calling Card as well, just like she had done with him.

“A Calling Card? Sure, I received two actually! Why?” he answered easily closing the door, unconcerned about giving away information.

But… two? Assuming one was Uraraka’s, what about the other one?

“Two? Who sent you the second one?” Kirishima asked in their place.
“What? Am I supposed to know who sent the first one?” Kaminari was now looking at the three of them confused.

-When did you receive them?- 

“Ah, let’s see… One was the 27 of April and the other two weeks ago.”

-Mishima, when did she asked you about the food?- 

“I’m pretty sure it was more or less two weeks ago. So that was hers, what about the one on the 27th?” Kirishima was looking at Katsuki in search of an answer.

-Did anything happen that day? Anything at all?- 

“I took notes of that day, just in case. That day was a class day and I met everyone, of course. I only talked to girls that day though. No idea why but they all wanted to say something to me, maybe I’m irresistible or something!” he grinned.

Only girls? Well that was surely peculiar, but Izuku could not see any kind of link. It was not possible for a quirk to manipulate them all, right? In that case, they would have received a Calling Card as well and… well, this was too complicated, really.

“And nothing happened?” he asked, just to make sure.

“Nope! What about you Shishi? Did you received any Calling Card?” Kaminari had already lost interest in the conversation.

Kirishima just shook his head. Izuku and Katsuki soon left, not wanting to spend the whole evening with the two of them. They returned to Katsuki’s room and Katsuki made some crepes for both of them. After they ate Izuku asked a question he had in mind for a while.

“Why did you told him to use another password instead of just telling him to use October 14th as well? I get that set multiple passwords could be a good idea, but at least you could’ve told them about this one as well, right?”

Katsuki suddenly looked very mad, or frustrated, or… something. He was changing expression too fast for Izuku to get his bearings.

“What’s wrong?”

-You idiot, like hell I would give them that date! You truly are an idiot!-

“W-what?! Why?” why was he mad again about this?

What the hell happened on October 14th?

Katsuki refused to answer him and started to get ready to bed while stomping all over the place. Izuku followed him around, even as he was brushing his teeth furiously like they had committed some treacherous crime.

“C’mon tell me!! What happened on October 14th?!”

Katsuki ignored him and jumped into bed giving him his back. Izuku sat on the bed and pestered him for ten minutes, already sure he would not get an answer but there was something oddly satisfying about acting like a kid from time to time. Especially since Katsuki looked about ready to blow a fuse.
In the end, Izuku gave up and laid on his futon looking at the ceiling.

October 14th?

He started to replay all Octobers that he could remember. The first year of high school October was nothing special, he could not remember anything about it. The second year they were hanging out, but... had something special happened? He regretted not asking Tsuyu for his book so he could take a look in there. He tried to rethink about the October of the third year, but nothing came to mind as well, same with the fourth year. When he reached the fifth year a thought hit him, it was October when Katsuki had withdrawn from high school!

Suddenly he knew why Katsuki was so jealous of this date and didn’t want to give it to anyone.

And why he was insulting him every time.

Izuku hid his face in the blanket, feeling heated with embarrassment. Katsuki just had to choose such a date as their password!

October 14th.

That was the date of their first time.

Chapter End Notes

So, as I said I'll be on vacation this week but don't worry! I'll be able to read and answer the comments so don't hold back!

And I'll be back on Monday, September 3rd, with the start of the next part, we starting the second half of the test!
The next morning Izuku was not capable of meeting Katsuki’s eyes.

The date of their first time. Katsuki remembered it clearly and got mad when he realized that Izuku had forgotten. He wanted to hide at Antarctica and never come back.

They ate breakfast and then Katsuki started to read in complete silence. Izuku was sitting on the carpet feeling like an idiot all over again. He still hadn’t learned anything from Tsuyu’s book. He was still making the same mistake of not considering things from Katsuki’s perspective. But at the same time how was he supposed to know he wanted to use *something like that* as their password? Izuku blushed again. They never actually talked about it; this was the first time one of them referred back.

Izuku observed Katsuki read. As always, when he was shut up in his room, he was wearing short pants and a top tank, he wore a sweater only when he was meeting other people. That was, of course, to cover the naked skin of the arms. He was seated on the bed with his back against the wall, one knee closer to him and the other leg dangling off the bed. His red eyes were following the lines of text and his expression was more neutral than usual, now that he was focused on what he was reading and not on something unpleasant, like most of the time.

Izuku focused more on the lines of the muscles of his arms, clearly visible in the light of the almost summer sun. Katsuki was pretty fit, despite him often being holed up in his room. While Izuku’s eyes were following the lines up to his hands, slowly focusing on all the details, he could see his body started to heat up. Katsuki was kinda hot… and remembering the date had reminded him of *other body parts* he saw. Soon he was forced to look away, not wanting to venture too far into forbidden territories. Right now, they were supposed to be friends, right? He was not allowed to…

What a terrible person he was. He just decided, some days ago, to be a better friend and now he was already starting to desire for more than he was allowed to have.

When he sneaked another peek at him, he caught Katsuki staring at him, observing him. Katsuki was studying him. Izuku started to sweat a little and tried to keep a straight face as he was feeling that his secret little mental trip was too visible. Choosing to sit with his legs crossed had been a bad idea as well. Katsuki had no problem seeing the evidence and he grimaced scratching his head violently. Izuku couldn’t run out of the room and hide now, could he? He surely wanted to.

“Hmm… I’m going to take a shower.” as soon as these words left his mouth, he regretted them immediately.

Katsuki was staring at him accusatorily. What was he recriminating? It was not like he was going into his shower room to mas—

Izuku hid his face in his hands.

“I changed my mind.” he managed to squeeze out.

He’d rather suffer in there in silence for a while and have his conscience clear than to make him thinks who-knows-what. The silence stretched for a while, Izuku had no intention of looking at him at all for a while. Maybe ever again. Suddenly, he could hear his steps on the floor, but Izuku still
kept his hands in place. If he was not looking at him, maybe he could fool himself that Katsuki was
not able to see him either. His hands were grabbed and ripped away from his face and he was
greeted by a very annoyed looking Katsuki. He sat down as well and Izuku noticed *a certain detail.*

-This is all your fault! Take responsibility!-

Katsuki had two red spots on his cheeks.

“Oh… But I can’t give blowjobs. It’s forbidden by my personal rule.” Izuku heard himself saying
these words like it had been someone else that said them for him.

Katsuki hit him with the notebook. He was looking furious but maybe that was only another way of
showing embarrassment. He quickly scribbled something.

-Who asked you that?! You stupid idiot-

“Ah but… You said ‘take responsibility’.” he had no idea what was going on in his mind right now,
his mouth was running on his own.

Katsuki hit him again, then got up and returned to the bed growling in frustration. Izuku was facing a
dilemma: Should he let the subject slide and try to return to normality or should he try to pursue the
other? Actually, the answer was obvious from the start. He joined him on the bed.

“You said we are only friends, this is not something a friend should do.” he actually didn’t care about
that, but maybe he could get Katsuki to agree to be his lover again?

He realized he was running too much again, but his mind was not very interested in these
philosophical questions now. Katsuki looked everywhere as if he was expecting the answer to be
written somewhere and then just scribble down like always.

-Friends with benefits do-

Oh god, this again. Katsuki really liked this idea, didn’t he?

“Are we back to that?” the question was actually ‘are we back to what we were before the end of the
accord?’.

-No-

Katsuki clearly caught on the double meaning.

“Why?” he really wanted to know.

-Don’t start with this again, *please,* I already told you that I can’t-

Izuku sensed that the mood was being ruined very fast. Katsuki was starting to look again distant and
cold. And he didn’t want that. It was true that he still had not figured out the real extent of his
affection for him but right now, he just wanted to be happy with him. Was this a selfish reasoning
again? Perhaps.

“All right, let’s leave that aside. Please, for once, tell me straight what you’d rather do. Be friends
with me on a platonic level or not?” this was a very basic question, everything started from there.

Katsuki had already asked him to have sex, but that was before the test so maybe there were other
factors into play then, he was not necessarily searching for a deeper connection with him specifically.
Izuku just happened to be the one. But now, it was different. The test was already ongoing and both
had a chance of losing. Now it was Katsuki’s chance to choose him and not simply a partner. Of course, there were still complications in the way; it was not like Katsuki had twenty guys to choose from. But he trusted Katsuki to know exactly what this all meant. Izuku refused to believe that Katsuki would agree to this again if he only intended to play around a bit. So, if he was willing to accept now, either he was desperate to have someone in his life, and that didn’t seem to be the case, or he honestly wanted him in his life. This was not before the test, this was not a time limit situation, Katsuki had no excuses after this. He could not say: ‘Even if both of us pass, we will never see each other again’. That was not an option. Once they were both in the Task Force they would see each almost other every day.

Izuku trusted Katsuki to not want to mess around with him. He proved to care about his feelings already.

Izuku realized that if Katsuki was going to accept him again, he had to keep his own part of the bargain. He had to reciprocate him in the same way or he would never forgive himself. And he still had no idea if he loved him or not… but was that really true? After all this time and after having realized these important mistakes from his past, had he not decided to try with him all over again? Now, just as before, no much more than before, Katsuki was the center of his life. The most precious existence. Was this love? Izuku could not answer, he never truly loved before, so now he was not capable of recognizing it. He truly envied people who would just declare their love easily, like in movies and books. Why was it so complicated for him?

Maybe because love consisted in putting someone else before himself and that was something he was not used to?

He was so lost in thought that he didn’t realize just how long they had sat there in silence. Katsuki was looking down at the bed, lost in thought as well. He sighed, getting ready to get up, the mood was completely spoiled anyway. Katsuki grabbed him and stopped him. Izuku waited for him to finish writing.

-This platonic shit is not working anyway-

Izuku stared at the sentence for a moment then burst into laughter. Of course, Katsuki would not give him a straight answer. Katsuki stared at him indignantly. Izuku decided to just throw caution into the wind and hug him, making both fell on the bed. Katsuki made an indignant noise, but Izuku ignored him, he could feel him reciprocate the hug clearly. The prick was just prideful as usual. He propped himself up on his palms to observe him from above and when he saw him staring back, he tried to kiss him but was stopped by a hand. Katsuki shook his head, looking serious.

“Why?”

He reached for the notebook and wrote.

-You decided not to tell Aizawa, right? Then we better not kiss. I’m not sure of how, but surely they must keep watch somehow. They need to know if we broke some rules. We better not-

It made sense. It was a bit sad, but it made sense. Besides, there were other things they could do that didn’t require him to ingest Katsuki’s saliva. Blowjobs were a no go as well, but only on Izuku’s part. Katsuki could. Not that Izuku was ever going to ask him. He could already see his face, if he dared. Anyway, right now blowjob-logistic was not a priority.

Izuku took a breath and kissed his jaw repeatedly, following the line of the bone reaching the ear. Katsuki placed a hand on his back and pushed him down, making their body connect completely. Izuku bit his earlobe lightly and felt Katsuki reacting under him while he grabbed the fabric of his
As soon as he let go, Katsuki quickly took advantage of the moment and slid the hand under his shirt making Izuku lose his breath. Katsuki caressed his back, up and down, a few times slowly while he was reciprocating the kisses. Izuku regained a little control, even as he was feeling the heat rise, and broke partially the contact, enough to grab his shirt and toss it away. One less obstacle in the way. After a moment, confirming with a glance that Katsuki was okay with it, he pulled his top tank as well and they were both half-naked.

He lowered himself down again slowly, conscious of the intense heat of their skin. Katsuki placed his hand on his back again and Izuku started to follow the lines of his arm muscles. The same lines he had followed with his eyes earlier. Katsuki started to play with his hair, pulling gently some strands and making Izuku shiver. Even if the pants he was wearing were really comfy, now, they were in the way. Izuku raised himself a little again, turning on the side but then realized that he was being a tad too eager. Maybe he was moving too fast. He tried to look at Katsuki in search of an answer of sort, but Katsuki only looked away, his face red. Instead of pulling down his pants, he decided to go for Katsuki's. He reacted with a surprised gasp and almost involuntarily reached for his hand to stop him. Izuku stopped and looked at him again.

Katsuki seemed to have reached a decision of some sort. He sat up, pulled down and then threw away his pants himself and then dragged Izuku up with him, against him. Izuku stilled for a moment but then somehow understood what Katsuki wanted from him and sat on his lap, a bit embarrassed, after discarding his pants as well. Now they were only wearing their underwear. Katsuki guided his hands behind his neck and Izuku grabbed on it then he started to kiss his shoulder. Now that a lot less clothes were on the way and Izuku could feel him almost directly on his skin his heat raised even higher making his head fuzzy. He started to move almost involuntarily, following his instinct, and felt Katsuki hugging him even closer. They didn't last long, it had been quite some time, more than seven months, since the last time they had done something with another person, so the emotion had been stronger than any self control. Feeling relaxed and content they laid down side by side. They had to take a shower, but that was a problem for later.

That day they didn’t feel like doing much. They took a shower, separately, and after changing clothes, they chilled on the bed all day. Katsuki told him they could sleep together on the bed from now on, since they were not strangers, but told him to not stay to close to him because he hated to be overheated when he was trying to sleep. And it was almost summer. Izuku was feeling a marble of happiness in his stomach and whether that was a sign of love or not he did not care. He loved this, so he was going to treasure it.

Speaking of marbles, when the sun disappeared beyond the ocean horizon Izuku thought of a cute little trick to show Katsuki. He pretended to drink from one of the bottles that Katsuki had stored in a corner and sneezed, creating a little Light Sphere. He hid it in his closed palm and returned to the bed, laying down next to him again. Then, after confirming that Katsuki was looking at him, he released it and focused as much as he could making it float right above the bed. Katsuki stared at him with an open smile before catching himself and resumed a bored expression. He could try as hard as he wanted, but Izuku knew that he was still a bit like a curious little kid inside.

“Look, we have our private firefly!”

Katsuki looked at him like he was being the little kid.

-You were always the romantic idiot-

“Hey! Not fair! You love romantic movies as well, don’t lie!”

-I love to laugh at them-
“Yeah, right. You were totally laughing when we were watching The Lake House,” he said sarcastically.

-Shut up-

Izuku chuckled. Katsuki stared at the marble of light again.

-It’s a cute little quirk. And it can be useful in dark places-

“Glad to see you approve.”

Days passed by and the two of them spent them together being closer they had ever been. On the island there was not much to do and Izuku would often be bored, but luckily, Katsuki’s sharp mind was always onto the next topic. Since Katsuki didn’t want to win, they had no use for strategies that would use the quirks they already knew in an advantageous way. Still, Katsuki told him it was important to at least keep his mind in shape by imagining a potential strategy.

Izuku convinced him to take care of the vegetables together, now that it was pretty pointless to hide their relationship. However, Katsuki still refused to go to the seafood barbeque. Izuku gave up on that, in the end, Katsuki looked perfectly content with what he had and with interacting that bare minimum with Kirishima, Shouto and Kaminari.

The 18th of June, a Wednesday, Katsuki convinced him to go to the seafood barbeque alone, since he had skipped them since quite a while. After the ‘incident’ with Uraraka, the person to suggest the idea, Izuku was not very eager to go to the social event. Especially now, since he knew that the girl had a hidden agenda regarding the use of that event. However, it was better to go and look at what the girl was now doing; maybe she was trying some underhanded techniques with the others too. Now Izuku knew that he had to keep his mouth shut, about everything really, so maybe he could help someone else and prevent the same situation from happening again.

The day went surprisingly differently from what he was expecting. Now Uraraka was being much quieter and the one to really keep the conversation going was Kaminari. Tensei was still silent, but now he was clearly keeping a close eye on Uraraka who was accepting this new situation with a bit of annoyance. Asking around a little, he discovered that it had become the norm for most of them to skip once in a while so Izuku’s absence had not been very noticeable. Even that day, both Shouto and Yao were absent and no one mentioned it.

Izuku took away a fish to bring to Katsuki and returned to their room only to find it empty. Izuku checked inside the shower room and after confirming that it was empty, he placed the fish on the table and sat down. Waiting for him to come back from wherever he was. He was feeling a bit restless, he was gone for only two hours and Katsuki was not supposed to go anywhere in the meantime. As minutes passed, he was getting more and more convinced that Katsuki would not leave the room when he knew Izuku was returning soon. But what was he supposed to do? Leave the room and search for him? But where? If Katsuki were to return, he wouldn’t be able to find him and that could be a problem as well. As evening approached, Izuku could not wait any longer.

With anxiety biting him in the stomach, he tried immediately to exclude the possibility he feared the most. He knocked on Aizawa’s door.


“What Kat—Bakugou passed by? To surrender or something? Is he still in the test?”

Izuku was not even sure he was allowed to ask this question, but on the other hand, the only other
way to confirm something like this for sure was to wait for the next day in class and see if anyone else was missing. Being Katsuki, surrendering meant to lose immediately, so maybe, he was already sent away? That possibility was killing him. Aizawa never said he would announce to everyone when someone had been eliminated. The man remained silent for a moment, making Izuku’s heart beating fast with fear. It was not possible… right?

“No, I haven’t seen him. No one has been eliminated yet. Anything else?” he answered in the end in a neutral tone.

“No… thank you…”

He closed the door. Now that Izuku’s worst fear had proven to be unfounded, he returned to the room to take another look. Katsuki was still not there. Another wave of anxiety hit him. It was dinnertime, he should be in there. He left and took a look all around the building, peeking inside the rooms as he was passing by them. At nine, he returned to the room again hoping for a miracle, but Katsuki was not there. He remembered the time he had been ‘kidnapped’ by Uraraka, maybe right now Katsuki was in a similar predicament. He remembered perfectly how glad he had been to see him when he rescued him. He wanted to reciprocate in full. He was not going to leave him alone, if he had been kidnapped.

But where could he be? He had already taken a look in all the rooms, of course he had not tried every nook and cranny, but still. The only ‘locked’ places in the building were the bedrooms. And Aizawa’s quarters, but that was forbidden anyway. He could not believe that Aizawa had kidnapped him, that was stupid. No, it had to be another one of them. Probably to ask Izuku to surrender as a ransom for his freedom. Yeah, that could be it; someone kidnapped Katsuki so they could manipulate him. There was no Calling Card anywhere and the day before they didn’t receive anything so it was unlikely a quirk was involved, but brute force was always an option. On the other hand, Izuku could not see someone risking a mark by grabbing Katsuki physically… But you never know.

There was only one way to see inside the others’ room. He left again and started to knock. Shouto opened after a moment.

“Have you seen Four? Did anyone said his name?”

“Has something happened? No, no one said his name.” he answered calmly.

“I can’t find him anywhere. Are you positive nothing happened? You weren’t at the beach so maybe you saw something?” he tried again sneaking a peek inside the room. It was empty. Well, he could be tied in the shower room… “Do you mind if I enter a moment?”

Shouto hesitated only a moment and then let him in. Izuku didn’t care if he was being rude, he immediately sneaked a look in the shower room. Empty.

“All right, if you remember something that may be important please tell me!” Izuku left.

The second room, the one right in front of Shouto’s, was Tensei’s.

“Have you seen Four?”

“No, I haven’t. Why?” he answered in a neutral tone, he didn’t look scared or suspicious either.

“I’m searching for him.” he hesitated for a moment, but then decided he didn’t care if he was not very familiar with the guy. He and Uraraka weren’t the most trustworthy people on the island. “Do you mind if I take a look in your room?”
“If you think I’m keeping him here, you are mistaken but sure, take a look around.” he opened the door fully for him.

Izuku didn’t waste any time looking at the room, he immediately took a look in the shower room. Empty.

“All right, sorry to bother you.” he was about to left when he remembered. “You sure Uraraka didn’t kidnap him, right?” he didn’t care if he was sounding a bit accusatory.

“Well, I can’t say it with total certainty, but I was with her until a little while ago. If you want I can make her open the door for you.” he didn’t seem very perturbed by the accusation.

“Yes, please.”

They left and they immediately went to her room. The girl looked pretty annoyed but let them in. The room and the shower room were empty. Izuku abandoned them and knocked on Tsuyu’s door.

“Have you seen Four?”

“No, I haven’t seen him at all today. Has something happened?” she answered, once again nothing suspicious in her behavior.

“I can’t find him anywhere. Sorry to doubt you but can I take a look around?” he didn’t think it was her, especially since Katsuki would not let himself get overwhelmed by a small girl like her.

Tsuyu let him in and once again, the result was just the same. He tried then Yao’s room and he was pretty sure he could not ask the girl to look into her bathroom, but he was going to try anyway.

“Have you seen Four?”


“Sorry, do you mind if I take a quick look in your room?” he tried to sound as gentle as possible.

“E-eh?! I… Okay?” she was definitely confused and it took Izuku only a glance to confirm that she had no idea what was going on.

Next was Haru. She took a while.

“C-coming!!” finally the door opened. “Oh… it’s you. What do you need Izu?” she tried to smile sweetly. She looked a bit suspicious, he definitely wanted to look in her room.

“Have you seen Four? Do you mind if I take a look inside? Not to suspect you or anything, I’m leaving immediately.” he thought it was better to just be frank with it.

“Hmmmm… Okay you can enter but… I don’t know what’s going on, but asking to enter a girl’s room so forcefully… Are you a perv? If you try something funny, I’ll scream!” she opened the door nevertheless.

He ignored her and took immediately a peek in the shower room. Empty. Damn.

“H-hey! Not my shower room! Are you trying to see my underwe-“

“Sorry to disturb you. Have you seen Four?” he repeated the question.

“No, I haven’t. Were you thinking I was keeping him in here? Geez… That’s so not cool! Why
would I keep a male in my bedroom? Perv.” she crossed her arms.

“Yeah, right, sorry. Good night.” he didn’t care what they were saying of him right now, he needed to find Katsuki.

He returned to the male section and knocked on Kirishima’s door.

“Enji.” was the first thing he said. The password. “Sorry to disturb you, have you seen Four?”

“Bak-Four? No, why?” he didn’t look suspicious either, not that Izuku thought he would.

He had no reason to kidnap Katsuki, he was pretty confident of that. Once again, he asked permission to enter and once again the room was empty.

“I can’t find him anywhere. If you see him will you let me know, please?”

“Sure, okay. Has something happened?” he looked worried.

“I don’t know, but I sure hope not.”

The last room was Kaminari’s and he was pretty sure he would not find him there either.

“Enji. Have you seen Four?”

“Eh? My name is Denki, not Enji, what are you talking about? Four? No, not seen him! What’s going on pal?” Kaminari answered totally unconcerned.

Izuku was not sure if this was a doll or just him being stupid. He even gave his name away like it was cotton candy.

“The password?” he tried.

“Ohh, that thing! Yeah, Shishi told me! The name of the supervisor or something, right? Right! Totally forgot!” he smiled widely.

Izuku, just to make sure, pinched his hand.

“Oh, man! What was that for?!” Kaminari took two steps back and Izuku used the opportunity to enter the room and sneak a peek in the bathroom.

Empty. Katsuki was in none of the rooms.

He had disappeared into nothingness.

Chapter End Notes

Just wanted you to know that I’m currently writing the last arc of the story, I still have some chapters left, after all I just started the finale, but I’m getting close! In other words, don’t worry! This story is 100% going to be finished :)

Next chapter is on the 10th of September!
Izuku returned to the room, hoping that Katsuki would have somehow bypassed them all and returned. Of course not.

Izuku sat on the floor with his back on the bed feeling lost. Katsuki was supposed to be the one to always avoid traps, he was supposed to be always there for him, he was supposed to be the one that rescued him, not the one to disappear. Izuku took another look around, in case he had left him some notes or something, but there was absolutely nothing. He tried to think, again, no Calling Card was found, so no quirk was involved. But he was not locked in one of the rooms either. Now that Izuku was thinking about it, there were some unoccupied rooms, he could check there too.

He did, he tried every other room that didn’t have a number plate, both on the male side and the female side. Of course, Katsuki was nowhere. So, no quirk was involved, no room was used… Was Katsuki somewhere else in the building? But where? Should he try to check every corner? Everyone was in their room when he tried, so no one was guarding a kidnapped Katsuki locked up somewhere. Had they abandoned him for the moment? Maybe it was a place where no one could find him? Katsuki could not scream for help after all… He tried to search all over the building again, more carefully this time.

As the night was approaching slowly, Izuku had all the time in the world to fall into despair. Katsuki was nowhere to be seen and now that the sun had disappeared beyond the horizon, the hallways looked creepy. He felt like he had been suddenly thrown into and horror game. Every shadow was scary, even his own. Not to mention, the fact that the silence was incredibly endless and loud. Growing up in a city, he was not used to this silence at all, but it never bothered him before. This was the first time he ever noticed it. Now every step he was taking, everything he was moving was making a terrible noise that put him on edge. He was starting to think that soon, a zombie would jump at him from a corner.

Nothing.

Nothing anywhere. He returned to the room once again and he was feeling even more restless. If this was a way to make him surrender using Katsuki why he had yet to receive anything? A note, a warning, anything. They could not want to keep Katsuki hostage for a long period of time, the longer, the more probability to be discovered or for Katsuki to find a way to escape on his own. Even kidnapped, Katsuki was still clever.

None of this made any sense.

The next morning, after a horribly long night of anxiety, Izuku went straight to Aizawa’s quarters. He asked him if Katsuki was still in the game and Aizawa answered the same thing from last time. So Katsuki was still somewhere on the island. Unless Aizawa was lying, but Izuku could not believe their supervisor would lie to them like this. There could be the possibility of this not even being Aizawa, if Izuku wanted to dig deep into despairing thoughts, but who would be so crazy to attack him of all people? Izuku had no choice but to believe him. His theory of a fake Aizawa was even more shaky when they reached the classroom together and everyone else, besides Katsuki, of course, was already seated. If everyone was there then no one could be around controlling strange dolls and stuff. And it was pretty unlikely that anyone would fake a whole lesson with a fake Aizawa. The real one would probably not be quiet about that. So Izuku was back where he started.
He sat down, looking at the empty desk with unease. Was Katsuki going to be penalized for his absence? He never actually got confirmation about this attending class, but Izuku just kind of assumed. Aizawa said that the lessons were compulsory after all. Strangely, the man started the lecture without mentioning Katsuki’s absence at all.

“I’m sorry I have a question!” Yao asked, raising her hand high. “Four is not here, is that okay?”

“Four?” Aizawa answered, bored. “Oh, the blond kid. Yes, it’s okay because he told me in advance. He got permission.”

Katsuki got permission?

“Wait, you mean he told you he wouldn’t attend class for a while?” Izuku asked, forgetting to raise his hand.

“Yeah.” the man answered with nonchalance.

“So,” Tsuyu raised her hand, “Four is voluntarily missing classes? Is that allowed?”

“I just said it. If you tell me in advance, there is no problem. He just need to take a remedial class afterwards. This test allows you to hide for a period if you need to. Can I continue with the lecture now?” he scratched his head.

“So K-Four hid voluntarily?!” Izuku could not help himself.

“I just said it kid. Are you deaf? Yeah, Four or whatever you call him is voluntarily hiding somewhere on the island and asked to be excused from classes for a period. Now I’m continuing the lecture, ready or not.”

Izuku didn’t heard a word of the lecture, he was too stunned. So he spoke to Aizawa two times and the man didn’t tell him anything useful both times and now he was just reacting like this was obvious and he was being stupid. He was mad at him for this. But even worse, he was mad at Katsuki. He hid voluntarily! Why didn’t he tell him? Why not leave a note? Why did he wait for him to leave for a couple hours to disappear? Where was he now?

Since the lesson lasted for two hours, Izuku had all the time to muddle things over. The anger slowly faded, Katsuki had to have some kind of reason. If Izuku had to guess, he was attacked, and he could not wait for Izuku to come back. So he probably went straight to Aizawa and hid in a secret place only he knew. Katsuki surely never told him of any place he had found, so he had no way of knowing where he could be. His only options was either to wait or to search for him again.

Of course, he was not going to sit and wait.

As soon as the lesson ended, Izuku stopped Aizawa from going back to his room.

“Sorry, can you tell me for how much time Four asked permission to leave?” Izuku asked him.

“No, I can’t. You’ve been asking me for two days about this. Why should I give you this information? For all I know, you are the reason he escaped in the first place. I’m impartial to everyone. Why should I tell you anything? Kid, you are supposed to do things on your own here. You can’t go asking me about everything.” the man didn’t look very annoyed, even if he was speaking like he was.

Izuku thought the man was actually telling him something he needed to know, but he was doing it in a way that it was not unfair to all the others. It made sense. He thanked him and let him go.
Izuku checked the room once again, but of course, Katsuki was not there. The only thing he could do was check around once again. He spent the whole day looking around, Tsuyu offered to look with him, or more precisely to keep him company while he was searching. The whole day ended up with a big fat nothing. Izuku was starting to think either Katsuki had dung a den like a mole or he was somewhere outside of the building.

That night he slept. He was too tired to even thinking about staying up, but his sleep was interrupted multiple times. During the previous nights he had gotten used to have something warm sleeping next to him, far too quickly than he expected to be honest. Someone. Katsuki was not a ‘hugging during sleep’ type, he was complaining about being too hot if he even got too close. But even so the bed was not that wide, for as far as he could sleep from him he just needed to extend a hand a little to touch him. Now suddenly the bed was very wide, cold and empty.

This was very stupid; he had slept in an identical bed alone for months.

The next morning, he was feeling even more tired if possible. He slept, but he didn’t rest. He really would’ ve preferred if Katsuki had left him some note or something. He should have at least told him if he had found a secret hiding sport or something. Maybe he could try to figure out why he decided to go into hiding, but he seriously had no clues. That day went by very similarly to the previous one; he searched for him, only on the outside this time. Kaminari and Kirishima were the ones to accompany him, but Izuku had a feeling that all the noise that Kaminari was making was helping Katsuki stay hidden more than the opposite.

By dinnertime, he returned to the room feeling completely discouraged. He could not find him anywhere and he was not getting any closer to understanding why he had decided to hide. Maybe, he was waiting for him to do something, but Izuku was too obtuse to understand what that was. A little, malicious voice in his head was starting to tell him that maybe Katsuki had really escaped because of him. Maybe he did something wrong or he misunderstood something. But at the same time, reason was telling him how stupid that idea was. Katsuki was not the kind of person that would get easily pushed into things by others and he was perfectly capable of saying no, if he wanted to. Not to mention that surely he could not stay hidden for almost a year, which was beyond absurd. Surely, he had to confront him sooner or later and with that in mind it was really not possible that he was hiding for such a cowardice reason.

He munched on a sandwich feeling really down. He was not really alone, he could talk to Tsuyu and the three guys, Kirishima, Kaminari and Shouto, but he was feeling sad and alone. He missed Katsuki greatly. These days were telling him just how different this test would be if Katsuki never were a part of it. And this could probably be what Katsuki was thinking this test would be. In some, strange way it was very good luck that made him discover his quirk on that day, right before the test. If he had discovered it any later he would had to take the test later, alone.

He wanted Katsuki back so bad.

The next day he walked around the hallways mindlessly, if he hadn’ t found him in three days, why would he find him today? He was turning a corner, not even minding where he was going, when a voice he didn’ t recognize called him and made him jump out of his skin in scare.

“Ah Izuku!”

It was the voice of a girl he never heard before and she said his first name like it was nothing. He turned in a hurry, dread filling him, and saw a girl he had never seen before. Or so he thought for a moment, but then he remembered. She had already seen this girl. It was on the first day, in one of the windows of the second floor, when he was approaching the front door. A girl with black short hair had waved at him and then she had disappeared. Izuku had thought she was a ghost. He never saw
that girl after so he completely forgot about this. He recognized her, she was indeed that one girl, and she had the same short black hair.

Suddenly he remembered something else. He had talked with Katsuki a lot about this potential secret participant, which they hadn’t met yet. Maybe it was this girl all along. But Izuku had thought, based on the numbers, that it had to be male. The person in front of him was definitely female. Not that Izuku wanted to assume genders, but the girl was wearing a loose off-the-shoulder white top and the straps of her black bra were visible. Not to mention that her black pants were super adherent and there was definitely nothing to see there.

If Izuku had ever seen a girl before, she was one, alright.

“Katsuki is inside the sea cave that’s on the Northern side of the island… If you don’t know where that is, try checking the map that he drew of the island some time ago, it’s inside his room, on the photo album. You can only reach it by swimming so you better get a swimsuit.”

And just like that, without even giving him time to answer or ask anything, she disappeared, like she never existed in the first place. Izuku stared at the spot where the girl was standing, not sure of what to think. Maybe she was a ghost after all. Never mind that, how was she able to get both their names? Who was she? Should he trust her?

Now that she had reminded him, Katsuki had indeed drew a map some time ago. He even said he was going to swim around a little. Of course, Izuku was remembering useful stuff only when it was too late. Very nice Izuku.

He hurried back to the room, to make sure the map was indeed where the girl had said. He opened the drawer and yes, it was truly there. The girl somehow knew that too. She could either be an angel, who was solving all his problems at once and was his biggest current ally, or she could be a demon who knew stuff she wasn’t supposed to and who was going to destroying them all later. For now, Izuku wanted to bet on her and get to Katsuki as soon as possible. Luckily, Izuku had brought a swimsuit from home, knowing he was going to an island. Izuku changed underwear for the swimsuit, putting his clothes back on. He didn’t want to run around the building in a swimsuit and even during the seafood barbeque he was always wearing clothes. If anyone saw him walk around half naked, it would look incredibly weird.

He looked at the map, memorizing the lines of the coast, there was not exactly a big sign with ‘CAVE’ on it anywhere, but he could see a question mark pointing at a point in particular. That must have been it. He put the map back in its place and left the room. He thought about running to the outside, but he decided to act as normally as possible. If someone was targeting Katsuki, it would only make sense they would know to spy on Izuku to see if he was capable of finding him. He didn’t want to help any enemy of Katsuki’s. So he walked slowly, trying not to look too hopeful or happy. He had to look as distressed and worried as before.

Leaving the building, he felt a little better but didn’t drop the act until he was on the beach. Once he was there, he undressed and hid the clothes behind a rock, just in case. He slowly walked on the low tide, it was pretty chilly, but in a couple seconds Izuku’s body got used to it and he just dived in completely to get used to it all at once. It was the first time Izuku swam on that island, the ocean was very clean and it felt good in that hot June day.

He was not a great swimmer, so it took him a lot of time to lose sight of the little beach, following the line of the coast instead. The cliff above his head was so high that Izuku felt a bit like an ant, he was reminded of all those shark movies and anxiety was eating away his stomach. He wanted to stay in a safe looking area while he was swimming and not in here where it was completely engulfed in the shadow. Both the building and the cliff were doing a great job keeping the sun away. The water
around him was dark blue, a bit too dark blue. Not being able to see the bottom at all made him even more nervous. At some point, Izuku yelped in fear when one of his foot hit a submerged rock that was invisible from the surface. Not only it hurt, but also it frightened him immensely.

By this point, he was already whimpering, regretting every decision of his life.

When he finally saw the cave, which felt like an eternity later, he actually started to cry in relief, calling for Katsuki. His voice was not loud enough to cover for the noise of the waves hitting the rocks, but Katsuki was sitting on a rock just at the entrance and saw him approaching as if he was a guard or something. Katsuki remained for a second frozen in place, shocked to see him there, then he got up. Izuku swam the last few meters like he was drowning and had just saw his only hope of survival right in front of him. Then he stood up on the rocky bottom of the cave, cutting both of his feet in the process and jumped on Katsuki.

“Ahh, Katsuki I was so scared!! Why did you have to choose this place?! Couldn’t you just hide somewhere else?! Ahh, I thought I was gonna die!!”

Katsuki didn’t reciprocate the hug and made some disgruntled noises, Izuku easily recognized disgust in them. After a while, he just grabbed him by the shoulders and broke the hug. He stared at his now soaked sweater with a very disgusted expression. Raising his arms, he sighed loudly and grabbed the notebook nearby.

-Look what you have done! This was my only set of dry clothes! It gets really cold in here at night! Unbelievable! I’m going to get a cold because of you!-

“Well, sorry,” he was not sorry at all, “you asshole! I searched for you everywhere! I even challenged this scary sea to see you!”

-You are aware that sharks can’t possibly pass the barrier, right? What’s so scary about this place?-

Oh.

“Well, the water was very dark and I hit my foot on a rock!” he had to protect his pride somehow.

“Hmm.” was Katsuki only comment.

He sighed and led him deeper into the cave. Izuku was extremely surprised when he saw what was inside and how big it was. On the far side of the cave was a bunch of old pieces of clothes, it was impossible to determine what they were in origin but now apparently they were what made up Katsuki’s bed. On the left side, were three inflatable lifesavers and a small pile of bread and other canned food. Izuku could easily assume that they were the method Katsuki used to bring food, clothes and the notebook from the other this side of the island. Clever. On the right side, there was a quite big empty space with chains nailed to the wall which gave Izuku a really bad feeling. Above the ‘bed’ were a lot of writings on the cave wall. This place looked both like a prison and a secret base.

-How did you find me? I’m surprised to see you at all-

“It’s a very long story. I want to hear yours first! I’m here because of you in the first place! What is this place anyway?! Chains?”

Katsuki looked around for a second then scratched his head, in search of the right words. He sat on the clothes and Izuku joined him.

-I found this place some time ago, after the time we went together to the barbeque. I searched the
entire perimeter and found this. I asked Aizawa after I found it and he said that as long as it was inside the barrier, I could stay for the night wherever I wanted and if I needed to miss some lectures I could, but I had to tell him in advance. As for what this place is... it’s natural, so I guess it’s just a cave. For what I can infer, this place was used as a hiding spot and a kidnapping spot quite some time ago. Some of the stuff was already here, like the chains and these tatters. I just brought the food and my stuff here. The clothes and the notebook. I was hiding here after I told Aizawa-

“Yeah, but what I want to know is why you didn’t tell me! Or left me some kind of hint!” Izuku was still pretty irritated about that.

-I could not, it was too dangerous. I know, I know, you are not happy with me, but this was the best solution. I was not going to stay hidden forever anyway, just for a bit, to see what’s actually going on-

“This doesn’t explain anything. Who attacked you? What happened?”

Katsuki was deep in thought, playing with his pen. Time stretched as Katsuki was not writing anything and Izuku’s irritation only grew. And the answer was not even nearly satisfactory as Izuku was hoping.

-I’m still not sure myself-

“Ah?! You were attacked, right? Tell me how! What happened! By who? How?”

-I don’t know who it was and how. I just knew I was not safe anywhere, so I couldn’t remain in the room. That’s why I chose this place. I’m just waiting to see if anything else happens. That’s all-

None of this made any sense at all. He was attacked outside of the room and he didn’t know how or by whom? How would that even work? Was he attacked by a gust of wind?

“You are lying to me aren’t you?” he tried to keep the disappointment out of his voice, but he failed. “You didn’t receive a Calling Card, surely you know who attacked you and how.”

Katsuki wouldn’t meet his eyes, staring at the ocean instead.

“Why aren’t you telling me?”

He picked up his pen after a moment of hesitation.

-Because this is not about the test, it’s not something you need to know. It’s something about me, a thing from the past. I’ll deal with it myself-

“And I can’t help you with this? Even if I don’t ask what it is?” now Izuku was feeling sad.

Once again, Katsuki was protecting another barrier. Something from the past? What the hell happened this time?

-Give me some time. There are only two possible outcomes of this. Either I have solved the situation already or I’m going to lose the test. You can’t help me and trying to do so will only put you in danger-

He didn’t care if he was going to be in danger, this was just too frustrating. Failing the test. And he was supposed to do just nothing? Katsuki was staring at him and he could probably sense what he was going on in his head right now.
“Will you trust me at least when I say that if you could have helped me, I would have told you?”

“I really cannot help? No matter what?” Katsuki shook his head. “You swear that when you don’t ask for help is only because I cannot help? Anytime that I can help, will you ask me?”

Katsuki rolled his eyes.

- I won’t ask EVERY time you can help. I won’t ask you to peel my apples, I can do it myself, thank you very much!-

Izuku slapped his arm.

“Stop being stupid. I’m being serious!” he said frowning.

- In the realm of common sense, all right, I’ll ask for your help, if you can help me-

Izuku sighed, defeated.

“Okay, okay. I’ll just ignore this for now. I can’t force you to tell me and getting angry won’t help anyone. I just hope you’ll tell me someday.”

- So, how did you find me?-

Chapter End Notes

When the story is completed I will inform you but I won't put the total number of chapters in the description, I want it to be a surprise :)

See you on the 17th of September.
“Oh, you won’t believe it! I think I found the secret extra participant! But it’s very strange, it’s a girl!”

Katsuki stared at him for a moment with wide eyes before writing in a hurry.

-You joking? Are you sure of what you’re saying?- 

“No, I’m not sure. I mean, it was a girl I’ve never seen before, but maybe it’s some kind of quirk. Maybe it was one of Uraraka’s dolls.” now that he was thinking about this, it was true, it was possible.

The girl knew both their names and she could use any doll she wanted from the outside world, it was not like she was limited to the people inside. But at the same time, why would she help him find Katsuki and how would she know about the map?

“Have you mentioned the map to anyone?”

Katsuki was very confused.

-The map? Of the island? You found me thanks to that?- 

“More or less, that girl I was talking about told me to look at the map to see where the cave was. She told me you were hiding in here and she used both our names.”

Katsuki scratched his head trying to follow Izuku’s confused way of explaining.

-Are you sure that was not one of Uraraka’s dolls?- 

“Yeah, no. But that’s why I asked you if you told anyone about the map.”

-Of course not. Who do you take me for? I haven’t told anyone about my only advantage. Not even you- 

“Yeah, I noticed.” Izuku pouted. “So there is a possibility that it was not Uraraka, maybe it’s some girl with a quirk that makes her invisible or something.”

-I guess it could be possible, but after I spoke to Aizawa about missing the lectures, I realized that this extra person must have somehow gone to lectures without us noticing. Is it possible that she was just invisible the whole time, but I don’t believe it. We would have heard her or touched her, or she would have moved an object. Not to mention that the Invisibility quirk doesn’t work for long. One hour at a time, if I remember correctly. We should have seen her already- 

“Well, she did disappear into thin air after we talked. Oh, wait!” realization hit him. “Uraraka’s dolls disappear in a bunch of lights, she disappeared entirely in a second, like she was never there to begin with. That must be her quirk!”

-Well, if that is how it is, then she can’t be another person. You can’t have two quirks. You can’t change appearances and have a quirk that makes you disappear all at the same time. Make sense? So yeah, she must be the secret person-
“Next are you going to ask me if I’m sure she was female, right? I already took a good look, I’m sure!”

Katsuki stared at him with a ghost of a smile.

-No, I wasn’t going to ask about that, but it’s interesting to hear that you immediately went there. How exactly did you confirm that? What did you see? How close were you to be so sure?-

“Shut up. I just saw a bit of her bra. Perv.” he pouted.

-No, that’s you-

“I just checked because we thought it was a male!”

Katsuki was grinning.

-You don’t have to justify your perverted thoughts to me, I always knew you had it in you-

Izuku slapped his arm, still pouting.

“As if you don’t know that I like males already!”

Katsuki ignored him.

-So the mysterious person is female and has a quirk that let her escape lectures easily. For now let’s call it Invisibility for simplicity, but it’s definitely not that. What do we know is that now, the number of girls don’t match. If that’s a girl, counting Haru, Froppy, Uraraka and Yao we have five girls. But there are only 4 rooms And the number of the males don’t match either. You are number 7 so we are still missing a male somewhere-

“What if one girl is living in one of the unnumbered rooms?” as he was asking he realized the stupidity of his question. Of course, Katsuki just mentioned that the males weren't matching either and what was even more proof was that he had searched through all of the unnumbered rooms when he was searching for Katsuki. “No, scratch that. I searched all of them. They were all empty. I don’t think anyone would live in a completely empty room. There were beds, of course, but no sheets or blankets. Even if they could keep the bed undone for camouflage, it still doesn’t match with the male doors.”

-Indeed. Glad I don’t have to answer to such a very easy question-

“So… does that mean…” he didn’t want to see it out loud himself.

It was stupid but he was feeling almost like it was very rude to speculate on someone’s gender.

-It means that one of the girls is actually a male-

“But who?” that was a really strange question to ask. Which one of the girls was actually not a girl?

-For sure not Uraraka. She is definitely female, we have seen her quirk and you were in her body, you even went to the bathroom with her body-

“Yes, don’t remind me of that.” Izuku shook his head a little.

-We know Froppy’s quirk, so she can’t change her physical appearance. Did she look like a girl to you?-
“Well, it’s not like I have seen her naked. On the beach she comes with shirt and shorts, so…”

-Well, let’s assume she is a girl. I can’t see a good reason for her to fake her identity since she doesn’t want to keep her quirk a secret. Unless this is some gender issue stuff, I doubt that a girl so upfront would do this-

“By the way. I entered the room with the number 6 on the door and it was bare. Like it had never been used. And I have entered all the girls’ rooms. Doesn’t this seem strange? Where does that extra girl even sleep? And does this means that one of the males stole her room?” so many doubts.

-Have you already forgotten? I know some time passed, but Aizawa’s speech at the beginning was important. He said that we are allowed to sleep everywhere and to go everywhere. That does mean, of course, that even though we call them ‘our’ rooms they are literally just bedrooms. Anyone can enter and sleep there. No one is forced to sleep on the correct side. A guy can sleep in a girl’s room and a girl can sleep in a guy’s room-

“I didn’t realize at all! Wow…” Izuku was speechless. He never even thought about what that rule, or lack of rule, would entail. “So basically the mysterious girl is sleeping wherever and this fake female took her room?”

-That’s the only thing I can think of. Unless there two people are working together. Still, the point doesn’t change. I don’t have any doubt that a male is sleeping in a girl’s room-

“Excluding Uraraka and Tsuyu we are left with Yao and Haru. Who can be the fake?”

Katsuki shrugged, signaling that he had no idea.

“I have seen Haru in a swimsuit multiple times. She has a female body. Yao always wears shirt and shorts, but it’s not like I can say she is not female either. I have no idea what to think about this.”

-It all depends on the quirk really. If the quirk is anything similar to Uraraka’s quirk, it doesn’t matter how ‘female’ the body is. I know nothing about those two, they could have any quirk in existence as far as I know. It’s impossible to determine right now. And let’s not exclude Froppy completely. There is still a chance-

“I’ll try to find a way to ask her that wouldn’t offend her. I can’t ask Yao or Haru though. That would be…” probably the last thing he would ever do in his life.

Honestly, asking a girl ‘are you a male?’ was a clear expression of your death wish.

-Okay, do as you wish-

Izuku observed him a bit. He was interested in the subject, but not crazy interested. This probably meant that whatever had happened to him that caused him to hide had nothing to do with this. This confirmed Izuku’s suspicion that Katsuki had a very clear idea of what attacked him, who and why. Irritation crawled on his skin all over again, but he had to give up again. He knew there were things he could get out of him by exasperating him, mostly things he wanted himself but didn’t want to admit it, but at the same time he knew that there were things he would never get out of him, no matter what. Katsuki was very, very good at setting up barriers for what he didn’t want to share with anyone. But Izuku was just worried about him.

“Is this place even safe?”

- Mostly. At least the waves don’t reach me-
“I think we should get more food.” he studied the pile of food and he could not see anything very appetizing.

-We? Who is we?-  

“You and me. There is not enough food for two.”

-Yeah, ‘cause you’re staying. Sure-

“Of course.”

-No. You are not staying. You have to go. And don’t even start, this is not advice. It’s a fact, you are not staying-

“You can’t give me orders. I do what I want.” Izuku crossed his arms.

When Katsuki slapped his hand on the floor of the cave, Izuku winced in surprise. Katsuki’s expression was so open, so full of anguish, that Izuku’s heart skipped a beat and a weight settle on his stomach. He realized, a moment too late, what his choice of words had been.

-Just do what I say for once! Why do you have to make thing more difficult for me?! Why are you always making things more difficult?!-

Katsuki got up throwing his notebook on the pile of food and started to pace the cave. Izuku got up himself, feeling awful and angry all at once.

“If you hate me, then just tell me to not get close to you ever again!” Izuku yelled.

He knew he was overreacting, he knew that Katsuki was not saying that. He knew, but his brain was not always connected to his heart or mouth.

Katsuki stopped in his tracks and stared at him. His jaw was clenched and his hands opened and closed into fists three times. After a moment, when Izuku had time to feel shame for his stupid outburst, Katsuki shook his head looking like he was fighting something internally. He shook his head again, maintaining eyes contact only for a moment and then looking away. Izuku started to feel really tired. He wanted to get closer to Katsuki, to understand him more as he promised, but now Katsuki was actively fighting against him. Only letting him get closer when he wanted and refusing everything else. But at the same time understanding him better included understanding his limits, his barriers. Breaking through them was not necessarily the right answer to the problem.

“Sorry. Really. I’m just frustrated. You left me without a word, I was worried, now I found you and you won’t say anything, you don’t want my help and you don’t want me to stay here. Can you explain at least why you don’t want me here? What do you mean that I’m making things more difficult?” he said with a soft voice, taking a step in his direction.

Katsuki sighed loudly and picked up his notebook again.

-Because there is the possibility that I may hurt you. Or you may hurt me. And then we are done. Both of us. And that’s the same for everyone else. I hid here because I don’t want to risk anything, I need to be alone for a while. I’ll come back on my own. I promise-

“Oh… I see…” of course, as always Katsuki was right.

-It’s best if you don’t stay anyway. It’s cold at night, the food is cold and terrible and the ocean keeps me awake. It’s not a nice vacation-
“Okay, but I’ll still come check on you regularly.” he paused then he added something. “Is that okay?”

Katsuki shrugged. Izuku took that as a confirmation and closed the distance, hugging him and hiding his face in his neck. Katsuki tensed for a moment, like always when physical contact was involved, then hugged back lightly.

“I was worried for you. I was afraid you got eliminated,” he whispered on his skin.

Katsuki nodded.

Izuku left a little later, before the sun started to set. Izuku was already scared of the ocean during the day, let alone at night. The swim to return looked just as long and when he reached the little beach, he felt strangely like he had returned home. Even though this place was most definitely not home. It was strange, just like for the people now even the place was looking more like the place where he actually belonged to, rather than the city where he lived all his life. The experience that he had had here were the most intense in his whole life, he was barely able to keep up with everything, always looking at different angles at things. It was dangerous and scary, yet he was feeling alive and full of different emotions like never before.

That night he slept well, finally resting as he was hoping. The next day, Izuku went back to meet him, taking with him some fresh apples from the tree using a little tablet of polystyrene that he found on the storage room to keep them away from the salt water. Katsuki sighed dramatically when he saw him again but the little smile betrayed his actual thoughts. Izuku, in a better mood, nestled with Katsuki on his ‘bed’ kissing him everywhere there was naked skin except his mouth. Katsuki was initially a little resistant, but ultimately just returned the cuddles and kisses. There was some more sweetness in his movements this time, as if he had actually missed him and was truly happy to see him. A huge wave of affection hit him. This was what was supposed to happen the first time but didn’t because they were both stubborn idiots.

He left him when the sun was already setting and the swim back was almost a nightmare. Nevertheless, Izuku was in a too good mood to really care. That night he had a wet dream, testimony that his activities with Katsuki, for as much as they were nice and warm, were a little too insufficient for his needs. The problem of not telling Aizawa that he had already absorbed his quirk was that they could just do this vanilla stuff. No kisses, no blowjobs and no sex, he had checked, there were no condoms in the ‘convenience store’. Which was stupid, they didn’t think about this possibility? What if a girl was to get pregnant during the test because of this? Really, bad planning.

That day, Monday 23 of June, he had class to attend. Tsuyu approached him before Aizawa and the majority could arrive at the classroom and asked him if he had done any progress in finding Katsuki. Izuku trusted her, but Katsuki’s safety was still his top priority so he lied, he said he had not found him yet. He thanked her for her concern, feeling a little guilty. Kirishima looked at the empty desk for a moment while he was passing by and nodded at Izuku in greeting. The lecture was once again very boring, Izuku was absolutely positive he would never become a lawyer. The news was that Aizawa informed them that in July they would have to take some physical tests. It was not that unusual for a Task Force member to have to chase criminals or fight, so it was important to assert their physical condition. Izuku eavesdropped on Kaminari while he was chatting lively with Kirishima, explaining that since he was supposed to be a part of the Collecting Information Branch or the Support Branch so he didn’t need to learn how to fight. Kaminari then commented on the fact that Aizawa gave an extra paper to Tensei before leaving.

“Oh, so you are a fighting type! Are you the only one? Surprising, a whole class and only one Fighter!” he smiled at him with his arms crossed.
“How do you know that?” Uraraka immediately tensed.

“Because that’s the schedule for his private training! I heard people talking in the Task Force, the observer is supposed to give private fighting lessons to the Fighters during the test.” he explained with a shrug.

Izuku remembered what the guy said to him when he was describing his quirk, about using it for torture and stuff. Of course, it made sense that Tensei was a fighter for the Task Force. How cruel to force him into situations where he was more prone to get hurt and use his quirk. Izuku left the classroom when everyone, one by one, started to disperse. It didn’t take him long, while walking in the hallway, to notice that Shouto was clearly following him. He stopped and gave him the possibility to catch up.

“How is he? You found him, right?” was the first thing Shouto said.

Izuku had a very clear feeling of whom he was talking about, but played dumb anyway.

“He? Who?”

“Four. How is he?” he repeated the question.

“How do you know I found him?” Izuku could have lied, he could have said anything else but no, he wanted an answer.

Shouto stared at him in the eyes, clearly confused. It took him a very long time to process Izuku’s question.

“Oh… I just noticed that you were in a good mood.”

It was not a strange answer, but the fact that he asked in the first place kind of was. In the first weeks of the test Shouto didn’t even want to talk to Katsuki, Izuku remembered perfectly the first time they talked, the way he said ‘he is useless to me’. And yet things had changed suddenly, first he went straight to Katsuki’s room to ask him what to do when Uraraka used Izuku’s doll to activate his quirk. Then they spent some time together alone in his room, waiting for midnight, and after that, they were talking as if they were friends. Well, almost, on Katsuki’s part. Now he was concerned for his well-being. He had asked how he was, not where or why he had disappeared. Had Izuku missed something important on the way?

“He is fine, he said he will come back on his own when he feels that it’s safe to do so.”

Izuku didn’t want to tell him he was attached or anything, but still Shouto could not be so oblivious as to not realize that this was the most obvious reason. Hopefully, the guy would not ask for more details. And indeed he didn’t ask.

“I see.” he relaxed a little, Izuku had not noticed that he was a little tense before. “Glad to hear that.”

With that, he left. Without even greeting him. Shouto was such a strange guy.

The next three days Izuku just waited. He waited for Katsuki to decide that he was safe, he waited for his return. Of course, he was still going to meet him every day in the cave, but the situation was never changing, everything was always the same. He was not going to pressure him, though, Katsuki was right 98% of the times, so he surely knew better than anyone when the right time was to return. Izuku gave him the information that Aizawa had given in his last lecture and told him that Tensei was the only fighting type in the test. Something that was still pretty important to know since they were unaware of some of the remaining quirks.
It was the fourth day, the one where Aizawa was giving another lecture that Katsuki finally showed up. Izuku woke up at the usual time and went to class feeling like it was going to be another boring day, but seeing him seated in his desk pushed away all the boredom in a swift swoop. Izuku sat down next to him feeling filled with enthusiasm and studied him a bit. Katsuki nodded in his direction, looking calm and composed as usual. He had dry clothes, but his hair was kind of dump, clearly he had just swum all the way here and he had not dried yet. Izuku reached up with a hand, to touch the spiky strands, when he realized that they were not alone in the room. He dropped the hand immediately, he could not believe he was about to do such an intimate gesture in front of strangers.

Kaminari and Kirishima greeted him when they entered and Tsuyu nodded in his direction with a smile. The last to enter the room was Shouto and he immediately locked eyes with Katsuki, he greeted him, completely ignoring Izuku, and sat down at his usual place. Izuku noticed that Katsuki’s eyes followed him for a bit. Izuku felt a little pinch of irritation, but he suppressed it immediately.

It was stupid, he was not going to get jealous of Shouto!

Chapter End Notes

The number of males and females is not questionable anymore, since Aizawa confirmed Izuku as number 7.
And yeah, while it could be possible that there could be another male, hidden somewhere, we already have one hidden person... I don’t like to use the same trick twice, so the mysterious girl is the only one, Katsuki and Izuku have the right idea: one of the females is actually a male!
Any idea of who? :)

See you the 24!
Okay, he was getting jealous of Shouto.

When the lecture ended, Izuku and Katsuki left the room together, but Shouto was following right behind them. Katsuki stopped and wrote –What?– on his notebook, but Shouto just answered “Nothing” and kept following them. When Katsuki started to climb the stairs to the second floor, to reach his room, he looked behind and sure enough he was still following them. Katsuki growled lowly and picked up the pace forcing Izuku to jog by his side. When they reached their room, the scene repeated. Katsuki turned suddenly and growled at Shouto who was only three steps behind them. The guy didn’t seem perturbed at all. Katsuki opened the door and pushed Izuku in, then after growling one last time, he slammed the door on Shouto’s face. Izuku stared as he plopped down on the bed irritated.

“What was that?” he asked, feeling completely out of the loop.

Katsuki sighed in clear annoyance and made a waving gesture with his hand.

-Let it go-

“No, seriously, what was that? That was weird!” he was not going to give up so easily.

Katsuki sighed again and picked himself up. He grabbed the notebook and wrote sloppily.

-Ignore him. He is just very, very strange-

That was no explanation and they both knew it.

“How come you two are such good friends now?” he was not pouting, he was definitely not pouting.

-Who’s that weirdo’s friend?- 

“He even asked how you were when you were away.” absolutely not pouting.

-How am I supposed to answer that? Ask him if you’re so curious-

“Something must have happened between you two! He changed attitude too fast! And you are the one who wanted me to keep track of these strange details! Not to mention you didn’t give me the password!” he added at the end, luckily his brain had been faster than his thinking process because he just realized that.

Katsuki smirked.

-You are still an idiot but you are learning! Impressive! October 14th-

“Shut up!” Izuku yelped weakly.

Katsuki’s smirk grew.

-I’m not even speaking-
It was Izuku’s turn to growl in frustration, he let himself fall on Katsuki’s bed and stared at him still smirking from above.

“Really, something happened, it must’ve!” Izuku still had not forgotten the topic that Katsuki was trying to make him forget.

His smirk disappeared and he turned to write on his lap.

-Nothing happened, lately he just decided that he took a liking to me, for whatever reason-
Izuku could not believe his eyes. When did something like this even happened? How, why?

-Do we have to talk about him all day? He already bothered me yesterday-

“Yesterday? But you were still at the cave!”

-Yeah. Stalker followed you the day before yesterday from the cliff and saw you enter the cave. Yesterday he approached me directly. That was one of the reasons why I decided to leave hiding-

“HE WHAT?!”

-I was pretty mad. Anyway, his intrusion convinced me that it was time to flee from there and here I am-

“Absurd… he didn’t follow me to attack you? He wanted to talk to you?!” everything was too strange for Izuku to get his bearings.

-If he wanted to attack me he just needed to say my name. No, he wanted to talk with me-

Izuku was weirded out to say the least. What was going on inside the bicolor guy’s mind? Before he could ask anything else, Katsuki started to complain about the fact that Izuku didn’t replace the food supply and now they were running low. Then he scanned the whole room and found even more fuel for complaints. In the end, Katsuki wrote a list and they left to do some ‘shopping’.

When they opened the door, Shouto was still standing there. Katsuki slammed the door.

They remained in complete silence for two minutes and then he opened the door again, slowly this time. Shouto was still there. Katsuki sighed and then dragged a shocked Izuku out of the room. Shouto followed them at the ‘convenience store’ and then up again to their room, he even offered to carry some of their stuff. Katsuki just growled in his direction. Once they were safely shut in Katsuki’s room, Izuku sent him an appealed glance. Katsuki sighed and then shrugged.

-I told you he is a stalker-

That was not the last time this happened. The next day he was outside the room when Katsuki tried to open to confirm if he was still there. The second day Katsuki threw an empty plastic bottle out of the door, missing him only by a couple inches. Luckily, that dissuaded him and he wasn’t there the third time Katsuki opened the door. This was half-funny and half not funny at all, Shouto was behaving like a madman.

Izuku was no longer jealous of him.

They had to get used to Shouto’s weirdness since the guy was no longer waiting outside of the door, but he was waiting for them at the stairs to the first floor. Katsuki started to ignore him, like he was not even there. Izuku was restless as first, but then he resigned himself, Shouto was greeting Katsuki
and ignoring Izuku every time, following them around, offering help and nothing else. He wouldn’t even come within three feet from them. Izuku even asked Katsuki if he had marked him and Katsuki answered with a murdering glare.

The morning of the 29th of June, when Izuku woke up, next to Katsuki like usual, he saw something on the floor. He immediately jumped on his feet scaring Katsuki that groaned confused and got closer to the square piece of paper. It was not black. It was not a Calling Card. Katsuki peeked from behind his shoulder as Izuku picked the note up and started to read.

Dear Izu,

It’s Froppy. Something has come up and
I won’t be able to attend class for a while,
I have already informed Aizawa, thank
Four in my place for making me realize
that it was a possibility in the first place.
I won’t be away for too long, don’t worry
about me, I’m going to be fine.

You be careful, okay?

PS: I would be very grateful if you could
water my plants in my room.

The door is open.

See you soon

Izuku stared at the note, he had a bad feeling. Something has come up? First Katsuki that had been attacked by who knows who, then Tsuyu was retreating as well… Something was lurking in the background and Izuku didn’t like it one bit.

“Any idea of what is going on?” he asked him.

Katsuki scratched his head as an answer. Izuku got on his feet holding the note.

“I want to check her room. Do you want to come as well?”

Katsuki shrugged and Izuku took it as an affirmation. They left the room and walked to the girls’ side, for once Shouto was not there waiting. Izuku was grateful for the luck but he was wondering if the guy had anything to do with anything. He was acting really strange after all.

The room was exactly as Izuku remembered it, only with a bit more stuff in it. Nothing was out of place, everything was still stacked neatly and there was no sign of a break in or anything. The girl said he was hiding voluntarily, just as Katsuki had done, so probably the attacker had not entered her room. Izuku wondered for a moment if he should try to search around a bit for any clues, but then decided against it. This was still a girl’s room; he could not pry into her belongings.

Katsuki had a different opinion.
“Hey! Don’t open her drawer! What if she has her underwear in there?!” Izuku scolded him immediately.

Katsuki glared at him and pointed at the empty drawer. It was empty? Then Katsuki opened every other closed space and revealed that everything was empty. The girl had brought all her clothes with her, wherever she was hiding.

“You think she hid in the cave?” asked Izuku in a whisper, not wanting to potentially compromise the girl’s hiding spot.

Katsuki shrugged again, unsure. They left the room after closing all the open compartments. It was really rude to leave the room in a mess after the girl had asked him to take care of it. Well, she only asked him to take care of the plants, but same difference. Once they were back into the hallway Izuku proposed to take a look at the cave, to see if she was there, even though he was not enthusiastic himself. He had been very glad when he didn’t have to go there anymore. Katsuki probably intercepted his thoughts and proposed to try to see from above the cliff if she would respond. He wrote him that probably the girl was not going to hear since the waves were really loud but they could try. Izuku called for Froppy, shouting from up above the cave, but the girl didn’t appear or answer. Katsuki offered to go take a look alone, if he really was so worried about her, but Izuku stopped him. He didn’t want him to go alone, if the girl was there or not was going to remain a mystery.

Monday, the 30 of June, they went to class like usual and as usual Shouto was following them. Izuku had no idea if he should feel relieved or not. Tsuyu obviously was not present and the others started to murmur about her absence. After Katsuki now they knew it was possible, but it was still an anomaly. Later when they were returning to their room at noon, a scream suddenly echoed outside the window.

“WHO DID THIS?!”

It was a female voice and if Izuku was not mistaken it was Uraraka’s. The three of them ran to a window that showed the indoor courtyard and they saw Uraraka fussing around the vegetables. She looked very mad, but from their position, they could not see what the problem was.

“Let’s go see.” Izuku proposed.

Katsuki just shrugged like always when something didn’t really concern him and Shouto followed Katsuki’s like he was always doing lately. Izuku led the way down the stairs and out the glass door, running in the open space outside. He saw some faces looking from the windows, attracted by the commotion. Uraraka was still shouting.

“EVERYONE GATHER HERE, I WANT AN EXPLANATION!”

She had her closed fists on her hips and looked pretty furious. Izuku saw then the cause of her fury: the vegetables. The eggplants were cut into irregular pieces, the zucchini were squashed on the ground like something heavy fell on top of them, the tomatoes were splattered all over on the wall, the salad was blackened by some kind of substance. Furthermore, the plants themselves were cut and scattered all over the place. Izuku stared at the battlefield speechless. He barely saw with the corner of his eye Katsuki’s message.

-Wow, someone had some fun-

Everyone arrived and they started to murmur at the sight, asserting the damages. Izuku didn’t think that anything was savable there.
“I guess we won’t exactly starve, but I can’t believe one of you did something like this! This is something a mischievous little kid would do! To just destroy months of hard work! I can’t believe this! Whoever did this come forward and take responsibility!” Uraraka shouted in an authoritarian tone.

No one moved.

“Ungrateful and cowardly too?! Come forward!” she insisted. “And where the hell is Froppy anyway?!?”

“How do we know it was not you and you are trying to blame one of us?” asked Haru crossing her arms.

“What?! Why would I do something so stupid?” Uraraka was disbelieving.

“I dunno, but you are getting awfully worked up. Maybe it’s some kind of strategy.” Haru answered shrugging.

“I…!” Uraraka was at a loss for words, angry and shocked by the accusation.

“All right, all right! As Urara said, we are not going to starve. We will simply start all over again!” proposed Kaminari smiling.

“Yeah, right.” said Uraraka sarcastically. “Do you even know how much time a plant needs to grow from seeds? And the seasonality? The vegetable season is in full mode, by the time the plants will grow back, it will be autumn! Not to mention we don’t even know if we are capable of making them grow, maintaining them was far easier!”

“We can’t exactly do nothing either, can we? Maybe Aizawa won’t care if we destroy something that’s not ours, but this will be a problem for the next group of participants as well. We can’t just leave everything like this!” Kaminari argued.

In the end, everyone agreed to help and they cleaned up the place before evening.

“We need to do this tomorrow. We have to prepare the soil again and then plant the seeds that we have collected. And pray it works out somehow…” Uraraka was still sulking.

“Yep, let’s all meet again tomorrow morning!” concluded the gathering Kaminari.

Izuku and Katsuki returned to their room where they took a shower, in turns. Izuku had a bad feeling about all this. First Tsuyu left for who knows where, leaving only the plants behind and now such a childish vandalism. Who could have possibly done that? Katsuki had no answer to give him, they had a solid alibi, but there was no way to know about anyone else. Maybe Kirishima and Kaminari were together, and maybe Uraraka and Tensei were together as well, but neither said anything at all. In a way, that had been a good idea, if they had started to collect alibis they may have ended up trying to carry out a witch hunt. And Tsuyu, who was absent, was surely going to be the main suspect.

The morning arrived and they went meet the others in the courtyard. Only Tensei, Kirishima, Kaminari and Uraraka were there. Shouto, Yao and Haru were not there yet. They were just starting working when Yao’s voice reached them from a window nearby.

“Guys, come quickly, this is serious!”

Izuku easily recognized that window as the kitchen window and they all abandoned the seeds to rush
to the kitchen. There, they found Shouto, Haru and Yao, the girls looked especially distressed.

“Well, what now?” asked Uraraka, still in a bad mood.

“The food has disappeared! All the food!” Yao answered with a hint of panic in her voice.

“What?!” Kaminari sprinted inside the pantry and the others followed.

It was most certainly empty. There was no food anywhere, not a single can or box.

“When did this happen?!” Izuku asked to no one in particular.

“I don’t know! Yesterday when I went to cook dinner, the food was still in here! It must have happened overnight!” Yao answered.

“First the vegetables, now all the food… This is not a prank, this is a serious attack. Whoever is doing this is a nasty piece of work!” Uraraka was staring at them all in turns, as if she was trying to read something from their expressions.

-When is the next cargo going to come?- asked Tensei.

Once again, Tsuyu was the only absent. Izuku didn’t like where this was going. He was pretty positive that the girl was not responsible for this, but if this continued it was really possible that someone would start to accuse her openly. Aizawa looked a bit annoyed at the news that all the food had disappeared, but it was still in full legality so there was nothing to be done. He said that the next cargo was going to be in two full weeks. More than enough time for everyone to starve. No one took the news very well.

Izuku and Katsuki had some food staked away in their room, but surely not enough for two weeks. Not when there were two of them. It was unanimous the decision to wait before planting the new seeds and Kaminari sprinted to get them, they asked Aizawa to safe keep them. The man scratched his head a little, but then agreed. Another unanimous decision was to search all over the building for the food. It could have not disappeared into outer space, right? Unless they threw it in the ocean, it had to be somewhere. Probably a place only the thief knew. And only the thief would be able to find it, as they had to accept that evening. No one had eaten anything the whole day and they were not able to find anything at all. Izuku could feel the bad mood enveloping them all fast. If this tension were to grow any stronger, there would be some serious accusations flying around, he could feel them coming.

The next morning, as all the males were leaving their section of the building, they were greeted by a shocking sight outside of the window that showed the space where the planes were landing. A huge, almost majestic, bonfire was glowing from a mountain of books. The flames were consuming them voraciously, leaving only a trail of gray smoke behind. Even from a distance, the noise of the fire was pretty audible and in front of all this was… Yao.

She had her hands on her hips and looked very proud of herself. She even turned toward them to stare at them with an expression of defiance.

“Hey, what are you doing?!” screamed Kaminari and everyone else snapped out of the trance the image had caused.

She grinned at him and ran away full speed, diving right into the ocean. They ran outside, but it was way too late to catch her and the books were not salvable either. Izuku proposed to go and call the
girls, since they weren’t there. They probably had not noticed yet what was happening. They abandoned the books, since there was not much to guard or steal in a mountain of hot ashes and they marched to the girls’ side. The knocked on all the doors but no one was inside, so they tried to go back to the first floor, they found Uraraka in the courtyard, she was pouting at the soil while watering the fruit trees. At least they had been left alone by the vandal. She was shocked to hear that Yao had burned the books and she swore she had seen her not too long ago in the hallway. They started to follow her to the spot where she had last seen her, when they found Haru who was coming from the outside, she was screaming about the books. Yao was, of course, not where Uraraka last saw her anymore, so they tried to look in the library, since they were close by. Sure enough, three whole sections were empty; all the books had been moved and then burned outside.

“This too had to have been done at night! This is not as bad as the food, but still, it’s not something we should just ignore. We need to find Yao and then I propose we do some kind of guard duty at night! We were stupid to think this would end so easily. I don’t know if it’s Yao or who but I won’t let them do as they please anymore!” Uraraka declared in a harsh voice.

They were going back to the burned books when Yao appeared, running in from outside. Tensei immediately went in fight mode and the others instinctively spread, closing all escape routes. Yao stopped looking at them, confused.

“Outside! Something is burning!” she said, pointing behind her.

“Yeah, we know that. We saw you burning the books.” answered Tensei, still tense.

“Wh-what? Me?! I didn’t burn the books! I just saw them now! I was doing laundry and then—”

“Is there someone that can provide your alibi?” asked Kirishima.

“Alibi?! Wait a moment! I didn’t do anything! Why are you all looking at me like that?!?” she was clearly a bit scared.

Izuku ignored their voices for a moment, focusing on Yao’s appearance. The girl was perfectly dry, she didn’t look like someone that had just dived into the ocean, and more importantly she was wearing different clothes. Sure, maybe she had a change of clothes hidden somewhere, but what was the point of doing something so openly, with witnesses that she had even noticed, and then change into something else? It made so much more sense to think that someone tried to frame her. Maybe that had been one of Uraraka’s dolls? It was a possibility.

He said what he was thinking out loud and a long silence fell. Of course, he didn’t specifically say anything about dolls or Uraraka, but it was common knowledge that quirks that let you take on another appearance existed. Izuku noticed that Uraraka was rigid, her hands closed into tight fists. She probably recognized the slight accusation that he had left unspoken.

“This is no good.” Tensei was the first one to speak. “Yao, you are suspicious, but seriously, you are too suspicious right now. It doesn’t seem like you’ll gain anything from doing this. I think the best idea right now would be to start moving in groups. We need to be each other alibis in case another incident like this occurs again.”

Everyone, one by one, agreed to what looked like a perfect solution and Kaminari went to stand next to Kirishima, while Izuku just exchanged a look with Katsuki. Tensei could be together with Uraraka and then Haru with Yao. And a group had to take Shouto, even if he would probably try to sneak into Katsuki’s group. The real problem was revealed a moment later.

“No, this is not okay. Friends can’t stay together in the same group, it would be too easy to suspect a
cooperation or blackmail. We need to pair people together that are not interacting a lot with one another.” Tensei was once again taking the lead in the decision making. “I think the teams should be… Me, Izu and Mishima, Yao and Shu, Urara and Haru, Kami and Four.”

-Why this combination in particular?-

“Because Izu is not scared of Mishima’s quirk and my quirk and his are badly fit for each other, I can’t use my quirk on him.” that brought some murmurs. “Urara and Haru are at an odd with one another.” the two confirmed by pouting. “Four needs someone that can be very loud with him, to cover for the fact that he can’t call for help, and of all the people here, Kami is surely the most suited.” Kaminari grinned as if he had been complimented. Katsuki just rolled his eyes. “And Yao and Shu…” he hesitated for a moment. “Because I have never seen the two interact before, they are both very reserved.”

Izuku understood immediately that Tensei had paired up Shouto with someone he didn’t know the name of. Honestly, all the pairs were well planned and pretty functional. Tensei had a great analytical mind and he was suited for the leadership. Izuku was feeling a lot safer now that the guy had planned everything. There was still a problem called Froppy and an even bigger problem called ‘the mysterious extra girl’, Izuku had not forgotten about that. But he didn’t want to give up this knowledge, not without asking Katsuki first.

Next they discussed the duties that every group had and they separated. They spent the rest of the day searching for Froppy or any anomaly, while Urara and Haru had to find some food in the sea. When it was time to eat, Izuku’s group went to Tensei’s room, the guy offered the food he had staked away for emergencies like this one. Kirishima offered his own as well, but Izuku could not do the same. He had transferred all his food into Katsuki’s room and he didn’t want them to enter it. Only Shouto and Tsuyu knew he was sleeping there and he’d rather keep things that way. In the end, Izuku ended up contributing in his own way, luckily Tensei still had the jar of jam from Katsuki’s birthday closed and full.

The day ended with nothing accomplished. Izuku knew the probability to find the girl was not that high to begin with. Around dinnertime, they reunited around the kitchen table and they contemplated their failure, even the fishing had not gone so great, Tsuyu was the expert in that area. Izuku was simply relieved to see that Katsuki was okay. And everyone else as well, but not as much since there was still a traitor in the room. He still was sure that Tsuyu was innocent. For some reason, the girl knew this was going to happen and she hid somewhere. Tensei proposed to share all the food to keep the game fair and they agreed, a bit reluctantly. Together, as one big group, they visited every room, even Tsuyu’s and all the food was collected. Even the one that Izuku and Katsuki had stashed away was added to the pile. He had had a little conversation with Katsuki, he said that he didn’t like to give up his food, but considering how things were going, to refuse would probably lead to a bigger problem down the line. And he insisted that Aizawa would not let them all die of starvation, that was just stupid.

Another proposal Tensei made was to all sleep in the same room, with the food at the center of the futons. As much as Izuku was a bit uncomfortable with the idea of sleeping in a room with five males and three females, he had to admit that it was necessary, no, it was vital. The trust between them was already thin as it was, entrusting all the remaining food to a single person was downright stupid. And suicidal for that person. If that food was to be lost it was going to be a massacre, Izuku was not deluding himself. Some people there were already in a very, very bad mood.

So they went to the ‘convenience store’ and gathered futons for everyone. They chose the art lab, the only room big enough for everything and everyone, they divided the room in half by gender and they pushed all the art supplies in front of the door. The food was piled up at the center and there was a
big moment of confusion as everyone was trying to get a specific spot to sleep. Katsuki and Kirishima ended up in the corner and Izuku gladly took the spot next to Katsuki. Or rather, he hurried to place there his futon when he saw Shouto trying to sneak in the spot himself. He needed to have a chat with that one.

When the lights went off, Izuku immediately scooped closer to Katsuki’s futon and grabbed his hand after confirming that he was still awake. In the really dim light, he saw a raised eyebrow on his face and he whispered to him ‘just in case’ with a smile. Katsuki’s theatrical sigh was the only answer he got and it was enough.

That morning they ate in silence, everyone, even Izuku, was in a bad mood. They had not been able to sleep much as someone, namely a guy called Kaminari Denki, was a sleep talker. Not to mention Haru that at some point started to snore loudly. Izuku, as an only child, had never slept with anyone besides Katsuki and he was silent as a mummy during sleep, so the experience had not been one of the most intriguing of his life. Tensei, the unofficial leader, divided up the food for everyone and then they took turns for the bathroom. The previous day they didn’t have the possibility to have a shower and Izuku hoped Tensei would propose a solution for that as well. It was summer, they were all sweating and soon they would be all smelly. Sleeping in a room full of smelly people didn’t sound like a dream. Especially not with a smelly sleep talker and a smelly snorer.

When Tensei didn’t say anything about showering, and no one else dared to bring up the subject either, Izuku waited to be alone with him and Kirishima once again to bring it up himself, after leaving Katsuki and Kirishima to guard the food. The guy considered the proposal a moment and then nodded. The next day they would have the first session of physical tests, it was really urgent to get the shower arrangement decided before that. Tensei proposed a potential solution, even if Izuku was not entirely sure it was going to be okay. There was a large bathroom at the end of both the male and the female side of the second floor. It was possible to shower all together there. Of course, male and female separated. Izuku didn’t bring up his sexual preference, it didn’t seem like a great idea to even bother.

The three of them decided to take another look inside the big bathroom, even though they visited it yesterday as well. It was indeed ideal, it was large and besides the big bathtub there were individual shower stalls for them to use. Not only it was functional, it offered privacy too. Tensei decided to declare this new proposal at dinner, since they had decided to give up lunch in favor of saving food. When they left the room, they saw someone they were not expecting to see.

Tsuyu was there, walking down the hallway of the male side.

“Froppy, we were searching for you.” Tensei immediately called up to her.

The girl stopped, her arms behind her back, and looked at him with his head tilted.

“And? Do I need to tell you everywhere I go? How is this your bloody business?” she smiled.

The three were speechless. This was something that maybe Uraraka would say, surely not Tsuyu. They looked at each other for a moment. Izuku opened his mouth to talk, but then thought better of it. She, Tsuyu, entrusted him with a note, saying that she was going to hide for a while. She should not be there.

And maybe she was not there, after all.

“Strange occurrences happened while you were away… I’m sorry, but it is my ‘bloody business’ where you were and why you were gone. Explain yourself.” Tensei ordered.
“Nooo way, you stupid-faces! I don’t wanna!” she stuck her tongue at them.

Izuku stopped Tensei from answering by placing a hand on his arm. Tensei recoiled a little, Izuku realized a moment too late that the guy had no idea of what his quirk was and his reaction was perfectly normal. He held up his hands in a pacifying gesture and then turned to face the girl.

“Which month was I born in?” he asked.

It was the very first sentence in her Book of Memories. She should know it. He observed her as she opened her mouth, but no sound came out. She realized she had been silent a moment too long and she took a step back.

“Whassat? A trick question? You don’t fool me!” she stuck her tongue again and then she ran away.

Izuku addressed the two that were standing still, confused and uncertain.

“We have to catch her. Him. They. Whatever. That’s not Froppy. Someone is messing with us.”

Once again I've received a very kind and amazing gift from Puolukka! Isn't she very talented? :D

Thanks again for the gifts and all the support you are giving me <3

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I especially love Kaminari, it's so well done!

She is Sarumomoka on Instagram if you want to take a look!

Chapter End Notes

This may not be the Shouto you were expecting, but give him the benefit of the doubt, okay? :)

Next chapter as always next Monday, the 1st of October!
They were luckily quick to snap out of shock and start to run after ‘Froppy’.

The girl was actually frigging fast, she was already out of the male section, running down the stairs and in a second she was out of sight. They ran to the first floor as well, but the girl had already disappeared to who knows where. They tried to take a look around, they checked with Kaminari and Katsuki but they had not seen the girl at all. Katsuki stared at him, Izuku could feel his desire to follow him outside, but he had to keep his position.

The three left again and they met Shouto and Yao soon after. After briefing explaining the new situation to them they joined together, to avoid having to search for everyone again all over the place. It was only moments later that they found Uraraka, alone, asleep on the kitchen table. Tensei, after a moment of confusion, shook her to wake her up. The girl jumped and tried to get up, but stumbled and she ended up steadied herself by placing her hands on the table. She groaned and ruffled her hair with a grimace.

“What…” she looked pretty out of it.

“Urara, what’s going on?” Tensei asked, impatient.

“I… don’t know…I fell asleep?” she was looking around, trying to understand the situation herself.

“Where is Haru?” Izuku asked, trying not to sound too impatient himself.

“Haru?” she looked around again. “I don’t know…”

“We need to find her, stay with us.” Tensei grabbed her by the arm and dragged her with them.

The girl took a long moment to walk by herself, but finally she stood on her own and looked a lot more awake.

“Ten—“ she stopped herself before she could say his name. “I was drinking a glass of water in the kitchen with Haru, when suddenly I felt really, really sleepy. I don’t know what happened, but—“

She was trying to explain herself to him but she got interrupted by a girl’s scream.

“THERE YOU ARE!” Haru was marching toward them, clearly angry.

They froze, caught by surprise. Everything imaginable was happening in the span of an hour.

“Wha—“ Uraraka took a step behind, surprised.

Haru took that last step and slapped her. And she started to cry.

“I knew that the traitor was you! What did you do after you knocked me unconscious?!?” she was screamed, crying loudly, making a huge scene.

Uraraka was staring at her with her hand on her cheek, her mouth open. Tensei took the situation into his hands once again.
“Wait a moment Haru, what the hell is going on?”

“We were taking a break in the kitchen and then I fell asleep while drinking water! And when I
awake I was trapped into the study room! She trapped me! What did you do while I was trapped?!?”
she was still yelling at the top of his lungs.

“I didn’t do anything! What?! I was the one that fell asleep!” Uraraka shouted back.

“Liar!” she pointed at her with big tears in his eyes.

“Wait, why do you think it was her? She was knocked down just like you!” Tensei tried to make
some sense of the situation.

“Who else could’ve it been?!” she was not even near to calm down. “We were alone in there! Not to
mention that everyone was in groups, surely everyone else has an alibi, right?!”

That was true, except for a fact.

“There was a fake Froppy running around. So someone definitely doesn’t have an alibi.”

As soon as he said that, he realized that it was not helping Uraraka’s case at all. The opposite. She
could’ve not been asleep at all, maybe she was inside a doll of Tsuyu, just moments ago. Maybe, she
saw that her body was being discovered and she destroyed her doll to go back, like she had done in
her room some time ago to demonstrate her quirk. If she had taken Haru out of the picture, there was
the possibility that she could have used her quirk without being disturbed. And that Yao the previous
day had been very suspicious as well. Izuku knew he had just given the girl a harder time when
Tensei stared at her hard, trying to read in her mind.

“N-no! That’s not…! Believe me!” she stared back at Tensei, her eyes were getting teary as well. “I
haven’t done anything! I was the victim! She was the one that drugged me! It must be! There are
doctors in the infirmary, she must have used those to make me unconscious. I haven’t done anything!”

“You are awful, just awful!” Haru whimpered loudly. “Now you are trying to pin the blame on me!
You even know all this stuff about the infirmary!” she started to hiccup.

Uraraka closed and opened her fists three times, holding her tears back, boiling with frustration. She
stared at Tensei in the eyes again.

“It-was-not-me.”

“I’d… say…” tried to intervene Yao weakly. “We should go back… find the others and regroup. I
think it’s best if we stay all together for a while and we take a break.”

“Yeah, I don’t think we should continue this conversation,” agreed Kirishima.

They all returned to the art room and they all sat down, defeated and tired. The lack of sleep and
food was weighting on their mood heavily. Izuku sat down next to Katsuki and wanted to cuddle
with him, to get some comfort and light up his mood, but of course, that was not an option in front of
everyone. He described all the events to him and Katsuki remained silent, pondering on the situation.
Izuku could clearly see Haru trying to convince Yao of Uraraka’s guilt and the ponytail girl looked
deeply troubled to be put on the spot like that. On the other side of the room, Kirishima and Kaminari
were whispering to each other, it was impossible to know what they were discussing. Tensei and
Uraraka were on the opposite corners of the room. Tensei was looking at everyone, deep in thought.
He probably was trying to create a new strategy. Uraraka was hugging her knees her face hidden;
clearly she didn’t want to talk to anyone.
They ate in silence; the food was already starting to not be enough for everyone. The next day was going to be an even bigger problem and everyone knew that. Of course, no one proposed the bath option, Izuku was sure that this was definitely not going to happen. Not with the girls so stressed out. He could try again the next day, after the test that Aizawa was going to hold. They slept again, just as badly as the first time, Izuku was pretty sure that Uraraka didn’t sleep a moment. He felt a little bad, since Katsuki didn’t comment one way or another he had decided not to do anything about her. Not believing her or accusing her. Seeing her so down made him feel guilty about the whole situation.

The next morning, everyone looked pretty much ready to accuse everyone of everything. They arrived at the indoor gym in complete silence and they all skipped breakfast. Aizawa was a full five minutes late, like pretty much always, and during that time Haru sent another jab at Uraraka, saying that if she failed the test because she had not eaten, she knew who to blame. Uraraka crossed her arms biting her lower lip and looked away.

“Good morning kids,” the man’s stomach growled immediately. “I guess there is still no news on the food department?”

Tensei raised his hand.

“If we don’t find the food in a reasonable span of time, will you ask for a new cargo?” he asked the man.

“Unbelievable…” Aizawa scratched his head sighing. “You are the first group of idiots I had to look after that actually lost all the food like this. I’m really tempted to let you all almost starve just to see how funny you think this prank is, but that’s not what a responsible adult would do, so… I already called. The cargo will be here tomorrow,” he admitted in the end.

“Thank you, sir!” Tensei said with enthusiasm.

“Now, let’s focus on the task ahead. First, we will have the female test. Please, boys, sit there and wait patiently.” he ordered and they obeyed, sitting on the edges with their backs on the walls.

Aizawa made them run, jump, then do squat and sit ups. The girls started looking more and more distraught as the tests went on. By the end, they were all panting hard and they were unsteady on their feet. Before the male tests could start Tensei asked for a time out. They all regrouped a little further away from Aizawa and Tensei told them about the communal bathroom. Unfortunately, the girls were not as cooperative as they would have liked. No one, except maybe Yao, agreed to use that and to remain in a group. Haru offered to look after the food and refused to be in the same room as Uraraka again. Uraraka said she was going to take a shower in her room and Yao in the end said she was going to do the same. Tensei protested against the lack of alibis, but Uraraka said she didn’t need another ‘alibi like last time’.

Once the girls disappeared from sight, the males returned to Aizawa who declared the start of their tests. Izuku, who was already bad at physical exercise, was already out of breath in ten minutes. In fifteen, his side was hurting and he was contemplating the possibility of giving up right there, if it wasn’t for Katsuki who literally kicked him in the butt and urged him ahead.

They took a break after the runs, and Aizawa was writing down their times while sliding his goggles off momentarily, when it happened. They were all near the wall of the building, in the shadow trying to cool down, when a huge splash of white paint dropped from a window up above and completely drenched them. They screamed, of course with the exception of Katsuki, and tried to escape, completely blinded. They didn’t get that far, they basically all stumbled on the ground and tried to wipe the paint off their faces. A couple of them, Izuku could not really tell who since he was blinded
himself, were coughing violently, probably after ingesting a little bit of paint. The remaining were sending curses to whoever did this ridiculous action. It took them a moment to recover enough to see Uraraka with her hands on her mouth, chuckling amused.

“Are you out of your mind?! Paint can be toxic, you know?!” shouted Tensei.

“Yeah Miss, this is not funny!” yelled Kaminari.

“Oh, sorry about that!” she ran away disappearing from view.

“Unbelievable,” Aizawa’s voice reached them from behind, “this is kindergarten level of stupidity.” he slid his goggles back on. “You are dismissed for the time being. We can’t continue like this. Come back later, I’m not letting you off the hook so easily, this is getting very ridiculous.”

He walked away, papers in hands. Izuku thought he heard he mutter something that sounded like ‘Are they going to notice yet?’ on his way out. The guys stared at each other, mostly pissed and tired.

“I’m going to propose the bathroom again, and this time I think I’m going to insist.” Tensei broke the silence. “We are going to stick together until we figure this out. There is definitely something going on with the girls and I want to know what. All the incidents are revolving around girls, this can’t be a coincidence.”

“Yeah, I definitely want this stuff off me.” Kaminari shook his hands trying to shake off some paint. “They say I’m a colorful personality, white doesn’t suit me!” he smiled, cheerful again.

They took a detour to the rooms to gather new clothes and towels then hurried to the male bathroom, before the paint could actually dry and become even more difficult to take off. They discarded the ruined clothes in the entrance and prepared a hot bath. Kaminari of course was super enthusiastic and chatted loudly about this and that, while most of them just went their separated way, each choosing a different corner or side and just focused on washing away the stupid paint as soon as possible. Izuku was in such a bad mood he didn’t even think about spying on a naked Katsuki.

After most of the paint was off they had to help each other with shampooing their hair, Katsuki immediately took Izuku as helper without even giving anyone else the chance to try and ask. Izuku could clearly see Kaminari and Kirishima sending a knowing smile in their direction. Kirishima, because of his quirk, unfortunately had to take care of himself with some verbal help from Kaminari and he was paired up with Tensei. Shouto looked around, not sure of what to do until Kaminari grabbed him and started to scrubbed him as well. Normally, maybe, the whole thing would have been a perfect opportunity for a lot of dirty jokes and general embarrassment, but they were all too exhausted to even care. Afterward, they all showered separately, since the water in the large bathtub was basically white with paint, and then the dried off sloppily.

Once they were all clothed and mostly presentable again, they had the next problem to confront, namely Uraraka. Once again, the suspicious actions came from her and once again, Izuku had a strange sensation. It was too easy to say it was her, why would she do something so clearly unbeneificial? In addition, he already saw a fake Froppy. Sure, that could have easily been her doll, but maybe there was another possibility. Maybe there was another quirk in play there.

“T—square glasses?” he tried to talk to him, he was sure that Tensei was concerned about the girl. “I think we should try and talk to her again. Before someone else can accuse her of something and make things worse.”

“Agreed, I think we should split into two groups again. I want to talk to her, but someone has to go
and keep an eye on Yao and Haru. And the remaining food of course. We can’t afford to let our guard down right now.”

“You know…” intervened Kaminari. “You should speak up more often! You remained silent for months, but now that you are actually taking part in things, I can say that you are a natural born leader!” he smiled at him brightly. “Me and Kirishima are going to check on the girls, you all go to Urara. Bye!” he grabbed Kirishima by the shirt and they took off for the art room.

They were not respecting the groups they had established earlier, but right now the food problem was more or less solved thanks to Aizawa, so it was more important to talk with Uraraka about what was going on. She clearly was not going to say anything with Haru present. Tensei brought them to her room without hesitation and Izuku asked him if he wanted them to wait for him outside, ignoring Katsuki’s glare. Tensei just shook his head and opened the door. The girl was seated on her bed with her pillow hugged against her. When they entered, she looked up, tense and possibly scared, but after seeing Tensei she slumped back.

“Someone that looked like you splashed a whole can of paint on our heads while we were taking the tests.” Tensei just opened the discussion like this.

Uraraka’s eyes opened wide open.

“What?! No! I was here the whole time!” she yelled looking at them all. “What, are you here to punish me or something?” tears were already sparkling in her eyes.

“No, we are not here for that. We just wanted to tell you before someone else could.” Tensei’s voice was still completely neutral.

Izuku was surprised he could speak this way to the girl, they were childhood friends for sure, probably even a couple, if he had understood this right. Izuku could have never spoken so sternly to Katsuki if he was convinced of his innocence. The girl started to manhandle the pillow and grunt in frustration.

“Always! It’s always like that!” she cried out in a teary voice. “Every time something happens, it’s always my fault! Always! Every time! Whatever happens! Even when I don’t even have a doll of that person! It’s always like that!” she threw the pillow at the wall in front of her.

Tensei sighed and reached for her, placing a hand on her shoulder.

“Calm down now. We are not here to accuse you.” the girl hugged him and hid her face on his stomach sniffling. He turned toward them. “Since she was very little, at school after they discovered her quirk, the other children started to use her as an excuse for everything. If something disappeared, if someone made a mistake… every time, they would say ‘it’s her fault, it was her’. Unfortunately there is no way to know exactly how many dolls she has, so in absence of a contrary proof, even if she said that she could not materialize that doll, no one would believe her. Her quirk is very fast and the dolls disappear without leaving any trace, it’s impossible even with a quirk that sees beyond deception to know when a doll is used beyond a shadow of a doubt. At least, not in a normal environment. Her personality didn’t let her take this kind of unjust accusations without fighting back, so she easily became pretty hated.” she let him go and wiped her face, sniffling loudly. “The first time I met her she was fighting against some bullies in a park, she was already completely covered in dirt and if I remember correctly she was biting one of them on the arm. Right?” he addressed her.

“Shut up.” she smacked his stomach pouting.

“At first I thought she was some snotty brat, and I still think she is a snotty brat,” she smacked him
again, “but still, three against one didn’t seem fair, so I told them to cut it out. They were a bit older than we were, maybe two years, and didn’t think much of me. I didn’t think they were really scared of me. I stood there, taking a couple of punches and then I used my quirk. It was pretty satisfying to see them run away calling for their mothers.” Uraraka snorted. “After that, I kind of ended up becoming her bodyguard. It was not bad to give back the bullies everything, a bit at a time. Vengeance is something you have to take your time on, you know?” he concluded pushing up his glasses.

Izuku corrected the thought he had had some time ago regarding the couple. She was not weird. They were both weird. But it was not a bad kind of weird, probably.

“It was not me. I would never risk putting Ten—him at risk. I don’t want to be a weight for my only friend and ally.” she said staring at them, challenging them to contradict her.

“I believe you,” the words were out of Izuku’s mouth even before he had time to think them through. “I believe that this wasn’t you. I think someone is trying to destroy everyone’s trust in everyone.”

-I agree-

Izuku was very surprised to get this unexpected assist. Shouto nodded from behind him.

“Thank you. Here, thank them.” Tensei addressed the girl.

Uraraka puffed her cheeks and refused to meet their eyes.

-I think we need to go back. The others may need our assistance. And catching and stopping the real culprit right now is more important than throwing a tantrum in here-

They all waited outside for the girl and then they walked to the art room, Katsuki grabbed a sleeve of Izuku’s shirt with two fingers, walking slowly, signaling him to lag behind the others. Izuku nodded at him, to tell him he was paying attention.

-I have a feeling I know what’s going on-

“Yeah?” he whispered.

-I noticed something. Do me a favor. Convince square glasses to divide us into the groups again tomorrow, I need to check on something-

“I can’t come with you?” he asked, Katsuki shook his head a little. “What did you notice?”

-The paint-

“Paint?” what about it? Katsuki just nodded. “All right. I’ll talk to him.”

Katsuki nodded again. Once they were all inside the art room, it appeared that Kaminari and Kirishima were able to quell Haru as she only faced the other side when Uraraka entered. Izuku waited for everyone to take the usual spot in their corners, it was evident that it was useless to search around the building for the food, since the next day they were going to get a new shipment anyways and they were all tired as hell. Izuku talked to Tensei and the guy agreed to try Katsuki’s idea even though he had no idea what it was, probably eager to try anything that could prove the girl’s innocence.

As he was returning to Katsuki’s corner, he noticed Uraraka signaling him to get closer. He hesitated a moment then sat down next to her carefully.
“I wanted to thank you, and Bakugou I guess, for believing in me. Even though I’m not sure you really believe in me or not, but that’s beside the point. I just wanted to tell you again. Ten—Tensei is my hero, the only person that always believes in me. I would never leave without him. Nor put him in danger by stealing the food. Of course, you can think we are in this together but you were with him all this time, weren’t you? Have you seen him eat or do anything strange?” she was not really looking at him, she had her knees hugged to her chest.

“No, I haven’t.”

“I would never do this to him. Never.” she declared. “I don’t care what that…” she exhaled, containing the insult that was almost out of her mouth. “…girl says.”

“I know.”

He returned to Katsuki to report his conversations and Katsuki just nodded again. Clearly fixed on some plan or something, already looking beyond. That night Izuku slept like a log, hand in hand with Katsuki. That morning they looked all like zombies, their stomach growling loudly. They immediately went to bother Aizawa who sent them away without even listening. After muttering some curses under their breaths, Tensei immediately proposed to divide and take some ‘strategic position’ or some sort. Honestly, it didn’t make much sense but they were too out of it to realize. They divided, switching Shouto and Uraraka’s position in the groups, and Izuku and Tensei, with Kirishima of course, went to sit in front of the main entrance, just because.

“I think I got what Four was talking about.” suddenly Tensei whispered to him, Kirishima was on the other side, he probably could not hear.

“What?”

“There is proof that Urara could have not have been the one to use the paint.”

“Really?” he looked at him, Tensei stared back.

“Yes. But I really wonder what Four intends to do. I don’t know what he can do to prove anything.”

The conversation died there. Normally Izuku would have asked for more details, but he was so hungry that he simply forgot, the thought flew away from his mind in favor of just closing his eyes and waiting for Aizawa to finally give them food.

“By the way, I just wanted to offer an apology. I lied.” Tensei whispered again.

Izuku looked at him again without speaking.

“My real name… I’m not Tensei, Tensei is my older brother. My real name is Tenya. I’m Iida Tenya. Sorry for the lie.”

“Why are you telling me this now…?” he was a little confused.

“Because it doesn’t sit right with me that you are helping Ochako and I’m still lying to you. I really think we should be allies here. I promise I won’t try to attack you, ever. I want to be friends, with you and Four of course. What do you think?”

They stared for a while, but then Izuku smiled and nodded.

“I have to ask Four but I think we can be on the same page there.”
Iida nodded back. Izuku closed his eyes again, feeling a little bit more serene. He opened his eyes when he heard steps. Katsuki was running toward him. Izuku opened his mouth to ask him a question, not sure which one, but Katsuki grabbed his hand and dragged him up.

“Wh-?!”

Iida and Kirishima hesitated, not sure if they needed to do something or not. Katsuki did some strange gesture with his hand and started to drag him away. Izuku gestured Iida he was okay and followed him.

“Katsuki?” Izuku asked when they were alone, he was dragging him back inside, into the hallway to the right. “What’s going on?”

He looked back at him, but only for a moment, he looked anxious. He pulled even harder and they passed some doors. Izuku tugged his arm back; not very happy to be dragged around, but Katsuki just tugged again glaring at him quickly.

“Password?” he asked more out of annoyance than anything else.

Katsuki frowned at him then turned again and dragged him into the classroom. Izuku was feeling tired and hungry, he didn’t really want to have a conversation with him right now, he just wanted to eat.

“What’s going on? Can’t we talk about this later? After we get the food?”

They stopped in the center of the room, Katsuki turned around and after looking behind his back for just a second he kissed him.

Izuku’s mind went blank.

He was frozen in place, not reciprocating the gesture. Katsuki grabbed him by the waist and pulled him closer. Izuku was not scared or particularly unhappy, but there was a very loud question in his mind: Why?

He was the one that said they could not kiss. Why was he kissing him there and now? Of all the places and times? This didn’t make much sense. Why would he…?

He never actually answered the password question, did he?

He was about to push him away, now honestly scared, when he heard a noise behind him. They separated immediately and Izuku turned sideways to see both this person and the source of the noise.

Katsuki was standing in the doorframe with his fist slammed on the wood.

He was livid.

The other Katsuki took a step back, searching for the window with his eyes. As the Katsuki on the doorframe was taking a step forward, Kaminari poked from behind looking shocked, the Katsuki in the room ran for the window.

Izuku could barely hear Kaminari yell “Holy moly, you were right!!” that Katsuki leaped forward grabbing the other one by the back of the shirt. Now that Izuku was seeing them next to each other, he realized that one of the two was wearing a t-shirt, clearly not what Katsuki would always wear in public. They started to fight. The fake turned and kicked Katsuki in the stomach. While he was recovering, the fake opened the window and started to climb out. Izuku remembered just a moment
too late that he was not a statue and he could move. As he was extending his arms to grab one of the two, Katsuki leaped forward again, grabbed the fake by an arm and forced him to turn. He scratched the fake’s face with the other hand.

Instead or red marks or blood, the only things that appeared on that person’s face were long, ugly black marks.

*Katsuki had just marked someone.*

The person, whoever he was, probably didn’t notice, but surely Katsuki did. He let him go and the person saw an opening, he was already climbing the window again when Katsuki stood tall and opened his mouth, pointing a finger at his back.

Everything happened really, really slowly in Izuku’s panicked mind, like someone was playing around with the fabric of time itself.

“I…”

Was the first sound, it was barely even recognizable, Katsuki’s voice no more than a whisper.

“…want…”

Izuku’s heart was stilled, Katsuki had just marked someone and now he was speaking as well.

*He was so done for.*

*NO!*

“…you…”

Two people dropped from the ceiling.

Izuku saw the whole thing perfectly, in slow motion, but he didn’t understand anything at all.

A girl, no, *the girl*, the mysterious girl was dropping down from above, holding hands with *another Katsuki*. She was dropping down right above the Katsuki that was speaking and she extended an arm toward him. When her hand touched his back, Katsuki disappeared into thin air, as if he never existed. Both the girl and the *other Katsuki* fell on their knees with a grunt of pain.

Kaminari was frozen on the doorframe, Izuku was equally frozen staring at the two, and the fake Katsuki was also frozen halfway out of the window. The two shook their heads at the same time and then the girl spoke, smiling.

“Pfiuu! Looks like I timed it perfectly! See, I told you everything would work out in the end!”

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy, what’s going on?

Next chapter is the 8 of October.
The girl got up and yelled at the fake Katsuki at the window.

“Mineta Minoru! It’s useless for you to try and run! What you did is considered sexual assault and it’s illegal! We have a lot of witnesses too, you are not going to get out of this one! Not to mention that you stole the physical appearance of three girls which is strictly prohibited by your personal rule! Aizawa is going to eliminate you in a flash!”

“No! That’s not true! If what you say is right then he would have eliminated me already! And I had their consent! They got undressed in front of me!” Katsuki on the window yelled in a high pitched voice that made Izuku’s skin crawl.

“Bullshit! You posed as a female, Haru, consent doesn’t work that way and you know it! As for why Aizawa hasn’t kicked you out yet, it’s easy, you never really bothered to think deeply about the rules, haven’t you? One person had to be eliminated, you were out from the very beginning! Did you really think Aizawa is stupid? That he didn’t know about your numerous crimes outside of the test? Let’s see… break-in into a female hot spring, appropriation of identities used to spy on even more women, invasion of privacy and not to mention what you were doing in your bedroom with the appearances you stole, I… don’t even what to think about it! You disgusting perv! I can’t believe you even thought you had a chance!” she placed her hands on her hips. “And change from that appearance, for heaven’s sake, Mineta!”

The fake Katsuki, whose face was now clean again, jumped from the window to the outside and ran away.

“Imbecile.” the girl groaned but didn’t chase him. “Whatever, as soon as Aizawa is back he is gone, a leaf in the wind. We don’t need to bother. It would be better to gather everyone else, however. Just to be sure he won’t hurt anyone else.” she turned to… Katsuki? “You okay there, Katsuki?”

“I’m sorry Izuku, but now it’s not the right time.” said Jirou noticing his complexion getting worse.

The fake Katsuki, whose face was now clean again, jumped from the window to the outside and ran away.

“I’m sorry Izuku, but now it’s not the right time.” said Jirou noticing his complexion getting worse.
“We need to move before Aizawa comes back and the Barrier people inform him of Katsuki breaking his personal rule. I mean, there is no proof anymore, but that just means that I’m the one that broke the rule. Either way, we don’t have much time.”

Jirou gestured the door to Izuku and Kaminari and left the room, looking back to wait for them. Katsuki approached him but looked away.

“I know this is strange, but believe me, it’s even stranger for me. For now just come.” he said, his voice soft but confident, not like the one he heard some moments ago.

“Password?” Izuku squeezed out the word, he was not going to make the same mistake twice.

Katsuki frowned for a second, as if he was trying to make sense of what he was saying.

“Oh, right. The password. October 14th. I almost forgot. We have a password, right. Sorry, it’s been like… two years for me, so… I tried to remove as much as I could from the test period, I hate to think back.” he was still looking away.

Two years. And he was speaking with complete nonchalance. What in the world was even going on. *A time travel quirk?*

Izuku had never heard of it in his whole life. Did something like that even exist?

The four of them walked around, Kaminari was looking between them all like he had no idea what to think, but he didn’t look particularly scared. Katsuki and Jirou were just walking ahead like they owned the place and Izuku was trailing behind, feeling like he was dreaming, possibly some kind of nightmare.

Iida and Kirishima were still where he had left them earlier; they were very surprised to see a new girl but Jirou just said ‘everything will make sense later’. Then they gathered everyone else, the girl was leading them with ease, finding them all without a problem. If Izuku was to believe that a time travel quirk existed, then it was possible that the girl simply already knew where to look. The last one they found was Shouto, he was alone, running around. It made sense, if Izuku was to take what Jirou said as the truth then ‘Haru’ was the one that kissed him so he, she, whatever, could not have been with Shouto. The guy looked pretty distressed.

“I’m sorry, I lost Haru. She went into the female bathroom and asked me to wait outside for her but she never returned. I have no idea where she went.” he was talking to Katsuki.

“I know, no worries. We already took care of that, now we need to go somewhere, and you need to come too Shu.” Katsuki answered him easily, as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

Shouto looked deeply stunned that Katsuki actually answered him, and everyone else with him.

“*He talks?!*” “Have you gone crazy?! What are you trying to do?!” “What about your quirk?! Your rule!” they screamed.

“It’s fine. The marks have been erased, now I can’t order anyone anymore. I can talk as much as I want.”

**WHAT?**

“You… what…?” Iida exhaled.
So Izuku was not the only one that was completely baffled by this recent development.

“We really need to move,” Jirou interrupted them, “I’ll explain everything, I promise, just not here and now. We need to join Ts— I mean, Froppy, and while you are all eating, we can talk about what we need to do. We are kind in a pinch right now; Aizawa will be back in half an hour, we need to have done by then.”

A long moment of silence and concern came and passed, then even though they were all skeptic and a bit scared, they still followed her. She led them outside, then around the building until they were on the Northern side, the one that was closest to the high cliff. She led them into a narrow path that ended into a dead end very shortly. There was nothing there. Or so he thought, the girl actually knocked on a wall. Surprisingly a door opened from the wall after only a moment, Tsuyu was on the other side.

“Ah, I see, I can assume that everything is going accordingly to the plan?” she said, not surprised at all.

“Yes, Tsu—Froppy. Shu, your quirk is a pain in the ass, honestly.” Jirou sighed. Izuku was shocked, this girl was saying names left and right and apparently knew every quirk in the test. “Everything is going fine, now we need to explain everything and get Kat—” another sigh, “Four out of trouble. Mineta is already finished.”

“Come in.” Tsuyu opened the door fully and after a moment of hesitation everyone entered.

The space inside was not actually a room, more like a little cave with a metallic door on the other end. There were two stone alcoves, on both sides, and one of them was filled with all the of the missing food and Tsuyu’s clothes. Kaminari immediately leaped to grab some with an enthusiastic yell.

“So… were you who stole the food?” asked Iida to Tsuyu.

“No, I just re-stole it. Mineta, the one you know as Haru, was the one who stole it. I thought it was not fair, so I just took it and hid it here, so he would suffer the consequences of his own mischief.” Tsuyu answered sitting on the empty alcove. “Go ahead and eat. In the meantime I, Jirou and Four will explain everything.”

“So, you are part of this too…?” asked Izuku, recovering his voice finally.

“Yes, sorry, I met Jirou way back and she told me a lot of interesting things. She was the one to convince me to hide to help her. Her quirk lets her visit the future you see?” she explained, confirming Izuku’s suspicion.

After another moment of hesitation, everyone grabbed some food and sat on the alcove or the ground. Jirou stood at the center of the cave and took a deep breath. Katsuki took a corner, his arms crossed.

“So… first. Mineta, the one you knew as Haru is actually a male, a Shape Shifter. That’s his quirk. You see, his quirk let him take the physical appearance of whomever he wants, as long as he has seen that person naked. This is his effect and his condition. To understand fully what happened you have to go back through your memories quite a bit. During May, Haru proposed all the girls, well excluding me but that’s not the point, to go to the pool together. Do you remember? Urara, Yao? The day at the pool?”

Izuku remembered it too, or to be more specific, he remembered that Tsuyu told him she was going
to the pool with the other girls. It was the day she brought him the book.

“Wait, wait, wait! Are you saying that Haru… that she… he was a male and we actually changed in front of him?” Uraraka looked both shocked and disgusted.

“Yes, that’s how he got to collect all your appearances at once. He made you fall into a trap that looked completely innocuous. After that, he remained quiet for a while. You may wonder ‘what was the point of getting our appearances if he didn’t do anything with them?’ and the answer… is not pleasant. He is a collector. He collects female bodies like trophies. He is, in short, a huge perv.”

“Wh…but… Is that even allowed?!” Yao yelled.

“No, it’s not. His personal rule is that he cannot collect a female body without consensus. Of course, it’s not like he asked you, right?”

“Hell no!” Uraraka shouted, furious.

“Thought so. Ah, of course the body he used? Haru’s? That was another victim from his time outside of the test. Anyway. After a while he decided to act and he used the bodies he had collected to screw with you all.”

“So… what made him change his mind?” asked Kirishima. “If he just wanted to collect female bodies…?”

“I made him change his mind.” Jirou crossed her arms, looking angry. “You see, because of my quirk I’m often thrown around and I cannot stay for long in the same place. He took advantage of that to pose as a female. The first day he arrived, he immediately noticed that one of the female room was numbered but unused and he took it for himself. Of course, if you think about it, it makes sense he would pose as a female, it was a golden opportunity for him to collect some more bodies. At first, I didn’t really care about him and my room, so I let him stay, but after he did what he did. I knew I had to make him commit a mistake somehow to eliminate him. I used my quirk to collect a lot of information about him and I discovered why Aizawa let him stay even though he was clearly breaking the rule. Fortunately the idiot didn’t realize it himself, so it was easy to trap him.”

“You mentioned something earlier, about the rule that one person has to be eliminated?” Kaminari commented with his mouth full.

“Yes, that’s exactly it. You all misunderstood the nature of the test. You always thought you had to eliminate one random person to win, but… that’s not it at all. From the very beginning, your real objective was to find the rotten apple of the bunch and eliminate it. Every year, the Government lets some criminals take the test, ignoring their crimes, with the precise intent to let you all find them and eliminate them with your own hands. Doesn’t this make a lot of sense to you? You are going to work for the Task Force, hunting criminals is indeed your job!”

“Wait, but doesn’t that invalidate the other rule? The one about winning if someone surrender?” asked Iida.

“No, that’s still a valid method. The Government wants to poke at you, force your hand. They want to see just how far you are willing to go to gain your freedom. It’s not uncommon to see more people become imprisoned than the ones that were supposed to lose, simply because they misunderstood. If you manage to make someone surrender in total legality, you are by any mean, welcome to leave. The problem still stands for all the others of course. In particular, it happened many times where the wrong person loses and the others just stop doing anything at all, waiting for the end. And then is when everyone still remaining is eliminated at once. They are not worth it, see? They didn’t decipher
the test’s true purpose, nor found the real criminal. They are worthless for the Government.”

“But then why are you telling us all this? Is it fair?” Kirishima looked worried.

“Of course it is. I mean, the actual test is finished, we won. Mineta is going to be imprisoned for sexual assault, so there is no need to do anything else. We are not here to discuss how to win a test that’s already won. We are here to discuss how to make it all out of here in one piece.”

“We really won? We are free?” asked Yao, not daring to hope. “What do you mean make it all out in one piece?”

“I’m talking about Kat—Four.” everyone stared at him. “He broke his personal rule. He will be sent to imprisonment as well if things stay as they are now.”

“Okay, not to be the worst person in the world, but…” Uraraka scratched her chin. “Why should we care exactly? If we are safe as you say, and we will see if you are lying when Aizawa is back, why should we care about him?”

“Because Four has to make it out of here. Free. He has to. Otherwise, something terrible will happen. No one will remain unaffected by this.” Jirou’s tone was really serious.

“Like what…?” Uraraka insisted.

“Like the extinction of the human race.” Jirou remained serious for a moment, then smiled widely. “Just joking! No, let’s just say that he has his role to play in the future! For now, you have to be happy with that. It’s never a good idea to discuss the future in too many details.”

Uraraka massaged her eyes, trying to make some sense out of the situation.

“All right… Let’s ignore that. What do you mean when you say that he broke his rule? Because he spoke? But he said something about the marks being erased.” Uraraka raised her eyebrow.

“No, I mean something else, Izu and Kami already know, but I’ll explain everything in the correct order. As I already said, I forced Mineta to change his mind. I sent him an anonymous letter with some photos inside that he took of naked females without permission. You see, I paid a visit to his house, these photos were very well hidden, he immediately recognized the threat. After I did that, I spoke to Froppy, I asked her to help me. She hid while Mineta was getting ready to ‘fight’. Being unoriginal as he is, he decided to simply try and make you all hate each other, he wanted you all to try and destroy yourselves. First, he targeted the vegetables, then the food. With my help, Froppy managed to retrieve the stolen food and kept it safe. Then there was the whole ‘burning books’ thing… very unoriginal. Of course, the person you saw was not Yao at all. Next, he tried to pin everything on Froppy, since she was hidden somewhere and he guessed that she was the one that stole his stolen food. Next on the list was Urara, as you see he used simply all the female bodies he collected that day at the pool. He could have used the female bodies he collected outside, but that would’ve only made you confused, not angry at one another.”

“How was he able to get Four’s body then?” asked Kaminari.

The others murmured confused.

“I think Ka—Four can explain this part better than me.” with that she stepped aside and Katsuki nodded.

“That day, I guess it was yesterday for you all, ‘Urara’ dropped paint on us. He knew us males had to get clean somehow and he predicted that we were going to the big bathroom on the second floor.
So, he hid in there, waiting for us to arrive and he simply spied on us. After that, he ran back and hid inside the art room. That day I understood what had really happened and I knew the true culprit. If you think about it, there was no other option. After the physical test, Urara went straight to her room to shower while Haru took the guard duty at the art lab. How could Urara even get to the paint? Who had clear access to it? Of course, there was the possibility that Urara stole the paint in advance, even if I never believed it. I perfectly remember that can of paint in the room that morning, and it was not there anymore during the evening.”

Izuku remembered Katsuki mentioning the paint to him, last evening. So that’s what it was. Katsuki was still as clever as ever. That deduction was very good.

“Yeah, that’s what you told me!” Kaminari interrupted Izuku’s thoughts. “When square glasses proposed to separate again you told me all this! You asked me to help spy on Haru!”

“Yes and that’s what we did. We spied on her when she entered the bathroom and left Shu outside, but we were too late to understand that she had gotten out of the window. In the meantime, he had taken my appearance and dragged… Izu… away. He… the bastard wanted to make Izu hate me. To betray me. He…” he stopped, looking enraged.

“He kissed him!” Kaminari added, not really helping the situation.

“He…” tried Jirou. “He wanted to molest Izu using Ka-Four’s body. I don’t think he would have gotten as far as to actually impose himself, after all he likes women, but still what he did was more than enough. He got desperate because he was hungry. He made a fatal mistake.”

Everyone turned to stare at Izuku who blushed, deeply disturbed and embarrassed.

“So, how does any of this have anything to do with Four breaking his personal rule?” asked Uraraka.

“Oh I know, I know!” Kaminari raised his hand. “It’s because when he saw that fake Four kissing Izu he marked him!”

“He… WHAT?” Iida shouted indignantly.

“Yeah, well. It was not really on purpose, but at the time I didn’t really regret it either. It looked pretty fitting to treat garbage as such.” Katsuki shrugged.

“So… You are asking us to cover for that? Am I getting this straight?” asked Uraraka crossing her arms.

“Yes, that’s right.” answered Jirou. “I need your cooperation with that.”

“Wait a second…” Izuku finally voiced a thought he had since the very start. A line had caught his interest. “Jirou… you clearly have some time travel quirk or something similar… and when you appeared you said ‘I timed it perfectly’… But that’s not it, is it? Couldn’t you intervene a moment sooner? Avoid the entire situation?”

Jirou opened her mouth to answer, but Katsuki was faster.

“No, she could not. I had to make that mistake.” for the first time Izuku and Katsuki locked eyes. “The old me needed to be taught a valuable life lesson and that’s happening right as we speak, in the timeline we sent him. He has to learn now, before making that mistake again, in much worse circumstances.”

Izuku felt nervous tension raise in him, threatening to crush him. Katsuki’s gaze was piercing his
very soul.

“I needed to see with my own eyes just how thin the ice I was walking on was.”

Chapter End Notes

Since this explanation is long and complicated I cut it in half, for this reason the next part will be up TOMORROW.
I want to give you the time to metabolize all this but not enough time to forget all about the little details.

I hope you are not too disappointed by this twist, I know it’s probably different from what you were expecting, so I ‘apologize.’
See you tomorrow!
The silence was heavy; no one wanted to break it.

In a way, they understood what he was saying and in another they could not possibly understand, ever.

“Hmm… so… As I was saying, we need to—” Jirou tried to redirect the discussion back on track, but got interrupted.

“Nevermind that!” said Uraraka sharply. “He is talking and saying that’s not a problem. What the hell happened to the marks?!”

“It’s because of my quirk and how all quirks work in general.” Jirou was the one explaining again. “You see, effects don’t carry over different times. Basically, anyone who travels with me gets the effect cut immediately, even the permanent ones. The effect lasts only if I carry the affected person or the materialized object with me. I made the Four from your time disappear from this timeline, so of course the marks he placed are gone. It’s like… he no longer exists. Technically.”

“Wait, all of the marks? Including the old ones and the one outside of the Barrier?!” surprising everyone it was Shouto who reacted first.

“Yes Shu, all of them. Including the ones I gave to my parents when I was young.” Katsuki answered, staring Shouto in the eyes.

They seem to communicate somehow with their eyes only, and Izuku felt like he didn’t know either of them anymore. They were both strangers. He had no idea what was going on but clearly he was not included. He didn’t like any of this one bit. Tension seemed to leave Shouto all of a sudden.

“I see… I see…” his voice carried a sigh.

“All right, returning to the point, we don’t have much time left. Only fifteen minutes.” Jirou tried once again to make her point. “I need you all to cooperate. My plan is composed of two parts. Everyone, except for one person, has to return to their positions before I came and got you. Not only that, you have to go along with the lie we are going to spread about Four. As he just said, all the marks have disappeared, it’s impossible that the people outside have not noticed, surely Four’s parents are already in high alert. For this reason, I need you all to go along with this lie. We are going to tell the world that they were wrong, that Four’s quirk never was permanent to begin with, he simply had no idea how to remove the marks but now he knows. That will be the official truth from now on.”

“Why though?” asked Uraraka.

“Multiple reasons. First, my personal rule says that I cannot take any other human with me when I use my quirk. They can’t know that I sent Four away. They must think that this one,” she pointed at Katsuki in the corner, “is the Four from this time. He will pose as his old self until I’ll be able to get back to the original one. So in the meantime, I’ll need you all to cover for both me and him. It’s not difficult, you simply have to avoid mentioning anything at all and treat him like he is the normal Four.”
“Why would we treat him any differently?” asked Kaminari, showing a very candid side.

“Because he’ll be able to talk from now on. Both this one and the original one. They will talk. You all need to go along with the lie.”

“You said that Kat—his parents are going to be in high alert… What do you mean?” asked Izuku, worried.

“Because they were told that the only way for the mark to be removed would be if I died. I don’t doubt that my mother is already raising hell out there. She must have called the Government to find out if I’m dead or alive and of course, this means that they will contact Aizawa soon.” answered Katsuki frowning and looking at the ground.

Izuku felt bad for the Bakogous.

“Okay, so basically you want us to cover for Four and yourself by never mentioning that he was sent for a trip into time. Well, it doesn’t sound too difficult. We only need to play it dumb and avoid Truth or Dare quirks. I doubt anyone wants our version of the facts.” Uraraka shrugged.

“No… the problem is bigger than just that.” Jirou scratched her head. “How do you think Aizawa knows when we are breaking the rules? Like, for example, if we are in our own room with a closed door? The answer is the Barrier. The Barrier quirk is very special; it’s actually an extension and materialization of the owner’s mind. What I’m saying is… everything that’s inside the Barrier is constantly seen and heard by the owner. They always know what we do, say and where we are. They can see and hear us right this moment.”

“Wait, wait, wait! You mean… they know we are violating the rules?” Uraraka was agitated again. “His rules,” she pointed at Katsuki, “your rule,” she pointed at Jirou, “and even right now the law. By keeping a secret that his quirk is not just… reversible? Is that it?!”

“More or less.” Jirou stared hard into her eyes.

“You gotta be kidding me! This was a trap all along, wasn’t it?! Now we are your accomplices and we are all going to jail!” Uraraka rose on her feet, shaking.

“There is nothing to fear, as I said my plan works in two phases. I just described the first. Whether you like it or not, you are going to need me very, very soon so we are going to help each other. Is that so difficult? I won’t let any of you go to jail or anywhere else, I guess that this is difficult to accept, but I’ve known you all for five years by now. You are all my friends and I don’t want anything bad to happen to any of you. Furthermore, there is something bigger than just us on the line, we have to cooperate. As I said the test is won, no one needs to attack anyone anymore. And I already know that my plan will work, from the future.”

“Wonderful. So basically the only proof you have for us is ‘I know from the future!’ . You are asking us to risk our lives just based on trust. Oh, I forgot to mention! Trust in the relationship we will build in the next five years. Because as far as I’m concerned right now you are a stranger to me!” Uraraka was getting pretty hysterical.

“Yes, that’s what I’m asking. I don’t have anything to give you that could ever cover for the risk.” she said with a calm tone. “I can offer all my personal information, but that’s not going to help you at all. There is really nothing else I can do. I’m sorry.” she bowed a little.

“Urara, calm down.” Iida placed a hand on her shoulder and they stared at each other for a moment. The girl sighed and ruffled her hair.
“All right, I got it. But if worst comes to worst, I’m going to sell all of you off and save my ass, got that?” she pouted.

“That’s okay! It won’t! Thank you!” Jirou smiled at her. “Everyone else?”

“If I can help Four, I will.” said Kirishima.

“I don’t really mind!” smirked Kaminari.

“I want to help.” stated Shouto easily.

“I don’t think there is even a question about what I want.” said Izuku weakly.

It was not as if he was not convinced, he seriously was. He just wanted… to talk to him. To ask him what was happening. To ask him why he was *not looking at him*. Seeing him so distant was hurting him a lot.

Tsuyu didn’t say anything, but she didn’t need to, she was already helping Jirou so she was on their side clearly. The only person who had yet to choose a side was Yao. The girl was looking at everyone, her hands pressed at her chest, like she had no idea what to do. It made perfect sense, Kirishima was Katsuki’s friend and Kaminari was just a chill dude in general, Shouto was… strangely obsessed with Katsuki, Iida and Uraraka were their ‘allies’ and Tsuyu was attached to them as well. Counting Jirou, who was saying they were friends from the future, the only person who didn’t have a deep connection to Katsuki was indeed Yao. She probably was not sure if she wanted to take the risks for a couple of strangers. Jirou was looking at her in particular.

“Yao, you are the focal point of the second phase of my plan.” she said.

“H-hm?!” Yao snapped out of her confusion and fell into an even deeper one.

“Just spreading a lie isn’t going to cut it; we need to modify the memory of the person that is keeping up the Barrier right now. We need to make them forget everything that happened past the kiss and for that reason we need the Memory Manipulation quirk. The one that fabricates fake memories. And for that reason, I need you Yao.” Jirou started into her eyes.

“M-my quirk is not-”

“I know. I know your quirk and I’m sure you already know what I’m talking about. I need a Credit Card of Memory Manipulation.”

Everyone gasped, except for Katsuki, had she just revealed her quirk? Credit Card? Izuku had never heard of that quirk before. Yao paled. Jirou looked at all of them seriously.

“Credit Card is a very rare quirk, so you may be more familiar with its ‘big brother’, the Wild Card.” Izuku almost jumped back. *The girl was just throwing things in the open so casually.* “The two quirks are pretty similar, the only difference is that the Wild Card completely absorbs the quirk and it can be used indefinitely, while the Credit Card let you borrow a quirk for once-time only. Basically, she can memorize quirks and after getting permission from the owner, she can create infinite Credit Cards of it to use personally or to give to people. Every Credit Card works only once or for an hour only, so it’s not the best, but it’s still the most versatile quirk in existence. Yao is a very, *very* special existence.” Yao looked at her feet, shadowing her face with her hair. “Contrary to the Wild Card, that’s extremely powerful but only the owner can use it, the Credit Cards can be used by everyone. She can very well give birth to an army all by herself.”

“Why are you telling them all this?!” Yao yelled, her eyes red.
“Because…” Jirou hesitated a moment and looked behind her back. “Shu, can you cover your ears for a second?” he obeyed without a second thought. “Because… Momo… I know you don’t want to marry that man. I’m offering a way out, if only you are willing to take my hand.” as she said as she extended a hand to her.

The two girls stared at each other for a long moment. No one was moving, the scene was almost magical, it made them hold their breath in anticipation. Yao’s mouth trembled as if she was trying to say something, but instead she extended her hand and touched Jirou’s.

And they were gone.

“What the-?!” Kami yelled.

Everyone gasped again and scooted back like they were afraid of something dangerous popping up. Katsuki, instead, pried himself out of the corner and stood near the void that Jirou left.

“The plan is set in motion. Yao and Jirou will be back in a bit, with the correct Credit Card, and the Barrier person, Yuki, will forget everything that happened. We need to move out of the way as soon as possible, let’s return inside the building, but let’s be careful of Mineta.”

“Will someone help me with the food here?” asked Tsuyu with a smile.

Izuku, Kirishima, Kaminari and Iida grabbed a large portion of it. When Katsuki picked up another bit Shouto immediately followed suit. Uraraka just pouted in her corner. Tsuyu grabbed all her neatly folded clothes and led the way outside.

“How is that girl going to reach the Barrier people?” asked Kirishima.

“Jirou doesn’t follow normal rules, a locked door and guards are of no concern for her.” answered Katsuki. “She is going to take Yao to a kid with Memory Manipulation and they will ask the kid to give them permission to use it. Yao will create a Credit Card and once it’s materialized there is no problem. Even though the condition will not be fulfilled in this timeframe anymore it won’t matter. It’s quite complicated, I know, I still don’t fully comprehend Jirou’s quirk myself, but it will work. We’ve done a lot of trial and error to prepare for this day. Yao herself helped us with these experiments. I know, we kinda dropped it onto you like it’s nothing, but we’ve been planning for this day since three months ago. Jirou had to make a lot of jumps to collect all the information we needed.”

Izuku was still stunned by the complete nonchalance he was showing about pretty much everything. There was no way to mistake this Katsuki for his Katsuki. They were two very different people.

Were two years really enough to make so big of a difference?

“Now we better stop talking about this altogether and let’s never mention it again. I’ll tell you about her quirk and some other things, but we can’t mention anything that can point to this rule-breaking. She should already be back right about now. Let’s hurry to the kitchen to drop off this food.”

He picked up the pace and everyone followed him, deep in their thoughts. It was impossible to accept what happened because it was not like they had actually done something, everything just dropped on them out of the blue and got solved on his own. But maybe that was the problem. Maybe it would have been easier if they had some control or say about the situation. They just got… overwhelmed by everything and they just had to accept it.

They worked in silence, placing all the food back in its place. It was when they were almost finished that Yao appeared, greeting them like it was normal. They stared at her, freezing in place,
questioning her with their eyes. Katsuki cleared his throat loudly, snapping them back to work. They needed to act normally. Yao nodded at them only a little bit, probably telling them ‘it’s all done’, if Izuku had to guess, and then started to help. Izuku tried not to fix his mind on her too much and tried not to stare, but even so he was able to notice something. Yao always looked uneasy, like she had no idea what her place in the world was, like she had no idea what to think or do, but now… The way she was moving, with grace and ease. She was almost a completely different person. It was like a long time passed for her and many things were now into a different perspective. It was the same with Katsuki. Had a lot of time passed for her too?

“So? Can we hear about that Jirou girl or whatever?” said Uraraka in the end, pouting as usual.

“Yes, I guess now it’s a good a time as ever. We have…” Katsuki looked at the clock on the wall. “five more minutes before Aizawa is back. It’s best if you all calm down a bit before talking to the man. We need to be all on the same page before capturing Mineta. So…” he collected his thoughts for a moment. Izuku noticed that even though he didn’t need the notebook anymore, he was still choosing his words carefully and not wasting any of them. He guessed that some things never really leave you, no matter how things changes or how much time passes. “Jirou’s quirk is called Dimensional Travel. The name is due to the fact that she travels back and forth between the present, the future and the past and because she can change timeline as well. But that’s… a bit too complicated, so let’s leave that as it is. Her quirk is new, just like mine, and unique.”

“If so, why I never heard of a quirk like that? She should have been on all the news, just like you.” asked Iida.

“Because she appeared in this timeline only recently and she never existed in this world in the first place. Basically… she doesn’t have an identity, she is not registered anywhere… She was born in another timeline and not here. The Government would have never even been aware of her existence if she didn’t inform them herself.”

“Why inform them though? She can just… jump around without leaving a trace, so why not enjoy her freedom?” Uraraka made a vague gesture with her hand.

“Because she needed to take the test, of course.” Katsuki added the ‘of course’ like it was an afterthought.

Izuku understood, he was trying to play the ‘good kid’ role but he actually meant to reference what she said earlier. That she needed to get Katsuki out of here in one piece. She never explained why though, Izuku really wanted to know.

“So… she was born in another timeline, and then jumped away from there?” Kirishima was like a child listening to a fairy tale.

“It was not intentional, she was five, and she never had any control over her quirk. As you already know, probably, new quirks are unstable and dangerous for the most part. In her case she cannot stay in one place for long, her quirk activates on its own. It’s like… she has an outburst of energy that activates it, the more she uses it, the less she needs to jump and the longer she can stay in one place. But no matter what, she cannot stay for more than a day. Her place is… nowhere. That’s her price. She cannot live in any time or place, she doesn’t belong anywhere. She can’t even see her family again since she jumped away from that timeline when she was little and now she can’t go back. She can’t go back to a place she already visited.”

“That’s… pretty messed up! But what about changing the course of history… You know… Like, can she?” Kaminari luckily phrased it smart.
“She can… that’s why the Government never revealed her existence, mass panic would ensue. This quirk… the world is not ready for something like this. Honestly, it’s already a miracle no one decided to kill her just in case. Maybe they tried, but they couldn’t. After all it’s not like I know her that well, I don’t even know how old she actually is.”

“Really? But you two acted like you were best fri—” Kaminari asked with incredulity, Yao pinched his arm. “Ouch! What?!” he looked at them in search of an explanation then he remembered that they were supposed to consider him their Katsuki. It didn’t make sense for this Katsuki to know Jirou so well. “Right! Of course, you don’t know her!” he yelled, not convincing at all.

Izuku massaged his temples; it would be a miracle if they were actually going to pull this off.

“Okay, this is it. This is her quirk. It’s not a real secret or anything, but it’s best if you keep it to yourself. The Government is at a loss with that one. You see… Whether she fails the test or not… they cannot stop her. And how would they know if she commits any crime? Or if she changes history? Not to mention that they have no idea where she goes and when. Normally they would plant a tracker on her to keep her under control, but considering the nature of her quirk, it’s not possible. As you can imagine… since she doesn’t bring the Tracker person with her, the tracker cannot remain on her in her journey. Every time she jumps, any quirk that has been imposed on her goes away completely. She is… unstoppable.”

“Wow, she looks broken! Even though your quirk, Four, is considered the newest, most ridiculous quirk of all, hers is… way out there!” Kaminari looked intrigued.

“Aizawa should have come back already. I think it’s best if we go.” Katsuki broke the discussion suddenly, leaving the pantry.

“Do you know where he is? We never saw him bringing the food in.” Iida tried to stop him.

Katsuki stopped, like he just realized that it didn’t make sense for him to know.

“No, I don’t know, we are going to wait in the entrance hall, sometime soon he will pass by, I believe.” he left the kitchen completely.

They others followed him outside in silence. Izuku remained behind a little. Now everything made sense, even though he more or less understood it all by himself even before the explanation. He could accept it all, even though it was still very overwhelming. But he still wanted to talk to Katsuki, to learn more, not about the situation, but about him. He sighed a little and then followed. Katsuki was surely going to talk with him later. Surely.

They stood in the entrance hall, waiting for the man. Izuku wondered if he really was going to pass by the entrance hall or if that was simply Katsuki’s deception for the Barrier quirk owner. They never saw him transfer objects around, they barely saw him at all outside of his own room. His suspicions were confirmed when the man appeared from the hall that led to the kitchen instead of coming from the outside. Was there a way to reach the kitchen from another place? Aizawa stopped when he noticed them.

“Oh, there you are. What the hell is even going on? I received two reports about today, what kind of mess have you made while I was away?!” he seemed bothered more than anything else.

“One of the reports was about me, right?” Katsuki said, his voice coming out low compared to the one he used until then.

He was probably trying to fake the fact that he just started to talk again. Aizawa hesitated a moment,
staring at him from beyond his protective goggles, he slid them off his face, staring at him directly.

“It’s really you… It’s not a trick or anything? How is that possible? How did you managed to erase
them?” he was speaking as though he was afraid to fall into some trap.

“Yes, it’s me. Mr. Aizawa, as you must be aware, my quirk is new, we only assumed that it was
permanent because I could not erase them, but you know how instable my quirk is.” he was talking
slowly, like he was having trouble. He made for a convincing impression. “I don’t know how it
happened exactly, but as instructed I continued to train my quirk to get a better hold of it. Earlier, as I
saw a friend in danger, something snapped in me and I saw the way to release it. I think hunger
played a part in it as well, my mind was a bit too lighthearted.”

“So… almost starving made you reach a new level of quirk control? That’s a new one.” Aizawa
sighed loudly. “Don’t talk about it around or idiots will start to try as well, just for the heck of it.
Why can’t I ever get a bunch of normal kids? Why do I always have to be the one to deal with these
abnormalities?” he slid the goggles back into places and scratched his head. “She never gets these
problems, it’s always me!”

“She?” Izuku asked, his mouth moving on its own.

“He is talking about the other God’s eye owner. There are two currently working, they take turns.
While Aizawa is supervising the test the other one is around visiting all the little kids with S and A
ranks and working as part of the Task Force. They exchange roles every year, so next year she will
be holding the test and he will work outside.” explained Tenya, as though he was not waiting for
anything else than a chance to share his knowledge.

Once again, Izuku was shocked by the amount of things he still was not aware of. It made perfect
sense, of course, one person with God’s eye was needed on the outside, it was stupid to waste that
quirk for a whole year in this place. When would Aizawa be able to see the new kids if he was
trapped here as well all the time?

“Anyway, stop talking, please.” he addressed to Katsuki again. “We haven’t heard official
confirmation from the Government, so if you talk again I’ll have to punish you for violating your
personal rule. You really better not, your mother is already raising hell out there. She even tried to
‘borrow’ a boat to come and see you personally. Even though she doesn’t even know where the
island is. If you are sent away now, I can see that she is going to burn up the whole city. Please,
spare us all.” the man ended with a tired voice.

Izuku could not hold back a smirk, that sounded exactly like something Mrs. Bakugou would do.
Katsuki just nodded.

“Now, about the food…” the man stared at Tsuyu next. “That was a nasty prank, forcing me to call
for a new cargo and when I’m out collecting it, you return the food back. Please, give me back my
wasted time.”

Izuku almost laughed at this, maybe because he was a little tired. The worse was behind them, if he
was interpreting the situation right. Aizawa was too chill to have really heard about Katsuki marking
this Mineta dude.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Aizawa, I was trying to corner Mineta.” Tsuyu just dropped it in the open.

“Yeah, I heard that you got ‘someone’ to tell you a couple things.” so he was aware that Jirou and
Tsuyu talked. Made sense. “Really, what a bunch of bothersome kids they dropped on me… Why
couldn’t I have to look after some boring quirks that open locks instead? It’s always on me…” he
was basically ranting by the end, Uraraka interrupted him, impatient.

“Sir, does that mean Mineta got eliminated or not? Have we won the test or not?” she asked forcefully.

“Hmmm…” Aizawa scratched his head again. “Yeah, he is out. Honestly, I was not expecting you kids to find him. You have been running around senselessly for a while, I was almost losing faith in your intelligence. Well, good work, I guess. You eliminated someone.”

“But does that means that we win? That we just have to wait until the end?” she insisted.

“Yeah, pretty much. Unless you start to stab each other in the back, I wouldn’t put past a human to eliminate more just for fun. But whatever, it’s your choice.”

He turned toward the stairs to the second floor.

“So now… let’s catch that little rat.”

Chapter End Notes

About Jirou's quirk, to make it as simple as possible:
Think about a lot of strings running all parallel to each other, but never touching. From one string to another the difference is really little, maybe you can compare it to different shades of the same color? But the farther the string is the more differences piled up. Jirou started from a random string, and now she can't go back there, since she left it when she was very young.
What Jirou normally does is jumping back and forth on that same string in random points in time. She can never return to a point she already jumped to, because that would create a paradox (a lot of Jirou in the same place for example) so each time she makes a mistake that point is lost, she has to try and change what she wants from another angle or, if she really can't, she needs to abandon the string forever.
Jumping in time is not something she decides, the quirk does what it wants, but to jump on another string she has to do it consciously. On the other hand, if she travels with another person she has an easier time controlling it. The reason for that is that all people have something like an anchor to their 'present' while Jirou doesn't (her price) so she gets swept away in time, but with someone else she has a kind of 'point of return' that makes it a lot easier. She likes to travel with people but they can suffer, in the long run, so she doesn't do it often.
At this particular point in time she is visiting her fifth string, or timeline. She already abandoned four.

Everything else will be explained in due time.
Next chapter is, as always, next Monday, the 15th of October.
Ready for the second half of this story?
“Can you lend me a hand? I have capture tape, but he is panicking and he will run away. I’ll need to use my quirk otherwise his appearance can actually fool me. So let’s all be careful.”

Aizawa slid the goggles off once again and started to climb the stairs. They shared a look and run after him, starting to make their way into the girls’ portion of the building. The man was faster than they were, especially since they were tired and they had just eaten after a long period of starvation. Iida was the one the in best physical condition it turned out, as he was the only one capable of keeping up. Katsuki probably could too but he had decided to trail behind the others for some reason. As Izuku turned to ask him if something was wrong, Iida slowed down and approached him.

“Hit me.” he said to Katsuki. Katsuki drew a question mark, frowning. “I need some power if I want to stun him and help Aizawa. This is my job after all.”

The two stared at each other a moment, then Katsuki hit him with a sucker punch in the stomach. Iida just barely kept walking as the others were staring at them in disbelief. The pursuit continued, even though only Aizawa knew where they were supposed to find this prey of theirs. The man stopped in front of the female big bathroom at the end of the hallway.

“He is hiding… here?! Out of all the places?” asked Uraraka with short breath.

“Don’t tell me he is using one of our bodies again…” breathed Yao.

“Probably, he thinks we won’t hurt a girl. Probably…” Iida looked focused, ready to fight.

“Oh, I’ll hurt him, all right.” Uraraka took a step toward the door but Aizawa stopped her.

“You girls stay out of here; you’ll only confuse us about who is who. This is probably the whole point. I don’t want to waste more eyesight than I need, just wait here. Kid with the red hair, you wait out here as well please, I don’t want you involved in any potential struggle.”

“Whatever. Just don’t use this as an excuse to get a chance to feel some boobs.” she whispered, low enough to be heard by the guys, but not Aizawa.

Katsuki’s face was saying ‘I wouldn’t want to touch your boobs even if it kills me’. Izuku sighed. They were adults… Right? Sometimes, he had some doubts. The males entered the room and Aizawa signaled them to block the door and create a perimeter. Iida and Aizawa were the only two to advance in the room. The man started to open all the shower stalls, one after the other. He was hidden in the very last one, flattened against the wall with Tsuyu’s appearance. As soon as the shower stall was opened, Aizawa started to prepare the capture cloth but Mineta was ready, he leaped ahead and passed him. Iida charged but he sprinted in the opposite direction, in a flash he Shape Shifted into Uraraka and started to whimper loudly.

The scene, maybe, was supposed to be tense, but Izuku could not help but feel that this was very pathetic. This was not a fight nor a struggle; it was simply a guy running around trying to escape a sealed fate. What was he hoping to do? Run in circles until they were all passed out from tiredness? Iida tried to punch him and Mineta screeched.
“You want to punch your friend?! Don’t you have any sympathy toward this body at all?!”

Iida used the moment of pause to his advantage and tackled the girl’s body to the floor.

“It’s exactly because it’s her that I don’t have any qualm in using my quirk!” as he said that he probably used it because Mineta started to yell.

“Ow, ow, ow!”

Aizawa was immediately upon them and the capture tape was promptly tied around the body on the floor. Izuku should have felt relief, but he was momentarily distracted. *It’s exactly because it’s her that I don’t have any qualm in using my quirk.* He had no idea if he should consider this a lucky coincidence or not. The girl was locking her body into a cage and this one had no qualm punching her. Was their relationship healthy? Not that Izuku was an expert on relationship dynamics, but he could not help but wonder.

“Good work. Now I just have to deliver him and this is done.” he started to drag him toward the door.

As soon as the effect of Pain Memory was out of his system, Mineta started to whimper loudly, making a mess of Uraraka’s face. Katsuki opened the door and the people that were waiting outside peeked inside. Uraraka’s face contorted in disgust as she saw her body being dragged around so inelegantly.

“Don’t you have any dignity at all as a human being? Return to your body and accept defeat in a more composed way. Stop hiding your stupid face behind someone else’s face!” she barked at him.

He started to blabber incoherently between a whimper and something else.

“Let me translate that for you.” intervened Aizawa. “He cannot return to his real body because he has no idea what shape he had in the first place. He lost it pretty much immediately after birth and since then he has been a mess of different features. And since he cannot stay in the same shape for more than three hours he can’t even forge a new appearance to use continuously. He is forced to change from time to time.”

Mineta blabbered something that could vaguely resemble a ‘Seeeee?’.

“I don’t care!” Uraraka shouted. “Don’t use these pathetic excuses on me! You should have never stolen female bodies in the first place!”

Mineta sniffle loudly, making Uraraka’s face look very ugly, the girl grimaced in disgust.

“Why should I… use only male bodies… when…” he started to speak between a hiccup and the next. “I can use… all the beautiful bodies… that I see… Males are… ugly and flat most of the times…”

As he said that, he puffed Uraraka’s chest as if that was the perfect explanation of his point.

“Ahh! Enough! Go and die perv!” she yelled at a very high volume.

“No, I’m pretty sure he won’t die, I’m only going to send him away.” Aizawa answered bored.

“NOOOO! There won’t be any cute girls over there!” Mineta yelled in the same volume as Uraraka just used.
“Yeah, I’m pretty sure you are going to be stuck with males for the rest of your life.” the man answered completely unconcerned.

“NOOOOO! SAVE MEEEE, HEEELP!”

Aizawa started to drag him away while they remained in place, filled with disbelief. The scene was too surreal to be true. Before disappearing behind the corner, he called back to them.

“None of you go off and hide somewhere, I need to deliver this and then I have to talk to you all.”

And with that, they were alone in the hallway. They looked at each other, tired and still a bit overwhelmed by the whole day.

“Will he tell us that we passed the test?” asked Uraraka.

“No, I don’t think so.” answered Yao. “He will tell us that we have successfully eliminated the person we needed to, but the test will keep going until the end of the year as it was supposed to.”

“So… he thinks that even though we eliminated that person, we will still fight against each other?” asked Kami tilting his head.

“Pretty much. There is no way to tell if someone intends to betray someone here, at least not from Aizawa’s perspective.” explained Yao again.

Izuku understood what she really meant. From Aizawa’s perspective. The man could not know they were already accomplishes in a crime, he had no idea how close they had been tied up by the recent events. Jirou said they would be friends in the next five years. Izuku was not sure he could trust her completely, but she did save Katsuki, so for now he was going to believe her while keeping an open eye.

“Are you okay Yao? About… you know.” he really wanted to ask her all about her time travel, but that was not possible as they were spied on by the Barrier, he had to wait for the end of the test.

“Yes, I’m fine, this was a very interesting day.” she smiled a little; it was the first time Izuku had seen her smile.

After a moment of deliberation, they decided to wait for Aizawa’s return in the kitchen. Tsuyu proposed to cook for everyone and they actually shared their first cooked meal together, not like the seafood barbeque that was basically just roasting ingredients. Uraraka and Yao helped her cook, it turned out they were making Katsudon, Izuku’s very favorite dish, between others. He made very sure not to show it anyway, just in case, Katsuki instead looked pretty much at ease as he spiced up his portion abundantly.

“Now, that’s a good idea if I’ve ever seen one!” Aizawa returned when they were eating. “Can I have some?”

“We have made some extra, since we received so much new food on top of the old one.” Yao grabbed a bowl for him as well.

Aizawa sat down at the end of the table and slid his goggles off just enough to eat.

“You seem happier than normal.” he said to her.

“Yes. Yes, I am,” she answered without even trying to cover it up, “I realized something lately.”
“Well, good for you.” he closed the discussion.

Izuku had a feeling the two knew each other. On a personal level, from way before the test. Many people in the room were very mysterious, like her and her ‘marriage’. Who was she supposed to marry? Probably not Aizawa. He could not ask anymore, since he was not supposed to know at all. This time travel stuff saved them but now Izuku was forced to keep all his questions to himself until they were all out of the Barrier’s range. What a pain.

Aizawa wolfed down on his food and when everyone was finished he started talking again.

“So… First, I wanted to say that Mineta, the guy from before, has been delivered, it’s done. This means that you have technically completed the requirement to survive this test, but it doesn’t mean that the test is finished. I’ll have you keep me company for a while longer. In the meantime—”

“But we are safe, right?” Uraraka interrupted him. “No surprise in the last minute?”

“The rules were clear weren’t they? Eliminate one for everyone to win.” he shrugged.

“It’s like this every year? It’s always one person?” asked Iida.

This was actually a very good question. Jirou said that they would put one or more criminals in it, so in that case some tests would have a different rule. Aizawa apparently sensed that they had understood the rule better than on a superficial level.

“No, sometimes it’s two or three. Never more than three, never less than one. Does that answer your question? You were actually lucky this year.”

“Yes, thank you.” Iida nodded.

“As I was saying, in the meantime, we have a little problem to solve. You kid,” he pointed his spoon at Katsuki, “need to come with me, outside of the island. The experts want to talk to you about your quirk and the new discovery you have made. They want to try and test some things. You can’t refuse, I’m afraid.”

Izuku felt a shiver down his back. Test things? It was a lie so how was Katsuki going to prove this? This was bad!

Katsuki nodded. Unconcerned.

Izuku’s eyes widened. Did he have a plan ready for this too? Probably. Now that he thought about it they said they made a bunch of tries and Jirou already knew it would work from the future. Unfortunately, he had no way to ask him what he was going to do about all this. He could just trust him with this.

“Very well, we are leaving immediately, go pick up some stuff from your room since I don’t know how long we will be away, you probably will need a change of clothes or something. I’ll wait at the entrance. Try to be as fast as possible.” the man left.

Katsuki left the table and started to make his way out of the room, without a word or looking at anyone. Izuku realized with a start that his cue to talk to him was there and it was passing by so he hurried behind him.

“Wait!” he caught up to him.

Katsuki looked at him just a moment, more like to confirm his identity than to actually look at him,
then he signed something vaguely. Izuku could not follow him very well, it was almost as if he was not used anymore to using signals or the notebook. Oh, right, that was what he was trying to say. He didn’t have the notebook with him, his Katsuki had it. That was a problem. He had no idea how to keep up a conversation with him without both the notebook and signals. Katsuki took the silence as a cue to keep walking. Izuku trailed back, not sure of what to do. He wanted to stop him and find a way to talk but at the same time he was feeling a bit uneasy, like the person in front of him was a stranger now, but that was not it. Right…?

Katsuki opened his door and searched through his clothes, like he could not decided what to take and Izuku just stood there. He could grab a notebook right now, couldn’t he? Instead, Katsuki just kept preparing the suitcase he had used to come to the island without paying him any mind. It was only when he had finished, that he turned to face him and hesitated a moment. He pondered something for a moment and then wrote down –We can talk another time- and just left. Izuku almost wanted the power to go back in time because the current situation was a bit frustrating.

Katsuki joined Aizawa in the entrance and after bowing a little bit to them, all the others had gathered there to snoop probably, they went out. Izuku called out to him, before he could vanish beyond the door.

“See you soon!”

Katsuki raised a hand a little and closed the door behind him. The silence lasted for a while and Izuku was so deep in thoughts, he didn’t realize the others had started to disperse until Kaminari snapped him out of it by placing an arm on his shoulders.

“Don’t be sad, I’m sure he will be back in a bit!” he grinned at him. “If you don’t want to stay alone these days you can join us whenever you want, you know?”

“Thanks, that’s reassuring. For now, I just want to go to sleep, okay?” he smiled a little.

“Sure, we will escort you!” Kaminari let him go and Kirishima nodded.

The three of them climbed the stairs and then Izuku wished them goodnight in front of Katsuki’s door. He changed into his pajamas and went to bed immediately. The day had been too long already. The dream he had was very bizarre, he was traveling around various dimensions to save Katsuki who was slipping past his fingers every time. It was frustrating to say the least. He had no idea if it was an external force that was forcing him or if he was consciously trying to escape from him. Either way it was unpleasant.

The next day he woke up early in the morning and was disappointed to see the bed empty. Of course Katsuki had gone for only some hours, but still it would have been nice if he was already back. He went to the pantry to eat breakfast and he found it very crowded, everyone had to get some food from there, since their personal stock had been used to help them all survive. Izuku had thought about doing just the same, so it was no wonder. Tsuyu thanked him for the plants; apparently, they were all still alive. If he had to be honest, Izuku had forgotten all about that, he had not gone to check on them since quite a while, but if they were still alive it was a good thing. Uraraka in the meantime was complaining about the seeds. They had forgotten that they had placed them in Aizawa’s custody so now they were in his quarters. A place they were not supposed to go.

After he ate, Kaminari and Kirishima offered to help him bring some food to Katsuki’s room and he let them help. After that, the three of them were in the room, in search of something to do or say. Izuku didn’t like very much this silence, it was different from the one he often shared with Katsuki. He didn’t know the other two well enough to be completely at ease with doing nothing. Then, a very good idea popped in his head. He could take a look at the files in the Archive. It could be useful both
for him and for Katsuki. Well, not this Katsuki, he probably already knew everything and didn’t need any help, but for his Katsuki. He could learn more about the Credit Card. There probably was not a file about Dimensional Travel since it was supposed to be a secret, but he could take a look. He proposed this idea to the two guys.

“Hey now! That’s a very good idea! I’m super curious about this Credit Card myself!” Kaminari was very enthusiastic.

Kirishima nodded, his eyes shining. He was maybe not as vocal as Kaminari, but he was still expressive. It was easy to understand what he was thinking. So they followed him outside of the room, now that they had found something interesting to do. Outside, they saw Uraraka and Iida doing some work in the place where the vegetables had been previously, so they made a little detour to take a look. It seemed like Froppy had kept some pumpkin seeds from some meal she had had. She said that pumpkin seeds were very healthy and if you put them in a very sunny spot for a long while they become delicious, crunchy snacks. She said that she wanted to eat them herself, but since the pumpkin season was going to begin soon and there was literally nothing else growing, she could live without her snacks for a while. Postponing their visit to the Archive for the time being, they decided to help, all of them except Kirishima who said that he could not.

“Why not, if you don’t touch us it’s fine right?” asked Uraraka.

“I’m not sure if the seeds can be considered alive or dead, but… If I touch them they will probably die and they won’t grow anymore then, right?” he said sadly.

“Wait… does Virus work on other things that are not humans? Like plants?” she insisted.

“Yeah, everything that’s alive. Animals and plants. Technically even the food, the organic one I mean, start to get bad if I touch it, but my body is immune to food poisoning caused by my own quirk. On the other hand, I definitely should not touch something that someone else is going to eat. You won’t die from it, but you’ll get a very bad case of food poisoning. Not worth the risk I believe.”

“Yeah, no. Sorry but don’t touch anything that’s going to become food.”

“Well, if I use my gloves there should be no problem actually, but I forgot the plastic ones in my room. These one here are getting dirty too easily I can’t play around in the ground with them. But if you can wait a moment I can go and get the other pair.” he proposed in the end.

“We won’t take more than five minutes doing this, it’s not worth to—” Uraraka had started to disagree when Iida elbowed her in the side. He had seen Kirishima’s face darken with disappointment.

“Go and get them, we will wait for you.” concluded Iida.

As soon as Kirishima sprinted inside the building again to get his gloves, Kaminari ginned and poked at Iida like he had just done to Uraraka.

“Aren’t you a nice one? Thank you!”

“I see no reason to avoid something so little, if it can help.” he pushed his glasses up his nose, faking indifference.

As soon as Kirishima returned, they worked on the new cultivation for something similar to half an hour, Tsuyu was super meticulous about this and made them do exactly as she said. No one had a lot of experience with farming, so they just followed her example. They used only half the space as they
still wanted to grow something else as soon as possible, then they would see how it was best to divide the space. After they had contemplated everything for a few minutes with satisfaction, they went on their separate ways again.

The three of them, alone again, entered the Archive and searched for the Credit Card. Izuku searched for Dimensional Travel as well, but of course, it was not there. He decided to take a look at Shape Shifting, however. To see if he was missing something. It happened already too many times. They noticed him reading and decided to wait for him. Izuku completed his reading fairly quickly. Everything was pretty much as he had experienced, there was nothing particularly tricky about this quirk or interesting, really.

He still had not processed completely what had happened the day before, it had been all so quick. Mineta stole him a kiss but it had been Katsuki’s body so it was all very confusing. He stilled.

A kiss?

*Oh for the love of…*

*Had he absorbed another A rank quirk?!!*

Chapter End Notes

Great news!
PQ, The Price of a Quirk, is officially FINISHED!
I won't tell you how many chapters you have left to read but they are a decent number, you won't get rid of me so easily!

I'll see you all the 22!
Izuku facepalmed as he groaned strongly. Then he dropped his hand and started reading again.

When the Shape Shifter was transformed which DNA was he using? It was his last hope, but Izuku was not really counting on it. Mineta changed shape, not *substance*. He was still him, only with a different appearance. It was not like Shouto’s quirk.

“Hmmm, what’s going on?” asked Kaminari sensing his distress.

“Ah, nothing… I just… realized something… I need to speak with Aizawa as soon as I can.”

He dropped the now useless file.

“Oh, I see, this looks important! Well, you do you! Can we read this now?” he pointed at the file on the table.

“Yes, of course.” he opened it.

### Credit Card

The Credit Card is one of the rarest quirk. While it took a while to figure out completely how it worked, its presence had always been very easy to spot. This quirk normally is discovered during the childhood, as it’s common practice to ask the kids to try and materialize object of any kind to test the presence of a quirk. This quirk is not exactly powerful, especially compared to a Wild Card, but surely it’s more versatile. The first proof of the presence of this quirk is the materialization of the contract. The Credit Card owner can materialize a scroll with the contract that is stipulated between the owner of a quirk and the owner of the Credit Card. The contract in question is an agreement to loan said quirk to the Credit Card owner for as long as both are alive. Before the contract can be materialized, it’s necessary to have fulfilled the condition.

The condition is to have an extensive knowledge of the quirk the owner is going to borrow. It’s absolutely necessary to know the full name, all the conditions, all the effects and how the quirk works in general. It is possible to acquire such information everywhere, reading an informative file is a good example. Once this condition is fulfilled, the contract can be materialized and the owner of the quirk has to sign it with his or her full name to consent the use. Once the contract is sealed, the Credit Card owner can materialize little pieces of shining paper, very similar to an actual credit card, which contain the quirk in question. It is important to know that what’s being borrowed is just the possibility of use the quirk a single time or for a limited period of time, it’s not as powerful as the Wild Card. The Credit Card materialized, which has the name of the quirk printed on it, can be separated from the owner without a problem, which means that anyone can take it and use it. Contrary to the Wild Card, where only the owner can use the quirk but for an unlimited amount of time, the Credit Card can be used by anyone anytime, but only once. To use the quirk you need to place the Credit Card in your mouth and wait, the paper will melt in a matter of seconds and you’ll be able to use the quirk, of course there are limitations.
There is a very wide number of quirks in the world and every single one of them has some conditions or technical difficulties to keep in mind. The Credit Card doesn’t negate any of them, so you have to treat the quirk like you would normally. For example, if the quirk you want to use have a condition of getting the full name of the person you want to use it on, you have to fulfill the condition before being able to use it. If a quirk requires physical contact, you have to provide it, as well as any material that may be needed. If the quirk requires you to do a certain task with your mind, you need to be prepared. If a quirk works around timeframes, you have to time the assumption correctly to get the desired effect. Using the Barrier as an example, you can keep up the Barrier as long as you keep your mind focused, when you let it go, you cannot put it up anymore as it has been consumed, however it’s been recorded of cases that could keep up a Barrier thanks to Credit Card for more than forty hours. In the case of Permanent quirks, a time limit of an hour is placed, after sixty minutes have passed the effect vanishes entirely. Contrary to the Wild Card you don’t get a second chance, you have to learn all there is to the quirk beforehand to not make a mistake in the process. If not consumed, the Credit Cards remain for as long as the owner is alive, the contract is void after death since they can’t remain after the owner passed away.

This quirk is the most versatile of all because it enables anyone to be able to use multiple quirks at once. It’s possible to defend, attack and apply effects all at the same time if the person is prepared and capable enough. The Wild Card can correct any mistake by just using the quirk again, while the Credit Card cannot. On the other hand, the possibility of creating as many Credit Cards and giving them to a large number of people makes this quirk a lot more appealing. The Credit Cards can be sold for a very high price, the rarer the quirk the better. This quirk is an S rank, because its potential is absolutely abysmal, even though the quirk itself is only considered a B rank. This quirk is not in the Top 10 for the most dangerous quirk because of the one-time only rule.

The person who adsorbed the Credit Card quirk has to pay the price of that quirk with interest. They have to pay double the price, for example, a quirk that makes you unconscious for two hours makes you unconscious for four hours instead.

“Whoa, talk about broken quirks! I can’t believe so many of us have such crazy quirks and I just got a variation of a stupidly common one!” Kaminari pouted. “Can you believe it? There are 25 Mind Readers in the Task Force. TWENTYFIVE. Granted, I’m different, but still! Man, I’m jealous! Next thing I’m going to learn is that you have an even more spectacular quirk!” he pointed at Izuku. Technically he could answer the question by just pointing at the page, the name of his quirk was mentioned plenty. But he didn’t want to. He was already feeling bad for having absorbed another quirk without permission; he didn’t need to cast even more doubts on himself. He wanted to ask about Kaminari’s quirk as well, but it didn’t seem fair, since he was not willing to reciprocate.

“It’s not more spectacular than this, that’s for sure. But it’s... quite something…” he had no idea how else to describe it.

“Figured. I’m the only loser of the group!” he pouted even worst.

“Well, my quirk is nothing special and it’s useless. You already are better off than me.” Kirishima shrugged. “Anyway, Yao is… something else. Have you noticed?”

“Yeah, she must make a lot of money!” Kaminari nodded with his arms crossed.
“Not that! The first sentence! It says ‘one of the rarest’, you know what that means?” when he noticed that no one was going to answer, he kept going. “A rare quirk is like… one every generation… Counting only Japan of course, I don’t know how things are elsewhere. You know that quirks tend to appear in certain areas more than others? Japan is very famous for the Mind Reader category and all the mental-type quirks, like Barrier, while we are one of the weakest nations in fighting-type quirks. However, ‘one of the rarest’? It means that a person with that quirk is born only once in two maybe three generations! Yao is like… a national treasure! No wonder someone wants to marry her, I wouldn't be surprised if someone had literally… bought her.”

“But if she is such a treasure then why is she here? Why have her take the test at all?” asked Kaminari with an eyebrow raised.

“Well… probably because it would set a bad example to let her out easy… And I’m pretty sure they would not let her fail anyway. Not unless she is secretly a murderous fiend, but I doubt that.” Kirishima scratched his head unsure himself.

“Hmm… I guess I cannot really say anything about that since I’m in a similar situation!” he laughed silly.

Izuku sighed with a smile; Kiminari surely was a person that didn’t take anything too seriously.

“Is this all, is there anything else we can research?” asked Kirishima.

“Hmmm… I don’t know any other quirk…” Kaminari looked at the ceiling pensively. “I know mine, yours, Four’s, now Yao’s, Jirou’s and Mineta’s. Is there anything else we can try?”

As he and Kirishima were discussing, Izuku realized how much more than anyone else he knew. Right now he knew every quirk in detail except for the one that Kaminari had. He had not realized it yet, but now that he was thinking about it there was no doubt. He knew every quirk in the test and had a vague description of Kaminari’s. He was pretty much set. Considering he didn’t want to win and now he knew what to expect and one person was already eliminated… There was a very good possibility that both he and Katsuki were safe, along with all the others in here.

It was a comforting thought. Now Katsuki just needed to come back, his or that one, or even both, and he was set.

Katsuki didn’t come back that day. Nor the day after. The more time was passing, the more Izuku was getting restless. Tsuyu told him to trust him when he mentioned it to her, she said that he knew what he was doing. Izuku didn’t doubt it, especially since this was a Katsuki that had had two more years of experience, yet he could not help it. He was not going to calm down until he could see him again. Even the lessons were on hold until Aizawa’s return so there was nothing that could fill the time. Izuku could not spend any time in their room, he was reminded of the time Katsuki hid in the sea cave and he was going mad with worry.

Finally, on the third day he came back, together with Aizawa of course. At the very least it meant that he had been able to deceive even the specialist. He wondered how but he could not ask as long as he was inside the Barrier. Izuku was waiting for him in the entrance hall, sitting on the last step of the stairs, like every day since he was gone. The others were feeling pity for him, he could see it in their eyes every time they were passing by, but at least they never said anything out loud, he was already feeling overly dramatic on his own, he didn’t need them to tell him. They opened the door without any warning and Izuku jumped on his feet immediately, half out of surprise and half out of embarrassment. Aizawa vaguely looked in his direction then left without saying anything. Katsuki looked at him with an unreadable expression. Izuku raised a hand and smiled a little.
“Hi.”

“Hi.” greeted back Katsuki without any particular inflection.

It was quite strange to be greeted back, but he could get used to it, what he could not get used to it was the fact that once again he immediately broke eye contact. He stood there a moment then started to make his way to the stairs, not even telling him anything. He didn’t look particularly happy to see him or anything. What was his problem?

“Hey so… Was everything alright?” he followed him up the stairs trying to start the conversation finally.

“Yeah, nothing particular happened.” Katsuki answered without even look back.

“I see that you are talking now, so I guess they updated your rule? Now you just can’t mark anyone, right? Were you able to see your mother?” he was sorry that Mrs. and Mr. Bakugou had to receive that scare.

“It was not a vacation, they didn’t let me see anyone.” he answered once again, not offering any help keeping the conversation rolling.

Izuku was getting a little irritated, but he swallowed his feelings. He had no idea what was really going on. Katsuki rarely was doing something without a reason. At least he wanted to believe so. Or at least he told himself so, to think he simply didn’t want to talk to him was too sad.

“I see, that’s too bad. I’m sure she would have liked to see you.”

Katsuki didn’t answer. Izuku tried to search for another topic to discuss. He had a ton of things he wanted to say and ask, but now that the moment had finally come he had forgotten them all. They were in front of the room before Izuku could gather his scattered thoughts. Katsuki reached for the handle but then stopped, Izuku could only see his back so he had no idea what expression he was making. What could be the problem? Katsuki took a breath and turned to face him.

“I’m going to stay in Shu’s room for a while.”

Izuku stared at him. Just stared.

His mind was not working properly. What did he say?

Katsuki returned the stare only for a second then scratched his head with an unreadable expression and just turned again to enter.

“Wait!” Izuku felt like he had to stop him at all costs. “What the hell do you mean?”

“Just what I said, I’m going to stay with Shouto for a while.” this time he used the full first name.

“But… why?!” he could not contain the shock in his voice.

Katsuki turned a little and sighed with a bothered expression.

“Because I don’t want to stay with you, if I can help it.” he stole a glance at him, in wait of some reaction, but Izuku was not capable of giving any at the moment. “You can stay in this room if you want, since your stuff is here anyway. I’m just going to take some clean clothes and go to his room. I’ll see you in class, probably.”

He entered the room and left the door open. Izuku just stood in the hallway, frozen in place. Too
bewildered to do anything or even think. There had been a time where Katsuki didn’t want his company, there had been a time where he had said something similar, but he had never been so… intentionally mean. And not after all this time especially. He would sometimes act like Izuku was a bother and he was better without him but most of the time he was just joking or he was in a very bad mood. This was neither.

He was gathering some clothes and objects from inside the room in a hurry. In a moment he was ready to go, it seemed. Once everything was packed under his arm, he went out of the door again. He gave him a look that Izuku was not even nearly able to decipher and he started to walk away, toward Shouto’s door. He followed him with his eyes, still frozen in place, and he observed them as they exchanged a word or two. He could not hear. He was not sure if the problem was the distance, that they were talking too softly or if his ears were malfunctioning. Any of the three was possible.

They closed the door and he was alone in the hallway. Neither of them had even looked in his direction at all. Izuku was beyond bewildered. He could not understand. What caused this? Was it something he did? Was it something he was going to do? Or was Katsuki the problem? Or Shouto?

He had no idea and he didn’t like this. At all.

After a while, he recovered enough to shut himself in the room. He didn’t even know if he wanted to feel angry or sad. At the moment he was so caught off guard that he was not really feeling like being either of them. He had no idea where to start to figure this out. He could not even be sure if the problem had been caused by him or by whatever Katsuki had seen or experienced in any moment of his life. Yet, his Katsuki was okay with him until the day he was sent away, so it had to be something that was true only for this Katsuki.

For a long moment he humored the thought that maybe this Katsuki was not Katsuki. Maybe it was a doll or a Shape Shifter. Maybe this was all a convoluted plan created by someone that was trying to mess with him. If that was true, it was working wonders. Of course, Izuku let the thought die. Deluding himself to the point of blindness was not a great idea. He was going to stay in high alert but since even Aizawa testified that it was Katsuki, there was very little hope there.

And in a way it was good, if that one was really not Katsuki and this was a big elaborate ruse then the real Katsuki was in danger right now. He preferred a very rude Katsuki to a Katsuki in danger, from whenever time he was coming from. He had to get to the bottom of this.

The Barrier was not on his side. He could not just barge in Shouto’s room and start yelling, demanding an explanation. He could not come out and say ‘I want to know if something in the future made you hate me’. Well, he could still barge in his room and start yelling, just avoiding dangerous topics, but the simple thought was making him feel shy. He had never made such a scene before, even if it was Shouto he was still feeling ashamed of making an outburst like that in public. It was not like him at all.

He spent the night trying to think at every possibility. Maybe they had broke up again after the test. Or maybe they had fought recently? Or maybe Izuku did something bad. Or maybe Katsuki was being his usual prick self? Or maybe something had happened that convinced Katsuki that he was not trustworthy anymore? Izuku was not the smartest; it was possible that he made some very stupid mistake. Maybe he was fed up of babysitting him since he was always so useless? Maybe Shouto was a lot easier to deal with. Maybe Shouto was smart and quick-witted, compared to Izuku. Maybe Shouto was Katsuki’s new boyfriend.

Izuku grabbed his pillow and groaned into it, frustrated.

He wanted to know what was up with them both. He wanted to know so badly. If any of the above
options were true, why he had chosen Shouto instead of him? He could have understood Kirishima, maybe even Kaminari or Tsuyu. Why Shouto? Why stalker, strange, odd Shouto? What did he have that he had not? He wanted to know it all. What he had done in the future? Had Shouto… replaced him? Took his place by his side?

And in all that, he had forgotten completely to tell Aizawa about Shape Shift. He needed to talk to him the next day.

The next day, even though originally it was supposed to be a day off, Aizawa called them to the classroom by sliding a little message under their doors. In the classroom Izuku arrived earlier with impatience and a bit of anxiety, he had no idea what he was going to have to confront. Katsuki should sit next to him and away from Shouto, so he had a moment to potentially talk to him. It was still strange to think ‘talk to him’ instead of just communicate with him. Obviously, things were not going to go that conveniently.

When Kaminari had decided to sit next to Kirishima a row of desks had been left empty. Now Izuku knew that one of them was supposed to be Jirou’s desk but she was never present to begin with. That day, when Izuku entered, the row was fully occupied. Katsuki and Shouto had taken it. Yao was now seated next to an empty desk and the other empty one was, of course, the one next to Izuku.

All his interest in entering had vanished. He wanted to go back to the room and maybe never leave again. Even in the classroom he was going to avoid him?

“Sorry, can you let us in, please?” a voice came from behind.

Izuku realized he had been blocking the door ever since he had seen Katsuki at his new desk. He turned to see Iida and Uraraka and hurried out of the way muttering an apology. He noticed Katsuki sneaking a glance in their direction finally noticing that he was in the classroom, but he soon returned looking outside of the window, ignoring him entirely. Not even a little gesture of the hand.

He realized he was still in the doorway, probably looking silly, so he quickly sat in his desk, trying his best to not look back at all. He didn’t need to pass the next two hours glancing behind his shoulder. Aizawa arrived shortly after and Izuku did his best to forget about them and focus on him. He had to listen to the lecture and then talk to him about the Wild Card. The man opened the day by telling the males that they needed to finish the physical tests. They were going to do them in the afternoon.

The lesson was both very long and very short for Izuku, who found himself at the end of it before he could have completely stabilized his mind. When Aizawa left the room he was being pulled in two different directions, he had to go but he wanted to stay and see what Katsuki would do next. Leave without acknowledge his presence? In a way a decision was made for him. Even when the others were getting up to leave the two of them made no attempt to. They seemed to be in a silent agreement to remain into the classroom until who knows when. Katsuki was still staring outside of the window, while Shouto was turning the pages of his notebook without a real reason, Izuku was sure. Izuku knew perfectly what was going on. Katsuki was not stupid; he surely knew he needed to talk to Aizawa, so he was forcing his hand. This didn’t feel like the times he was ignoring him because maybe he was mad or irritated with him. These times he would avoid him emanating that air of superiority that was so fake that Izuku would almost chuckle at it. If only he wasn't perfectly aware that doing that would only make him even more irritated. These times he could feel his feelings, hidden in that almost childish attitude. This time there was a wall in front of him. He was not irritated nor mad, he simply didn’t want to deal with him. Plain and simple.

Not that Izuku was going to accept it.
But that was for another time, maybe during the afternoon when they would meet for the tests. Now he had to speak to Aizawa before his position would worsen. Surely the man already knew about him having absorbed this quirk; after all they had informed him of the kiss. The more Izuku waited before telling him the more he would look guilty of something. Better solve this immediately. He ran to catch up with him.

“Aizawa, sir, I have to talk to you.” he said a little out of breath.

“Yeah, I think you do.” he turned his face only a little.

“I may… have absorbed Shape Shifting.”

Chapter End Notes

The explanation for Credit Card is a bit long and probably annoying but I just wanted to make sure to write down all the details for anyone who wanted to know them, theory is more difficult than practice, it’s actually a very easy quirk to use.

See you next Monday, the 29th.
“Yes, that’s my understanding as well.” the man scratched his head.

“Yesterday I forgot to mention it, I’m sorry.” Izuku bowed his head a little, trying to look as genuine as possible.

“Have you confirmed it yet?” he asked, ignoring his apology.

“Confirmed it?” how was he supposed to… oh.

“Have you ever seen anyone naked before? Anyone is fine really. You can try.” he clarified what Izuku had already understood on his own.

Oh boy. He remembered seeing the others naked when he took a bath with them but he had not really paid any mind to it, he was not sure he remembered anything of that day. He had no idea if he was capable of becoming any of them. On the other hand, there was someone he had seen naked and he remembered perfectly. Well, damn.

“I… maybe…?”

“A ‘maybe’ is not going to be enough. First, you are allowed to use only male bodies, so exclude any female from your mind, now and forever. Then we can go to the dressing room and see. Your father is okay too, in case you have seen him. Don’t worry, you don’t need to strip, you can keep something on so it won’t be as embarrassing. I’m most certainly not interested anyway.”

Had he seen his father naked? Maybe. Probably? When he was very little? Now he could not remember the last time. Was that good enough? He didn’t want to transform into his father… After a moment Aizawa started walking again and Izuku followed him into the dressing room, his decision still left to make. Inside the man just waited for Izuku to do something with his arms crossed. When he noticed he was not doing anything, he sighed.

“If you don’t want to take off these clothes you have on now, you should become someone close to your size or you’ll tear them. Just saying. Can you please get a move on? I want to eat before the tests in the afternoon.”

Feeling pressured he gave up on his father, thankfully actually, and started to focus on the other males in the test. He didn’t have a clear idea on how to use the quirk, but it was an active quirk that only required to have seen the body completely naked. So probably… he had to visualize a complete image of the person he was trying to become. He closed his eyes, to avoid distractions, and tried his best to remember. After some minutes he had to accept it, he probably didn’t pay much attention because he could not recall anything past what he had seen in other instances. Like Kaminari; he could remember how he was in his swimsuit but not without. The others he could recall even less. If he had to be honest with himself, he knew why.

Knowing his own preferences, he had consciously tried his best not to focus too much on that. He didn’t want to feel like a perv. Take advantage of the fact that they were not as guarded around him as with girls was not a good excuse to be openly malicious. And he was somehow feeling like he would cheat on Katsuki as well… since they were again in that strange pseudo-relationship thingy.
So basically he was again at a square one.

Annoyed with himself, for a reason he himself was not sure he knew, started to recall Katsuki’s naked body. He was even more annoyed when he discovered how easy that was. He didn’t want it to be so easy, because he was annoyed with him right now! Oh, so that was the reason after all. Right.

He could not recall every inch of skin, he was not that crazy yet, but he had all the basics down pretty well. He was just wondering how well he had to imagine him when he heard another sigh from Aizawa. He decided to just go for it, after all Mineta could not have memorized every single mole on a body, could he? He repeated the process he had learned for Acid Skin and Light Sphere: first stop hearing all that surrounded him, then stop paying attention to things like temperature and the floor beneath his feet. He focused only on himself, his body, something that was inside his body. It was, for him, still not an easy thing to grasp that light flow of energy that was flowing in the underside of his skin, permeating the whole body. He wondered if a person that had a quirk only on a part of the body could feel that flow only there. Probably so. In his case the Wild Card was always, day and night, flowing like a second kind of blood. A blood that didn’t make him warmer, a blood that was not liquid, a blood that was not red.

Forcing the image to burn into his mind, he ordered the flow to recreated it. That was how he figured this quirk worked anyway and he was right. He could feel the slow and lazy flow that was the Wild Card penetrating deep into himself and curling into a little marble in his stomach. It was the first time he ever felt something like this and Izuku almost lost concentration. With Light Sphere and Acid Skin he was only pushing the new flow either on his palm or outside of himself. Actually forcing all the Wild Card to retreat was a thing he never even attempted and it was taking all his mental fortitude. Another flow, more erratic, took its place and he felt all his skin prickle like he had been stung by a thousand bees or mosquitoes. It was not a nice sensation by any mean. Then the flow… concretized. Izuku was feeling like he had created a shield around his skin that was covering it with another layer of skin. He was like a person inside a shell of a person. He wondered how was Mineta able to endure using something like this all day long, but maybe for him it was different. He was already doing his best to keep himself from scratching that strange shield off his skin, as if it was a foreign intruder.

“Ah, it worked.” Aizawa’s voice was not disappointed nor interested.

Izuku opened his eyes and saw ‘himself’ in the mirror. Katsuki’s eyes returned the stare. He felt shy for a moment, as if it was really him, but of course it was just his own eyes disguised, nothing more. He looked at the rest of the body and as far as he could see everything was in the right place. It really worked. Now he had another quirk to worry about. Wonderful. His clothes were making noises because Katsuki’s frame was slightly bigger than his. He had barely had the time to think he wanted to revert back that he suddenly felt a surge from the inside. The Wild Card had overtaken his body once again and the Shape Shift was nullified. The shield vanished and with it the prickle, much to Izuku’s relief.

“Can I ask a question?” Aizawa’s voice forced him to stop his flow of thoughts. Izuku nodded.

“Why him in particular? You two seem to have a very close relationship. Had you already seen him naked even before coming here?”

Izuku felt a shiver down his spine; he had let himself be caught in a very bad spot! Of course, he could say something about the bath they took all together but he was pretty sure that it was not enough to satisfy the man, especially considering that he surely knew they had a pseudo-physical relationship inside the Barrier. This was his last chance. He had foreign ignorance about having absorbed the Mark of Submission, but now that he had been questioned directly anything other than
the truth was going to be considered a violation of the law. No more excuses. He had to make the last choice.

“Before coming here me and Katsuki were good friends, best friends even. We went camping together once and that’s when I saw him. I tried to think about the time when we shared a bathroom in here with everyone but I was pretty out of it that day, so I could not remember anything useful. Katsuki was really the only person that popped into mind.”

There, done. He was officially a criminal. Well, technically he had been since the time he had not reported Katsuki and Jirou breaking their person rule, but that was a little less… heavy than this one.

“Is that so?” Aizawa waited another moment, but Izuku only nodded again. “Okay then. You better be careful and not absorb his quirk. I’m not really sure the Government would love that, but more than anything… it’s for your own safety.”

“For my own safety?” what the hell was going on every time the possibility of him having Katsuki’s quirk was brought up? First Katsuki himself and now even Aizawa. “What does that mean?”

“Nothing in particular, only that this is one of the quirks you may not want anything to do with. And I’m not talking about the rules.” Aizawa turned and left without giving a proper answer. “Oh, right,” his voice came from the hallway, “as I said no girls and if you really must, at least ask for permission. And that goes for male and female alike. You are free to use this quirk, if you really want, but I would advise against it. Just saying.”

Izuku waited a moment then he sighed loudly, releasing all the tension. That could have gone worst. Well, except for the Katsuki’s question, that could have not gone any worst. He left the dressing room and went to the kitchen to eat. He grabbed the first thing that he found, opened the box and spilled the contents in the bowl. He grabbed a fork and stabbed the dried plums, of course, the first thing he was able to grab had to be something strange, and munched on them. So, to get a summary of the day thus far… he had not been able to get a word with Katsuki and he almost had to spill his secret to Aizawa. And then the man just decided to throw a riddle at him. Just to add some spice to his life, which was usually very boring.

The tests were a little more doable than last time, at least this time he was not half starved. He was not sure the dried plums were a good choice before physical activity however. His mood was not going to get any better. Katsuki ignored him the whole time and his results were far better than last time. Now that Izuku was taking a good look at him, actually he looked a lot more fit than before. Was he doing a sport or something where he was coming from? Everyone’s results were much better so Katsuki was not standing out too much. In the end the girls, or more precisely Uraraka, started to demand a retry for them as well and Aizawa had to concede, irritated.

The day ran by fairly quickly after that. Izuku returned to his and Katsuki’s, or ex-Katsuki’s, room and took a shower, then he didn’t really want to leave anymore and just spent the rest of the evening moping around. At some point, he realized that Katsuki had not taken the photo album with him. Had he forgotten about it or did he not need it anymore?

That night he was able to sleep only a little and not very well, he kept having a strange dream where he was talking to him, but then he remembered he was dreaming and the talk would start all over again, but it was still a dream. It was very weird honestly. The next day he decided to stop beating it around the bush and try another approach. He would follow Katsuki around until he was alone and then force him to talk. He reached the classroom before anyone else but Katsuki and Shouto arrived together almost at the last minute. Izuku could not shake off the irrational feeling that he was doing it on purpose.
After the lesson he basically became a stalker. He followed the two everywhere. In some small moments of sanity, his brain asked him why he was not simply telling Shouto to go away and go for his plan straight out in the open. But the irrational part, which was becoming worryingly dominant, always found some excuses to avoid this simple, and probably much more healthy, plan. And Katsuki was not the type of person that would just let himself get trapped. Especially not now that he seemed to have an iron control over his quirk and could very much tell him to fuck off without a second thought. The situation could be summarized with Izuku having a solid intention, but then lacking the balls to act up to it.

The day was not completely wasted, however. He was able to notice some more differences between this and his Katsuki. This Katsuki was not wearing the sweater anymore, he was now dressed like everyone else, with the exception of Kirishima of course, with a shirt and shorts that were suited for the island temperature. He didn’t look perturbed by it at all, he didn’t look like he was scared of using his quirk anymore. This Katsuki, contrary to his, was never smiling, only frowning. Not even a little smile to mock people, one of his favorite. Not only that, with the exception of Shouto, he was not really interacting with anyone, but he looked oddly respectful of everyone, besides Izuku. Always greeting them. It was almost as if Shouto had taken Izuku’s place and then Katsuki had accepted everyone else. It was almost like he had cut Izuku away from his life entirely and allowed everyone else in. This Katsuki didn’t like to remain shut in his room, quite the opposite. At the start of the stalking operation, Izuku was sure they would just disappear in there and that would be the end, but Katsuki was not even nearly interested in staying inside. He preferred the outside, he was sitting on the beach or on the peak of the cliff, with his legs crossed and an expression that was worthy of an eagle. But even then, he would get impatient soon and change location. It was almost like he could not stay in one place for long. It was like he was expecting an enemy attack any moment.

He was like a lion in a cage.

The two of them, Shouto and Katsuki, basically never talked. Katsuki was choosing when to move and where to go and Shouto was just following, like an obedient bodyguard. But then there were moments when they were maybe both seated somewhere and Shouto would start to look around, like he was following with his eyes something. There was never anything there. Or sometime when they were walking he would just start going off in a completely random direction all of a sudden. In these moments, Katsuki would always turn toward him and call him with a sharp “Oi”. Shouto would always wince and look around like he had been just awoken from some kind of dream. Izuku was starting to really wonder if he was all right. The guy had always looked like he was in his own little world, never saying a world. But Izuku had always thought he was just distrusting or wary or the others. But what if in actuality… What if he actually could not help it? If that was his… Maybe… Maybe it was not Shouto being Katsuki’s bodyguard. Maybe it was the opposite.

And then Izuku could not take it anymore.

He had seen enough, now it was really the time to act. He waited for them to go to the kitchen and he ambushed them.

“Sorry Shu, can you wait outside for a moment.”

Shouto immediately searched Katsuki’s eyes to get an opinion. Katsuki sighed and nodded then, after he had left, he grimaced and didn’t even let him start speaking, cutting him off as soon as he opened his mouth.

“I don’t think we have anything to say to each other.”

“Well, I beg to differ.” he knew that sarcasm was not the right choice but right now he didn’t care.
“Look, if you want to be Shouto’s friend or whatever, I’m not opposed, but can’t you at least talk with me as well from time to time? What’s your problem?"

“No, I can’t. My problem is mine and it’s going to stay that way.”

Izuku clenched his fists but forced himself to stay calm. He needed to talk and he was going to make him spit out something now. Otherwise, he would not be able to live with this.

“All right, at least tell me why you don’t want to talk to me and I can leave you alone, as you so much desire! I’m not going anywhere without at least that!” he blocked the door.

It was absolutely useless as Katsuki could use the window, but it was the gesture that counted, more than the thing itself. Katsuki opened his mouth and then closed it. He looked away and clenched his fists as well. Then he sighed and stared at him again.

“I don’t want to talk to you because it’s not something that can help me at all. To me, you… you have been the biggest disappointment ever. You… one year ago, the two of us took a separate path and since then… you have been dead. You are like dead to me now. Got that? So what? Since I’m here now, I have to become buddy-buddy with you again? Who gets to decide that? You? I don’t think so. I don’t want to talk to you. That’s how things are.”

Izuku’s mind was running miles; this conversation had a double meaning. It could have been read from the present prospective. It could have been interpreted as them separating one year ago, taking a different path and Katsuki forgetting all about him. It made perfect sense, in a way. To someone that had no idea what was really happening. No, that was not the interpretation that Katsuki was trying to make him see. He was talking about one year ago from his perspective. In other words a year in the future. Something happened one year in the future and the two of them took a different path.

Since then, you have been dead. You are like dead to me now.

Scrap the ‘like’. Was future Izuku… dead? Did he die one year ago? No, was he going to die in a year?

Now I have to become buddy-buddy with you again? I don’t want to talk to you. Because it’s not something that can help me.

Since he had appeared in this time, he had been mostly nice and respectful with everyone, except with Izuku. He had refused to meet eyes with him most of the times and didn’t want him around. It was not because he hated him, probably the opposite. It hurt him to see him again. He had agreed to help Jirou, but he never wanted to see Izuku again. Because…

“Soon the test will be over and we will not have to see each other every day anymore. It’s better like this.” Katsuki continued in his distant voice.

Because soon I’m going to go back to my time and you’ll be dead again. Don’t be so cruel to me.

Izuku felt all his irritation evaporate. As always Katsuki, always always, knew what was best.

He had to give up. Izuku was in no position to choose for him what he had to do. If that was the way he wanted to cope with this, then he had to accept it.

“I’m sorry…” his voice was barely able to squeeze out his throat.

“It’s fine. This was partially my fault as well. Just let it go. It’s not worth agonizing over it.” Katsuki walked toward the door and Izuku moved out of the way immediately. He stopped right before
leaving. “By the way, that person… You remember that annoying person? The one that sometimes looks like a dragonfly, sometimes like a kitten and sometimes like a vulture? It’s still around, watch your steps.” he closed the door behind him.

Izuku was distracted from the massive discomfort he was feeling. What the hell was the last part? The annoying person? He had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. There had been a lot of annoying people during the school years but no one particularly noticeable.

*It’s still around, watch your steps.*

No, this… This was an advice. A prophecy, one may say. If Izuku had interpreted this correctly...

Katsuki had just told him the identity of his future killer.

Chapter End Notes

It's a bit earlier because there is a storm in my area and I'm afraid I'll lose internet connection.

See you next Monday?
The 5th of November!
Izuku was in a permanent daze for the following two days.

He recalled something that Katsuki had said that day, inside the cave when they learned of Jirou for the first time.

*I needed to see with my own eyes just how thin the ice I was walking on was.*

He had replayed this phrase and their talk in his mind endlessly. Just what kind of hardship had this Katsuki experienced? What kind of horrible future was *his* Katsuki going to witness where he had been sent to?

Why was destiny always so mean to Katsuki?

Well, he was going to die, that was not very lucky either, but as always it was Katsuki that had to deal with the short end of the stick. Once you’re dead you can’t feel pain or sadness, it was the people who were left behind who suffered. As always, he was capable only of leaving behind a mountain of unsolved problems.

If only he could know more, understand better, about what had happened so he could prevent it next time or something.

Was that possible? Was that considered changing the future? Probably, it was a different future if he did anything about it. Jirou could apparently do it without too many consequences, as far as Izuku was aware at the very least, so it didn’t seem like the world would stop them from trying to change it. On the other hand, maybe it worked for her because of her quirk, maybe it would not work for him. The future was already changing… but it seemed like this particular change had already been done some time ago. If Katsuki had said he needed to see for himself, it meant that this one had already seen it all. This Katsuki was indeed his Katsuki, only with two more years on his shoulders. So was Jirou only interested in making this one change and not the other?

If only he could get more information.

He was seated outside of the building, in the shadow to avoid the intense July sun, when Yao suddenly approached him.

“Hi, how are you doing?” she asked a bit shyly, standing a couple steps away.

“I’m fine, I think. How about you?” Izuku had no idea what else to say, this was the first time the two ever interacted directly and alone.

“Oh, I’m alright.” she shrugged and after a moment of hesitation she sat close to him, but not quite next to him. “I wanted to speak with you about a decision I took. To help everyone going past this last bit of the test more harmoniously. I decided to reveal everyone’s quirk to everyone, this way no one will have an advantage and no one will have a disadvantage. We can just put aside all suspicions and live together peacefully until the end comes.”

Izuku was very surprised. This was not what he was expecting from such a reserved girl. She never even talked to them, now she was going to reach out to everyone? Wait, was this truly Yao?
“Sorry, do you mind if I pinch you?”

“What? Why?” she pondered the question for a moment. “Oh! Uraraka’s Doppelganger. I see. There is an easier way, look.” she extended her closed hand in front of her and a little glow shined between her fingers. When she opened her palm, a little shining card was reflecting the light. “See? My quirk? I can’t be a doll, now can I?” she smiled. “This is a little D quirk that spouts a tiny water jet. It’s nothing big, you can use it mostly to prank people, water a plant, drink or clean something. I don’t mind giving it to you.”

Izuku extended a hand slowly and took it, it was small, not even half his palm, and light, it was almost like a little jewel. On the front was written ‘Water Spout’ in a black font.

“Thank you.”

“It’s nothing. If you want to use it, you have to place the Card in your mouth and let it melt on your tongue, as if you are taking a medicine or eating a candy. Then you can focus on your fingertip and the water will spill out. As I said, it’s just a silly quirk.”

“It doesn’t matter if it’s silly; it’s still a nice little present. It’s my birthday tomorrow anyway so I guess I’m lucky!” he smiled at her. “You already know everyone’s quirk?”

Since when? Before or after the time travel?

“Actually I knew everything from the start. They let me read the files for everyone here, except Mineta was not depictured like a criminal, but just like a normal Shape Shifter. I guess they didn’t want me to ruin the test for everyone, just to stay safe myself.” she was looking at the ocean, she didn’t look very happy about what she was saying. “I wasn’t aware of a lot of things anyway. Like always. The things that really matter, they never tell me.”

“So you want to tell my quirk to everyone?” he was not really opposed, just a bit reluctant.

She stared at him for a moment, making Izuku confused.

“Actually… one of the things I was not aware of was your existence. You were not in the files at all. I found it very strange and so I avoided you in particular. I still don’t know your quirk. I was hoping you would reveal it to everyone yourself. Of course, you don’t have to do it immediately; you can first confirm what I’m going to tell you and then decide.”

“I already know almost all of the quirks, truth to be told. I’m missing only Kami’s. But… I think I’m going to tell everyone my quirk anyway. We should all just get this over with once and for all.” he smiled a little.

“I see. Kami’s quirk is Mind Link by the way. You can take a look at the specifics in the Archive.” she was staring at the ocean once again.

“I know that your quirk is very valuable… But who are you really? You seem much more powerful than you make yourself out to be. And you seem to know Aizawa better than most.” he was not sure she was going to answer, but it was worth a shot anyway.

“Oh that. Aizawa is a family friend. I’ve known him since seven years ago, when it’s not his time to hold the test he often comes and eat dinner with us.” she didn’t look bothered by his question at all. “My father is a politician, not a very famous one, but still pretty influential. When I was little, I became my father’s blessing. At the time, he was just the mayor of an average city on the West coast, nothing too impressive. But then my quirk came along and my entire family and I were invited to transfer to Tokyo. I became his money machine and we soon sealed many accords with very
influential people. My father doesn’t really have what it takes to become a really good politician, so even with me he is still pretty much crushed by the competition. Even so, we are most certainly not poor. I’ve been working for many politicians since I was very little, everyone wants my Cards.” she stretched her arms and then massaged her neck. “I was not permitted to interact with other children, not because I was a danger to anyone, but because I had to receive special education, worthy of… ‘the role I’m supposed to take in the future’. You see, I’m going to marry the son of a very important politician and become the First Lady, one day. They wanted me to learn proper manners and such, not to mention that they wanted to ‘keep me safe’. When I was little, many people would ask me for Cards by appealing to my compassionate or generous side. They would ask for a healing quirk for a sick relative or a protective quirk for a bullied son. Things like that. I soon learned, after some very harsh punishment, that I’m not supposed to make myself waver. I cannot falter, cannot pity, and cannot empathize. I’m supposed to keep my weak, human side to myself.”

“Wait, won’t you get in trouble if you give me this Card?” asked Izuku, handing the Card back.

“Oh, I sure will and I don’t care. I’m tired of being the princess who is being forced to marry Prince Charming,” she looked at him for a moment then smiled. “Just kidding. Don’t worry. This is really just a silly quirk. Nothing will happen to me! And maybe I’ll marry a prince, it’s not so bad, who knows?” she got on her feet. “Well, that’s all from me. I’ll tell everyone. You think about what you want to do with your own quirk, okay? See you.”

She started to walk away, for the first time Izuku noticed that she had a very composed walk, like a ballerina or a real princess. He assumed that they taught her that as well. He was not expecting her to open up to him that much, but he was glad she did. Now he was feeling a lot closer to her and by some extent to everyone else.

Mind Link? That seemed worth a little investigation.

Glad to have a good excuse to distract himself, he stood up and stretched, then started to walk toward the Archive. The sun was making the calm ocean surrounding the island a strong shade of gold, Izuku wondered if this had already happened some other days, but he never realized because he was always so self-absorbed. Always seeing only the things he cared about and neglecting the rest. Just like with Katsuki, when was him avoiding him he was not happy with it, so he just decided to invade his space and force him into a conversation. He had been partially right, as Katsuki was still avoiding him without a plausible explanation and he had the right to know what the hell went wrong. But he should’ve stop and thought about why someone like Katsuki would start to avoid him so fiercely. Katsuki was always right.

Why he still didn’t learn to trust him? How could he just dismiss this as ‘maybe he replaced me’? He still had not grown up one bit. He was still a selfish brat.

He found the file easily.

**Mind Link**

This quirk is fairly common. It is not the most common mind reading-type quirk, but still very close. It’s a pretty easy to spot quirk as many children use it on their parents or relatives without realizing it, or in some cases, is the price that makes them easy to localize. Mind Link is a quirk that’s affectionately called ‘walkie-talkie’ as its primary use is to link two or more minds together in a continuous flow of shared thoughts, even at incredibly long distances. Activating it requires the owner to meet in person with his target or multiple targets, to know the exact feelings they are harboring for the people they want to be connected to, be them the owner themselves or someone else, make eye contact and say ‘Link’ out loud. It’s possible to
add more people to the Link afterward using the same method. There is no upper limit to the people that can be connected in one single Link. It’s possible to connect two people and not include the owner at all, in that case the two people need to look each other in the eyes, with the addition that the owner must know the feelings they harbor for one another.

Any feeling is acceptable, except for indifference. Hate, love, friendship, even envy, distrust, disgust, admiration, longing and lust are all acceptable examples. For this reason, in order for the Link to be established, it is necessary for the people involved to have at least some kind of opinion of one another. A stranger is not going to work. The Link can be very different depending on the ability of the owner of Mind Link. A novice can get easily overwhelmed by the amount of information and create an unstable Link that is cut off immediately. An expert can create a Link that only shares specific thoughts that are purposefully sent to the others, creating a clean and functional communication. However this quirk has a very big limit, it works only for as long as the owner keeps his eyes open. As soon as he closes them, the Link is cut. For this reason, the Link normally lasts from two to five minutes at most. Of course, it’s possible to force the owner to keep his eyes open in some way.

There is a second, less known way to use this quirk. It’s possible to stimulate the brain that gets connected into a Link by sending a specific question you want to get answered and it’s possible to stimulate the brain to give the answer without the consent of the person. This method is used to access memories and not current thoughts. It’s possible, but it can get overwhelming pretty easily as the amount of information gets completely out of control. In a couple seconds, it’s possible to receive a huge amount of sounds, images and thoughts, all at once.

This quirk has a very long and complicated history. Almost every generation, since the first appearance of quirks and the start of the Quirk Regulations, this quirk is moved from one rank to another. Sometimes it’s considered a B rank, sometimes a C, sometimes an A. The reason for that is that is not the quirk per se, the invasion of privacy is almost always inconsistent as it’s very easy to interrupt, furthermore having to say ‘Link’ before using it it’s quite the big disadvantage. Normally this quirk would be considered a B at best, if not for the fact that many criminals like to kidnap kids with this quirk to use it. This communication method is the only one that’s completely untraceable, contrary to phone calls, texts or even verbal communications. Due to this, criminals love it as it can be used to share many secret transactions and illegal acts. It’s not uncommon for a criminal to talk to others only using a Link. The kids are kidnapped and trained to share only the correct amount of information; they are then killed after they are no longer of use. For this reason, the Quirk Regulation Office decided to raise its rank, so they could force them into the Task Force and protect them closely. The parents and relatives of a kid with Mind Link are forced to either hire a bodyguard or give the kid to the Task Force preventively to avoid accidents. If you add to all this the price that this quirk has, it’s possible to see why this quirk it’s considered more of a hindrance than useful.

The price for this quirk is conditioned by the fact that they need to keep their mind always open and exposed to others’ thoughts. The human mind has a natural barrier that keeps the thoughts from flowing out, so even with a mind-reading quirk it’s impossible to read everything immediately. However, the kids born with this particular quirk don’t have any barriers that protect their minds. This, of course, means that any quirk that messes with
minds doesn’t have to fulfill any condition at all to affect them. Their thoughts are always flowing out, making it always possible to read them and they don’t have any kind of protection against quirk like: Mind Manipulation, Memory Manipulation, Hypnosis, Emotive Manipulation and so on. To bring a person with this quirk onto a battlefield is a highly unwise decision, as they are most prone to falling into enemy’s hands without any warning.

Izuku was somewhat surprised. Kaminari had said that his quirk was complicated and mostly a mess, but this definitely fit the description even too well. This quirk really was a mess. They didn’t even know how to classify it.

So, his quirk was a kind of mind reading, but it was mostly a communication quirk. It was used to talk to distant people instantly. The limit was kind of a pain though, it could have been a very wonderful quirk, but to activate it the person needed to be present to make eye contact and as soon as the Link was broken because of the owner closing his eyes they had to meet again. It sounded ridiculously impractical.

For some reason Izuku felt like this quirk was very suited for Kaminari.

The second use, the one where you can make surface memories by the depths of the brain, was very interesting. If he could use this particular feature, he could learn all he wanted to learn about Jirou, Yao and more importantly Katsuki. He didn’t have to fear the Barrier or anything else. Well, except for the fact that these people were probably going to kill him afterward, because it was very rude to violate one’s mind without a very serious reason.

After returning the file inside the cabinet, Izuku pondered for a moment about the problem at hand. Now he knew everyone’s quirks and soon he was going to be the only one whose quirk had not been revealed at all. Everyone would notice it and he would be at the center of all their suspicions. A quirk you want to keep a secret real bad was most definitely bad news. It was better for him to simply reveal it to everyone. In the back of his mind he was still a bit worried; what if this was all a big trap? But at the same time you cannot move forward without ever taking any risk.

Before he could change his mind, he took the file for the Wild Card from the cabinet and left the room. He didn’t need to tell his quirk to Katsuki and Tsuyu, so he had to find all of the others. The first person he met was a solitary Uraraka, she was walking around the hallways pouting. Now that he thought about it, the girl was almost always pouting.

“Hi, did something happened?” he greeted her.

“No, it’s just… have you spoken with Yao yet? She said she wanted to tell everyone about everyone’s quirk.” she pursed her lips.

“Yes, she told me. Do you disagree?” it was pretty normal, she was maybe the most territorial person out of them all. She really disliked to share and do teamwork.

“It’s not that I disagree exactly… After all you and some of the others already know my quirk. Actually, I think the majority already knows so meh… But on the other hand I dunno… to just end like this, I feel like it’s a cheap ending. I would have preferred to pry their quirks out of their mouths myself. This doesn’t feel like a win, more like a defeat. This whole thing ended up being a disappointment in the end.” Izuku could see what she meant in a way, but on the other hand he was not disappointed at all, rather he was relieved. “Anyway, she didn’t mention your quirk. She said yours is the only one she doesn’t know. What’s up with that? Not that I disagree with you being cautious, not after all I’ve said about you being stupidly careless, but I wasn’t expecting you to be the only one to be secretive until the very end.”
“Ah, no, that’s not it! Here, I brought my file; this can also explain why she doesn’t know my quirk and why I was late to the test. And why I was a big idiot during the test, partially.” Stupidity was not caused by the Wild Card, but he could forgive himself the lack of knowledge at the very least.

Everyone there had some kind of advantage from their time before the test, like Katsuki who knew Kirishima, Tsuyu who knew Kaminari, Uraraka and Iida and of course Yao. Izuku had only been very lucky he knew Katsuki, if not for that he would have been completely alone. It was the luckiest coincidence of his whole life.

“Hmmm.” She hummed, surprised and took the file he was handing her. She read quickly, her eyes moving following the lines of text. When she reached the end of the first page, she whistled.

“Unbelievable. We have both the Credit Card and its big brother in the same test. I guess your quirk is not as rare as hers is, but still! What quirks do you have?” She asked, suddenly suspicious.

“Well… Since that Mineta guy kissed me… I have his quirk now. Besides that, I have Acid Skin and Light Sphere. Not much. I just discovered this quirk in April and luckily I’m not the type to kiss a lot of people.” He shrugged.

“For real? Wait, don’t tell me you can transform into me as well?!” She raised her voice, indignantly.

“No, no! I haven’t seen you naked, how could I?!?” He raised his hand in a pacifying gesture.

“Ohhh…” She hummed again staring into his eyes, almost like she wanted to read the truth there directly. “I guess I’ll believe you for now. You better not be lying or I’ll kick you in the balls.”

“Yeah, I’ll keep it in mind.” He sighed. “Will you tell this to Iida as well? I still have to find Kaminari and Kirishima, and then I guess I’ll have to tell Yao and Shouto as well…”

“Sure whatever. I just noticed, why is the only other person you are calling by his first name, except for Bakugou, Shu? There is some strange triangle going on here and I’m very perplexed.”

“T-there is no triangle going on!” He almost shouted flustered. “It’s just… he never gave me his last name! He only gave me his first name, so unless I keep calling him with the nickname, I don’t know how else to call him!”

“Peculiar… Or maybe not. Now that I think about it, I remember him saying that his father is in the Regulation for S quirks… His last name is probably too recognizable; he probably kept it a secret on purpose. Well then, the only people that are still keeping their full name hidden then are Yao and Froppy.” She crossed her arms after giving back the file.

Izuku actually knew Froppy’s full name but he was not going to say it to her. She was a collector of names after all; he didn’t need her to have even more dolls. Izuku and Uraraka separated shortly after and Izuku searched for the others. He encountered Tsuyu and the girl informed him again of Yao’s intention, but Izuku confirmed that they had already talked and he was going to reveal his quirk to everyone as well. In a way, he was happy to have encountered her so he could get her opinion, since she always knew more than the average person. Tsuyu was not surprised of this turn of the events and she agreed with his decision. With her reassurance, Izuku was feeling a bit more confident. Next, he found Kaminari, Kirishima and Yao talking inside the classroom. The girl was informing them about everyone’s quirk.

“And then Shu’s quirk is a variation of Body Swap, a pretty rare variation that lasts from midnight to the next. Anyone can activate it by using a first name in a place where he can hear you, so you need to be careful if you don’t want to activate it by accident.”
“Whoa, I was right! Everyone has a crazy quirk except for me! It’s unfair!” Kaminari pouted.

“I’m still convinced that your quirk is better than some others.” said Kirishima, a little annoyed that he had to repeat the same thing every time.

Then Kaminari noticed him.

“Oi, Izu! We were just talking about quirks! Do you want to hear them as well?” he invited him cheerfully.

“Ah, yeah sure. More importantly, I thought about telling you about my quirk myself.” they didn’t need to know that he already knew everything, they were all on equal ground now anyway. He sat on top of a desk, mimicking Kaminari, while Yao and Kirishima were seated on the chairs like good kids. “Do you remember when we read about Credit Card? My quirk was mentioned there a bunch of times. Here, the file.”

Kaminari took the file and Kirishima peeked from the side to read as well. Yao didn’t make any move to read she just raised her eyebrow at him. She surely guessed that he had to have the big brother of her own quirk and she was probably surprised.

“Ahh, yet another unusual quirk! Why it’s only me that—” Kirishima elbowed Kaminari in the side to shut him up.

“I was not expecting to have two brother quirks in the same year. And neither are mind reading type. In the S/A ranks the mind reading quirks are certainly the most common. Now I can see a little better what Aizawa meant when he said that this year he had a bunch of crazy kids. Our quirks are not common and mostly very dangerous or special.” Kaminari murmured something, Izuku had a feeling he knew what he was going on about. Kirishima ignored him. “Do you have many quirks Izu?”

Once again, he gave the list of quirks, of course not mentioning Katsuki’s, and then the other two made a recap of all the quirks that Yao had said to them, thinking that Izuku had yet to hear them. Both Izuku and Yao played along, to make things easier. The discussion ended when Kirishima told them about Mind Link, since Kaminari could not. Izuku noticed that Kirishima had wordlessly asked for permission to Kaminari who just smiled broadly at him. They were very close friends, maybe more, Izuku was happy for them.

“I still need to find square glasses, I must leave for now, please do not hesitate to call me if you need my help. I may not be able to give you Cards, as stated by my personal rule, but I can at least try to help.” she bowed her head just a little before leaving.

The three in the classroom were silent for a moment, then Kirishima spoke again.

“This does really feel like the end of the test, does it not?”

“Nah, we still have more than six months ahead of us! The test is definitely not over!” Kaminari crossed his arms behind his head.

“Yeah, but surely these last days had a sense of finality to them… we have eliminated the person we had to, and we now know each other’s quirks… There won’t be any more attempt to attack, I don’t think, and we are somehow all becoming friends. Yao was the only one left that was not interacting a lot with people but now even she has decided to come out clean. I can see that we are just going to waste time here now, I wish the test would just end already.” Kirishima sighed.

“What would you do outside of here?” asked him Kaminari.
“I know I’ll be forced to stay in the Task Force, but… I’ll probably be allowed to at least go outside. I… want to see the world. Well, maybe not the whole world, as we can’t leave Japan, but at least I want to see Tokyo, and Mount Fuji! And I want to see other places if possible as well.” Kirishima shrugged like it was not that big of a deal, but it was pretty clear that for him it was a big deal.

“Hmm, I see I see!” Kaminari had a mischievous smile and Kirishima raised an eyebrow at him. “Oi, Izu,” Kaminari ignored him and turned to face Izuku, “what do you want to do once you are out of here?!”

“Kick Four in the ass and force him to tell me all his secrets.” he answered honestly, half joking half not. That was really what he wanted to do, but he knew it was impossible, useless and stupid.

Kami laughed and Kirishima chuckled.

“I have a feeling outside it won’t work any better than here.”

“I know, but at least I can kick him slightly harder!” Izuku pouted.

They chuckled again, and then Kaminari placed a finger on his lips and tilted his head.

“Hey, do you want me to create a Link between the two of you?”

Chapter End Notes

I know this chapter is a little ‘empty’, next chapter we are going back into the main stuff. I hope this last quirk was clear enough. Now you have them all!

Next Monday, the 12th, should be interesting! :P
“Do you want me to create a Link between the two of you?”

“No,” Izuku answered immediately, without any hesitation, “I don’t want to use a cheap trick to force answers out of him. I wouldn’t be much of a friend if I did that.”

“Actually, I agree.” Kaminari smiled again. “I know I offered, but I’m not happy about this plan myself. He looks like he has a lot on his plate already, I think we should leave him alone.” Kaminari studied his expression a moment. “But! If you need it urgently, you can ask, I’m definitely going to help, okay?”

The three of them spent a little more time together and then Izuku returned to Katsuki’s room, feeling a little better. As soon as he opened the door he saw a little square on the floor and his thoughts immediately went to a Calling Card. But after all this, a Calling Card? Indeed it wasn't; as soon as he crouched down to pick it up, he noticed that the color was wrong.

-Happy 19th birthday-

There was only a sentence written on it. Not even a signature. There were three people who knew about his birthday, Yao since he just told her, Tsuyu, and of course Katsuki. He wondered which one sent this little message. He knew which one he would have liked best, but it was the least likely. They were not communicating and this Katsuki seemed to not want anything to do anything with him, let alone remember little things about him. He probably forgot about his birthday. It had to be Tsuyu. He turned the card absently and was surprised when he noticed text on the other side as well.

-Since this is all the present you got me for my own 19th birthday, this is all you are going to get.

You may not have noticed, but I’m fairly good at keeping grudges. Good night-

Izuku started to laugh. He didn’t even know exactly why, it was not really funny at all but… Katsuki remembered a lot more than he cared to admit. He held the little card tight. This was a way better gift than any materialistic thing he could have gotten him. He was so happy.

Some more days passed and nothing special happened. Life was getting into a comfy, and a bit boring, routine. Katsuki and Shouto were still spending most of their time alone together walking around like sentinels, but all the others were often trying new things to keep themselves busy. They started to study together, even though the lessons were so straightforward that Izuku didn’t think that any study was necessary. He was surprised to discover, however, that Kaminari had a terrible method of keeping notes. He was unable to read his own handwriting and so they had to help him rewrite everything. While idly chatting about this and that, they also discovered that he was bad at school subjects in general; his grades had always been pretty bad. When they asked how he had finished high school with his degree of attention, he grinned and answered that he had an accomplice for tests. Apparently, he had a friend he was keeping a Link through all the important moments. He looked pretty proud of himself for what he was calling ‘a genius idea’.
dismissive tone, if he was sure that he could declare to the world that he had obtained a degree by cheating and he grinned even wider. He said that everyone already knew he was cheating and they let him graduate to send him away and be free of his presence. He declared, confidently too, that he would have been stuck in school for years, had not that been the case. Iida offered to try to teach him something. Kaminari agreed but told him to not get his hopes too high.

Kaminari was a fun guy to have around at all times. He was always enthusiastic and silly, but he clearly had a big heart. He was always hearing everyone and wasting time listening or doing things even when he didn’t need to. Kirishima was always following him around and he looked a lot more relaxed now. It was pretty clear that he had never had many social interactions before, for example he was not very quick in understanding jokes and his reaction was always a second too slow, showing his insecurity. It was quite fun to see Kaminari teasing him. His reactions were quite cute.

Izuku had not talked with Katsuki anymore, respecting his wish. For the same reason he had not talked with Shouto either. His curiosity about him was not wavering though, and as the days passed the others started to become more and more curious themselves. In time, Izuku wasn’t sure how, the news that Shouto’s quirk was not really Body Swap but some other mimic quirk had made it to everyone’s ears. They were all speculating quite hard about it and Kaminari even proposed to look in his mind but of course, his idea was rejected. A couple days later Kaminari sneaked up to Izuku and told him he tried the Link with Shouto, but he had not been able to open it because he had absolutely no idea what feelings Shouto could have toward him. He was really bummed about this too.

The day that something new happened was so very subtle and sudden that Izuku didn’t realize this was not a normal day until he saw Shouto’s door opened. That door was never open, whenever the occupants were inside or outside. Izuku peeked inside but the room was empty so he saw nothing that could help his curiosity. He kept the strange occurrence in mind, but she had no clue on what was happening and he had no idea where to look to find answers. He ate lunch with everyone else as usual and he almost convinced himself that nothing strange was going on. He had to change his mind when he saw Shouto, alone, sitting below a window in the courtyard. He was hugging his knees and biting his lower lip.

Izuku approached him slowly and quietly, as if he was a wild animal ready to attach at the fist noise. He had no idea of what, but it was pretty clear that something was wrong with him. Not to mention this was the first time he had seen him without Katsuki since the exchange. This was definitely an anomaly. When he was close his shoe moved a little gravel on the ground and the sound was enough to make him turn. Cursing his poor luck, he tried to smile at him to cover for his mistake. The guy looked definitely upset.

“Hi… Are you alright?” he tried to ask with as much tact as he could.

Shouto didn’t answer, he looked away and he looked even more upset. Izuku closed the distance and stood next to him, unsure of what to do. He had no idea what made him upset, it was so strange to see him with an expression different from blankness. Izuku was really wondering if Katsuki’s absence had anything to do with this. He didn’t want it to be, but probably it was exactly how it was.

“Did you and Ka—Four fought or something?”

“None of your business.”

This time Shouto answered in a low, irritated tone. He got up in a single fluid motion and started to walk away.

“Hey, wait a minute!” he could not stop himself from shouting after him. “It is my business! I want to know what happened between the two of you.” both in the present and in the future, but he knew
that this Shouto was not able to answer that part.

“Don’t worry.” he stopped only a moment, and spoke with a bitter tone. “Soon I won’t be your problem anymore.”

He was showing him his back, so Izuku was not able to see his expression. But he knew anyway, he had known for a while now. There was a limit to how blind he could be. He still had no idea how or when all this happened. Something strange had happened that time when Katsuki had decided to hide in the cave and then after that one time, Shouto had changed completely. Now Izuku had a feeling he knew who ‘attacked’ Katsuki that day. Everything else was still foggy and unclear.

He really wanted some damn answers.

One thing was clear though, he said that soon he would not be a problem. This could either be something extremely melodramatic, and he didn’t believe that was the case, or it could mean… that his Katsuki was going to return soon.

He remained in place for a moment longer, trying to decide if he wanted to follow Shouto to make sure he was not doing anything stupid or if he wanted to search for Katsuki. It was honestly a difficult choice. Obviously he wanted to search for Katsuki, but what if Shouto’s situation was more urgent? Not to mention that he had a feeling that either wouldn’t like his presence. He sighed, lately the test had become a very secondary concern, but on the other hand he had been drowned in a lot of drama. Drama he didn’t even know where to start to understand. He was tired of this feeling of impotence.

The problem kinda solved itself as Katsuki popped up in the hallway as Izuku returned inside. They started at each other a moment before Katsuki looked away as always. Izuku was starting to feel disappointed, like all the time this had happened, when Katsuki sighed and looked at him again.

“Care to have a word?” he asked, surprising Izuku greatly.

He gestured toward the outside of the building, the place he clearly liked best and Izuku quickly nodded, his throat not cooperating with him. They walked for a while; Katsuki was walking at a leasurably pace, looking up at the sky. He looked completely lost in something, as most of the times. Izuku didn’t even try to talk, it would be a terrible idea. In the end, they stopped at the beach.

“I may have been a little too harsh, I’m sorry about that.” Katsuki breathed suddenly.

“Ah! No…” Izuku was at a loss for words.

“No, it’s true. What I said was true too, but I went a little too far. There was no need to take it out on you. It’s just… it’s been such a long time for me since I last was able to stay in one place for a long time. And everything else. Everything about this place makes me nervous. Because it’s too peaceful. But this isn’t your fault. At least not this part anyway.”

This was probably the best he could say without revealing too much and Izuku appreciated it.

“It’s okay. I’m not mad. I was only a little sad, that’s all. And I was afraid I was doing something wrong.” the silence fell upon them again until Izuku spoke again. “What happened between you and Shouto anyway?”

“Nothing, I just said my goodbyes to him. He was a bit upset I guess.” Goodbyes? It was pretty clear that the exchange was going to happen soon, but… the other Katsuki was coming back here, so it was not really a goodbye, was it? This was a strange way to put it. “Be a little nicer to him if you can. He is a bit… special.”
Yeah, he was really starting to want to know what the hell was going on there. The curiosity was making his skin prickle. But it was not the right time, nor the right person. With this Katsuki, it was better not to cross too many lines. Katsuki was still staring up in the sky. Izuku had not, until that exact moment, thought too much about how this new exchange was going to happen, considering that the first time was quite the show. But when the Barrier lit up and disappeared in a second, the answer was upon him. Quite literally.

Jirou and Katsuki appeared a little further down the beach and the fell on their butts after a bad landing. They got up, dusting away the sand, while Katsuki, the other one, walked up to them with half a smile.

“Still sucking at landings, I see.” he said almost fondly.

“Yeah, yeah, do mock me!” Jirou smiled at him. “We don’t have much time, I slipped some laxative into Kazuya’s evening tea, but she is going to go back to work quite quickly. Unfortunately this time it’s not Yuki, he has a weak intestine so laxative works a lot better.”

Izuku was frozen in place while the two Katsuki crossed eyesight. They were unmoving for a moment then they both nodded, almost simultaneously, Izuku had a light head spin.

“Sorry Izuku!” Jirou called up to him. “All the times I’m here I really don’t have time to stop and chat with you. Ironic right? Considering my quirk? I’ll talk to you when the test is finished, I promise. Wait until then, okay? Bye!” as she said that she placed a hand on future Katsuki’s shoulder. Katsuki, that Katsuki, turned to look at him, their eyes locked and this was the time he had looked at him the longest of all the times. And then, the two were no more.

Both he and Katsuki stared at the spot where they were standing only seconds ago. They looked up when the saw a faint light in the sky and they saw the Barrier being reconstructed in front of their eyes. Jirou was right; the Barrier had been down only for a couple of minutes. She really knew everything. Now that he had heard about the laxative, he wondered if she had used this trick some other time. She mentioned a person called Yuki and another called Kazuya too.

Katsuki looked his direction. Izuku felt his heart skipping a beat. Sure, he had seen a Katsuki until a few seconds ago, but this was his Katsuki. It was different. And he was so happy to see his Katsuki again. Until he looked away. That gesture was so very identical to the one that the other Katsuki was constantly doing that Izuku could feel his brain say a big NO. Not this again!

“Katsuki… hm…” he wanted to ask him many things, but he could not. Once again. This Barrier was so incredibly annoying. “Do you think we could go back the way we were? I mean… do you think we can go back to sleep in the same room?” this was really the best way he could ask.

Katsuki took a moment too long to answer for Izuku’s standard and it wasn’t even the right answer.

“Is my stuff in Shouto’s room?”

He decided to ignore the fact that one of the first things he came out of his mouth was that guy’s first name.

“Yes, I think so, unless you have changed its place today.”

“Let’s go get it then.” he started to walk off of the beach.

It was still not the answer Izuku wanted, but it was an improvement. At the very least, it looked like he indeed intended to go back to his room. He hurried after him and tried to walk by his side, but the silence was unsettling. This was his Katsuki, so why was he still refusing to meet his eyes? Now
Izuku was starting to get really scared. What if there was no way he would ever get the same person back? What if he was fated to live with this new, secretive version of him?

“Are you… okay? You… avoided me for quite a while after all, I know you apologized, but if you are not feeling comfortable spending time with me again, we can wait a little.”

Actually Izuku didn’t want to wait for anything. But well, it was still Katsuki’s decision to make, he could not force him, and more importantly he hoped to have provided him enough information to play the part. This way he would not risk a bad slip up about the time that they were separated. Katsuki finally looked at him again.

“Yeah, it was a rough week for me, but I think I’m okay now. I needed a bit of alone time. It’s fine, we can go back to the way we were. I’m fine.”

He was playing the part well. Too well, even. And… a week? He was gone for more than a month. Did this time only looked like a week for him? Jirou’s quirk was truly too confusing for Izuku to follow properly, he was always caught off guard by everything. He hoped he was going to get used to it soon or else everything would become a nightmare next time he was going to see her.

“Well, you were not really alone, there was Shouto with you.” he said, refusing to admit that he was being petty, even though he really was.

“He is different.”

That answer, without a hint of hesitation, punched Izuku in the guts. He had almost stopped walking. Izuku was aware that he was really, really, overreacting. People had new friends and fights all the times, people could change opinion on a person on a daily basis almost. It was pretty normal.

But not for Katsuki.

Or at least not for the Katsuki he knew. But maybe… he never knew him so deeply. He never went that extra mile for him all these years after all, what gave him the right to say he knew him truly? No, maybe Shouto was a lot more suited for him after all.

Not that he was going to accept all this just like this. He was not going to go down without a fight.

The other Katsuki was different; he was not truly… his to begin with. He had no right to impose himself, especially not since apparently his Izuku had already screwed up plenty in the future. No, that Katsuki was different. But this? This was his Katsuki. He had all the rights in the world to try to keep him, to fight for him.

He had seen him first.

Yes, the good old kid reasoning: ‘I’ve seen it first, so it’s mine now.’ Way to prove his maturity. But no matter what… No matter what, he could not let this go. Was this a proof of love towards him or just a mere feeling of possession and jealousy? Izuku was not sure himself.

They reached Shouto’s room. The door was still opened and the room empty. Katsuki started to pick
his stuff up, luckily the other one had left everything in one place so it was easy to find everything, it would be awkward to search all over the room for his stuff. He didn’t want to poke into Shouto’s possessions. They left and returned to their room. Finally.

Once the door was closed behind him, Izuku let out a long breath, feeling like finally the emergency that started more than a month ago had ended. Now everything would slowly get back to normality. He helped him in putting everything back into place in high spirit. Katsuki raised an eyebrow at him, questioning his good mood, but Izuku ignored him. If he was to tell him why he was so happy surely Katsuki would call him sappy or whatever. It was not worth to start a pointless argument right now. Not now that they could talk to each other as well. Izuku still was not entirely used to it, thanks to the other Katsuki avoiding him. He searched for something to say but Katsuki was faster.

“I’m going to check on Shouto a moment, I’ll be back soon.”

Okay, this was not a topic of conversation Izuku was fond of.

“You never really cared about anyone before, how come you are so fond of him all of a sudden?”

yes, he was pouting.

“Because in a foreign land, he was the only one I could rely on.” Katsuki answered easily, as though it was obvious.

A foreign land? Was he talking about the future? The only one? What about all the others? And his parents or anyone else really.

“Is that so? Were you two really that close?” still pouting.

“I guess so, he is a bit special.”

_Not this again!_

This had to be some kind of curse.

For sure.

Chapter End Notes

So... it's kind of possible to understand what happened to future Katsuki by this point but it's necessary to put the pieces together ourselves, so I decided to help and summarize a little.

So, we know that Katsuki and Izuku somehow passed the test with Jirou's help, and they are outside together.

But then something happens, Katsuki calls Izuku 'a disappointment', and we know he then gets killed.

We don't know the exact circumstances but that's for, maybe, another day. Katsuki then is alone and in a foreign land (Izuku assumed he was talking about the future but Katsuki meant it in a more literal sense) and the only person that's there for him then it's Shouto. Being the only person he can rely on and trust Katsuki becomes his close friend, not to mention Shouto's special circumstances made him become more protective of him.

Then Jirou appears and asks him to help her help his younger self and Katsuki accepts
but not happily. Its been almost a year but the wound it's still fresh, he doesn't want to see Izuku again because it hurts. He does what he has to, but he is not capable of spending time with Izuku so he chooses his best friend instead, hence the strange situation we witnessed thus far.
This day at the beach it's the last time ever future Katsuki will be able to meet eyes with Izuku.

About present Katsuki instead... he was in place of future Katsuki, he learned a lot, including Izuku's fate. And Shouto.
If he acts differently it's because he is inside a storm of conflicting emotions.

See you on the 19th!
There was only one solution to this problem really. He had to create a Link and steal the information he wanted directly from his brain.

Yes, it was drastic. Yes, it was overkill… He didn’t care. He could convince himself that Katsuki was not telling him anything because of the Barrier, but Izuku knew better. Katsuki was not saying anything because he didn’t want to say anything and he was never going to say anything, it was just how he was. And Izuku could not accept it any longer. He was not going to force him to tell everything he wanted to keep a secret, in hopes that someday he would speak to him naturally. Probably it was never going to happen, but still Izuku wanted to hope. But the very least he wanted to understand what the hell was the deal with him and Shouto. It was surely pitiful, especially since afterward he had to admit to his jealousy, but Katsuki had to see it coming, considering how blatantly he was speaking of him as being ‘special’ and all that.

Still pitiful though.

Katsuki returned after an hour more or less and he didn’t say anything. Izuku didn’t ask, annoyed that as always, Katsuki would never share information without him asking insistently. They ate together, finally a meal cooked by Katsuki, surely the best cook of the two, and then they prepared for bed. It seemed like an eternity ago that they slept in the same bed, but Izuku was incapable of enjoying it like he wanted and should, he was too fixed on the mission that he gave himself. And Katsuki didn’t make any attempt at making things any better. Surely, there was another explanation, like maybe he was tired or dizzy from the travel, but Izuku could not stop himself from thinking that he simply was not happy to see him again.

The next morning, Izuku told him it was okay for them to eat breakfast with all the others in the dining room, that it had become normal. Katsuki looked a bit unsure but in the end he trusted his judgment. Izuku actually didn’t care much about where they were going to eat, he just cared to see Kaminari as soon as possible. The guy was of course in the dining room together with Kirishima and the others. Izuku had no idea how to explain to them that this was the old Katsuki but after some glances, exchanged secretly between everyone, it seemed like they suspected it. After all, the other Katsuki never had breakfast with them before. Izuku noticed that Shouto was nowhere to be seen. He tried his best to catch Kaminari’s eyes, the guy was a mind reader type and his condition was eye contact, surely he would take the hint that he wanted to speak with him? Or maybe not… every time they made eye contact Kaminari was immediately distracted by something. The guy was lively and it was good, but at times like these it was frustrating. Izuku started to feel nervous but he had to be patient. Especially since if not Kaminari, surely Katsuki was taking the hint too well. He sent him a questioning look that Izuku tried to dismiss with an innocent smile. He could clearly see the moment where Katsuki’s brain thought: ‘yeah, right. I believe that you are doing nothing. Totally’.

When finally Kaminari caught him staring holes into him he opened his mouth to ask him what was wrong and Izuku was getting really close to start screaming. And he was supposed to be a mind reader type! Finally, he registered Izuku’s frustrated expression and tilted his head. Still very blunt and open, but at least silent, most of them didn’t notice and the ones who noticed just raised an eyebrow and returned to their meal. Izuku got up using the excuse of the bathroom and left, hopefully the guy could take the hint this time and follow him. He felt Katsuki’s eyes on his back, but he ignored him, he was doing just the same with Shouto after all, he could feel a little bit of
jealousy himself! Izuku was aware that he was probably more confused or worried than jealous, but whatever.

“Hi, Izu! What’s going on, you were staring at me funny!” Kaminari finally joined him on the end of the hallway with three whole minutes of lateness.

“I have a favor to ask.” he didn’t have time to be subtle. Katsuki could leave the dining room any moment. “I want to read something in Four’s mind.”

“Ohh.” he looked a bit impressed. “Have you changed your mind? I thought you were not going to.”

“Yeah, but things are different now. And I don’t want to see anything that he really doesn’t want me to know, I think, I only want to know why he acts so differently toward me and… Shu.” he admitted in the end.

“Hmm, I see…” Kaminari pondered for a second. “So, you don’t really want a Link, you need my secondary effect, right?” Izuku nodded. “Well, this is a bit difficult to do. I suppose you don’t want me to look in your place right? You want to look yourself.” Izuku nodded again, a bit less certain this time. “So… I can activate the Link, but you have to be the one to steer his mind in the direction you want to go.”

This sounded difficult.

“Is this… something I cannot do?”

“No, I’m pretty sure you can. The mind is kind of uncontrolled you know? Thoughts are born independently of our will all the time. It’s pretty easy to evoke the memory you want to see, you just need to ask questions. And show images of what you want to know, if possible, that helps as well. You just have to stimulate an answer out of him, and it’s not difficult, it’s the brain job to answer all questions and problems as fast as possible. Even a good liar will need to think about the truth first and the build a lie after. You just need to keep him constantly working toward your desired direction, this way he will have less time to question what you are doing and break the Link before you had the information you wanted. How long you can maintain the Link stable and how much information you can get out of it depends entirely on your ability to remain focused on the task. Remember that thoughts are much faster than any other thing in the physical realm, so what you’ll experience is a very large flow of information in a span of very little time. You can get overwhelmed pretty easily. If I was the one conducting the interrogatory, I could control the flow, but you being just a host will be hit full force. What do you think?”

“That your quirk is really messy Kami.” Izuku sighed and smiled. “I’ll try. Will you help me?”

“Sure! I don’t have any reason to refuse, except for the fact that Four may become mad at me… But in that case, I’m just going to put all the blame on you, saying you blackmailed me or something!” he smiled and gave him a thumbs up.

“Thank you, really. I know it’s not something I should ask but I’m reaching my limit and I don’t know what else to do.” he bowed a little.

“It’s fine! Anyway, for it to work my quirk needs to fulfill the conditions, do you know them?” Izuku nodded. “Yeah, I need to know the feelings that you have for one another. So, be honest, what do you feel for him?” Kaminari hid a smile, but only barely.

“I… care about him?” Izuku tried to keep it vague.

“No, no! Don’t try to cut corners!” Kaminari smirked. “It has to be as accurate as possible! I’m not
taking this as an answer! And so you know, if you lie it’s your problem since the quirk won’t activate! And of course, you need to know what his feeling for you are, as well. So?”

“I… don’t have an answer to that…” Izuku was really not sure of his own feelings, let alone Katsuki’s.

“Well, that’s not good, is it? We can’t go any further without that answer, can we?” he placed his hands on his hips. “And remember the eye contact bit, that’s important too.”

“Oh… hmm, maybe we should talk about it at another time.” he was starting to regret the whole thing.

He was hoping to get this done without going into specifics, but this was not an option apparently. Kaminari pursed his lip and then smirked again.

“Or maybe… I can solve the problem for you. After all I just need to keep in mind what I think your feelings for him are, and his for you, so I don’t need your permission or input! Actually, let’s try this right now! I think I know what your feelings are anyway and there is no downside to try! Just drag him somewhere with an excuse and I’ll do the rest! Be ready to dive into his brain and catch him with his pants down, I’m going to hide, later!” without waiting for him to answer, he ran away.

Well, that escalated quickly. Now he could not take this back anymore, he had to go and try. He was not sure he was mentally prepared so suddenly, probably not. But he had to go for it anyway, it was already something of a favor, he didn’t need to be a pain as well. He took a deep breath and went back to the dining room to get Katsuki. He didn’t go as far as to open the door as it was opened directly into his nose. On the other side was Katsuki, of course it had to be him, who flashed him a worried expression for half a second, then just stared at him unimpressed. Izuku massaged his nose and stared back.

“What, it’s your fault for staying on the other side of the door like this.”

Izuku was used to this kind of remark on paper, but it was a first that he had actually heard them out loud. It gave him a strange feeling, he was not sure if he loved it or what. He was being kind of a prick, but he had some trouble focusing on that aspect to be honest.

“So? What’s going on?” Katsuki asked stepping out of the dining room and looking back to be sure the others were still in there eating.

“Nothing much, I just had to talk with Kaminari for a moment, that’s all.” no use in lying and telling the truth would probably make him more curious and more prone to follow him somewhere private.

“Do you have plans for today?”

“No, why?” he was scrutinizing him, clearly suspicious.

“I thought maybe we can talk about the quirks, do you know all of them now?” actually, that was a good point. Was he aware of them as they were now? Traveling in time could have thrown him out of the loop. “If you are interested…”

“I guess we can talk about them, I’m interested to know what you know as well, knowing you, you are surely missing something.” Izuku decided to ignore this comment. “Let’s go back to the room.” so this Katsuki still preferred to stay inside.

“Actually, maybe we can talk… outside? To get a bit of fresh air?” Kaminari could not barge into their room.
Katsuki scrutinized him again, sensing that something was wrong. Izuku was not a good liar and they both knew it.

“All right, but I’m starting to think that you are trying to lure me into a trap. If I hadn’t seen Urara in the dining room, I would seriously suspect you. And the Shape Shifter is gone now, so unless you are someone that’s using a Credit Card…”

“Okay, okay, let’s not exaggerate. I’m me, October 14th, okay?” they stared into each other eyes for a moment and then Katsuki nodded with a shrug.

The two started to walk side by side. Izuku was not sure where to go exactly. He had no idea where Kaminari was and if he was following them closely or what. He wanted to make as much eye contact as possible, but at the same time if he was meeting his eyes uselessly too many times then Katsuki would surely get the picture. It was too absurd to expect him not to suspect any trick at all. He was already suspecting it anyway. He decided to try to meet his eyes only at the corners, with the excuse of seeing if he was following him, but to do that he had to improvise a casual stroll around the hallways. As Katsuki’s stare was becoming more and more persistent he started to sweat, what was Kaminari waiting for?

“Oi, where are we going, we are running in a circle!” Katsuki stopped him.

Izuku turned to face him, ready to admit defeat.

But as soon as their eyes met, it was like he had just entered a tunnel. Katsuki was getting farther and farther away as his vision was becoming distorted. Izuku, at first, thought he was going to see only black in a moment, but he was wrong. His vision was getting more stable, but he was seeing… double. On one hand, he was seeing Katsuki staring back, and on the other hand, he was seeing himself, overlapping Katsuki’s frames. His and Katsuki’s confusion were fused together so it was almost impossible to understand where one started and where one ended.

Take control of the flow.

That had been Kaminari’s advice. He had to ask his question and fast before Katsuki could understand what was going on and stop him.

What’s your relationship with Shouto?

It was a mistake, the question was too open and the answers too many. He saw flashes of images and thoughts at such speed he could not process even one. But he could feel very clearly that Katsuki had caught on what was happening, if he was not capable of taking control in the next few seconds it was all going to be over.

When did things start to change between the two of you?

It was surely the wrong question again, it was open to many interpretations and all of them were surely correct in a way. So Izuku was really surprised when a single, strong and stable image formed in his vision. It was strong enough that it obscured his vision of reality making him feel like he was immersed into a movie. A movie completely composed by Katsuki’s thoughts and images on his perspective.

Who is it? It’s too early for Izuku to have come back, or has he forgotten something?

The image showed Katsuki opening the door and on the other side was Shouto. Him? What does he want? Don’t tell me something happened again! He looks uneasy, why is he
looking around like that?

“Are you alone?”

What does it look like? What is going on this time? Hey, don’t just barge into my room like that!

Katsuki took a step back, avoiding the risk of touching Shouto who had just stepped into the room without being invited and in a really forceful manner. When he closed the door, Izuku felt a phantom of the memory of Katsuki’s anxiety.

What is he doing?

“I know everything you have done, no use hiding it; today I’ll make it right.”

Izuku felt Katsuki’s confusion.

The hell? He does look serious. What is he even talking about?

Izuku would have winced physically, if he only remembered to even have a body, when Shouto grabbed Katsuki’s arm making his alarm spike almost into panic.

What is he doing?

He realized immediately that his involuntary question had disrupted the flow of the memory. It jumped around a bit, showing a quick collection of moments where Shouto was staring at him with an angry expression and one scene where Shouto had pushed Katsuki on the floor and he was towering over him. He could then feel Katsuki’s attempt at wishing away the memory, as new panic was adding itself to the old one. Izuku acted fast, he needed to distract him.

No, the scene before, what day was it?

As Kaminari had explained, the brain always jumped at the opportunity to answer a question. Izuku saw himself leaving the room, to go to a seafood barbeque. He recognized the timeframe; this was the day when Katsuki had disappeared. So it had been Shouto who attacked him as he had suspected.

Katsuki’s mind reacted at this thought as well, going back to the scene where Shouto had grabbed him. Izuku could not be sure it was the same moment or if some time had passed, this was too confusing to follow properly, the thoughts were too fast.

“There must be a way for you to release your marks! I won’t let you go until you tell me!”

Idiot, there isn’t! If there was I would have been the first one who wanted to release them! Let me go, goddamnit, you are risking to be marked yourself!

“I noticed that you have a certain attachment to that guy, Midoriya? I know his name, I can take his body and hurt him real bad, are you really sure you want to keep quiet?”

Stop it! I can’t do anything about that! I can’t even… let me take the damn notebook at least, how am I supposed to answer if you keep me like this! Why are you doing this? What relation do you have with the marks?!

“Still going to play dumb? I won’t let you play with the life of my little brother like this! You are going to release the mark you placed on Touya right now!”
Little brother?? OH SHIT. Is he talking about Todoroki Enji’s son? Is this one another one of Todoroki’s children? Oh, crap. The hell did he tell him? He was the one that told me to mark his son as an experiment!

“What? You don’t even remember? Just like you, oh so conveniently, forgot to tell everyone that the people you mark won’t age? My brother was five! It’s been eleven years! He still looks like a five years old kid! Are you having fun? Because I’m not amused! Stop laughing at me!”

I’m not laughing! And I may have ‘forgot,’ but your father surely forgot to tell you that he forced me to do it! Because he wanted to prove his Negate quirk on me! And big surprise, it didn’t work! I told him my quirk was fucking powerful! HE insisted! What the fuck is wrong with your family! The fuck is wrong with you?! I’M NOT LAUGHING STOP PUSHING ME!

“I was observing you, studying you, but you don’t seem perturbed at all! Don’t you feel ashamed for the lives you are ruining?”

Katsuki stumbled on the table and fell backward on his butt, Shouto was immediately on top of him, he pinned Katsuki on the floor with one hand and tried to grab both his arms with the other.

“How did you solve that situation?

Another image was sent his way, eager to answer his question. It was Katsuki placing a hand on Shouto’s cheek. Without leaving a Mark. The two were stilled into position, both waiting for something to happen. Izuku could read partially into Katsuki’s train of thoughts at the time. He had thought that the only way out was to show complete submission and the fact that he didn’t mean any harm. He wanted to see how this situation was going to evolve, but Katsuki pushed away the image forcefully, finally taking control of the flux of memories.

Izuku saw Katsuki, again in reality. He was breathing a bit harder and looked flustered and a bit angry. He immediately started to look around, probably for Kaminari. It was then that Izuku realized that the Link was not broken yet, just repressed a little by Katsuki’s will. He wanted to see more, he wanted to push further beyond.

Wait, what happened after that?

The images this time were almost faint; he could still see Katsuki in real time behind them. The image showed Shouto getting up and leaving without a word. Katsuki panicking again and trying to think of what to do. Katsuki thinking that Shouto knew both their names and they were both in deep shit. Katsuki thinking he had to find a way to keep himself away from the others so that Shouto
could not use him to hurt others. Katsuki thinking that he needed to keep Izuku as far away from him as possible, until he somehow could find a way to solve this situation. Him talking to Aizawa, him going to the cave. Him waiting alone for something to happen. Him locking himself at the wall with the chains at midnight. Shouto in the cave talking to him. That last image captured Izuku’s interest.

Did he find you?

Once again, his brain was faster than his will, and the image of the cave appeared again.

Will this bastard let me explain this time?

With slow, calculated movements, Katsuki grabbed the notebook and wrote at his max speed.

-How did you find me?-

“I spied on Izu, I knew he was the one that could find you.”

- You didn’t need to come here, you could have just taken my body from wherever you were-

“True, but that’s useless since I wanted to talk to you. You don’t need to hide here anymore. I… realized that I may have made a mistake.”

-It was your fucking father that made me Mark your brother, by the way-

“Yeah, I knew.”

What the fucking hell! If you knew already, then why?

“I mean, more than knew… I had a feeling that was the case, but I didn’t know for certain.”

-Then why the fuck did you attack me instead of just asking and THEN attacking?!

“Because… that day I had a pretty big episode, I thought… When I woke up, you were in my room and you were mocking me, saying stuff to me… But that was not you, just a hallucination.”

-What the hell are you even talking about?-

“My quirk. The Soul Wanderer. The price is causing me visual and auditory hallucinations combined with three voices that tell me things in my head. These three are always there, they won’t go away, but the hallucinations come and go from time to time. Sometimes, it’s very difficult to distinguish between them and reality. What happened that day… was not entirely intentional, it was mostly me following a hallucination and the stupid advices of one of the three. I’m sorry.”

Wh…why…how…who…what…

Izuku shared Katsuki’s confusion in full.

“I believe you. You cannot release the Marks, otherwise you would have fought back. It was my bad, please forgive me.”

The cut of the Link was so sudden that both Izuku and Katsuki were frozen in place even after, trying to get their thoughts straight in their head. Izuku somehow had the feeling that he had discovered way more than he should have. And Katsuki was probably feeling the same, judging by the furious expression that was forming on his face. Izuku took a step back and raised his hand a little, feeling guilty.
“Hmm… I wanted—“

“So, now you decided it was fine to just steal my memories like this?!” he cut him off angrily.

“Look, I’m sorry, but… why the hell you didn’t tell me this?! It’s such a major thing, what were you thinking, keeping this a secret, Shouto could’ve hurt you!” the guilt was fading fast, replaced by the realization of how big a risk he had taken.

“Do I have to tell you everything? I don’t think so. What happened was something that didn’t have anything to do with you, it was my own business. Did we sign a contract that says that I have to tell you everything I ever did in my life? I don’t remember anything like this!” Katsuki shouted at him.

“You are being stupid on purpose and you know it! It does have something to do with me! What would have I done if something bad had happened to you? You made me completely powerless, incapable to help you!” he shouted back.

“I went away so he would not have any incentive to hurt you. It was really the only way I could solve the situation, so I don’t get to be lectured by you! And I don’t need your help!”

“Oh, well excuse me! I’m so very sorry to bother you with my useless persona!” he said sarcastically. “And here I thought we both cared for each other and we could help one another. How foolish of me!”

“Yes, you are a fool!” Katsuki shouted without hesitation. “And you’ll always keep being a fool, even after.”

“Oh, yeah, apparently it is very foolish of me to love you, what an idea to have!”

Izuku had no idea what had come out of his mouth and why. Apparently, Katsuki had no idea either. They just stared at each other in silence. Izuku was starting to regret having said that, but no, he said it because he was thinking it, so he had all the right to say it. Why would he need to keep that to himself? He clenched his fists and steadied his stance. He was not going to regret. Katsuki probably read it in his eyes because he clicked his tongue.

“Well, clearly you chose the wrong person to love.”

He turned and left.

Chapter End Notes

Shouto's price will be explained a lot better in the following chapters, a bit at a time. It's not so easy to grasp completely for now because it's pretty arbitrary in its own way of working.

I'll see you on the 26th of November.
Katsuki didn’t return to the room that night.

Izuku could not sleep, he had too many things going on in his head. Shouto and Katsuki. Both were giving him a headache. Katsuki was a heartache as well, but he didn’t want to start rolling around in self-pity. No, he was not sure where to go from there, but he was not going to give up so easily.

His real problem was what to do with Shouto. Should he confront him or not? Apparently both Katsuki were okay with Shouto though, so maybe confronting him would be received as being nosy by Katsuki and he didn’t need that, as well as all of the other problems. Izuku probably had to just accept this whole thing and make peace with it. In the end one thing was true, whatever relationship Katsuki wanted to have with Shouto was his own business.

Izuku was eating breakfast slowly, feeling a little down, when surprisingly it was Katsuki himself who entered the room. He closed the door and they stared at each other, Izuku waited for Katsuki to say something, after all he was the one that approached him.

“Were you serious yesterday?” his tone was tense, guarded.

“Yes.” Izuku confirmed without hesitation. “Were you?”

“Yes, I was serious when I said you chose the wrong person. For a lot of good reasons. But… I know you. You are stubborn, ridiculously stubborn. I can’t convince you to change your mind, can I?” he crossed his arms.

“No, you can’t. I won’t let you decide for me.” once again, he didn’t hesitate. “At the very least, you should give me a serious reason to not to care about you. That fight we had yesterday was not a good reason.”

“It’s no use, if you knew you would just become more obsessed. That’s just the kind of stupid person you are. Always embracing hopeless missions.”

“So you are still hiding things from me. You don’t trust me at all, do you?” it was not a recrimination, he was just stating facts.

“This has nothing to do with trust. I was trying to… protect you.” he admitted in the end reluctantly. “But clearly you don’t want my protection. Whatever, just ruin your life completely, it’s up to you now.” he shrugged in the end.

Izuku could swear that Katsuki was pouting. He sighed silently. Izuku would prefer to have it all out in the open and to confront all the problems straight on, rather than being protected in secret from who-knows-what. He, once again, wondered what was going on inside Katsuki’s mind; he couldn’t understand him at all.

“Okay, as this is my decision, I want to be here and stick around, even if you’d rather have me gone.”

“I don’t-” Katsuki sighed in annoyance. “Just don’t enter my mind without permission again.”
“I don’t like the fact that you are still hiding things from me.” Izuku was not really sure he wanted to accept his terms.

“I’ll tell you what I’m hiding. If you really are going to stick around then there’s no way around it, you’ll discover it eventually. And you are going to regret this. No, scratch that, you are not selfish enough to regret it. Really, you’re the worst. You should have just disappeared from my life as planned. And I’m the worst as well, because I’m too weak. I should have kicked you out as soon as you entered the test that day.”

“You have stopped making sense.” Izuku sighed. “But… alright then. If you say you are going to tell me, then I’ll wait.” he finally dropped his attitude and smiled a little. “I hate having to get everything out of you by force. That’s not the kind of relationship I want with you. Please, let’s try to make this work. You don’t dislike me, right?”

Katsuki sat down next to him and stole his breakfast.

“Stupid.”

The mood had brightened up, and they prepared for the lesson. Izuku was secretly feeling a little triumphant; he had not won, but something close to it. He said he was going to tell him his secret and he had not rejected him after he had said that he loved him. This was not the worst result, far from it. Once they were in the classroom, Kaminari giggled at them from the back of the classroom. Katsuki sent him a murdering glare that only made the other guy fell into hysterical laughter. Kirishima was looking at them all in turns, completely out of the loop. Immediately after Izuku and Katsuki left the classroom, Kaminari ran after them with a wide smile.

“So? Are you two feeling better now? Being a little bit closer?”

“The hell do you mean?” Katsuki growled at him.

“The Link activated with the feeling I had in mind, for both, so you two are official now, right? When is the engagement party, you’ll invite me, right?” he was still smiling.

“Fuck you! I’m going to murder you first!” Katsuki shouted and took a step forward.

Kaminari took three steps back in a hurry and laughed a little.

“So, you are still going to deny it? Well, that’s on you, I guess, but it’s your loss, really! Bye Izu, see you another time. When he calms down, maybe!” he winked at him and ran away.

Katsuki was red, muttering curses under his breath. Izuku was a bit stunned, what had just happened? Kaminari walked in like a typhoon and then just left a disaster zone behind. Why was Katsuki so mad anyway? Was it because of the mention of an engagement party? The feeling I had in mind for both.

What feeling?

Oh.

Katsuki saw the moment that realization hit him and pointed a finger at his face.

“Don’t get strange ideas! His quirk is probably bonkers as much as he is!” he yelled.

“Right.” Izuku fought a smile.
Katsuki could deny it all he wanted; a quirk could only speak a universal truth. If Kaminari’s quirk activated correctly, and he had witnessed that, then it must have meant that their feelings were much similar than Izuku initially thought. And the fact that instead of being confused he immediately went into denial mode was simply very solid proof.

“I told you not to get the wrong idea!” he insisted.

“Oh, okay, I’m not getting the wrong idea! I’m pretty sure I’m getting the right one actually.” Izuku bit his lower lip.

Katsuki growled even louder and started to walk away with a scowl on his face. It was evident, after a few minutes, that he was going back to his room. Old habit really die hard. This was definitely the same old Katsuki. Izuku was not unhappy about that at all. Once they were both inside, with the door closed, Izuku searched for something to say and he found it easily.

“What’s a Soul Wanderer anyway?”

“A fucked up quirk.” Katsuki deadpanned.

“Really? It’s a mimic of the Body Swap… Is it really so different and bad?” he insisted.

“Yes, it is. Were you aware, the Body Swap quirk is just a temporary exchange of consciences. If a person is killed, the one to die is the real owner of the body, not the person that’s temporarily inside it. That one goes back on his own after the body that’s hosting the person dies. But a Soul Wandered does what the names imply. It doesn’t play with consciences, it plays with souls. Your entire soul is pulled from body and thrown into another. It’s not a temporary exchange, if the Soul Wandered dies before exchanging back, you are stuck into your new body forever, there is no turning back. And if the body that’s hosting you dies, you die as well. Which means the other person gets to live in your body and he just has to hold a funeral for his own body, or something.”

“That’s…”

“Messed up.” he concluded for him.

“Yeah.” Izuku nodded. “Isn’t this quirk very powerful as well?”

“Of course. It’s new.” Katsuki lied down on his bed.

“New? But then why was it not on the news like yours?” Izuku joined him.

“Not that new. He is already the third person that had it. But still, it’s relatively new. It’s been around for more or less fifty years.”

“Fifty years sound like a lot of time, but I guess that for quirks it’s basically nothing at all, uh?”

“Yeah pretty much.” he shrugged. “Mine is barely considerable alive, it’s been around for less than twenty years, but Shouto’s it’s not even at the toddler stage yet.”

“What about mine?” Izuku suddenly got curious. “It was not written on the file. How old it’s mine?”

“I dunno the specifics… Quirk history is not really my best subject, but as far as I know, yours is seriously old. I think a Wild Card has popped up in basically every stage of modern history. As you surely know the first quirk, at least, the first one documented, was Hannibal’s quirk, during the Punic Wars. The guy had a very faint Clairvoyance quirk, that was how he was such a capable general. Of course, it’s speculated that some less known people, maybe villagers, had some quirks as well. And
there was no way to tell what was going on in places where writing was not so common yet. The real first documentation of quirks was during the Middle Ages. The famous witch hunt was just a misinterpretation of a natural phenomenon in big expansion. The first Wild Card that I can remember, I can be mistaken though, was Niccolò Machiavelli. The guy had absorbed a lot of quirks that helped him read people’s minds and intentions, plus a Clairvoyance quirk and some mind control or manipulation quirks. That, of course, helped a lot with his fame. I’m sure he was not really the first one though, after all your quirk is very difficult to find and identify, I can imagine a lot of them had just one quirk and thought that was theirs all along. Or even if they had multiple quirks at that time, it was almost completely unknown how they worked. They married very early as well, so absorbing quirks was not that difficult. It was only in the Modern Era that quirks has been accepted and studied as a normal part of human nature, not some kind of evil demon gift. It’s still completely unknown how quirks came to be. Maybe it was something that has always been there, only too faint to actually count. After all-

“Quirks are in constant expansion.” Izuku concluded for him with a very famous sentence everyone knew from propaganda.

“Yeah. Old quirks are becoming more and more powerful at every new owner, new quirks are popping up every one or two generations and they are all monstrosities. Like mine, Shouto’s and Yagi’s. And of course, Jirou as well. People like us… we should have never been born in the first place.”

“Don’t say things like that.” he cut him off harshly.

“Yagi Toshinori killed seventy-six people just by looking at them. And he is still on the loose today, sure, the Government managed to confine him into a place, but no one can hope to get close, not unless they were suicidal. They can’t capture him. He is physically weak, not unlike a bony old man, and yet he just needs to… find your eyes and… poof! Your brain explodes. The only way to stop him is to destroy his eyes or kill him. Talk about an overpowered quirk. The Government can’t decide which is worst, between him or Kirishima. But I would bet my money on him.”

“That’s different. He chooses to do these things. You are not doing anything like that.” Izuku protested.

“Not now. But what about next year? I hold lives in my hands just as much as he does. The two of us… we just need to wish for someone’s death and we can get it easily. I can even kill from a world away, there is no escaping my quirk. At the very least, he can’t kill people on the other side of the city, let alone of the globe. I just need, one day, to decide I’m fed up with everything and I can—”

“Oh! Wait, this is dangerous—” Katsuki breathed between an attempt and another.
“Shut up, nothing is dangerous, you are just afraid you are going to lose!” Izuku chuckled.

“If it’s like this, then—“ Katsuki grabbed him and easily pushed him off himself and next to him on the bed. “I’ll fight back!” Soon, it was Izuku who was containing laughter. “See, I win!” Katsuki breathed with triumph.

“Not yet!” Izuku pushed himself forward and bit his earlobe lightly.

Katsuki jumped a little, out of breath.

“You…! Little shit!” now that he was fighting back verbally, it was like a whole new experience. Before he could only express what he was feeling with silly faces. “You are playing dirty!”

Izuku had no idea what rules they were playing by and he didn’t care one bit, he just laughed into his neck. Katsuki pinched his arm and bit his shoulder a little at the same time. Izuku just shifted even closer to him, hugging his back.

It was a pity he could not explore Katsuki’s new verbal ability to its fullest by doing something a bit more challenging.

The next morning Izuku woke up early, even though he had not slept the night before. He was so full of adrenaline that he could not really sleep for long. He woke up after dreaming a lot about Katsuki, about things they could do together and about things he could say to him. They were mostly insults, but they were playful so Izuku loved them just the same. He was reminded of when he was a little kid. Once, on the night before Christmas, he was so excited about the game he was going to receive the next day that he dreamt about the entire plot of the game. Of course, it was nothing like the actual game, he was actually disappointed since the dream was better.

He prayed this would not be the same.

Katsuki was still sleeping, so he spent the time studying his face. He was sleeping with his mouth just a little bit open. Izuku had never noticed before, but his blond eyebrows were naturally well defined, but not like how a girl’s eyebrows would look sometimes, unnaturally polished. When they were not furrowed, he could pass for a handsome guy, but since that didn’t happen too often, he would easily look more like an angry hedgehog. The thought made him escape a strangled chuckle that awoke the other. Katsuki gave him a side-eyes glare that immediately brightened Izuku’s day.

“I love you, I’m afraid.” he said with a wide smile.

Katsuki furrowed his lips.

“What a thing to wake up to. I’m going back to sleep.” he turned the other way.

Izuku laughed loudly.

“C’mon, don’t be so standoffish, I know you love me too!” he hugged him from behind.

“I like you better when you have your mouth shut, you could almost pass for a cute guy.”

Izuku laughed in his shoulder.

He waited later in the day to ask Katsuki clarification about some things he had seen with the Link. He asked him what was the scene with the chains. Why had he chained himself to the wall? Katsuki was not really happy to answer that.
“Because I was afraid he would take my body. His quirk is a bit of a pain since he can exchange no matter how far that person is… So the cave was not enough to protect me. By chaining my body, I was able to make sure he would not just drown my body or something. I wouldn’t have put it past him to do something so stupid.”

“Is that why you declined when I asked if I could stay with you in there?” Izuku asked, suspicious.

“Yeah. I was sure you would have freaked out if you had found out and you would have realized it was Shouto who was the problem… And you would have just done something stupid as well, like confronting him alone. I didn’t need more problems,” he had his lips into a thin line.

“Okay, I’ll ignore your insults to my intelligence. But how were you managing that? How could you chain yourself and then free yourself?”

“I had the key, of course, and I was hiding it after I would chain myself in a hidden spot in the wall nearby. I was able to open the lock easily, but Shouto would have taken a lot more time since he had no idea where it was. In the meantime, I would have been inside his body and I could have done something. Like maybe surrender with his body or something. It was my only possibility to fight back at that moment.”

Izuku was a bit sad that Katsuki didn’t trust him with any of this before. Yeah, he wanted to spare him anxiety about something that maybe he could not change, but still, Izuku would’ve preferred a different solution.

August came and went by peacefully, Izuku and Katsuki were finally behaving like boyfriends and all the others were friendly toward them and each other. Well, with the exception of Shouto who was kind of spying on them from a distance. Not in a malicious way, Izuku could not feel any bad vibes coming from him, strangely. All he could feel was sadness and loneliness, but he was good at keeping a straight face. In the second half of the month, Izuku, in the end, felt pity towards Shouto and told Katsuki to go and talk to him. Katsuki raised an eyebrow at him and asked him if he was not jealous anymore.

“I know you made all that mess with Kaminari just because you were jealous, you can’t fool me. You can say that you did it because you were worried about me all you want. I’m never going to be fooled by that.” he teased him.

After that, Katsuki really talked to him, Izuku was not present, and he was not an apprehensive mother, so that would be inappropriate. And despite being jealous or whatever, he trusted Katsuki. The next day Shouto became a strange third wheel. Izuku was sure that Shouto had a thing for Katsuki, so it was incomprehensible for him how could he hang out with both him and his boyfriend, but he looked perfectly content with it. Of course, he never entered their room and luckily giving him attention intentionally made him stop his stalkerish attitude. Two birds with one stone.

Izuku still was questioning what, in Shouto’s mind, had made him go from hate to attraction, but he was not going to ask.

The first time something different from the normality happened was the 20th of August, when Kaminari asked a question in class, cutting off Aizawa.

“Mr. Aizawa! Is there the rule about not talking directly about our quirks still in place? I mean… everyone already knows, so right now it’s more of a hindrance to communication rather than a help for us. Can we talk about them now?”

Aizawa scratched his head a little, he looked a bit unsure, but it was difficult to tell with his goggles
“Hrm, yeah, I guess it’s fine. You know about them, so yeah, it’s basically a silly rule at this point.”

It looked innocuous enough so no one thought much of it, but then on the 25th of August he asked another question.

“Mr. Aizawa! Do we still need to send Calling Cards?”

“Yes, you still need to. Why would you think differently?” this time he answered without hesitation, a little bored.

“Because it’s a bit of a pain. We could use our quirks for fun, if we can’t unless we sent a Calling Cart we can’t do any spur of the moment stuff!” Kaminari pouted.

“This is not a party kid. But I guess I could make a new rule. If you get permission from the ‘victim’ of your quirk then you don’t need the Calling Card. Happy now?” he really looked dismissive and bored.

“Yep! Thank you Mister!” Kaminari smiled.

“By the way, I let it slide because you had some kind of permission, but I didn’t miss the fact that you used your quirk on two of the others without a Card. Don’t push your luck too much, got that?” Aizawa closed the argument with a stern voice.

Izuku and Katsuki exchanged a confused glance. What was the guy brewing in the background? Well, maybe he was not trying anything, he was simply a lazy guy.

The next question was on the 2nd of September.

“Mr. Aizawa! Do we have to ask you if we want to use the quirk of another person?” he waved a hand to attract his attention.

“Are you almost finished bothering me?” he sighed loudly. “I have no idea what’s going on in your mind, so if you don’t want to be more specific in front of the others, ask me later, privately. Because I have no idea what are you trying to ask.”

“Okay!” he agreed cheerfully.

By that point, everyone was gossiping about Kaminari and of course people a little more forward like Uraraka had already confronted him. Izuku and Katsuki had spied on the two talking, but the girl had not been able to get a straight answer out of him. Kaminari just reassured her that he had no bad intention; he just wanted to try something. That didn’t explain anything, but another thing that Izuku noticed was that Kirishima was acting a little bit colder to him, like there was some tension between them now.

A week later, Izuku and Katsuki stumbled into a situation by chance. Kaminari was talking to Yao, the two of them alone in the empty classroom during the evening.

“I don’t want to memorize that quirk and he is not happy about it as well, so you should not insist so much.” she was telling him.

“I know, I know, but don’t you get it? That’s the only way! Your quirk is perfect for what I need to do and I even asked Aizawa for permission! Sure, he had to ask permission from the Government as well, but in the end they accepted.” he answered.
“It’s not the point. I don’t want to have the possibility to create Credit Cards of Virus! Someone will certainly abuse it someday, I just know it.” she crossed her arms frowning.

Katsuki pushed past Izuku and entered the classroom. The two of them noticed them.

“What the hell is going on? A Credit Card of Virus?” Katsuki asked harshly.

Kaminari scratched his head a little and finally explained.

“I studied Virus a bit and discovered something interesting. Apparently, that quirk kills everything that’s alive except… for people who have the same quirk! Since both of them would have the virus in their bodies, it doesn’t matter if they touch! That’s why I thought that I could get the quirk myself! Genius, right?!” he smiled widely.

Izuku was speechless. This was both extremely romantic and extremely silly at the same time. Kaminari had tried his very best to find a solution to Kirishima’s problem with touch. It took some dedication. And some courage as well. Kaminari was often silly and he looked an airhead, but he could pull out some surprising twists every once in a while.

“Oh. I see, then I don’t care.” Katsuki turned to leave.

“Wait wait!” Izuku grabbed him by his sleeve. “Kami, that’s a nice idea you had. Does Kirishima know about it?”

“More or less. I mean, I wanted to surprise him, but Yao needs to ask him to sign on the contract, so I asked him to do that. We kinda fought… but I’m not giving up! If Yao can get on board with this idea, I’m sure I can convince Kirishima as well. Please!” he turned to her again.

She looked a bit overwhelmed now that she was surrounded by a crowd. Not that Katsuki was really pressuring her either way, and Izuku himself was not really being particularly imposing.

“I… but…” she looked almost defeated, but definitely not happy.

“Right now the Government already has accepted my request… so they already expect you to have it in the near future. Not only that, some of them appeared to be enthusiastic about this idea, they said it could be used to raise the children with that quirk in a more skillful way. Without risks. You know your quirk is rare… You are the only one who can do this. You are the only hope for people like Kirishima as things stand now.” Kaminari for once looked really serious.

His reasoning took Izuku and Yao by surprise. It was all true, and they never would have realized it without Kaminari explaining it in that way. Izuku felt a strange similitude with the guy, just like he had been the only one to trust and search for a solution for Katsuki’s quirk, while everyone else either ignored the problem or expected him to help himself, Kaminari was the only one really interested in improving the quality of his life. And of everyone else with the same quirk. It was admirable, moving even.

“I understand.” Yao sighed. “If you manage to convince him, I’ll do it.”

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!!” he shrieked pulling her in some kind of hug that the girl was clearly not enthusiast with. “I’ll talk with him again!” and he disappeared beyond the door.

Yao combed her bangs with her fingers, uncomfortable. After a moment of awkward silence, Katsuki walked toward the door and Izuku hurried after him after saying goodbye to the girl. Izuku’s curiosity almost wanted to see how this whole thing was going to evolve, but Katsuki was right, this was not their business.
The next day they ended up learning about it anyway. As soon as the lesson finished, Kaminari and Kirishima went straight to Yao’s desk. The others were starting to leave, but their attention was caught and they remained a bit longer, spying on the three. Everyone’s interest became even more intense when Yao waved a hand in the air and a glowing scroll appeared. They all, almost unconsciously, gathered around to take a closer look. Yao noticed them, sighed and ignored them as she grabbed the scroll and started to explain.

“This is the contract. You give me permission to lend your quirk to anyone I desire in exchange of double interest to be paid on use… There is nothing on your end, you don’t get any kind of downside, and if you die the contract is canceled. Well, of course.” she added as an afterthought.

Kirishima looked worried and he looked at Kaminari almost pleading. The guy elbowed him on the side with a smile, edging him on. Kirishima grabbed a pen that Yao was handing him and took the scroll for himself. He signed it, covering his name a little just in case, and handed it back. Yao nodded and then looked at Kaminari.

“Only one use, or in this case only an hour.” Kaminari nodded, they had read this information in the file. “Put the Card in your mouth. Since it’s not a quirk with any particular condition you’ll use it immediately.”

“Wait, what are you two doing?” Kirishima asked, confused.

Yao united her hands in a gesture like a handshake and closed her eyes. When she opened them again and she separated the hands, a shiny square was on her palm. It was very similar to a real Credit Card, the same fake silver metallic look and shape; it was only a little smaller. She handed it to Kaminari who took it with a smile. As Kirishima was asking questions in the background, he opened his mouth and stuck his tongue out. He placed the Card on it as if it was a candy and closed his mouth. He looked at the ceiling like he was focusing on the sensation of the Card melting and then he grinned.

Kirishima took a step back, clearly scared, but Kaminari was faster. He grabbed his nose between two fingers and chuckled. It was difficult to tell what Kirishima was more shocked of, if by being touched at all, or if he had gone for something so stupid immediately.

“Hi!” Kaminari greeted him like they had just met for the first time and Kirishima raised his hands, probably to slap his hand away, but stopped midway, his confusion showing. Then he took a big step back, freeing his nose. He rubbed it, still with wide eyes and Kirishima laughed softly. “So, how does it feel?”

Kirishima didn’t answer, he looked completely devoid of words. Kaminari laughed again and lunged forward. He grabbed his cheeks and stretched them to create a fake smile.

“Here! This is the expression I want to see!” Kirishima looked like he had regained a little bit of control over his limbs and started to scramble away from him, scandalized. Kaminari followed him around, taking this as a funny game and they started a kind of slalom between the desks. Uraraka was the first to react.

“Time out! You two, don’t… run around with that quirk! You are going to kill us all, go... play somewhere else!”

Kaminari stopped with a huge smile in his face, and then turned to look at the front of the classroom.

“Hey, Mr. Aizawa!” Izuku realized only then that the man had not left the room yet, he was still in his position. Maybe he had sensed a potential disaster and decided to be close by in case of
emergency. After confirming he had the man’s attention Kaminari grabbed Kirishima’s arm and
dragged him in front of the man. “I surrender.”

Chapter End Notes

Hmm, what's going on now? We can't ever catch a break!
Thank you for the 500 kudos anyway, I appreciate them a whole lot :3

Are we seriously already almost in December? Oh my. To think I started writing this in
May! I'm not taking a break for the holidays, I'm never taking a break, so you know
where to find me and when, always always.
See you the 3rd.
“I see. For this one kid, I guess, right?” Aizawa gestured vaguely to Kirishima.

“Yep!” Kaminari nodded happily.

“All right. You,” he jerked his head at Kirishima, “go and prepare your stuff. You are free to go.” the man sounded completely neutral, like it was a given.

“Wait a moment!” once again the first one to react was Uraraka with a half yell. “Does this work? Like this? Without even… pretending to have been captured or something?”

“The rules state that you can make someone surrender in any way you wish. Nowhere was it written that it has to be by force. Friendship can work as well.” surprisingly it was Kaminari who answered. When no one reacted, he stared at them all, confused. “Don’t tell me you hadn’t figured it out? I can’t be the only one who figured out the rules, right?”

Uraraka opened and closed her mouth three times. By the fourth time she was finally able to speak.

“I surrender for Iida.”

“All right. You too, go and grab your stuff.” Aizawa was still pretty unconcerned.

“Are you kidding me?! This was an option since the first day?! I could have just surrendered for him on the first day and gotten this over with?” she yelled indignantly.

“Yeah, of course.” Kaminari looked stunned. “You seriously had not figured it out?”

“But… but!” she looked almost out of breath. “What about the person we had to eliminate?! If this rule is true, then… we could have all gotten out the first day, with the exception of one person! There would not be a test at all!”

“That’s not entirely true.” this time, it was Aizawa who answered. “You could have started and surrendered one by one for someone else, but… if any of you had surrendered for the person you were supposed to find and eliminate, you would all be eliminated on the spot, for having failed your mission. So in a way it was a blessing you waited until now to start and purposefully gift people a win.”

“Does this mean that we can all get out right now? Just by surrendering to each other?” asked Tsuyu.

“Yeah. I was wondering what was taking you guys so long,” Aizawa looked like he was talking about the weather, “I mean, I’m paid to keep you all on this island until next April, but they are not going to take away my money if you all leave now, so we may as well just leave.”

No one had words to react to that. This was too absurd.

“You… and your genius… idiocy! Next time you get one of these ‘amazing ideas’ care to share?!” Uraraka yelled at Kaminari.

“But I seriously thought you’d all figured out by now! How was I supposed to know?!” he yelled back on the defensive.
Izuku realized a moment later that he was not a spectator; he could take advantage of this rule as well. He opened his mouth to surrender for Katsuki when the person next to him elbowed him on the side. He turned to see an annoyed Katsuki that was staring at him, eyebrows furrowed and lips in a thin line. He wanted to start argue with him because he was being stupid, but he never got the opportunity.

“"I surrender for Bakugou." Shouto’s quiet voice.

Izuku turned sharply to look at him, Katsuki sighed with annoyance at his side. Shouto didn’t look at either, just staring at Aizawa.

“Okay. Anyone else? Can we hurry this along?”

“I surrender for Izu.” next to speak was Tsuyu.

Izuku turned again on the other direction to send her an incredulous look. She just smiled, not surprised at his reaction.

“Ah, well, then I… surrender for Kami?” Yao looked unsure of what she was doing herself.

Then Tsuyu surrendered for Yao, giving away her second chance, Shouto surrendered for her, Uraraka surrendered with a sigh of annoyance for Shouto and she was the last one remaining. People who had already won could not surrender anymore, and no one was left to surrender for her. Izuku realized the problem a moment too late. Now what? He rapidly did all the calculations in his head and no matter how he realized that this result was to be expected. A person had to be left behind.

“Uraraka, are you sure of what you are doing?!” he asked even though it was completely useless and he was aware of it.

“Yeah…” she sighed again. “Shu had already surrendered two times, he could not let me out anyway. To refuse to help him would just be cruel.”

“Does she have to remain here until April?” asked Iida, calm and collected, to Aizawa.

“Well, technically, as you must already know, there is another person in the test. If she surrenders for her she can go.” the man answered him, scratching his cheek.

“But then Jirou would remain trapped here in her place, right?” asked Kaminari tilting his head.

“She doesn’t look very trapped to me.” Uraraka muttered looking away.

That was kind of difficult to argue against. Jirou had hardly been there, she didn’t look like she needed anyone’s permission to leave at all. Uraraka was right.

“But there is no guarantee that she will show up any time soon.” Izuku reminded her of this possibility.

“I know, but it seems like I was not able to earn anyone’s friendship during my time here, so no one wanted to help me. I’m not complaining, by the way, I simply got what was coming from me, I was never here to make friends. I guess that bit me in the ass in the end. Figures.” she shrugged. Well, Izuku supposed he should admire her fairness. “But wow. Talk about an anticlimactic ending. This whole test ended up being a disappointment.”

“Personally I’m glad it was so easy, I can’t wait to go home!” Kaminari smiled and made a peace sign.
“To the Task Force apartments complex, you mean? We are not going home.” Iida contradicted him.

“No, actually you can go back home for a little while, just to let your relatives know that you are still alive and well. The Task Force was not waiting for you all so soon, I’m sure they need some time to get everything set up. You can enjoy a short vacation before the official moving.”

Kaminari whistled in satisfaction. Everyone looked a little happier after this answer too. Izuku himself was feeling increasingly better, he was happy to see his parents again, but more importantly he was starting to feel excited about this new phase of life he was going into. Both he and Katsuki were free, and now they were going to figure out the best way to live step by step.

Slowly, as if they were on a cloud, they started to separate, deep into their own thoughts. Everything Izuku wanted to take away with him was inside Katsuki’s room, there was no need to stop by his room. He was not particularly fond of it anyway, he didn’t feel the need to see it one last time. If he had to talk about a nostalgic room, surely Katsuki’s would fill the bill. But he didn’t want to walk around, looking at the furniture like it was a friend he was never going to see again, it was beyond pathetic and Katsuki surely would think he was an idiot. So he entered and collected his stuff without looking around too much, trying to focus just on the task ahead. There was not much to miss from this place anyway, right? He was heading into an even better future.

When he closed his trolley he looked up to find a Katsuki with his eyebrows a little furrowed, but not out of irritation. He was looking at the room, almost bothered.

“Maybe it would have been better to stay a little longer…” it was only a whisper, Izuku was not sure he had heard it at all.

Katsuki was being the nostalgic one? Impossible.

They already have mine I won’t let them have another.

Was he nervous about his role inside the Task Force? Surely, they were not going to ask him to mark people at random, probably they wouldn’t even ask him to mark people at all. He was going to help with his quirk, Izuku knew there were some people that could only do paperwork or maybe patrolling. Like Kirishima, he could not help using his quirk, he surely was just going to do office work. There was really no need for Katsuki’s quirk in this world either.

“Let’s go.” Katsuki spoke out loud this time, getting up and dragging his luggage away with him.

Izuku followed immediately after, before closing the door he looked at him.

“Should we put back all the things we gathered back in their places?”

“Nah, I’m sure they will have all the time in the world to do so. They have to replenish the library anyway and the plants are half a disaster.” Katsuki didn’t turn he just kept going down the hallways.

Izuku heard Kaminari and Kirishima discuss something in Kaminari’s room, their voices reaching him since they had left the door opened. Izuku didn’t want to eavesdrop, he followed Katsuki in silence after closing the door to their room slowly, almost with care. The test had kept him in tension for days but in the end, he got out of it only good things. Izuku was satisfied with this life; maybe he had been lucky after all.

They walked to the entrance and Izuku was looking around, not really feeling sad and nostalgic, but he wanted to engrave the place in his mind. It was a very important part of his life. Outside of the door he was kissed by the still hot sun of September and he felt even more overwhelmed, if that was possible. The hot light was blinding him, so he had to cover his eyes with a hand. Shouto was
already in the landing space, with a small black suitcase, standing around with Iida, who had a big, dark blue bag. Neither looked really interested in talking, but Izuku figured he should at least say something, especially if they were going to be separated for a period before meeting again in the Task Force.

“So… are you going back home?” he asked, hesitant.

He knew nothing of their families situation, except for the fact that Shouto had apparently a father who forced Shouto’s little brother to have a mark. Maybe this was the wrong question, but it was really a pretty normal topic to bring up in this situation.

“Yes, I’m going back until I have to move to the Task Force.” Iida answered flatly.

“I’m going back to see my siblings and mother, then I don’t know.” was Shouto’s answer.

Izuku almost wanted to dig a little deeper in his answer, but he knew it was better to leave it be. He told them he was going back home as well. He realized then that he had yet to ask Katsuki, he just kind of assumed because Katsuki loved his parents. He was surely going back home, but it was best to make sure. He didn’t want to go back home only to discover that Katsuki had traveled to Hokkaido, just because. With Katsuki no option was ever completely impossible. Katsuki answered his question with a nod.

Soon after, Aizawa appeared from the door and he was followed by all the others, even Uraraka, empty-handed. The girl was pouting, but she wished Iida a safe flight back home and she whispered something else as well. Izuku could guess that she was not happy to not see him for a while and so he respected their privacy by moving a little farther away.

“Well then. You are all going to leave now. I’m going to stay here, I have to keep an eye on the two girls left, but I’ll see you again soon. Your supervisor is not just for the test, I’m really your supervisor for a while. When we will meet again I’ll be your guide through the first period of your permanence in the Task Force. If you had hoped to be freed by my presence, sorry to disappoint.”

Izuku was not disappointed. The man was kinda lazy, kinda uninterested, but he was much better than some other people. He was a good supervisor; he was letting them do what they wanted as long as they were following the rules. He was not sure how the other person with God’s eyes was, but probably not like this.

“Then I guess I’ll see you all again soon. Bye.” Uraraka was talking with her lips pouted.

Aizawa jerked his head in the direction of the door, signaling to the girl that she had to leave. She turned with her arms crossed and walked back inside. Izuku was turning to look at the landing zone, searching for the plane that was supposed to bring him back home, when he suddenly saw black and collapsed.

When Izuku woke up, he was seated on a plane seat next to Katsuki who was looking straight ahead with his eyebrows furrowed and arms crossed.

“What happened?” he tried to say but it came out a little off.

Katsuki apparently understood anyway because he looked at him then stared ahead again.

“They didn’t want us to see something, or maybe they didn’t want to risk anything, whatever the reason we got knocked out and then dragged here. We are already flying, I can only see the ocean from the window.”
Izuku looked past Katsuki, outside of the window, and saw only white and blue. Then he turned on the opposite direction and saw Kaminari sleeping with his head rested on Kirishima’s shoulder. The red hair guy nodded in his direction, noticing his stare. Izuku looked forward and saw Shouto and Iida, both already awake, on the seat in front of the two guys. In the seat right in front of him, was Tsuyu, but she was sleeping with her head on Yao’s lap, who was sleeping as well. Apparently, the girl had fallen into that position while she was sleeping. They were alone, not Aizawa nor Uraraka or anyone else was present. Izuku had forgotten the fact that he had not met an adult, except for Aizawa, in months, and he was expecting someone to be on the plane, like a hostess maybe. Not that Izuku had ever been on a plane before the whole test thing, they were not really common anymore. If he wanted to move around Japan, he would use a train. International flights were impossible to catch unless you got permission from both the nation one was departing and the nation of arrival. Not to mention you needed a very good reason to visit, vacation was not a good reason. Of all the people that he had known in his life only Katsuki had ever left the country and they let him because he was ‘a new study topic for the whole humanity’. Basically, any request for travel to a foreign nation, if it came from him, was surely going to be accepted.

Izuku relaxed back in his seat. It was no use to get emotional about any of this, what was done was done. They were flying, they were already miles away from the island. His only regret was leaving Uraraka behind. It didn’t matter if she was not a very close friend, she was a part of the group. Now suddenly he was starting to understand Jirou’s attitude. She was treating them all like they were her friends, comrades. Because they were. They had survived a test together, they had confronted crazy situations together. Now they were bonded by something.

Maybe…

Izuku waited for them all to wake up and get a bearing of their surrounding before speaking up.

“Now that we are outside of the test… I was thinking that maybe we could exchange names? Some of us already know some names but not everyone knows. What do you all think? I think we can all call each other friends now.” he tried to smile to them all.

Everyone agreed, some even reciprocating Izuku’s smile. They all did a small self-introduction, quirk, name and some other random information they decided to share. Even Katsuki introduced himself even if he only gave the very basic information. Iida was the one to introduce Uraraka. Shouto was covering his ears every time.

Kirishima Eijiro, Kaminari Denki, Todoroki Shouto, Iida Tenya, Uraraka Ochako, Asui Tsuyu and Yaoyorozu Momo.

His new friends.

They even decided to start referring to each other by first names rather than last names. Well, it looked like not all of them were going to use the first names, but at least now they had permission to chose what they’d prefer to use. The next topic was the future. They started to exchange phone numbers and they talked about where they were living and if they were going back to their parents’ home. Everyone said they were going to return home, there was only one person who didn’t say anything and Izuku knew why.

“Eijiro, where are you going to go?” he asked as gently as possible.

He didn’t want to put him in a rough spot, but to just ignore the matter would not be considered a solution.

“Oh, I discussed this with Denki, or rather, Denki forced his decision on me and that was that… But
well…” he smiled shyly. “He said I can stay at his house for a while, even until the start of our work. I’m not so sure this is a good idea, since it’s not like he asked his for parents’ permission, but—“

“I already told you!” Denki interrupted him. “I don’t need to ask, my family believes in hospitality before wealth. And I’m pretty sure we are not going to eat white rice without a side dish for days just because you are there.”

“That’s not the problem. Well, not the only one at the very least. Won’t they be scared of me?” Eijiro sighed.

“No, duh.”

Izuku had to stop a laugh with a hand. The Kaminari family looked like a trip. He almost wanted to go with them just to see them in the flesh. They sounded a little like Katsuki’s mom and dad. On the other hand, when Izuku was thinking about his own parents… He felt a little uneasy. Sure, they said they were supporting him in this difficult situation and of course, they hoped to see him again. But at the same time Izuku had changed so much since last time he saw them. And this time he was not going to hide, he had no reason to. He was going to tell them all about Katsuki and a bit about everyone else in his life, he had to be strong and just walk forward on his own path. Even alone if he needed to. He had been spoiled until the test and now it was a bit scary to take a real step toward complete independence, but he had to. Of course, he hoped his parents would simply accept him and his choices.

They kept having small chats throughout the flight, probably to keep the tension at bay. Needless to say, Katsuki didn’t say a word. Izuku stole some glances at his face from time to time, but he looked really tense. His eyebrows were furrowed and he was resting his face on a closed fist, looking outside at the ocean and sky. Izuku had a vibe that something was wrong, but he could not put a finger on what. He poked him a little with a finger and asked what was wrong with his lips only. Katsuki looked at him for a moment, but then he shook his head imperceptibly and turned again. He probably didn’t want to talk with the others present. Izuku had no idea why.

Finally, the plane landed and they all let out a big sigh of relief. They did it all synchronously; it looked so perfectly planned that they chuckled a little. Izuku climbed down the ladder and breathed deeply into the evening air. Well, it was kind of a smelly air; it stunk of gasoline and smog, not even close to how clean the island air was. But it was ‘home air’ so it was good all the same.

“Katsuki, are we taking a taxi?” he asked him.

Katsuki didn’t answer, still all tense. Everyone exchanged their goodbyes for the moment and they separated. Everyone was headed in different directions. Denki, Eijiro and Tsuyu took a taxi, Momo had a car waiting for her right inside the airport zone and Iida walked outside of the building alone. The last one left was Shouto. He was staring at them like he was waiting to see what they would do. Katsuki looked at him a moment, then he waved a hand vaguely, to bid him goodbye probably and left. Izuku followed sending a glance back at Shouto. He had not moved an inch.

The two of them, again alone, walked on the streets. Their houses were a little far away so he hoped Katsuki didn’t intend to walk all the way through there, but maybe that was truly his idea. Izuku, for the first time, felt like he was overwhelmed by the crowd. The island was so silent and solitary… only the waves were breaking the silence most of the time. As they walked, Izuku really wanted to ask him why they were doing this like this, since they could take a taxi, but he decided to not ask. There was something strange with him and he was pretty sure he would not appreciate being
bothered now.

By the time they reached their neighborhood it was already sunset. Katsuki asked him if he wanted him to accompany home, but Izuku shook his head. His idea was a bit different, he wanted to go to Katsuki’s house first, then returning to his own later. Maybe even the next day if Katsuki was going to offer him the night. He wanted to see Katsuki’s parents again, since they were so attached to him as well, and he didn’t want to deal with his own parents so soon.

He informed him of his intention and Katsuki just nodded, he didn’t look particularly bothered so Izuku assumed it was a good sign. Katsuki knocked on his own door when it was already night. Izuku heard Katsuki’s mother responding from the other side and soon the door opened. As soon as she opened, she stared at them both with her mouth opened. Both Izuku and Katsuki smirked from amusement at her clear surprise.

“Wh—Katsuki! You are back?! Now?!! How did that happen?!” she looked at Izuku next. “Izuku, darling, it’s so nice to see you again!”

“Hi, mom. Can we enter or do we have to talk at the door?”

She opened her mouth even more and her eyes were as wide as they could become. Right, this was the first time she could hear his voice in so many years. Izuku could understand perfectly.

“Masaru! Come, hurry!!” she shouted inside the house.

Katsuki entered and Izuku soon followed closing the door, since Mrs. Bakugou looked like had completely forgotten about that. She hugged Katsuki and when her husband arrived in a hurry, the scene repeated. Izuku remained in the background a little, not wanting to ruin the happy family reunion. Katsuki was grimacing at every hug, but it was absolutely evident he was happy as well. They asked him how he was home so soon and Katsuki explained, in bits and pieces, about the rules and the fact that they had completed their task sooner than expected.

“I’m so glad the two of you passed easily and even earlier than expected!” that caught Izuku’s attention.

“You knew I was in the test as well?” he asked.

“I was really surprised!” Mrs. Bakugou stepped forward and hugged Izuku as well. “I thought you were quirkless, but then I read Katsuki’s letters and I was like ‘wow, you never know what may happen in life right?’” she smiled at him. “Maybe it’s selfish, but I’m happy you were in the test together with my son, you were in every letter he wrote to us!”

“Mom that’s not true!” Katsuki yelled, his cheeks a little red.

“No, pretty sure you mentioned him at least fifty times, may have been sixty actually.” Katsuki grimaced hard at her words. “I was totally surprised when I discovered you had an S rank quirk! But that’s not really important, thank you for having always been a good friend to Katsuki and I’m sure you helped him a lot as well.”

“Thank you Mrs. Bakugou, actually it was Katsuki that saved me nine out of ten times.” he smiled at them.

“Yeah, my sweetheart is as smart as a button, right?” Katsuki grimaced once again. “But of course, what surprised me the most was the other news! Your quirk!” she turned again towards Katsuki and the two parents stared at Katsuki, waiting to get some kind of insight from him. “They explained some of it to us… but not much. They didn’t seem to know much themselves.”
“I learned how to erase the marks thanks to the quirk of another person. I know, it was sudden and it was scary, I didn’t really have a way to warn you anyway. Not even I knew what was going to happen, it was all kind of new. Anyway, that happened. You are free now. Everything is cool again.”

A silence followed. Izuku wondered what was going on in their minds, he could not even start to imagine. He was not a parent himself so there was no way he could ever understand what they went through and what they were feeling about all this.

“So… what does this mean for your price?” Mr. Bakugou asked cautiously.

Wait, price? Katsuki said he didn’t know his price.

“Not much. I had it checked when they confirmed my ability to cancel the marks. It went up a little. From half a year to a whole year and a half. Because I don’t pay for it anymore now and some other factors got in the way, I don’t know which ones. But of course, what’s gone is gone.” Katsuki’s face was completely inexpressive, it was impossible to understand how he was feeling.

What? What went up to a whole year?

“This little…” Mrs. Bakugou looked disappointed.

No, not disappointed, something worst that Izuku could not identify.

“Yeah, of course. It’s just longer because now these extra months are going to be spared.” Katsuki turned to look at him and apparently read the question in his face. “My life expectancy.”

What?

“That’s how long I have left to live.”

Chapter End Notes

This is probably not at all what you were expecting...
The test had gone on for so long, it was time to end it right? I mean… I never said the story was going to take place inside forever, we got all we needed from there, time for us to leave the nest!
And fall on the ground hard.

Se you the 10th!
“Wait, are you saying you didn’t tell him yet?” asked Mrs. Bakugou.

Izuku had forgotten how to talk.

“No, I haven’t. I never intended to tell him. But I knew he would figure out soon after the end of the test, that’s why I’m not opposed to tell him now.” Katsuki crossed his arms.

His parents looked at each other; any trace of a smile had disappeared.

“We are leaving you two alone. I really think you have to talk.” Mitsuki grabbed her husband’s arm and dragged him away.

Katsuki picked up both his bag and Izuku’s trolley and climbed the stairs to his room. Izuku followed him without a word, his body felt like solid ice. Katsuki waited for him to enter and closed the door behind him. Izuku’s eyes never lost him for a second.

“Well…” Katsuki started, looking away. “You heard it. That's it. My price is my lifespan.”

“When were you thinking of telling me?” Izuku didn’t recognize his own voice.

“Never.”

It happened so fast, Izuku’s brain didn’t really register anything. He raised his hand and slapped Katsuki so fast, he didn’t even see the hit at all. But he felt it in his hand. He was feeling half-appealed and half-satisfied. Katsuki on the other hand, didn’t look really surprised or anything. He didn’t react at all at the slap. He was expecting it and accepted it.

“Then tell me.” Katsuki said after a moment of silence. “When was the right moment?”

Silence.

Izuku didn’t feel like he was the one that was supposed to answer. He was the offended party in this, not Katsuki. He had done nothing wrong.

“Should have I told you the first time we met and interacted? When it was not your business nor you had any right to know? Should have I told you when he started our contract? Why? I told you, you shouldn’t get attached to me. I told you our time together was limited. The test was just an excuse. I admit that. I could have seen you again, after the test, presuming I could pass it, of course. There wasn't a real reason I could not see you again. Or maybe I should have kept you away with all my strength, to avoid the problem altogether? I tried. But then… I told myself ‘fuck it’. You were useful and stubborn.” Katsuki’s jaw hardened. “Should have I told you when we decided to deepen our bond? There were so many variables in play… and I know you. You stupid stubborn idiot. You would have forced yourself to spend time with me while treating me like a terminal patient. Well, I have enough of that with my parents, thank you; I didn’t need to worry about you. Why. Tell me why. I’m the one who is gonna die, why do I have to spend my life reassuring others?!” his voice was strained and painful. “And don’t you dare tell me ‘no, that wouldn’t have happened!’”. Bullshit. BULLSHIT. I was supposed to die two months after the end of the test, in April next year. We were not supposed to see each other ever again. Ever again! Was I supposed to tell you? Well, fuck you.
Seriously fuck you!”

They were breathing hard, both into an emotional storm. Izuku’s mind was a jumble of emotions and no coherent thoughts.

“Then you appeared at the test! And I knew I was screwed. I… had no idea what to do. Really. I could either fail the test on purpose… to avoid you on the final days, depriving my parents of the possibility of saying goodbye to me one last time. Or I could have passed the test and… avoid you somehow. I… I don’t know! You… confuse me! Every time you just enter my life and do whatever you want, say whatever you want. It makes me worry about you. You were not in my plan! None of this was part of the plan! I wish it was easy to push you away. I really do. You have always made things more complicated than they were supposed to be!”

Izuku’s anger had slowly transformed into something cold and painful. He was trembling a little and Katsuki was not doing much better.

“Why… you didn’t tell me even during the…” he breathed, but his voice didn’t quite lasted the whole sentence.

“Because it would have ruined everything.” Katsuki answered in a pleading voice, still looking away. “Everything would have been… ruined. Worst. Sad. Difficult. You looked… happy to see me.” his voice broke.

Izuku hugged him forcefully. He felt Katsuki hiding his face in his shoulder and he felt something wet.

Goddamnit.

Goddamnit.

Goddamnit!

It took a long time before they were both able to calm down. They had sat down on Katsuki’s old bed and just hugged, not talking. Izuku didn’t cry, because Katsuki was right, he was not the one that was supposed to be comforted. Katsuki cried a little, but silently, not making any noise. Izuku wondered if this was how he used to do it. Crying alone, silently in his room. It was a solid possibility. He didn’t want to make his parents feel bad and he could not speak. Yes, he could cry out loud… but, Katsuki was always suppressing as much noise as he could, to avoid even the possibility of a mistake. Not that Izuku was ever going to ask him how he was mourning himself. Not even in a million years.

“Can you tell me…” he took a breath before continuing. “Can you tell me what your price is exactly? You said something about your lifespan going up?”

Maybe there was some hope? Maybe it was some strange effect and it could be countered. It didn’t seem like some kind of sickness, Katsuki was always pretty healthy, at least in appearance.

“Yeah, I guess I should.” he said, still hidden in his shoulder. Then he distanced himself a little and sighed. “I need to give something back. For the freedom the people lose because of me, you get it?” he looked at him but soon looked away again. “You saw a part of it in Shouto’s memory right? The fact that his little brother was still looking like a five years old kid?”

Now that Katsuki mentioned it, he remembered thinking that it sounded really weird. Izuku nodded.

“How to explain… They live my life. Every day they live, is actually my day. They don’t age
because they suck my own lifespan out of me to use for themselves. It’s not something they do voluntarily, it’s just the mark. Every person I mark gets to live a part of my life in my place. Every hour... I actually spend five hours of my lifespan. One is for myself; one is for my father, my mother, Shouto’s brother and that random man I marked years ago. None of them has aged a day since then. It’s... an equal exchange. I own their lives, just as much as they own mine.” Katsuki smiled sadly. “The people at the Government... they didn’t exactly say it to my face, but... they said the most efficient way to use my quirk is to give a person a single order and then order them to kill themselves. This way, I get what I need and I don’t pay anything for it. How fun.” he was not amused at all.

“You said...” was it bad to change a bit topic without responding? He was not really sure how to answer him and silence was not the best idea either. “You said people who have a new quirk often don’t know their prices because often it’s an effect that it’s discovered very late... Since when have you known yours? Since before you met me, that is clear, but since when precisely?”

“The very beginning. I told you they made me do a lot of tests, right? There is a quirk, a B quirk, that’s called Life Line, basically it’s the reading of your palm, only it’s an actual quirk, not just superstition. They can tell you the exact duration of your lifespan, presuming you won’t be killed. It accounts for any current or future illnesses that are developing on your body as well. Of course, if you get appendicitis and don’t treat it, it doesn’t count. Same with a flu not taken care of. But things like diabetes or heart attacks, or even dementia... the quirk can predict these kinds of things. It’s normally used for medical purposes, to start heart treatments at the right time and stuff. It’s not normally used on healthy kids, not until they are eighteen and they can decide on their own if they want to know the date of their death. But I’m an exception, being a new quirk and such. It was discovered immediately, my life depleted twice as fast as what was considered normal. And after I marked that other man, my life was depleting three times as fast. I was supposed to live until the age of 96, but mark after mark, I was supposed to die at twenty and three months. Now I get to live until twenty and ten months. It’s kind of a pity that for two months I won’t get to celebrate my 21st birthday but I guess it’s no big deal.” he shrugged.

“So...”

“Yes, I’m going to die in February, a year and five months from now.” his voice was monotone, as though he was talking about a definitive fact.

“There has to be a solution...!” Izuku breathed, still out of breath, his throat was too tight. “There must be a quirk that cancels prices or something, right!!”

Katsuki stared at him.

“Cancel the price...? How would you even come up with something like this? You think people would still pay the price it that was the case?” he looked really baffled.

“Then what about a quirk that gives you mere years to live?!” Izuku insisted.

“Yeah, right. The Eternal Youth quirk.” Katsuki said with sarcasm.

“Really?! It that a thing?!” Izuku hitched closed and Katsuki grimaced.

“Yeah, it is a thing, but it works only on the owner and it only makes you look young your whole life. It doesn’t give you more years to live. I was just joking.” he leaned back a little. “That’s the excuse my mother used to cover for the fact that she was not aging... She told everyone that was her quirk. It’s just a silly C quirk for vain people, nothing too impressive.”
“Well, then something else. There must be a quirk that can help you!” Izuku slammed his palms on the bed.

“You think my parents haven’t searched for it since I was five? Stop making a fuss. I’m sure the two down there have already prepared a banquet for us, to welcome us back. We better go down or they are going to think we are killing each other.” Katsuki jumped on his feet.

Izuku knew that Katsuki’s parents wouldn’t be surprised that this was taking a lot of time. But he took the bait anyway. It was not the right moment to insist for more details. He wanted to do some research on his own first. After all, now he could finally use the internet again.

“You know, I’m half thinking to kill you for real, just because.” he poked at him a little and Katsuki smirked, finally.

They left the room and Izuku took a step forward to walk by his side and intertwined his fingers between Katsuki’s. Normally he would not be so bold, but right now he was tired and silly enough, he could live with this embarrassment perfectly. Katsuki, on the other hand, fought to free his hand all the way to the dining room and lost the battle.

Katsuki was right. Mrs. Bakugou had really prepared a banquet.

After eating, the atmosphere a lot lighter now that they were all making an effort not to talk about the issue anymore, Izuku and Katsuki opened their luggage and prepared to go to sleep. No one even thought about asking Izuku if he was going to leave or stay and Izuku didn’t mention it either. Like he just belonged there. And in a way, he really did. He sneaked inside Katsuki’s bed even before he could try to lie down himself. Katsuki paused for a second then muttered something that sounded like ‘you don’t know the concept of personal space’ but Izuku could honestly not care less.

The following morning he woke up feeling energized and determinate. He was not going to accept this situation so easily, so he was not going to mourn or anything. Absolutely not, forget it. He was going to fight and find a solution, he had a lot of time. If a quirk like Jirou’s existed then surely there had to be a quirk that could help him. He didn’t care if he had to travel to the other side of Earth to find it. But, first things first, he needed to go back home and talk with his parents. He owed them a little bit of his time before starting this new phase of his life. He was going home today.

He ate breakfast with the Bakugou family. Sometimes the two adults would steal a look at him, like they were expecting some excessive reaction, but they stopped after a while. Katsuki instead was acting completely normal, it was almost like they were back to before the test, before he left him for the first time. It was pretty clear he didn’t want to bring up the topic ever again. Izuku was going to, but not now, now they could pretend this never happened.

After breakfast, Izuku borrowed his shower and prepared to leave, Katsuki didn’t question him, he probably could imagine what was going on. Izuku worked calmly, taking his time, he collect everything he had pulled out of his bag last night and placed it inside the trolley again. When he was done, Katsuki walked him to the door. Mr. and Mrs. Bakugou were at work, it was a weekday so Katsuki had persuaded them to not take a day off. He was not going away anytime soon anyway, so they could see each other later. Izuku asked him to tell them he was going home for a bit and to thank them for their hospitality. Then he grinned and told him to not get used to not having him around because this peace was short lived. Katsuki rolled his eyes in response. Izuku started to walk away, but turned before he could reach the corner of the street, Katsuki was still outside observing him. Izuku smiled, he was always so oddly considerate.

Izuku looked at all these familiar sights, from his childhood neighbor, feeling a little anxious. They were surely going to welcome him, he had no doubt. But at the same time he just could not stop
himself from feeling that he was in the wrong place. It was not them, or the place, it was Izuku who changed too much. He took a deep breath before knocking, looking around at the greenhouse that his mother loved so much. His garden had not changed at all. It was decorated with nice and bright sunflowers. Izuku’s mom loved sunflowers. He remembered all the years they would spend, him and his mother, collecting all the seeds from the flowers. It was such a nice, rewarding job. Each flower had so many seeds and they could fill entire trays. And they made that satisfactory noise, toc-toc-toc, as they fell into it. They were even better than corn. Izuku loved dried up corn, his mother would always make a lot of hanged up trails of corn to hang at the wall of the greenhouse.

It was almost noon, so they must be home. They worked both very close by and so they were always back to eat. Izuku was never one of those kids who would eat alone, his mother would have never allowed that. It was one of the reasons why Izuku never really got the hang of this whole independence stuff, they were pampering him too much. He waited for them to open the door. He had the keys, but he didn't want to enter without any warning like this, since they were not expecting him, he didn’t want to give his mother a heart attack. His father was the one to open the door. His eyes fixed on him and he paused.

“Izuku?”

“Yes, hi dad, I’m home.” Izuku smiled.

His father took a moment too long to process the situation, but then he opened the door completely and called Izuku’s mother. The next moments were a huge mess, questions were thrown in the air without a real purpose since no one was letting him answer properly. His mother hugged him and shook him from side to side as if he had survived a war or something. Well, Izuku could technically see why this could be considered the case, but having lived through the test himself, he could not really see it this way anymore. He remembered Shinso, the day he found out about his quirk. The man said that the test was a lot less terrible than what everyone was making it out to be, but Izuku didn’t really believe him. Now he could totally agree with him. If he was to meet a person who was going to take the test soon, he would probably feel like he should say just the same. It was pretty interesting how things were often thrown out of proportion if they were unknown.

When things calmed down a little, he was finally able to describe the test, in bits and pieces, not really going into specifics. They didn’t really need to know the whole thing, he just described the others, the rules and the island. Then he explained how they found a bad element in the group and gained their freedom. He told his parents some details about his new friends but he avoided some of the quirks, like Eijiro’s. And then the moment arrived. He had to tell them about Katsuki. This time he was not going to lie or hide parts of it. One thing was a friend they would probably never meet, another was a person who was probably going to be a huge part of his life from now on. A boyfriend, even.

He had yet to tell them his sexual preference as well. This didn’t look very encouraging.

“Hmm so… In the test there was a classmate of mine… Do you remember, my friend from high school I was visiting all these times?” he had to start from somewhere.

“Yes, I remember.” his mother was frowning a little. “Wait, that friend had a dangerous quirk?”

“Y-yeah, he has an S quirk…” he could feel this train starting to derail from this exact point.

“And you knew? And you never told us?” again his mother, his father was just listening for now.

So… to lie or not to lie? If he was going to tell them he had known all along they would get mad and start to trust him less. But lying was bad… and he had come home to tell the truth. This was a big
branching point. His future relationship with his parents was probably going to be defined by this very moment.

“I… yes, I knew all along. I learned it when I started the school year. I didn’t interact with him for a long while, but then… He just became my friend. He is a nice guy, he is not dangerous, I swear.” he knew he was not supposed to plead them, but he somehow could not help it. He didn’t want them to talk bad about Katsuki. “And we passed the test, together. We came back together.”

“You… knew all along about him having a dangerous quirk… and you didn’t even think about telling us? You don’t think we have a right to know that you were at risk of… what? What’s his quirk?” his mother was getting a little too worked up. His father was still silent.

“…Mark of Submission…” he answered reluctantly.

“What’s that?”

“I’ve read about it in the newspaper. A quirk that makes you a slave?” finally his father spoke.

“Yeah, more or less,” no use denying it. “But there is no danger, he has to mark me before he can make me a slave and of course he is not going to do that! He is not going to mark anyone. And he passed the test, so clearly he is a trustworthy person.” he tried to close this part as soon as possible.

He had not been able to even get close to the dating part and he was already stuck.

“But that’s now! What about before! We had a right to know, what were you thinking?!” she was not going to calm down at all.

Izuku could understand. If he had had a kid, he would probably feel anxious as well, not to mention the whole lying to the parents stuff. But still, what was done was done, it was all in the past by this point.

“Stop it, Inko. He should have told us, but he is free to make as many friends as he wants. I don’t like when he is lying to us, you know that. But technically he didn’t lie, he just didn’t introduce us to his friend. We aren’t introducing him to our friends either.” his father was surprisingly on his side.

“That’s completely different!” his mother protested. “Don’t encourage him to keep secrets from us!”

“Inko, he is going to live in the Task Force from now on… How do you suppose to keep an eye on his life? Getting mad at him is not going to help; he is going to have a lot of A and S quirk friends soon. Let’s let this slide, in a way it was nice that he had a friend with him in the test.”

Inko was sending her husband an accusatory glare, but Izuku was overcome with relief. What he said was absolutely true and perfectly logical. His father had always been a logical person, he reminded him a little of Katsuki. He was a strict, moral-tight father as well, but not absolutely impossible to discuss with. In a strange way, his mother was more difficult to deal at times because she was often too emotional to think straight.

Now for the final stretch.

“Well, anyway, as I was saying… this guy I befriended…” it was so absolutely embarrassing to admit this thing to them. They had had ‘the talk’ once, when Izuku was in middle school, but then they never mentioned anything again. His father was absolutely not the right person to talk about this stuff and Izuku was embarrassed to talk about it with his mother. Especially since she would surely start to worry about pretty much everything. If he had been straight, probably about him not finding a girlfriend or, god forbid, getting a girl pregnant. If he had told her he was gay, she would have
probably started to panic about him being bullied or something. Really, as soon as he thought about talking with her about this kind of things he would change his mind instantly. “He is… my boyfriend now.”

Silence.

They were both staring at him. Way to go Izuku, nice way to tell them. The first to react was his father this time.

“My… oh, I see… Okay.” he got up and left.

His reaction was exactly what Izuku was expecting from him. His back was telling him ‘get that out of my face’. He really didn’t want to discuss about this with him. And it was not because Katsuki was a male, Izuku was pretty sure that if he had had a girlfriend his reaction would have been pretty much the same. He simply didn’t want anything to do at all with his son’s love life. Izuku was almost grateful for that. He was not sure it was okay, but he liked the concept of ‘do what you want as long as you stay out of my sight’ better than ‘what you do makes me anxious, I wish you would stop’. And that was the exact expression his mother had right now.

She was silent because she had no idea what to say that would not offend him. But it was absolutely clear she was not happy about it at all. They remained seated on the sofa for five minutes in silence. Izuku knew he had to say something, but he had no idea what. In the end, his mother got up and said she was going to call her assistant to take a day off work. Izuku sighed and leaned back on the sofa. It could have gone worst. They could have kicked him out of the house. Well, no, he never thought they would do something like that, but still the awkwardness that was drowning the house could be a lot worst honestly. The worst has passed, now they just needed time to adjust and accept. Or ignore, in his father’s case.

He got up and climbed the stairs to his room. He pressed the switch and the light flickered on, his shades were down so the room was too dark to see even though it was daytime. He opened them and looked around, his room was exactly the same as he had left it.

It didn’t look like his room at all anymore, more like the room his old child self had.

Sure, there were things he wanted to take and bring to his new apartment, when he had one assigned to him, but the whole room was like… suffocating. It was like going back home after the end of a cohabitation with a lover. Or the failure of a marriage. An adult trapped into an adolescent room.

But there was his laptop still on the desk. It didn’t have any dust on it, his mother was still cleaning the room, waiting for his return most likely. He felt a little guilty to feel so eager to leave the house again so he could live alone. He opened the laptop and booted it up.

He had a little research to do.

If Katsuki thought he was going to give up on his life, he had another thing coming.

Chapter End Notes

I haven't actually done the math, the lifespan I wrote down is surely wrong, just ignore it, it's not so important that I needed to create a mathematical accuracy :')

To calculate this right I should have decided like... a date for the mark he left on
Shouto's brother and whatnot, it was not worth it.
The only important thing is how it works and the time limit.

Will Izuku's hero complex make his appearance for the rest of the story?
Find out the 17th of December.
Izuku ate dinner with his family in silence.

The awkwardness was still very real, but Izuku’s head was filled with something else. He could not wait for tomorrow to come. He went to sleep really early, since it didn’t look like anyone had anything to say to him. Before he could get into bed though, his mother knocked at his door. Izuku sat on the bed and allowed her to enter. She smiled a little when she did, then sat on the bed next to him.

“Congratulations on passing the test.” she smiled again.

“Thank you.” he answered, a little confused, wasn’t a little late for that? “I’m happy to be back.” he was, but not as much as he had thought.

“Izuku… I’m sorry about before. I know you are not a little kid anymore. I’m just… you know I love you, right?” Izuku nodded. “About this guy… are you… are you sure of what you’re doing?”

Izuku started to feel irritated but he contained himself. It was not the time to lose composure.

“Yes, I am. I don’t know if you ever want to meet him or not, but… you would understand that he is a serious person if you did. He is trustworthy, really smart, a good student, and he is responsible as well. Much more so than me, for that matter. I would like to say he is a nice guy as well, but… I’m afraid that depends on the point of view.”

His mother looked a little confused by the last part, but she let it slide.

“I… will meet him if you want, but… give me and your father some more time. I think… we need some more time to adjust. By the way,” she changed the subject, “your quirk… how is it going with that? Have you learned how to use it? Is there anything we can help you with? What about your… price?”

“I learned how to use it and stuff… You don’t really have to worry too much, I only have absorbed Acid Skin, Light Sphere and a quirk called Shape Shifting. Basically, I can change my physical appearance to someone else’s. It’s nothing too dangerous, don’t worry about me.” of course he didn’t mention about Katsuki’s quirk. That… was not needed. It would not help make him any more trustworthy and it would be pretty much illegal. He didn’t need to risk his parents snitching something by mistake or not. “And my price… I don’t know what it is actually. It seems like my quirk’s price was never found. It’s strange but… maybe my price is simply to pay the prices of the quirk I possess. So it’s probably fine.”

It was probably not fine at all, but she didn’t need to know this either.

They talked a little more about this and that, she asked him to tell her some more stories of his test and Izuku was happy to do so, however he only chose the ‘safest’ ones. After she left, he went to sleep and he woke up early in the morning. He started to prepare his trolley again with things he could need at Katsuki’s house. He was going to stay at both houses from time to time, until they were called to go at the Task Force to live there. He ate breakfast with his parents again, like normal, and then after his father had gone to work he told his mother he was going to spend the day at Katsuki’s house until evening. She accepted, if a bit worryingly. He didn’t call Katsuki to tell him he
was going to visit again, he was pretty sure that he was home. Even if Katsuki’s parents were going to work, Katsuki didn’t have anywhere else to go.

Katsuki opened his door almost immediately. He was in the living room, eating ice cream on the sofa and watching TV. Izuku joined him there and they watched TV together for a while. Actually Izuku had no idea what they were watching, he was only thinking about all the comments he had read the previous night online. Well, now it was a good time as ever to mention them.

“Are you aware of the existence of the quirk Exorcist?”

Katsuki stopped his spoon in mid-air for a moment and then started to eat again.

“Are you aware that the Exorcist is an urban legend?” Katsuki matched Izuku’s fake tone.

“There are dozens of testimonies of people who encountered him though.”

“And zero proof. Just like aliens, and Nessie in the Lake of Loch Ness. Same difference.” Katsuki was really dismissive.

“You clearly did some research on this topic. But this would be the solution, right?” Izuku insisted.

“No. Why would it be? The urban legend,” the sarcasm was clearly there, “is that there is a quirk that can banish other people’s quirks. Basically it makes them disappear and transform that person into a quirkless. But, that doesn’t mean anything in terms of prices. I could lose my quirk, if I were to encounter this Exorcist person, but that would not give me back my lifespan. That’s gone.”

“You don’t know that! Maybe cutting the connection with your quirk, becoming quirkless, would make the whole price invalid!”

“No, that’s stupid, how would that even work. Did you even hear me? The people I marked already spent my life. Exorcizing my quirk would not magically increase some more years in my lifespan. Just let this go.” Katsuki sighed.

“I’m going to search for this person. In any event I’m going to have some serious free time from my work in the Task Force, so I can do what I want right?” Katsuki was not going to stop him, and he wanted to make this clear.

“Oh, sure, do what you want. Too bad though, 90% of the testimonies about this Exorcist are overseas. And as you know you can’t go overseas, it’s highly unlikely they will ever give you permission. But you can keep on dreaming. Whatever.” Katsuki dismissed him.

Izuku elbowed him and bit his tongue, annoyed. He let die the topic, Katsuki knew the Exorcist, for now it was enough. Izuku was going to work on that alone and find him. For sure. Not to mention his secret plan. Izuku spent the whole night thinking. As of now, Katsuki was never going to accept his help but Izuku had the Mark of Submission himself. That had to mean that if he marked Katsuki he would get to live his life instead. Izuku could already feel the headaches proposing something like that would bring so he didn’t say. For now there was time, as long as they could remain together Izuku had the chance of marking him anytime, even if he never tried using the quirk before he was sure he could. His most pressing concern was to search for a solution that Katsuki was willing to accept and keep his emergency plan a secret for later. The most important thing right now was to keep Katsuki calm and still. They could figure out things as they were going forward.

They kept watching TV and when they finished the ice cream they started going through a bag of potato chips. Katsuki never really cared about the correct order in which you ate sweets and salty things. Later that evening, Katsuki’s parents returned and they ate together like the previous day.
After dinner, they went up to Katsuki’s room. Izuku asked him what he was going to bring with him to his new apartment when it was time for them to leave home again, but they were shortly interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Katsuki, Izuku? There is a boy at the door, he said he is your friend!” Katsuki’s mother called them. The two of them looked at one another and then Katsuki opened the door.

“What does he looks like?” Katsuki asked her.

Mrs. Bakugou shrugged.

“He has bicolor hair, red and white. I guess this would be the most noticeable thing I can say about him.”

And it was plenty. Katsuki and Izuku looked at each other again and then they descended the stairs. Shouto was in the middle of the Bakugou’s household living room. When he heard the noise they were making down the steps he looked up and when he saw the two of them he nodded in greeting. Katsuki, by his side, sighed softly.

“What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Sorry, I just wanted to talk. And I don’t have anywhere to go.” Shouto didn’t look perturbed by the poor welcome.

Katsuki started to massage his eyes, sighing again. He gestured towards the stairs and started to climb them again, inviting him to his room. Izuku was a bit lost, but he guessed this was not his house and now Shouto was allowed in, somehow. Shouto didn’t react either way, he just followed. In moments they were all sitting on the floor of Katsuki’s room, around the little table. The silence was stretching uncomfortably.

“So?” Katsuki asked rudely after a while.

“I went back home to confirm that my brother was free and then I left.” he paused a moment. “I’m here now.”

“Yeah, I noticed that part. So, what are you doing here?” Katsuki rested his cheek on his hand.

“I don’t have anywhere to go.” another pause. “Can you tell me why my father forced you to mark my brother?”

“You know his quirk, right?” Shouto nodded. “He wanted to test it. He wanted to test which quirk was the strongest. Why he chose your brother, don’t ask me.” Katsuki intercepted Izuku’s confused glance and explained. “Todoroki senior’s quirk is called Negate. Basically, it’s a quirk that lets him disables a quirk from working. He says ‘I negate your quirk’ and it won’t work no matter what. Well, no, it will still work if the quirk is stronger than his Negate, like mine. So, he tried. He tried to see which quirk was the strongest. Since my quirk is new it’s apparently much stronger than older quirks. He should have expected it… but he took that defeat pretty hard. I have a feeling he thinks that if all the kids of the new generation have a quirk stronger than his he will be fired from his position of Head of the Regulation Department for S quirks. After all that’s the whole reason he’s there in the first place. To be able to Negate us.”

“Makes sense, he had the same reaction when he discovered he could not Negate mine.” Shouto nodded.
“Then what now?” Katsuki returned the discussion to the previous topic fast.

“I’m here to ask for a favor.” he paused for a moment, maybe waiting to hear if he was allowed to or not. “I want you to break my eardrums.”

His… what?

“Denied. Something else to say? Or should I accompany you to the door?” Katsuki didn’t hesitate half a second.

“No, wait! It’s important, I—“

“Without your eardrums you can’t hear the first names and you can’t use your quirk. I know. You already asked me once and I already rejected it.”

Izuku was looking at the two of them feeling like he had stumbled upon an alternate dimension. Why was he always the last one to know things?

“I already asked?” Shouto was confused.

“Well, no. Technically, you’ll ask in the future. You said you asked this to me once already, but the old me would not do it. So you said you wanted to try and ask a Katsuki that was not your friend already. My answer won’t change. If you really want to have your eardrums broken, you’ll have to ask someone else.”

This was the first time Katsuki made a direct reference to the future. Both Izuku and Shouto were a little stunned.

“He said the same thing…” Shouto whispered.

“Who?”

“Future you. I asked him as well.” okay, then maybe only Izuku was completely lost. “He said… not to give up on my quirk yet.”

“Well, he probably knows better. You should do what he says.”

“But…” Shouto’s eyebrows furrowed. “Soon, I won’t be of any use anymore. Every time I use my quirk, a fragment of my soul flies away. The price for my quirk… My soul is not attached to my body, often I ended up in a different place. I don’t know if it really exists or if it’s only in my head. It’s getting worst and worst every time. At the beginning, when I was little, I could see the difference between reality and that place, but now I cannot. I often enter a state of hallucinations and I convince myself that what I see is real, then when I notice that it’s an illusion, I cannot understand what was just a hallucination and what was reality. Soon I won’t be able to understand when I’m leaving one either, so for me there won’t be any difference between reality and hallucinations. Not to mention that my soul is already broken in three parts. When I was little I could hear only two voices in my head, now I fragmented my soul a little more and I ended up with three. I don’t think I can take a fourth. Please, you cannot cure me… but, you can stop me from progressing any further.”

“Can’t you…” Izuku tried to enter the discussion, feeling cold and very much lost. “Can’t you see a doctor for all this? Maybe they can give you some medicine…”

Shouto’s stare was very difficult to sustain.

“I’m not ill. Not truly. For simplicity sake I often say to people that I’m mentally ill… but that’s not
it. My mind has little to do with anything, the cells in my body, brain or not, have little to no relation to any of this. A medicine for a fragmented soul is not in development, I don’t think.” he finally looked away. Izuku was feeling really bad for even suggesting such a thing. “Mine is the first quirk that has its power in something as abstract as a soul... And, for clarity, my predecessors have all tried therapies for mental illness. I’m sometimes under medication as well, but they only make me feel sleepy.”

“How have your predecessors dealt with this problem?” asked Katsuki.

“They haven’t. They both killed themselves when their souls started to split. That’s why I’m saying I can go on like this for much longer. Killing themselves was the only solution they found to make the hallucinations and voices stop. Well, personally I have some doubts. Since our soul is not tied to the body... there is the possibility they are actually still alive, living in that different plane of existence forever. I don’t want to be trapped in there. It all looks normal, until something starts to go wrong and you don’t know what to believe anymore.”

“I see. Unfortunately, if there is anyone I trust, it’s myself. He must have had a very good reason to refuse, especially since the two of you have been very good friends in the future. I’m afraid you’ll have to wait a bit longer. And who knows, maybe Izu’s super secret plan will work. Maybe he will find the Exorcist and save us all.” he concluded with his voice full of sarcasm.

Well, now he was just being an asshole.

“What’s an Exorcist?” Shouto looked at him again.

“Nothing. It’s nothing, forget it, I was just—“

“It’s a quirk Exorcist. I want to use it to make Ka-Four a quirkless person.” he had to keep in mind he still needed to use codenames with him. “If it works, we can use it to make your quirk disappear without destroying your eardrums!”

Now that Izuku was thinking about it, he could actually see three people benefit from the Exorcist. Katsuki, Shouto and Eijiro. If he could find this person, he could help his three friends be lifted from their curses.

“Yeah, see, it’s as I said. He is going to save us all.” again Katsuki was full of sarcasm. “With the power of a non-existing quirk.”

Izuku sent him an annoyed glare and the topic was dropped.

Shouto was invited to stay the night by Mrs. Bakugou, again very excited that his son now had not only one friend, but another as well. The whole thing felt very strange to Izuku, and out of place, but this was not his house, he could not say anything in opposition. The next day, Shouto searched for a hotel close by where he could stay. Izuku had no idea why he was so obsessed with Katsuki, but clearly he wanted to stay close by even though he surely had realized he could not just self-invite himself to live into his house. Izuku was not so sure he was happy with the fact that Katsuki had such a dedicated stalker, but he kept silent. He still had not formulated a clear image of what Katsuki had experienced in the future. He tried to get some information out of him but with little to no luck. Even if they were not inside the Barrier anymore, he was really not going to explain anything.

It was two whole weeks later than they received a letter from the Task Force. It was time for them to move to their assigned apartments and take their place in their new offices. Everyone was assigned to a specific branch of the Task Force, so they were not coworkers, strictly speaking. And of course Aizawa was their temporary supervisor. Tenya called them to tell them that Ochako had passed the
test; apparently, Jirou had appeared and surrendered for her. She had joined him back home just last night. The reason why Aizawa was now free to be their supervisor immediately, instead of next April, was because Jirou’s existence was so extraordinary that he was barely useful at all on the island, all alone.

In Izuku’s letter, it was written that Izuku was assigned to the Extra Branch, number 20, while in Katsuki’s letter he was apparently assigned to the Capturing Branch, number 3. Shouto brought his letter along that day to show it to them. He was in the Collecting Information Branch, number 14, the same as Shinso. Izuku did some thinking about the assignment they had received. Izuku’s made sense, his quirk was indeed an Extra since he could use it in various ways. Shouto’s made sense as well, since his quirk was the most useful in situations while he could spy on people undetected. Katsuki, however, was a bit stranger. Capturing? Katsuki was supposed to capture criminals? How? By marking them?

Izuku sensed that something was wrong the moment when Katsuki opened the envelope and furrowed his eyebrow. He was not surprised, more like frustrated. This had to be wrong, he could not believe that his idea was the right one. Certainly the Government didn’t want to use his quirk to make the criminals slaves, right? Surely.

He didn’t get to ask Katsuki why he was not surprised as the other friends started to call them on the phone so they could meet up and talk about the current situation and the assignments. The organization of the meet up took much longer than it should have with a lot of completely unnecessary calls all over because no adjustment was working. In the end Katsuki was the first one to completely lose his patience, called them all idiots and said they could just meet up at the apartments, since they were going to live in the same complex. It did actually make perfect sense.

The day went way too fast after that, both Katsuki and Izuku had not completed their packing up yet. Katsuki sent away Shouto and then asked Izuku to go home and prepare his own stuff. Izuku was about to propose they packed their stuff together, one at a time, but then he realized. If Katsuki was going to die in a year and a half, emphasis on the if, then it was unlikely he was going to live with his parents ever again. He wanted the rest of the day to bid them farewell properly. Izuku had a sour taste in his mouth, because he had not given up and he was never going to give up either, but he realized that he was being selfish. He was not going to get in between Katsuki and his family. The two of them decided to meet up in front of Katsuki’s new apartment the next morning. In the letter, it said that they had to remain at home until a guy called Tokoyami could pick them up, with all their stuff included, with his Teleport quirk.

A very convenient moving method.

Izuku packed up his stuff all evening, but his mind was elsewhere. He informed his parents as well, of course, of his new address and the Branch he had been assigned to. There wasn’t any big reaction, in the last days home Izuku had felt a growing distance with his parents. Like he could not understand them anymore and they could not understand him anymore, which were both probably very true.

The next day came too soon, Izuku had barely slept at all. Too much excitement and anxiety at the same time. His new life was going to start very soon. His parents had taken a day off work and helped him drag the boxes outside of the house, in the garden from where hopefully Tokoyami was going to Teleport them. The guy in question arrived at past ten in the morning, maybe he had Teleported a lot of the others before it was his turn.

Tokoyami was a dark haired, dark eyed guy with a face that was set into a perpetual frown. He looked a very direct and no-nonsensical type of person. He introduced himself quickly and with only
the basic information, not wasting any time with pleasantries. Izuku introduced himself in the same way and just mentioned his parents, since he was sure that he didn’t want or need any information on them. He just nodded at them in response. The guy observed the boxes for a moment, like he was weighing them with his eyes, and then told him to wait, he needed to make two different Teleport travel to get his all done. He pulled out some capture cloth from his pocket and wrapped it around all the boxes then grabbed the end of the cloth tight and closed his eyes. In the next moment, only his afterimage remained.

Izuku could, with just that, understand a little how his quirk worked. Apparently, he could not move with himself a lot of small, separated objects. He needed to move one object at a time, as a whole. That was probably why he needed to make two separate trip, one for the boxes and one for Izuku himself. Unless he could’ve wrapped Izuku in the capture cloth as well, but that was probably not a very sensible thing to do. Izuku had to wait another five minutes before the guy appeared again.

“If you want to say something to your parents, now’s the moment. I can give you some privacy if you want, but we need to go as soon as possible, I still have to move two other people after you.” he said.

Izuku turned to his parents and hugged them quickly. His father nodded and told him ‘I’m sure you’ll be fine, take care’. His mother hugged him tightly, with tears in her eyes. Izuku wanted to say something to her. Something reassuring and possibly mature and cool but he could not think of anything on the top of his head. And he was feeling too pressured by the heavy atmosphere. In the end, he hugged her again and promised he was going to visit as often as he could and call her. She bargained for him to call her every evening. Izuku felt treated like a little kid again, but he let it slide for the moment. This was a problem he could take care of at a later date.

They exchanged some other words, mostly advice, and then he turned to face Tokoyami. The guy extended his hand, to create the necessary physical contact he needed for his quirk to work, and Izuku took it, like a handshake. He waved at his parents one last time and Teleportation activated. It was the first time he ever Teleported and he wondered what it was going to feel like, in any event he decided it was best to close his eyes. He felt like his stomach had been pulled upward by an incredible force. Well, gravity was a pretty incredible force, so this quirk needed to be even stronger to fight against it. The light beyond his eyelids changed from white to dark brown, which meant that he was now inside. He opened one eye to check his surroundings slowly, cautiously. Tokoyami let his hand go gently after confirming that Izuku was not going to faint, throw up or maybe both, in inverse order. He sighed, releasing the tension and started to actually look around. It was an unknown hallway.

“This is your complex, number five. There are ten complexes in total, all spread around the plaza. This whole section of the city is entirely reserved to the Task Force members to live in. The complexes are more or less divided by age, I live in this one as well since I’m close to your own age, I’m only two years older. If you want to meet someone older than you by five years, you need to go to the complex number four or higher. In complex number six, the members are in their fifties or sixties, so once they are retired, the new generation is going to fill that one instead. Anyway. Your supervisor will meet you in the lobby, tomorrow morning at nine. You are free to unpack and explore the area until then.” the guy searched through his pockets until he pulled out a key. “Here. The others are in the rooms next to yours, you’ll figure out I guess. In any case, there is the map of the floor, there, next to the elevator.” he pointed in the right direction. “Your stuff is already inside your apartment. I don’t know if we will see each other again, considering that I am in the Supporting Branch, number 6, and always around. But anyway, welcome to the Task Force.”

Tokoyami nodded and then closed his eyes, Teleporting again in the next few seconds. Well, that was surely eventful. He opened the door with the number corresponding to the key, and inside he
had a strange sense of déjà vu. The room was actually really similar to the one on the island, minus
the sea outside of the window. He checked that all his boxes were where they were supposed to be
and the plopped down onto the bare bed. He unlocked his phone and sent a text to Katsuki.

-I’m living into room number 252, are you here yet? What room are you in?-

As he was waiting he started to unpack a little, at the very least it looked like the room had been
cleaned recently, he could not find any speck of dust. Katsuki answered while he was putting his
clothes into his new closet.

-254. I’m haunted by the number 4-

Izuku chuckled a little. This message was so Katsuki. No pleasantries and sarcasm. Yep, Katsuki
100%.

-I’m coming over-

Izuku left his room and walked past one door on his right, the door number 254 was slightly open.
Katsuki had probably left it this way for him to enter, Izuku pushed it a little and he found Katsuki
crouched down, searching through a box. His room was already in a better condition than Izuku. He
had arrived here earlier than he did.

“Do you like this room?” he asked, just to chat a little.

Katsuki shrugged. Chatting with Katsuki was never a thing. Should he follow his example and go
straight for what he wanted to know? Well, he was going for it.

“You were not surprised when you received your letter. Capturing Branch? With your quirk?”

Katsuki stopped searching and sighed a little. He got up and picked up a stack of paper from the
already made bed. He handed them to him.

“This is the whole reason why I’m here.”

Izuku tried to read something in his expression but Katsuki turned again and started to work on his
boxes again. Izuku looked down to read.

-Yagi Toshinori Capture Mission Informative-

Chapter End Notes

I’m sure Shouto’s price has you confused... It's fine, you'll understand a lot better in time.
His price is complicated because no one can really study 'souls', not yet at least.

Next chapter is on Christmas Eve, the 24th, have a nice week! :)
“The one and only reason I’m here. They know about my life expectancy, obviously, so I’m basically useless as a long-term investment. Except for the fact that they wanted me to capture and enslave Yagi Toshinori for them.”

“Why you…?” Izuku’s throat was tight and painful.

“Because everyone who catches him dies immediately after. The only way to stop him is either to kill him or destroy his eyes. But I’m different. If I can somehow to mark him, I can keep him alive, uninjured and completely in control. That’s what they want. For as long as I’m alive at the very least.” Katsuki got up again, abandoning his unpacking.

“Why do they want him alive and uninjured?” he tried to gulp.

“Hell if I know. The only thing I can think of is that either they want him as a hostage for the rest of the rebels or they want to make it looks like he changed idea so to discourage them from continuing. Yagi is their leader and the strongest of them all. Or…” he crossed his arms looking outside of the window. “They want his quirk. I don’t know for what, but it’s a possibility.”

“You knew this already… Since when?”

Another one? Another secret he had kept from him? Another one?

“During one of my last examination, before the test, Aizawa passed by. I eavesdropped on him and Todoroki Enji talking. I actually think he spoke loudly on purpose he wanted to let me know, but leaving that aside, he was discussing my chances of success with him. I’m pretty sure they have been planning this operation since at least a year ago.” so yeah, he had kept this a secret from him for months.

“What would they have done if you had failed the test?”

“That would be even better for them. They would still carry out the operation and then they would lock me in prison, probably under mind control. So they would have the criminal and his owner both in one swift swoop. A wonderful win-win situation.”

Silence.

Katsuki was still looking outside of the window and Izuku had nothing to say.

“Do you remember? The time I told you I didn’t want them to know you have this quirk?” Katsuki asked after a while. “I couldn’t tell you under the Barrier surveillance. But my point is… if you tell them… after I’m dead, you’ll take my place. And if it’s not you, it’s just going to be another Wild Card. The Credit Card would not work, for a thousand reasons, so it has to be a Wild Card. Sure, even if you don’t tell them it’s very possible they are just going to order you to absorb it anyway. But in that case I’ll make sure to drag Yagi Toshinori to his grave together with me.” he was too serious to be joking. “But if you had told Aizawa sooner… They would have changed the plan immediately. They would throw me out of the operation and place you in my seat instead. Because you have a lot more years ahead of you to waste on this shit. I’m not going to have that. I’m never going to give them another Mark of Submission, no matter what.” he clenched his fists.
Finally, all the pieces fell into place and Izuku’s anger evaporated.

Katsuki had kept all this a secret because, of course as always, he wanted to protect him. They met inside the Barrier and soon after Izuku told him he had absorbed his quirk. It was obvious Katsuki, the intelligent one of the two, would think all the possibilities first and then decide which one to fear most. Still, there was no way Izuku had nothing to say to all this. No way Katsuki was going to waste his last months on this.

“I’m going to tell them I have your quirk as well. They will probably forgive me, especially if I say I got it right now by accident.”

“No, you’re not, don’t even try.” Katsuki’s voice was warning him.

“You can’t stop me, it’s my own decision.” Izuku stood his ground.

“For the love of—See? And you ask me why I don’t tell you anything. Why should I?! Every time you just go and decide things for the both of us on your own!” he shouted, angry.

“Oh, right, flip the blame on me when you do the same! If you think I’ll accept you wasting the little you have left on this, not to mention risking your life on the mission itself, then you clearly are not thinking straight!” Izuku shouted back in the same way.

“Oh, sure! Better to risk yours instead?! I’m gonna die anyway, it would be a waste for you! You will not be able to talk anymore and you are going to have your life cut in half for no good reason at all!”

“It’s my life, so I can decide for myself, thank you very much!”

“Well, this is my life, so I decide for myself! How about this!?”

“I think, for as much as this is an endearing conversation, you two have reached an impasse. I don’t have much time. Can you come with me and continue this fight later please?”

Both Izuku and Katsuki jumped a step behind when they heard the familiar voice coming from the door. Izuku realized too late that he had left the door slightly open. Jirou Kyouka was standing in the doorway.

“What do you want?” Katsuki tried to contain the rudeness in his voice but failed.

“As much as this mission is not the top of my priorities… This has to be done; it offers an interesting stepping ladder for the future. Who does what is not the important part now—“

“If you are thinking about using your little trick to erase the marks, think again. If we erase his mark after the capture, it would be completely useless. The only solution is to kill him, but I have a feeling the Government will not be very happy about such a personal initiative.” Katsuki crossed his arms, annoyed.

“Actually,” she was completely at ease, like she was used to Katsuki’s attitude, “there is a third solution. If we make the Exorcist erase Yagi’s quirk, neither of you need to keep the mark on him.”

Izuku’s hopes perked up strongly. So even Jirou wanted to search for this Exorcist person!

“Oh my god. Not another one. What’s this obsession with this legend…” Katsuki sighed massaging his eyes.
“Have you met this person, Jirou?” asked Izuku.

“Call me Kyouka. No, they won’t appear for me. But I’m 98% sure they exist. My informant met them in person, and while I can’t use this to find them… At the very least, it’s a start.” they won’t appear for her? “Anyway, I’ve already gathered the others, let’s go to discuss a plan to survive all this.”

“What I don’t get…” Katsuki didn’t move. “Is your long-term goal. I asked everyone in the future, everyone knew you and seemed to think of you as a trustworthy person. But no one wanted to tell me what you are really trying to do. I already know what you want to offer for now, I’ve seen it myself in the future. The point is, why? Why are you so obsessed with me and Izuku?”

“It’s completely useless to talk about this right now. Not to mention that if I am sent away by my quirk before I can say what I need to, it will take me months to find a close enough point in time again. But I can say one thing. I don’t want anything that you two don’t want. Your safety is the very foundation for my plan to work. I need you two. Let’s go now.”

She left without waiting for them.

Katsuki refused to meet Izuku’s eyes, so he left the room first, Kyouka had left a door open for them to join the meeting with the others. When Izuku entered, he had a strong sense of déjà vu. It looked just like the meeting they had the first time she appeared and messed up his life for the first time. Granted, she saved Katsuki and his own life, but still, things had moved too fast and too strangely after she appeared. Izuku was not really sure of what to feel for the girl. She looked nice and helpful enough, but still she was messing up his life all the same.

Kyouka interrupted them before they could start to greet each other.

“Sorry, you can talk and share your stories with each other another day, right now I really need to hurry.” Izuku went to stand in a corner, he was not sure whose apartment this was, but he could not just sit on someone else’s bed. Judging by who was already sitting there, this had to be either Tenya or Ochako’s apartment. “So, I know this is all very new to you and you surely need some more time to get adjusted to all this news… but first, I need to tell you something important.” no one said anything. “Kat—“ she remembered Shouto’s existence and quirk before making a mistake. “I mean Bakugou already has a mission assigned to him and you are going to help him. Soon Aizawa will tell you all about it, but the gist of it is that you are going to make a group effort to catch Yagi Toshinori.”

The room filled with shocked questions. Not that Izuku was surprised. But, a group effort? Sure, he didn’t get enough time to study the informative of the mission or anything, but he was not expecting this to be a collective effort with everyone else.

"Why us?" asked Tenya.

"Because you are all expendable. You are barely anything more than kids, your lives aren't all that important. Your quirks are going to be reborn soon enough if they aren't already. Four's quirk is the only one that have some value here." she answered.

"But then why not chose some better bodyguards!" Ochako wasn't going to stay quiet.

"Because you are..." Kyouka hesitated.

"You are both my bodyguard and my reason to do my best." Katsuki spoke up. "You are basically hostages to make me work as they want. It's too easy for me to sneak past and fail the mission on
purpose. If your lives are on the line I'll have a reason to not fail. And even if I fail... I'm sure they have a plan B."

"Please, I know I’m dropping incredulous stuff out of nowhere, it’s the story of my life, but keep calm. It’s not as absurd as you think, this operation was in the making since quite some time." Kyouka tried to take control of the discussion again. "Only some of you are really needed, in particular they need Kaminari, Iida, Bakugou and Yaoyorozu. Kaminari to communicate orders from a distance between Aizawa and Bakugou. Iida as Bakugou’s bodyguard and Yaoyorozu to cover for all potential needs with Cards. What they want, ultimately, is to mark Yagi and order him ‘keep your eyes closed’. But my idea is a little different. First of all I want help from some of you, to make things run a bit more smoothly, since I already know this will surely fail otherwise. And next, I want to make sure they don’t have actually access to Yagi’s quirk. In other words, I want to both solve the problem and to not create another one."

It took them quite a long time to fully understand her plan. She explained in details about all the quirks they needed and how to use them. She knew all the closest members of Yagi’s escort and she had the map of their hideout memorized. Hers was really a broken quirk; she could easily direct this operation all by herself since she already knew pretty much everything. Then finally, she explained the last part.

“So… you want Four to mark him and then… escape? You want him to… flee from the Task Force?” Ochako was as always very quirk to disbelief.

But for once Izuku was with her. Kyouka really proposed Katsuki to mark him and then flee, away from Japan. Away from the Task Force and the Government, away from everything and everyone.

“Look, I know this is big… But as long as Bakugou is far from the Government’s influence… No one can make Yagi open his eyes again. In other words, this would solve the problem permanently, without killing him. And this is not all, Bakugou and Midoriya have another task ahead of them, they are going to search for a person that posses an Exorcist quirk. This special quirk can eliminate every other quirk, to make people become quirkless. So in other words… what I’m asking is for you to keep calm, pretend to go along with the Task Force mission and propose the changes I told you, then immediately after the mark is placed, both of them needs to go away. Overseas. It’s really the only way. Believe me, I have tried many things already, they all failed. Do you remember the Bakugou you met some time ago? The one from the future? He was the first one I successfully helped escape from Japan, he was free. I know for a fact that this is going to work, you just need to trust me.”

“Trust you… right.” Ochako crossed her arms and her lips were pressed into a thin line. “This is already the second time you asked us to do this. The first time I admit, it worked. We are here, as you promised. But now we are in the same situation again, you are asking us to break a lot of laws and rules for you without an acceptable explanation. Don’t think I feel any particular need to repay you just because you surrendered for me.”

“No, I assure you our interests are all aligned in the same direction.” Kyouka took a deep breath. “Honestly… I don’t want this role. Being a hero was never my dream or intention, but there are times when you just can’t look away from the truth, you know?” her voice was sad and sweet. “You think I’m just coming here, without any warning or right, to ask you for favors. But what you don’t know… is that what I’m doing is for the sake of many, many people. It’s for the sake of Kirishima, because I want to free him from his burden, thanks to the Exorcist.” she turned to face him; he stared back with wide eyes. “It’s for the sake of Yaoyorozu, who doesn’t want her life to be a possession for other people to put on display.” Momo clenched the rim of her skirt in her hands. “It’s for the sake of Bakugou, who is going to die a completely needlessly death if nothing is done.” it was Izuku’s turn to clench his fists, he was surprised and maybe a bit mad that she brought up the subject
like that. He intercepted some stares directed at Katsuki who ignored everyone completely. “And it’s for your sake, or rather for Iida’s sake, because I want to make sure he won’t need to withstand tortures, pain and suffering anymore.” Ochako’s shoulders tensed up. “I’m the only one who can do this; I’m the only one who knows what it’s needed to do. It would have been easier for me to just look away, you know? At the beginning I didn’t even know any of you, so I didn’t care. You died multiple times during my lifespan, I didn’t even notice. I met a lot of people, I saw a lot of things… and I saw what’s going to be, if nothing is done. You don’t have to look at the bigger picture. You don’t have to look at the future. Just look at the guy you love that’s right next to you. If that’s not a good reason enough to fight, for you, then I guess you are free to go.”

Ochako dropped her shoulders and attitude little by little. The room was filled with silence. They were all adults… but they were still kids. Betray the Task Force? Betray the Government? Leave Japan? Didn’t they talk about how difficult it would be for Izuku to find this Exorcist in Japan, with the Task Force breathing on his neck? If it was for Katsuki’s sake…

“What was she talking about? You withstanding torture and pain?” Ochako asked Tenya, the guy sighed loudly.

“I was trained to withstand torture since I was a kid, to build up my pain tolerance. So I could receive more pain without passing out, so I could use my quirk better.”

“Wh—When were you planning on telling me?!” she was barely keeping herself from yelling at the top of her lungs.

“Never. Why would I tell you? So you could go and complain to the Government? So they could send you away as a ‘problematic child’ even before the test? Fat chance.”

“You… stupid… moronic… idiotic… imbecile… piece of shit!” she yelled this time and got to her feet. “I’m going to burn down the Task Force Headquarter and then I’m going to destroy the Diet building brick by brick with my bare hands!”

“Yeah, right, sit down and shut up!” Tenya grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her back on the bed.

A part of Izuku’s mind felt a strange sense of similarity between their relationship and his relationship with Katsuki. Wow.

“Is it true?” Eijiro’s voice came from his corner. “Can I really erase this quirk of mine?”

“Yes, with the Exorcist’s power.” Kyouka nodded.

“Then I’m in. Even though I’m useless, I’m in. Let me join.” he declared.

“Hey, if you are in, then I’m in!” Denki smiled from his position on the floor where he was sitting. “I don’t really get all that’s going on, but hey, you can count on me one hundred percent!”

Shouto didn’t say anything, but he stared hard at Katsuki.

“You are going to die…?” Kirishima voiced Shouto’s question in his place.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Katsuki destroyed any possibility of a discussion. “It’s just my price. That’s all there is to know.”

No one commented, they all had an uncomfortable expression on their face. Izuku could see easily why Katsuki hated to talk about this. If he tried to put himself in his shoes, he was feeling a huge discomfort and need to make them stop staring. He needed to distract them.
“I agree to this plan as well. I want to search for this Exorcist. I was going to do it myself, even alone if necessary, but the possibility of leaving the country and having more freedom is tempting.”

“I don’t mind leaving the country.” Katsuki finally gave his opinion. “But I don’t want to drag other people into this. It’s my problem.”

Of course. Izuku was not surprised at all.

“Yep, it’s totally your problem, I don’t really care.” Ochako was as frank as ever. “But… I think it’s best if there are as many of us as possible. I know, strange coming from me, but strength is in numbers, right?” she scratched her head hard. “At least in this situation. The more of us there are, the higher the chance to dig up some dirt on them. You can’t fight against the whole system alone.”

“Says the girl who wanted to burn the building by herself…” Tenya murmured on her side. Ochako pinched his arm.

“Your side-quest to get this Exorcist doesn’t really interest me,” she continued, “but it can be useful. If we can get this person on our side, we can remove a lot of dreadful quirks from the Government’s grasp… This sounds great. How are we going to keep in contact from overseas though? Can Kaminari’s quirk cover for this?”

“No, no, definitely not! I need to look a person in the eyes to activate it! And I can’t keep the Link for a long while, my eyes dry up too easily. I can only keep a Link for five minutes at most. Once you are too far from me, I can’t do anything with my quirk. A phone would be better.”

“Phone signals don’t reach outside of the national borders though. They get jammed.” Yao corrected him.

“We have to figure something out for sure, but for now I can work as a messenger for everyone since borders never meant anything to me.” Kyouka took control of the discussion again. “While for me it takes an incredible amount of work and time, for you it’s only days, so it should work. But now it’s not the time to discuss that, we have a lot of other planning to do and I’m probably going to travel in time again soon, so you can discuss this between yourselves and tell me your conclusions later. I look forward to work with you all guys.” she smiled finally.

“You really cannot stay in a place for a long period of time?” asked her Momo.

“No, my quirk is new and totally unstable. It works on my energy, or stamina, I think… When I’m energized I get thrown around a lot… for this reason I try to take short naps instead of long periods of sleep… Not that I can sleep for long even if I wanted, the landing sucks, I always fall somewhere and it’s not a very easy thing to stay asleep after falling from two feet high. I can decide when to travel, like to save my life for example, but even when I don’t want to, I still do. If I’m really really tired I have a tendency to stay a bit longer in one place. But still, not long enough. The worst part is that when I lurk in a single timeline for a long while, I get to meet people who already know the future me… and that’s absurd. Because not being a linear human like you all, I can reach a place in time where future me will have already made some connections. It happens often, actually. It’s possible that you have already met a future me, but you would not be able to recognize the difference anyway.”

“You mean that… the girl we met that day when you helped us with the Barrier could be a future version of you?” Momo looked confused.

“No, that was definitely me… I mean, I have already done that, so it’s past me. But surely you must have met a future me at least once. Like for example… right now I still have to go back and disable
the Barrier to make sure Aizawa and the others don’t listen in to your conversation that day.” she jerked her head at Izuku and Katsuki.

Listen to their conversation that day? Izuku took a moment too long to understand, but he did in the end. The day Izuku told Katsuki he had absorbed his quirk the Barrier was disabled for a while. So this Kyouka still had to go back and do that…? Future Kyouka would do that?

“Were you the one who disabled the Barrier that day? How?” asked Katsuki.

“No, not were you, it will be me. I have some laxatives. The male twin has a weak digestive system, it’s rather easy to make him leave his post, if needed. But normally his sister takes his place, so I will need to give laxatives to both. It’s not easy, since they eat separate food precisely to avoid this and I have to be very careful not to get caught while I poison their food… Even where they live, it’s still inside the Barrier, so they can still see me.”

“So… how are you going to do it?” Katsuki asked again.

“I imagine you’ll use the same method you used to get me to them, to modify their memories, right?” Momo was the one to speak up. “You are going to use a Credit Card of the Barrier quirk. If you create a Barrier inside a Barrier, that space will be cut out from the sense of the Barrier owner. It’s a very obscure weak point of the Barrier quirk. Something very few people know. If you create a Barrier inside another Barrier you’ll become invisible and impossible to detect.”

“You mean that they can’t detect a Barrier, if it’s inside another Barrier?” Ochako was skeptical.

“Yes, that’s the trick. Not many people know, but the two use this method to have some privacy from one another. When they want to be alone for a while, they just create a Barrier inside the other Barrier. The people who take the test and their guards are basically strangers, they don’t mind seeing them all day, but the two of them have been together since birth. Sometimes they are fed up of one another, so they create a Barrier to separate their presence from the other’s senses.”

“How do you know all this?” Eijiro looked impressed.

Kyouka gestured Shouto to cover his ears.

“Yuki, the male, is a good friend of mine. Or rather… he will be a good friend of mine. I mean, not of future me, just, in the future, you know like… Ahh, whatever!” she sighed in frustration.

“Anyway, Yuki is on our side. Kaguya is a bit of a trickier one… she is quite prideful. But she is not a bad person either.”

“You know,” Denki scratched his cheek, “your life is a mess girl.”

Chapter End Notes

I wish you all a nice Christmas eve and a merry Christmas! :D
I’ll see you all again on New Year eve, happy holidays everyone :3
Aizawa was waiting for them in the lobby the next morning.

Kyouka disappeared the previous day in the middle of a sentence, just like that. They separated a little after that. Izuku had a feeling that Ochako and Tenya had a big argument afterwards; he could see how the two were purposefully avoiding each other that day. The others looked normal, if a little more serious and on edge than usual. Izuku didn’t talk with Katsuki after Kyouka had disappeared, for once he needed a break from him. Not that he was really mad or anything he just needed… a break. He needed to sort out his thoughts and feelings a little. As always when Katsuki was involved, it felt like a huge weight was dropped on his shoulders suddenly.

The first thing Aizawa did was sharing everyone’s new position in the Task Force. As Izuku already knew, he had been assigned to the Extra Branch, number 20, Eijiro was in his same branch, since he could not do much with his quirk. Katsuki was in the Capturing Branch, number 3, together with Tenya. Shouto belonged into the Collecting Information Branch, number 14, with Ochako and Tsuyu. The last two, Momo and Denki, were assigned together to the Support Branch, number 5. When they realized they were all going to work together with a friend they were all feeling a little better.

Next, Aizawa gave a rundown of the rules they had to follow to not have any trouble in this new environment.

So apparently they had to follow something along the line of an express course to learn all about the vast network in the Task Force from Aizawa, before officially entering their branches. There were branches that were working together all the time, like the Support Branch and the Collecting Information Branch. There were branches that never were supposed to work together, like the Archive Branch. That specific branch needed to have all information only from impartial sources, otherwise, they may record information improperly, due to personal bias. Same with the branch that was working partially with the Juridical system of Japan, they could never come into direct contact with the victims or criminals or their vision of facts could become clouded. Luckily, no one was in one of those branches, so they were still allowed to interact normally. But there were some really strict hierarchies to follow. The Fighting Branches was strictly to follow the lead of the Supporting Branch, at the same time the Supporting Branch was to follow all directives the Collecting Information Branch was sending their way. And yet the Capturing Branch was free to dismiss the three mentioned branches and complete the mission with a pretty high degree of freedom. Izuku discovered that the Extra Branch, the one he was placed into, was the one with the lowest amount of power; all of the other branches were allowed to order them around.

Next, Aizawa explained the hierarchy inside every branch. Every branch had some different kind of superiors; the Head of the branches were for the whole branch, while others were leading smaller groups. The entire branch was kept in balance by a point system, so the leaders were those that successfully completed the biggest number of tasks. It was not based at all on age; it was very possible for young people to lead the entire branch, while older people were still led around like a third wheel. The salary was of course different for every level of points. The Head of a branch was getting an entire piece of property with a house as a reward for their service and fidelity. Aizawa even mentioned, vaguely, that the most amount of points was awarded when a person reported incorrect behavior from other members of the branch. Apparently uncovering and reporting potential
betrayals was very encouraged. Of course, Izuku and the others were going to start at the very bottom of the spectrum.

Then he explained about the working schedule. They had a bare minimum of five hours a day depending on the branch, five days of the week, and then they were free to go wherever they wanted, but they had to always carry the cellphone they were going to receive later. If they were to refuse to answer the phone for more than fifteen minutes, they would immediately be considered traitors and captured. The Task Force could call any moment, day or night, no matter where they were, they had to be available, no excuses, unless they were on the verge of dying or something. In the same fashion, no matter what mission was or where it was supposed to take place they had to go and do their very best. Those with a Teleporting quirk would assist them, but if the mission required them to spend a week on the other side of Japan, there was no escaping it.

The next topic was regarding their daily lives. They were free to do what they wanted, except taking a partner without permission. They were free to go to the city and do things like a normal citizen, even have a side job, but they needed to tell their employer about their availability and be ready to quit anytime. Therefore, in a way it was better to have a hobby rather than a real job. Their identities and quirks were going to be revealed to the nation the next day, so people could be wary of them, if they wanted to. Aizawa gave them advices, he said to stick to the surrounding of the Task Force, where people were used to dangerous quirks and were a lot more tolerant. Of course, they were free to do groceries in the other side of the city, but if they were to cause mass panic the Task Force was not going to help, rather it was going to punish them. In short, it was wiser to just stick around people that would not freak out about the smallest thing and try to keep a low profile.

The thing about the partners caught Izuku’s attention and so he asked out loud what that meant. The man sighed loudly and told he was better pay extra attention because he was one of the most affected by this rule. Basically, they had to submit a form to the Task Force to ask permission to have a relationship with anyone. He said that it was not only for people who had a quirk that was somehow related to the matter, but for literally everyone. There were two major reasons; one to avoid strange synergies with quirks and two to avoid introducing untrustworthy people to the Task Force. The second reason was only in case the person was not already a part of it themselves, like a quirkless or a low level quirk owner. Since they were supposed to work in the most sensible fields of the nation, they could not associate themselves with people whose background hadn’t been checked thoroughly. The Task Force higher-ups would interview and judge any potential partner of theirs and it was a long and pretty stressful process, so they should submit the form only in case they were sure of what they were doing. One night stands and casual relationships were definitely not allowed.

Denki asked how the people in the Task Force were supposed to know if they had one night stands and Aizawa finally brought up the worst topic of all: Trackers.

The Trackers were an entire Branch dedicated to just that. They were number 19, and their one and only job was to keep constant track of every single Task Force member. Aizawa explained that they were going to have a tracker implanted in them the next day and from there their every move would remain registered on their special archives. The Trackers were one of those branches which never interacted with anyone else, to avoid blackmail or corruption. Actually, the Trackers were exceptional in every sense, they were raised directly within the Task Force since they were very small to make sure they never would get an opportunity to befriend another member of the Task Force. They weren’t even taking the test, they were just a different category entirely.

Aizawa then explained how the quirk worked. It was Permanent, no quirk or object could ever remove it, and every Tracker could only follow up to five people and these five were for life. The only way to break the connection was for either of them to die. The Tracker was capable of knowing the exact position of these five people at any given moment and they could create a virtual space in
their mind where they could see a bit of the environment they were currently inside. Basically, they would close their eyes and recreate a black box where the tracked person was in, and they would see, in lines and shapes, the objects around them, but not exactly what they were doing or what they were saying. For this reason, the partners had to pass the selection, because the Trackers could not know for sure what kind of secrets they would partake into.

As the discussion was progressing, Izuku realized something. Aizawa was telling them a lot of details that worked way better if they had been left unsaid. Now they all knew about what to do and what to be careful not to do. He had given them a possibility to fool the Trackers if they wanted. He clearly said they could not hear them talking and only see shapes and lines. Basically, he was telling them how to do secret stuff and not get caught. For example, they could write using colors and talk without fear. Tenya asked why do this instead of creating a Barrier around everyone so they could see and hear everything. Aizawa told them that the Trackers were borderline B quirk, easy to find in every city. Barrier was an A quirk that was so rare they were basically a protected species, they were needed for more important jobs, like the test and protecting the most sensitive places from thieves.

When Aizawa finally left, it was already noon and Izuku was very hungry, he had not eaten anything for 24 hours now. As he was leaving the complex to do some groceries with Katsuki, since now he finally had a kitchen directly inside the apartment, he realized a few other things. First, he could not have a physical relationship with Katsuki even now, outside of the test. The Trackers would immediately report him. Submitting a form to ask for permission was completely out of the question. Katsuki would kill him if he even tried to let them know there was a very solid possibility to make him absorb his quirk and transform him into the next sacrificial lamb. They would not refuse his request, they would probably encourage him. Second, there was a way to remove a Tracker. It was the same method to remove a Mark. Now that he was thinking about it, Jirou even mentioned the fact that they could not put a Tracker on her. This was wonderful news and a great asset to their secret plan, Jirou’s quirk was stupidly broken.

They returned to Izuku’s apartment, but Katsuki remained at the door, not entering.

“What are you doing, come in.”

Katsuki closed the door.

“Listen, let’s not see each other for a while.” he said in a neutral tone.

Izuku froze while he was putting his grocery away.

“What?”

“You heard me. I thought about it. Aizawa knows all about what we did during the test, and he has not reported us yet. And I’m pretty sure he suspects all about you having my quirk, but still he didn’t say anything, he just gave us a lot of advice. He is probably… the only adult on our side, really. He explicitly made sure to tell us all about the rule for having a partner; he is trying to help us. It’s impossible to know how much they will suspect us if we stay in each other’s apartments alone and such. We are already walking on thin ice, it’s best if we don’t add any unnecessary weight on it as well.”

“Y-you cannot be serious! Am I supposed to not spend any time with you right now, when you are getting so close to the end? No way!” it was too unreasonable to be true.

“Weren’t you going to save me?” Katsuki asked with sarcasm.

“I am. I’ll save you. That doesn’t account for accidents though! You can’t seriously be asking me to
meet you only at work!”

“We won’t meet at work that much, your branch is separated from all the others except during emergencies or when your specific quirk is needed. We won’t probably meet at all there.” Katsuki was still perfectly calm, contrarily to Izuku who was starting to get agitated.

“Oh well then forget it completely, no way I’m going to just not see you for months!”

“See what I mean, when I say that you always make things more difficult than they need to be?” Katsuki frowned.

“See what I mean, when I say that you are completely unreasonable half the time?” Izuku retorted angrily.

“I may be completely unreasonable, but at the very least I know where my place is and what I can do and what I can’t. I always know when it’s the right time to take a step back and stop to think. You don’t, you don’t know where to stop. You never knew. It’s charming in a way, it’s the only reason you and I got closer, but it’s annoying all the same. Because of you, I need to think not only about what’s best to do, but about what alternative to share with you, since you never accept anything I decide. Can’t you see how much you add to my burden? Stop making a mess out of everything, not all wars are supposed to be won. Sometimes you need to retreat.”

Izuku felt like crying.

“You really don’t spare me any punches do you?”

“You have been pampered for most of your life; you are used to having people only compliment you and never make you see your faults. I’m not your mother, I don’t have to tell you that you are the most beautiful and intelligent child in the world. If you wanted a nice boyfriend, you should have searched elsewhere because I’m not a nice guy. I think that you are immature, selfish, irresponsible, stubborn, hasty and irrational. And you get immediately mad and upset as soon as something doesn’t go the way you want, like right now. Your worst trait is maybe the fact that you never let go. I love you for that, and I hate you for that.”

Izuku could not contain his tears anymore, he let them fall. It stung too much.

“It’s just because I love you, that I don’t want to lose you.”

Katsuki looked away with sad eyes.

“I love you too and that’s the whole point.”

Izuku sat down on his bed and started to wipe his tears and snot, but they would not stop coming. The more he swept the more frustrated he became, he didn’t want to make a scene, like a little kid, but his grief was just too much. The first time that Katsuki finally admitted to love him and it just had to be in this situation. Izuku had surely many faults, but Katsuki could be a real bastard when he wanted to. Or maybe the gentlest guy in the world, if one wanted to see it that way. Was there a better way to express your love than to be completely honest, even though it hurt like crazy?

“Look,” Katsuki sighed, “I never said we are never going to see each other again, I just meant… alone. We can still meet if other people are around. And if you get the irrepressible need to see me… Just kidnap Shouto and force him to come as well.”

The last sentence was just so out there that Izuku could not contain a strangled chuckle in between tears; it was the strangest sound ever. Like Shouto even needed to be kidnapped, he would jump at
Katsuki stood in front of Izuku and place a hand awkwardly on his head.

“Don’t cry, god, stop crying, I have no idea what to do, I hate it when you cry!”

“You are terrible at comforting people Katsuki.” Izuku chuckled again.

“Yeah, so don’t make me! Anyway… this is only for now, after the mission we will have all the time we want. Let’s just do our best to arrive there all in one piece.”

Not all the time they wanted, only until two Februaries from now. But still, it was better than nothing, definitely better than nothing. Izuku grabbed Katsuki’s hand from his head and placed a kiss on it.

“Can we stay together? At least tonight?” he asked in a whisper. Katsuki hesitated. “What?”

“I was just wondering how high was the risk of them spying on us this very moment.” he answered with a sigh.

“Kyouka didn’t seem to have any trouble speaking yesterday, if she knew our rooms were under surveillance she would have made sure to take us somewhere else.” but he was not going to insist. If Katsuki didn’t want to risk it then this was where it was going to end for the moment.

“That’s true…” he didn’t seem really convinced. Izuku let his hand go, taking his hint for what it was. He could not help the bite of disappointment and hurt in his heart but there was nothing to be done.

“I’m staying, but just for tonight.”

Katsuki’s declaration took him so much by surprise, he nearly missed the blush on his face. Izuku just stared right at him, trying to read his mind. They had been together for a while, outside of the Barrier, but they were inside Katsuki’s childhood bedroom and with his parents downstairs, and with Shouto coming and going, the mood has been far from ideal. Now they were alone, in a different environment and atmosphere, all the blood immediately started to boil in his veins. Suddenly, it was like he could not wait a moment longer.

He grabbed Katsuki’s forearm and tugged him down, catching him by surprise. Katsuki fell awkwardly, trying to miss him and not knock them both over.

“Someone’s eager…” he complained a little.

Izuku didn’t even bother try to answer. He placed a hand on his shoulder and pushed to force him on his back, immediately assaulting his mouth. It had been too long since he had kissed him properly, definitely too long, almost a whole year. This could not stand a moment longer. Izuku immediately asked for access but tugging a little at his lower lip and Katsuki responded by parting them just enough for Izuku to continue his assault. He didn’t waste any time, he met Katsuki’s tongue with his own and he was momentarily distracted by the thought of their saliva mixing together. He felt almost proud of himself for breaking the rule so shamelessly, when had he started being so rebellious?

The moment lasted only until Katsuki completely overcame his surprise and natural awkwardness with intimacy, he immediately started his fight for predominance. With Katsuki, it was just how things were going to go. He had to be the one in charge or he would never be happy, and he was not down for being the one pushed down on the bed either. Izuku was not surprised when Katsuki turned their position in a flash and he was now the one being held down by the shoulders. He didn’t
even try to fight or resist, it was a waste of time, they had a night, he wanted it to matter.

Izuku was okay with Katsuki being in charge, but he didn’t let him chose the pace. Even as a bottom, he had a certain power on Katsuki and he immediately put it into good use. He played with his hair, tugging a little at the strand on his neck and savoring the chill that passed through all his body. The other hand was immediately inside Katsuki’s underwear. He growled in his mouth, protesting against Izuku’s exaggerated aggressiveness, but Izuku ignored him descending without even pause. Katsuki broke the kiss, grabbed his hand, pulled it out and slapped it on the bed, keeping his wrist in place. Izuku ignored that too and repeated the action with his other hand. Katsuki grabbed that as well.

“Will you stop it?!”

“No, why are you still wearing these clothes? They are in the way.”

Katsuki growled again, but then he smirked. He grabbed both his hands with one hand and started to work on Izuku’s clothes instead. Izuku realized immediately that in this position Katsuki was not going to get too far without Izuku’s cooperation, at least not the top. He was waiting for him to release his wrists and let him undress properly but it didn’t happen. Katsuki wasted an incredible lot of effort unbuttoning and pulling down his pants and underwear with only one hand. Izuku was both amazed and frustrated. The stubborn idiot was making this a lot more difficult than it was supposed to be for no reason at all. When Izuku was finally half naked, Katsuki smirked again like he had won some kind of battle. Izuku almost wanted to mock him hard for this idiocy but he had more pressing matters.

He had remained still until then, only because he really wanted to see how much time Katsuki would waste on his stubbornness, but it looked like he had forgotten that Izuku could move his legs freely if he wanted. He hugged him with his legs effectively blocking him down with his weight. Now they were both locked in place, except for Katsuki’s hand. He growled in frustration at Izuku. Izuku had to keep himself from laughing, who was the more stubborn of the two? The answer was that they were both terrible.

“Fuck off.” Katsuki growled at him an inch from his face.

“No, fuck me.”

Katsuki’s blush was memorable.

“I liked you better when you were a shy little runt.”

“Liar, you like me perfectly fine, even now. You are pressed against me, you know? I can feel it.” was it necessary to have this conversation now? There were better things to do.

“If you stop trying to slip your hands everywhere, I’ll let you go.” Katsuki proposed.

“If you stop trying to waste time I’ll let you go.” Izuku counter-proposed.

“I have a free hand, you know?”

“Yeah, make good use of it then.”

“To tape your mouth shut, you mean?”

“But then we would not be able to discuss blowjob logistic, we never get around doing that did we?”
Katsuki dropped his head on Izuku’s shoulder, hiding his face.

“I give up. I give up! You are too much for me to handle. I give up!” after a moment of silence, he raised his head again and stared at him with narrowed eyes. “Wait. You said you got your Acid quirk by kissing someone. Who was it? How far have you two gone? Is this the result?”

Izuku was amazed he had still enough presence of mind to remember this detail. He was not sure if he should try to pursue the possibility of making him a little jealous or just return to their previous task. He decided almost immediately, but Katsuki took his moment of hesitation in the wrong way.

“Oh, so this is how it is, ah? I’m not sure I want—“ Izuku silenced him with a quick kiss.

“We just kissed and mostly because I was a little drunk. After you, no one looked even nearly interesting; no one was capable of making me feel something. So you better take responsibility, like, right now.”

Izuku stared into Katsuki’s red, deep and darkened eyes. They kissed and the time stretched forever and passed at double speed at the same time. They only thing Izuku knew, by morning, was that he had not slept a minute and that he was covered in love bites.

They were the most beautiful marks of all.

Chapter End Notes

This is I think one of my favorite chapters, I think it's perfect to celebrate the end of the year and the start of a new one :P Not to mention I want to celebrate this being my most successful story as of now, with the highest number of kudos I have in a single story, and this is all thanks to you! :D

Next update is at the end of the holiday season, the 7th of January.
“Hmmm so…” Aizawa had just started talking when Izuku yawned deeply.

Katsuki was a lot better than he was at keeping up appearances, Izuku was sleep deprived and he didn’t have the strength to cover for it. He got a side glare from Ochako and turned to the side to finish his yawn properly and shake his head a little.

“The first official mission you are all going to accomplish will be group mission, but before that you'll need to get into the right mindset so during the preparation period you are going to do individual missions. I’ll be your supervisor, so you’ll respond directly to me for everything you do. Before that, we need to get you all tracked, then I can go over the first official mission with you and show you the facilities. You need to know your way around the buildings and the forbidden areas before the end of the trial period. Let’s get a move on.”

They all followed the man out of the residential complex and into the September morning sun. They walked past a couple of buildings and entered a circular one that was a lot smaller than all the others. Izuku immediately understood why as soon as they got past the entrance area, where the guard nodded at Aizawa recognizing him, they entered an elevator and descended underground. Inside the elevator Aizawa was asked a password of sort. Izuku tried, not completely maliciously only a little bit, to steal a glance at him typing, but he was surprised. Aizawa was not stupid, he typed his password on the brail console and Izuku was not able to keep up with his movements, he was too fast and precise. Memorizing some unlabelled buttons was far more difficult than trying to remember a sequence of numbers. Izuku noticed Ochako, Tenya, Momo and Katsuki trying to steal the password as well. He almost wanted to chuckle, they were such a bunch of scoundrels.

The elevator had glass walls and after a couple of feet they were in a transparent tunnel where they could see past the walls. Outside it almost looked like a beehive. Many small rooms were placed in a circular pattern and it was possible to see inside as they were separated from the large central empty space only by a glass wall. On the other side of the wall creating the rooms, Izuku could see people. People sitting, people eating, and people reading. All kind of people, one in each room. It looked like a prison, a comfortable one, but still a prison. Were these people the Trackers? Forced to live underground like ants? It made sense, just like for the Barrier twins; they needed to be removed from society and potential dangers. Still, it was not fair.

The elevator stopped and they left it in silence. The atmosphere was somewhat tense in there, despite the people apparently living without a care beyond their glass walls. A man greeted Aizawa with a nod and showed them to a room that was even deeper underground. They had to descend a spiraling staircase that was directly dug into the rocks. Izuku was starting to feel really anxious. At the end of the staircase was a bare room with only a door in it. They were told to wait, as they had to enter one at a time to privately meet with their Tracker. They could not know the identity of the other people’s Tracker and Izuku was pretty sure they wouldn't want to show them even their own, if only the tracker could be placed on them from afar.

One by one, they entered when called but no one returned. Izuku started to joke to himself that maybe they had been killed or something, but as soon as he completed that joke, even in his own head, he immediately started to be bitten by anxiety; what if it was true? No, it couldn’t be, right? He was so deep into his own imagination that he completely missed his name and Katsuki had to push him forward to make him realize it was his turn. In the time between when he started walking and the
time he was sitting in the only chair of the room, he was already shaking with nervousness. Where had everyone else gone to? Through that door in front of him? The door opened seconds later and a girl entered.

She looked young, younger than him, maybe sixteen or so. She had two braids and a clip with a white flower at the end of each braid. She had a round face and the same hair color of Ochako, he would almost think she was her younger sister.

“Hi.” she murmured timidly. “You are Midoriya Izuku, right? I’m your Tracker, Hagakure Tooru. I’ll be quick, I promise.” Izuku wasn’t sure what the etiquette for this whole thing was supposed to be so he just nodded. The girl stood in front of him. “Remove your jacket and shirt.”

“What?!” his surprise made him blurt out without really wanting to.

“I need to trace your spine.” the girl answered calmly.

Izuku really didn’t want to get undress, even more since he still had marks he didn’t want to show, but he realized that there was no other way around this. He stood and undressed his top half, folding his clothes messily. The girl walked around him until she was right behind him and Izuku felt, more than saw, her finger touching the base of his spine, right above his pants. Then, as if it was perfectly normal, and probably for her it was, she started to trace the whole line, one vertebrate at a time. The sensation was awkward and not completely welcomed, but Izuku forced himself to stay put. When she arrived at his neck he had an uncomfortable shudder. The last sensation he felt was when she stopped at the hairline, the whole line she traced became warm, like she had placed a hot thread in his bones.

“Here it’s done.” she removed her finger and she stepped back.

Izuku turned to look at her, preparing himself to put his clothes on again. When he saw that she was just quietly waiting for him to do something he dressed up again. After he was all set, he tried to think about something to say, he opened his mouth and the door behind him opened, a man entered.

Izuku woke up with a start in a room where the others were sitting spread all over the place.

“Oh, you are awake. All in the right place?” Ochako asked in a very uninterested way.

“Is… the tracker…? They placed it?” he looked at them, they were all pretty calm.

“I think so. A man told me it was done, but I don’t remember anything.” Kirishima shook his head.

“How did I arrived here?” Izuku asked again, hadn’t he just woke up?

“They brought you here while you were unconscious, like everyone else. Nothing too strange I think.” Tenya answered.

The door opened and two men were carrying a sleeping Katsuki, they placed him on the floor. Izuku got on his feet immediately and walked up to him, just to make sure he was unharmed. The two men left without saying anything and Izuku shook Katsuki gently.

“Katsuki?” Izuku whispered and he opened his eyes, they looked a little unfocused for a moment but then they fixed on him.

“What happened?” he sat up in a hurry, almost knocking down Izuku in the process.

“I don’t know for sure, I think they tracked us but I don’t remember anything.” Izuku explained to
calm him down.

“I see.” he frowned. “They don’t want us to know which one it is.”

“What?”

“They don’t want us to know which one of the people in here is our Tracker. They are afraid we would kill them to free ourselves. That’s why they deleted the memory of who it was and how it was done.” he crossed his arms.

“Make perfect sense.” said Ochako, in a bad mood, playing with her hair.

One by one, the missing ones were brought in, all sleeping. Tsuyu, Momo, Denki and last Shouto. Shouto had barely awakened when Aizawa appeared again and guided them outside. They rode the elevator again and the man asked them if they were feeling any side effects, confirming Katsuki’s theory about the deleted memory. Izuku felt like the man had done it on purpose to make them realize. It was pretty incredible how much he was feeling like he could trust the man compared to every other adult in the place.

Aizawa walked away once they were outside of the building, giving them an appointment in the lobby after lunch. They walked back to the complex in silence, the mood pretty down.

“I understand the whole need for secrecy, but I would have liked to know what they did to us and who is the person that has my life in his hands.” murmured Momo.

“Yeah, I would have liked to become friends!” said Denki with his hands behind his head.

Izuku noticed that Shouto was staring at them strangely.

“What’s wrong?” he asked him.

Maybe a side effect?

“What are you talking about? What secrecy?” Shouto asked them.

Had he not understood the situations? Maybe he was still a little confused.

“They deleted our memory of our Tracker.” he clarified.

“No, they didn’t.” it was one of the rare time where Shouto actually made eye contact with him.

They all stopped and stared at him.

“Yes, they did.” Ochako contradicted him.

Shouto looked at everyone, confused still.

“But I remember my Tracker.” everyone’s stared at him in silence. “He said his name was Koji Koda.”

They kept staring at him.

“Oh, right.” Katsuki was the first one to react. “Your price. Your mind doesn’t really work like everyone else’s because of your soul. The reason why you are remembering is because your soul memorized this information and kept it, you got it back after they deleted it.”
Izuku was not sure he was following, but it sounded pretty incredible.

“Oh, now that you mention it, it was one of my voices that mentioned him and then I just…
remembered. I guess they can’t delete my memories as long as a part of me keeps them hidden
somewhere.” Shouto nodded to himself.

“Yes, you told me yourself, in the future. You are immune to any kind of mental manipulation,
you are pretty useful. It’s a pity you didn’t see our Trackers as well. Keep your eyes open, we will count
on you in the future for this kind of thing.” Shouto nodded, apparently happy with the praise.

“Anyway. I think later Aizawa will talk about the mission, you know which one.” the Yagi’s one, of
course. “So try to look surprised. Only I was supposed to know for now.”

They returned to their room, ate, and then they met again in the lobby. Aizawa soon arrived, his hair
was tied into a ponytail.

“So… we have a number of missions already…” he massaged his neck, as always he looked like
even breathing was too much of a hassle. “But the most important one, the one that will define the
starting point into your branch so they can already assess your abilities, is this one.” he pulled out
some papers from a purse on his hips. Tenya grabbed them. “It’s a mission to capture Yagi
Toshinori.”

Everyone except Katsuki started to make some surprised, strange and totally unbelievable noises.
Izuku wanted to grimace at this bad acting but tried to keep his face straight. Tenya raised his hand.

"Why were we chosen for this mission?"

So Tenya wanted the man's version of facts. They already had Kyouka's but it was never wrong to
be double sure.

"Because you are new in this place, it's possible they don't know you and your quirks just yet.
Everyone else we are sure they know.” Aizawa answered calmly.

"And because we are expendable." added Ochako in the back.

"Yes, that too."

Wow, honesty. Silence fell on the room. Aizawa waited a moment and then sighed.

“Yeah, yeah, you are not happy with this mission. Big surprise. No matter what you think, it’s not
like you can refuse. You can fail. Or die. One of the two. I would prefer to fail over dying, I would
lose points if some of you were to die before the end of the trial period… Try not to die, I really need
a raise in my salary.”

Sometimes Izuku had some strange impulses of affections for the man. He just could not decide if
Aizawa cared a lot or just didn’t give a shit. Tenya raised his hand again.

“Would you mind explain a little more about this mission?” he asked him.

“Yeah, I guess I should. So… first thing first, it’s a capture mission, not a killing mission, even if you
get the chance, for some reason, don’t kill him. And try not to get killed either. You know his quirk
right?” everyone nodded. “Mental Breakdown. His quirk activates when he makes eye contact and
he forced his own mental power into others. The pressure of his will is so strong that the brain of his
target explodes, killing it instantly. I mean… he can use it in a smaller dose, to just distract or
paralyze a target, but lately it’s not the way he uses it. Back in the days Yagi was a great, no, an
amazing Capturer. We are talking about thirty years ago or so, I wasn’t even a part of the Task Force
yet. Then stuff happened and he left the Task Force. And then he betrayed us. And then he killed a lot of people. And that’s the end of the story.” he concluded casually.

“Sorry Sir,” Momo raised her hand, “can we get a bit more details?”

Aizawa scratched his head.

“Hmm… this part is not really for everyone to know…” he was lost in thoughts for a moment. “But I guess it’s fine. Thirty years ago, the S ranked quirks were looked at a little differently… There weren’t ‘mass murder’ quirks just yet. Yagi’s quirk itself had never been used that way, they weren’t even sure it could’ve been used this way. His quirk is a little older than one may think, everyone thinks it’s new but that’s not true. In old times this quirk was used only to impose one’s will, like for example to make someone agree with you or to force them into submission… But quirks are in constant evolution. Every generation gets a better handle of the quirk and it becomes a little more powerful, many quirks become dangerous over time. People think they become extinct when new quirks are born, but actually, they only change shape. Anyway… the rules were different thirty years ago.”

“Is it public knowledge?” asked Iida. “I don’t think I ever heard that quirks are getting stronger. I mean the old quirks… I thought the most powerful ones were only the new ones?”

“Yes, the new ones are automatically more powerful. An old quirk will never be more powerful than a new one. However the others are evolving as well, for example when God’s Eye was first born, it could only see the quirk inside a person, not the materializations like dolls. Now I can see the quirks, the materializations and who created them. Not to mention I don’t have to focus on a single person, I can see the whole room at once, something the old owners could not do. Another example is Kaminari’s quirk. In old times it could only create a Link, now it can make specific memories surfaces. Someday, all B ranked quirks will become A ranked quirks.”

“And on top of that we are constantly getting new quirks?!” Denki was impressed. “What’s going to happen in the future if this keeps going?”

“The rules will become increasingly more strict and we will end up in complete chaos like North America.” Aizawa made a vague gesture. “Anyway. Back then, the Trackers were not kept where you have seen them. They were in the general building with everyone else. Yagi… met his Tracker, it was a woman called Shimura Nana. At the time, they were considered normal citizens and she had a husband and a kid. The two became friends. Then, years later, an incident happened and the position of the Trackers was reconsidered to what it is today. Yagi, being the woman’s friend, was convinced to help her hide, so she could stay with her family. However, being Shimura Nana his own Tracker the Task Force considered Yagi a part of the previous incident, where a lot of Trackers got killed and a lot of Task Force members escaped who knows where. The Task Force had just received a big blow, just like the trust that was placed on it. Yagi and Shimura Nana ended up being chased everywhere. We don’t exactly know what happened during that time, but one thing is for sure: he gathered a lot of followers. At first, they were pacifistic, only trying to survive, but then Shimura’s family was captured and sentenced to death. Shimura Nana herself was brainwashed and her memories completely wiped after they got all they wanted to know about the other members of the future ‘rebellion’.”

Aizawa took a moment and Izuku hugged himself, he was feeling cold. What the hell was this story.

“Luckily, I was not in the Task Force yet at the time…” Aizawa spoke again. “Yagi and his most trusted allies broke in, killed all the members they could find and freed the Trackers. It was a major incident as you can imagine, the Task Force lost the 45% of their active members at that time in one day. Of course, the public opinion couldn’t side with the rebellion after that, no matter how much the
rebels could talk about the Trackers unfair treatment. They had ended up in the wrong. I’m not saying they aren’t in the wrong, because they definitely are, but there are some fair points in what they are representing.”

Silence. No one moved.

“Anyway. This is just history, not very known history, but still history. The important point is that we know the majority of the quirks these people possess. They decided to hold this operation finally, after more than ten years, because they now can use Bakugou’s quirk to keep Yagi as a hostage.” everyone sent a quick glance at Katsuki, but then they immediately returned their stare to Aizawa. “It was decided to wait these many years because they didn’t want to take any risk. Bakugou’s quirk is new after all, and he was too little, too difficult to control. A mistake was just around the corner and this was too delicate an issue.”

“But why leave such a dangerous group free for so many years?” asked Eijiro.

“They are not really free. They are confined inside a building and they can’t get out. We can’t get in just because they kill everyone who gets inside, not because we actually can’t. We need a well-planned strategy to get in, there are a number of them inside, and they have surely some spy inside the Task Force. They already know about you, Bakugou, and about our plan to use you to capture him.”

“One thing I don’t get is why you need to capture him, instead of killing him.” commented Ochako.

“The Government want to use him. He is the leader of the rebellion; while the real active members are trapped inside, his ideals are constantly spreading to new people. Many recent crimes were made in his name, even though they never even met him. The Government is hoping to make him their puppet and use him to destroy the very foundation of the idea of rebelling. After all, if the person you look up to as an example suddenly negates everything, the whole thing becomes shaky.”

“Would this really work?” asked Tenya.

“Maybe not. But he is a seventy-year-old man… he is getting close to the end of his life. It’s very possible he will plan a suicide mission soon to use his power one last time, before dying. It would be good to avoid at least that.” Aizawa looked bored of this conversation already.

“And what about Shimura Nana? Is she still alive?” asked Izuku, honestly she was the real victim of all this.

“I have no idea.” yep, the man was definitely bored.

They spent the rest of the day listening to the details that Kyouka already explained. Not only did they match what the time-traveler girl said, she had even more information than Aizawa. Slowly, one at a time, they started to add ‘their’ suggestions to the ones Aizawa had and they create a whole, complete plan. Aizawa was pretty impressed with them, which felt a little bit like cheating but they ignored it, as long as they would make it out of this situation alive it was all worth it. The last thing he did was giving them another file, another mission, one for each of them suited for their individual talents. They were just beginner missions, nothing too crazy like the one with Yagi, but they would be busy for a while.

When the man left, they shared their personal missions, after all Aizawa didn’t forbid it. Tenya and Katsuki were assigned as a backup to another Capturer, they had to capture a drug dealer and stop trafficking of fake paintings. Shouto needed to enter the body of a suspect and search in his house for proof. Ochako was going to create a new doll, they wanted her to pose as one of the most famous
bodyguards, as a deterrent. Tsuyu had a suspect to interrogate. Kaminari was going to support an infiltration mission by sending information from afar. Eijiro was assigned to a desk; he had to do paperwork. Momo had been given the highest priority to start collecting everything she needed for the mission with Yagi, since Credit Card was going to be used.

Izuku was pretty surprised when he read his own mission. He was going to memorize the shape of a company manager assistant and snoop around using his body. As an Extra, he was going to do any kind of mission that was available that no one else was free to do. Like this mission, normally it would be assigned to the Collecting Information Branch, but since no one else was available he was going to step in as a filler. Izuku was already feeling his stomach turning with anxiety. Katsuki had made it pretty clear that he was terrible about subtlety. Not to mention he could not use a doll, like Ochako, he had to go in person. What if they were going to uncover his true identity, capture him and kill him?

Izuku suddenly started to wonder if there was even a chance for him to be still alive for Yagi’s mission.

How was he going to survive, as clumsy as he was?

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone, nice to see you in the new year! :D
In a month it will be a year that I started writing, maybe not this one story but writing in general. I think I've improved a lot in this time and I'm proud of myself. When I started I wasn't sure I would write more than one story, right now I'm about to start writing my eighth... ahaha
Some trivia about my 'writing career' lol:
In 2018 I published 526,000 words, wrote 770,000 words which are divided into 223 chapters of different lengths...
What can we gather from this? That I'm probably crazy xD

See you next Monday :P
“How was it?” Momo joined him at the coffee machine. “Your first infiltration mission?”

“I was so scared, I thought I was going to wet my pants.” Izuku was so tired and stressed that he didn’t even think about minding his language.

Momo chuckled softly. Izuku gulped down all his coffee at once.

“I can understand, you had to go in person and with a body that’s not yours, it’s a difficult mission. They went down hard on you, giving that mission to you without even training you on how to impersonate someone else. Shouto at least just had to search his house, not his workplace where everyone knew the body he was impersonating. So, was your mission successful?”

“I got some of the documents they wanted me to look at… I confirmed some of the accusations but one of the papers wasn’t like the one they told me to memorize for proof, so I had to steal it to give it to experts. They were not happy about this because it was not a clean job like they had hoped for.” Izuku sighed.

“I see, don’t worry too much, that’s their problem. You are safe now, they can’t catch you and do something to you. The others in the branch are going to cover for it somehow, and if you found the proof they wanted then there is nothing to worry about. You did good, they were unfair to you in the first place.” she comforted him gently.

“How was your mission?” he changed the subject, he was still a little too stressed to talk about his mission rationally.

“I got the Electric Barrier Credit Card that they needed from me for something else more urgent. It wasn’t so difficult, she is part of the Task Force, I just had to show her my permission.” Momo shrugged a little. “Next is Tokoyami’s quirk that I need. It’s going to be easy as well since he is another member. The last one, the most important one, is going to be a bit of a challenge.” she looked a little worried about going to meet that person. “I never knew,” she snapped out of some thought suddenly, “I had no idea that since my quirk is less powerful than yours… I can’t create a Credit Card of the quirks you have absorbed. It’s so weird.”

They had tried. She tried to create a Card of one of Izuku’s absorbed quirks, but even though all the conditions were met, she still failed. The Task Force even called someone from the Archive to record this discovery. Momo’s quirk was so rare they had never managed to test this before.

“Do you want me to come with you? They didn’t assign me a new mission yet.” he proposed to ease her worries a little.

“I would like to bring you along, but I can’t… It’s already pretty irregular that they are letting me in, you are not necessary, so they don’t want you there…”

“Are they going to manipulate your memories as well?” he was worried of this one eventuality.

“They are going to erase some of them for sure… like the position, the prison is supposed to remain hidden from everyone. They are either going to knock me out until we are already inside or they are going to erase all my memories of it. They can’t cancel the encounter itself though, or the contract
will be considered void. I don’t really want to meet him…”

“Well, luckily we don’t need to know anything about the prison. So even if you forget where it is, it’s not a terrible thing.” he tried to light up the mood.

“No, as long as they don’t search through my memories. There are things I don’t want them to see.” she looked a little guarded.

“Are you talking about…” he wanted to ask if she was talking about her time travel, but it was best not to mention that inside the Task Force building. “Kyouka?”

“Yes, that too.”

That too? He somehow got a feeling he was not supposed to ask anything else.

Time passed fast, they were all taking some personal lessons with Aizawa about various aspects of their positions, they needed to grow a lot, the mission for the capture of Yagi was supposed to be the last one before they would become full flagged members, they needed to know everything else before that. September and October flew by, Izuku almost didn’t notice. He was constantly in and out of some mission, when he was not he was taking a personal lesson or visiting his parents. His mother would often call him at random times to complain about the lack of news and ask him to visit. He was spending some time with the others, but not as much as he would have liked. Momo was still waiting for the right moment to visit the prison, when they would give her permission. Katsuki and Tenya were training together, both needed to be as ready as possible to fight. Ochako was searching everywhere she could for information about the Exorcist, but nothing had turned up yet. Kyouka didn’t appear again.

Izuku missed Katsuki greatly.

Sure, they were seeing each other almost every day, in one of the hallways or in the lobby of the complex, but they weren’t spending any time together at all. They would just greet each other, maybe say three or four words about a mission or something and then both they would go their separate way. It was a blessing that he was always so busy and tired or he would’ve already become impatient out of his mind.

A person that was making Izuku a little worried was Denki. His price was to not have any barrier in his mind, protecting his thoughts, and he was working together with a lot of Mind Readers. It was scary to think what they could see in his mind, but Momo tried to reassure him. She and Kyouka had already thought about this particular problem with time to spare, during the time travel they had prepared for it. Well, prepared was a strong word, after all they chose the same solution both for the Barrier owner and for him: Memory Manipulation Credit Card. The day before they first entered in their own Branches Momo had worked on his memory, deleting everything that could link them to any crime. She said she made his memories consistent with the one he had given to the Barrier owner, Yuki. Izuku had asked Denki if he wasn’t upset about having his memories toyed with but he said he didn’t really care, as long as everyone else would still include him and help him when things were not making sense for him anymore. Nedelessly to say Eijiro promised to take care of him. Izuku was still a little worried, Momo was not a professional, she could have missed something, but he knew they were making their lives more complicated because of him and Katsuki, so he really needed to shut up and trust them in silence. Nothing happened for a long time, so Izuku was reassured.

In November, finally, things started to move. Momo left for the prison for four days and they were all very worried until she finally came back all in one piece. There was no telling what she would have to go through to get in there, so it was possible that she could even get discovered for treason and
captured. The only person that was not so worried was Tsuyu, she said she was keeping an eye out and if something had happened to her, she would have known. Izuku was not sure of what she meant by that. But Momo returned and she had accomplished her mission. She had been able to get Minoru Mineta to agree and give her permission to use his quirk. The night she returned, everyone tried to ask her what she had seen in there and if she remembered anything at all. She said she didn’t remember any specific detail about the prison itself, only the cell Mineta was being kept prisoner and the fact that he looked a lot less lively than she ever remembered Haru being. She even said he had a male body, but she had no idea who that person was; she had never seen that body before. It was a pity they could not have sent Shouto in her place, since he was capable of retaining his memories. They even debated on that possibility, but Momo in the end decided that Shouto could not impersonate her in a convincing way and this was too delicate a matter to take so lightly.

The next day when Izuku left the complex to go to work, he was together with Momo, Tenya and Eijiro. An expensive back car was parked a few feet from the entrance. Leaning against it was a young man in a black suit with really lacquered hair. He didn’t look especially handsome but not ugly either, he was kinda mysterious, his suit and hair made him look more silly and out of place than anything else. They all gave him a glance but Izuku was not worried, if he was there with a car it had to mean that he was allowed to be there, whoever he was.

“Hey Momo!” suddenly the man spoke up with an annoyed tone. “What are you doing, pretending not to see me?”

Momo stopped with a troubled expression, but then she covered it up with a mask.

“I saw you, Sir.”

“Then why you didn’t stop to talk to me?” he took a step toward her with his arms crossed. “I don’t like to be ignored like this.”

“I thought we weren’t supposed to make it public yet?” she was definitely troubled.

“Last week we talked to your father, he already agreed, we even have the papers almost done. By now it’s already a sure thing, so as of now you are officially my fiancé, I’ve come to pick you up.” he looked impatient to leave.

“Where are we going…?” Momo looked really ready to turn and start running, but she was keeping herself in check.

“I don’t want you here. Together with these…” he gestured vaguely at Izuku and Tenya, “people. They are not safe, we don’t know what may happen to you here, do we? Me and mother are already waiting for you back home, the room is already prepared for you. I’m sure your father won’t mind sending all your things over. The wedding is in spring, we have a lot of time to know each other. Let’s go.” he extended a hand to her.

She didn’t take it.

“I have work to do here…” she tried to defend herself weakly.

“Yeah, I already know that. But I spoke with your superiors, they said it’s fine if you work from home, after all you are not needed on the front line, you can only get hurt there, and we don’t want that. You can keep making your Cards and they will send people to you, this place is not fit for you anyway.” he dismissed her.

“No, I have a mission that—“ he didn’t let her speak.
“Oh, that? They told me and let me be frank; I don’t like this at all. What were they thinking, sending you to the prison? With all these criminals? Don’t they know how valuable you are?” he shook his head a little.

“I want to do this mission, it’s important to me.” her voice was a little more impatient now.

“Well, I don’t want you to, so you’re not going.” he said in a matter of fact way.

“You don’t own me.” Momo’s voice was harsh.

“Actually I do. I paid your father a lot of money, where do you think he found the money to—“

“Sorry Sir, I think she doesn’t want to come. Maybe you should drop this for now?” Tenya intervened.

“Who do you think you are? Absurd, mind your business!” the man barked at him.

“This is my business, Miss Yaoyorozu is my friend, and we have work to do now, I think you better go.” Tenya had still a very calm tone, Izuku was pretty impressed by his cold blood.

“I don’t think you know who you are talking to. You may be her friend and I’m her fiancé, who is most important?”

Tenya was opening his mouth to respond when Aizawa appeared from somewhere behind them.

“Sir, it’s surprising to see you here. Do you require something?” he asked with a subtle sarcasm.

“Aizawa, I’m here to pick up my fiancé, tell your protégés to go to work and leave us.” the man ordered.

“Yaoyorozu is one of my protégées, and right now we have an important mission ahead of us. I’m sorry Sir but without her expressed consent you can’t bring her anywhere.” Aizawa addressed Momo. “Do you wish to be excused from the mission?”

“No, I don’t. I wish to take part in it.” she answered immediately.

The man clicked his tongue quietly, maybe he was not feeling so courageous now that an adult was present. Aizawa was a really trusted member of the Task Force and he had capture tape. Yes, the man was rich and the son of a very important person, so surely he would not pay a single yen, let alone been incarcerated, even if he were to kidnap Momo right in front of this many witnesses. However, he would be forced to explain all this to many people and make this matter probably public. Apparently, he decided it was not worth it.

“Alright, do what you want, take part in the mission. But if something happens to you, I’ll have your head Aizawa.” he sent a glare in his direction, one that Aizawa probably didn’t even see since he was wearing his goggles, and entered into the backseat of his car.

“Are you alright Yaoyorozu?” Aizawa asked as soon as the car engine came to life and the vehicle started moving.

“Yes, thank you for your help, for a moment I thought I had no choice but to follow him.” she answered sighing.

“You always have a choice, even if maybe you don’t see it now, you’ll see it eventually.” he turned to face Tenya. “Thanks, I saw that you tried to help her, I appreciate it.” Tenya bowed a little. “Now
let’s go, the mission is going to take place next week and we still have some details to figure out.”

The following week their individual missions were put on hold. They were holding meetings about the mission with some other members of the Task Force. They all learned how to use the Credit Cards, Momo created a whole bunch of Teleport Cards to give them to practice with and to use in case of danger to flee. The Teleport quirk was easy to use; it was a B rank quirk with only one condition. In order to use it, it was necessary to have the most detailed mental image of the place they wanted to Teleport to. If the image was not detailed enough, it was possible to appear some feet away from the target; of course, there was the possibility to Teleport directly inside an object, or a wall. That was a possibility that no one wanted to personally test, since it would be instant death. Well, maybe not instant death, if only a part of the body was to conpenetrate with an object then they would need to cut it off to save the rest. Again, no one was eager to test this.

The most surprising thing was that Momo suddenly declared she was not going to be a supporter, she wanted to take part in the mission directly, in person. Of course, that immediately got all the higher-ups yelling with indignation. This time Aizawa didn’t even try to help her, she fought her battle all by herself, and she lost. They didn’t give her permission but secretly Momo told him she had no intention of remaining behind, she was going anyway. Izuku discussed with her if it was too dangerous and she answered that as long as she was shifted into someone else, only Aizawa would be capable of seeing the difference and he was not going to snitch on her.

Another person arrived halfway through the week, Yuki, the Barrier quirk owner. They needed a Barrier for the mission, and he volunteered himself. Apparently, he said he wanted to take a break from his sister and right now the test consisted of looking after a girl that didn’t even exist and the Observer wasn’t even there anymore. So basically, there they were both wasted. Kaguya, his sister, decided to use the break to make a trip to the hot springs she never had the chance of visiting before. Izuku saw him for the first time in his life, the mysterious Yuki. He was young, it was impossible to determine his exact age but he had to be in between his twenties and thirties, he had black hair and black eyes, which was a bit disappointing since Izuku imagined someone called ‘snow’ to have white hair. But he was incredibly pale, surely because he never had the sun shining on his skin. He had big square black glasses as well, not to mention he was so short that Izuku could tower over him by a whole head. Next to Tenya, he looked like a middle school kid.

The reason why they needed a Barrier was because Yagi had his own Barrier around the building. They wanted to use the weakness that Kyouka already explained about the Barrier quirk. They wanted to create a Barrier inside the Barrier to move undetected inside. They were going to divide into two groups, the one outside, the Supporters, and the one that would infiltrate, the Fighters plus the decoys. The Supporters were Shouto, Denki and Aizawa. The Fighters and decoys were Katsuki, Tenya, Ochako and Momo. Tsuyu and Eijiro were completely useless, they had no useful application for this mission, so they were supposed to be there only for emotional support or something. Denki already said he totally needed Eijiro’s support to survive the day. He was exaggerating as usual, but it was not that big of a problem.

And then there was Izuku.

Izuku was supposed to use his Shape Shifting quirk to become Katsuki and create a decoy, one of the many. The people in the Task Force were sure that Yagi knew Katsuki’s appearance, so it would surely work.

“Hey Izu.” it was the day before the mission, the first week of December, and they were all inside Denki messy and colorful room. Normally they had stopped using their ‘code names’ but with Shouto present it had become custom to just use them, it was easier since everyone was already used to them. “I was thinking… are you okay with this?” asked Denki.
“Okay with what?”

“Four marking Yagi. I still don’t understand the whole thing about his price, but wouldn’t the mark make his life even shorter? It’s already short right? Are you okay with this?”

Everyone stared at him, Izuku felt that everyone had thought about this, but no one had the courage to bring it up with him, Denki was not one to dance around matters, however. He wondered for a second if he had brought this up only now because he had reached this conclusion only at that moment.

“No, I’m not okay with that.”

He never told them he had absorbed Katsuki’s quirk. It was his last secret. For this reason they weren’t aware of the fact that he could, potentially, take Katsuki’s place in this mission and mark Yagi himself. But that would mean to have his own life cut in half, his voice forbidden and it would make Katsuki very useless for the Task Force, considering how little he had to live. Izuku was still wondering why they hadn’t ordered him to absorb it yet. Or maybe another Wild Card. He could see why they wouldn’t ask Momo, Credit Cards of this quirk were useless since it worked for only an hour and it would take two hours of the user’s life. A Wild Card, however, could replace Katsuki completely and with a lot more years on his back to spend uselessly like this. Not that he was going to give them this idea, Katsuki already made it clear that he would prefer to die than to let them have someone else absorb his quirk. But still, there was something strange in all this.

The others looked at each other, not sure of how to react. Izuku could understand. They were scared he was going to do something stupid to make maybe the mission fail or something.

“Don’t worry, I don’t intend to ruin the mission or anything. I know that Yagi has to be captured, whether his cause is just or not. And if you are worried about Four, thank you, but I’m absolutely positive I’ll get to meet the Exorcist and free him.” he tried to sound as firm as he could.

Everyone nodded. More out of courtesy and reassurance than because they actually believed it was possible, Katsuki rolled his eyes, the only ones that nodded because they were actually convinced were Shouto, Eijiro and Denki.

“Then tomorrow is the big day, I recommend a lot of sleep and rest, you all need to be focused on the job and ready to escape at the first sign of danger.” Tenya got on his feet and stood at the center of the room, putting on his best leader act. “We practiced a lot with the Teleport Credit Card and with everything else; we all know each other quirks and weaknesses. We don’t need to complete the mission at all costs, your safety is top priority. Even if we start with a low amount of points, I think we will survive, it’s not like we are starving here and we are too young to have a mansion all to ourselves. Don’t rush and don’t risk it. Let’s all meet again after the mission, safe and sound.” he presented them with one of his rare smiles.

The meeting was disbanded after that and everyone left the apartment except for the owner. They wished goodnight to one another and dispersed down the hallway, Izuku and Katsuki didn’t talk, they just walked together toward their doors. Katsuki’s was closer. Should they separate there? Katsuki opened it and looked back at Izuku for a moment. Izuku smiled a little and Katsuki entered, closing his door behind him.

Izuku took a deep breath and opened his own door, preparing himself to meet the person that was inside.

Chapter End Notes
I don't have much to say, I'm working hard on this story still, I hope you'll appreciate the direction this is going to take, but who knows? Thank you all for reading and commenting :) 

See you on the 21 of January.
Mental Breakdown

The room from where Aizawa and the supporters were going to watch them during the mission was dim, illuminated only by the strong light coming from the huge two monitors. For now, the two monitors were just showing the building from the outside, using the camera placed outside, to spy on the resistance base. Later, a girl with a quirk that transformed mental images into a video would connect minds with Kaminari to show everyone what everyone was seeing directly. Everyone was already there, tension on their faces.

The first thing to do to prepare was to connect them all with an extensive net of Links. Kaminari was going to connect them all, one at the time. Then they had to move out from there fast, it was already 10pm, they needed to be out and about before midnight. Katsuki stared down at ‘his body’ or more accurately at Iida’s body. He still was not comfortable trusting someone else with his body, even if it was Iida. He trusted Iida to some extent, compared to many other, but still, his quirk was too dangerous to be given to people at random. He looked at the other pacing around the room.

His own body was now inhabited by Iida’s soul, since he was the most able fighter of them all. He was going to remain like this until midnight, in two hours the best outcome would be for Katsuki’s body to be in front of Yagi, so he could mark him himself after the souls exchanged again. Iida didn’t know how to mark people, or more precisely he didn’t know how to control his quirk, so it really was best to time this as perfectly as possible. Shouto was there, looking a little lost like usual, standing in a corner and meeting eyes with him from time to time. He was just waiting, his role had already been fulfilled, Katsuki said his own name to return back into his body after midnight, during the operation. Considering Shouto’s mental problems, no one even tried to propose for him to be on the front line. Katsuki was grateful for that, he didn’t need that distraction and worry today. Next were Kirishima and Kaminari, the former was there just to support Kaminari. The operation was supposed to last at least an hour, probably two, so he had to keep his eyes open for that amount of time to let Aizawa communicate with them as a whole and singularly as well. Good luck with that, he didn’t envy him at all. Uraraka’s body was already napping on a couch on the back. She was inside a doll with Katsuki’s shape. Hers was one of the decoy they were going to toss in there. Since it was a doll, the girl was actually not risking anything and it was for the best. Not to be sexist, but he was feeling anxious, making girls taking hits in his place. Not that he was thinking they were going to punch him, surely they weren’t that stupid, but any quirk that could attack at a distance would work wonders on him. Then there was Izuku taking Katsuki’s form using Shape Shift, being a decoy as well. Yaoyorozu was nowhere to be seen, Asui was just observing and trying to ease their nerves. She was, unfortunately, completely useless but Katsuki was happy about it. He didn’t like the idea of them forcing her to Shape Shift into him and fight as well. Yuki, the Barrier person, was there as well just looking at everyone with his bright black eyes.

Katsuki listened in boredom to the supervisors of the various branches talk and talk. There were a whole bunch of them today; giving him endless dumb advice that he was not going to take. He knew what he had to do better than anyone, but he could feel the tension in the air, this was definitely a very important mission for them. When it half-past ten, the talks were finally cut short and the moment to create the Links came. Kaminari whined a lot when it was the moment to wear the special band that was purposefully created to keep his eyes open. He stopped only when Kirishima took his hand, he was wearing his gloves of course. Then one after the other they looked each other’s in the eyes and said their ‘feelings’ for the other. It was a very ridiculous and embarrassing process; Katsuki didn’t even want to be present for it. The two, Iida and Uraraka, confessed their love, in a way, Izuku just said something positive about everyone, Shouto answered ‘you are fine’ about everyone and Kaminari said he liked everyone. Then when it was his moment, the first one that locked eyes with him Shouto.
“I like you.” he said.

“You are okay, but I don’t feel the same.” was the only answer he could offer him.

Then he said, “You are kinda annoying,” to Uraraka, “You are not bad,” to Iida, “You are too loud,” to Kaminari and last he looked at Izuku.

“I respect you.”

This was pretty much the only thing he could say, it was true so it had to work. He hoped no one was going to question it. The last one was Aizawa and everyone said he was a good supervisor, to their surprise he returned the compliment without hesitation. Wasn’t he always complaining about them? When all the Links were functional his mind was invaded by a mass of stupid thoughts coming from people all over the room. He felt like he was going to have a headache soon.

“Please, let’s start. I don’t want to keep my eyes open more than necessary!”

“Alright kids, we are all ready, be careful and come back in one piece.”

Fast they all Teleported, Tokoyami took them all directly so they would not waste a Credit Card before the start of the actual operation. The guy wished them good luck and then Teleported away. Everyone looked at each other, gathering their courage. The only person that was not connected by the Link was Yuki, the guy needed to maintain the Barrier while walking to keep an eye on his surrounding, he didn’t need that distraction as well.

“Please hurry!!”

“Shut up Kaminari, we are risking our lives here!!”

Katsuki grimaced, Uraraka’s voice was even worst drilling directly into his brain. He ignored the next lines of banter the two were shooting at each other and focused on what was in front of him. Yuki closed his eyes and released a long breath, the Barrier expanded from his skin like it was a round, second transparent layer. Katsuki felt his scalp prickling, even the temperature raised as if he had just entered a greenhouse. Now they could enter the Barrier protecting the building, hidden inside a smaller Barrier.

The building was, surprisingly, in the middle of the outskirts of the city, it looked like one of the many abandoned factories in the area. Well, originally it was indeed exactly that, but one would expect the secret base of the worst villain of the nation to be a little more… intimidating. But Katsuki knew better than to let appearances deceive him by now. Yuki walked slowly, intertwining his Barrier with the other one inch at a time, creating something like a doorway in for them. Izuku started to run, entering the building and disappearing from view immediately, as part of the plan. They could not stay out in the open too long, so the others followed Yuki on the opposite direction that Izuku took.

“We are in.”

“What about you Midoriya?”

“I’m fine, they are going to spot me at any moment. I’ll distract them but they will expect you to be here as well, I’ll tell you as soon as they start chasing me so you can send out the second decoy.”

“Roger that.”

Katsuki hoped the first decoy was going to get out of there all in one piece as soon as possible. It was
supposed to bring out all the outer guards so they could reach the main entrance undetected. One piece of information that Jirou gave them was the fact that a wall of indestructible concrete closed all the other entrances. The only way to reach Yagi was to go there directly from the main entrance. All the other hallways and rooms were for the grunts to live in.

The first decoy worked, they were able to reach the entrance without alerting anyone, but they met the first enemy guarding the door. The Barrier was almost transparent, so they were seen immediately. Now it was his time to act. He had trained with Iida and even used his body for days, he learned how to use his quirk perfectly. Iida had been particularly impressed by how fast he had been able to learn how to control it, but Katsuki reminded him that he had trained his control ability since he was a kid; even if the quirk was different, he was the most suitable for using a new quirk. He had been the first one to learn how to use Teleport as well. Instead, what they trained for all these days was actually Katsuki’s pain tolerance. Katsuki had never been touched by anyone except his parents and Izuku, so no one ever punched him or hurt him in any way. Izuku had slapped him once, but that was bearable, a fair trade for Izuku’s pain. He spent the last few days basically getting punched and kicked by Iida, so he could give the pain back, and now he was a decent fighter. Not anywhere near the level of a professional fighter like ‘his seniors’ in the Capturing Branch, but decent at least.

Katsuki sprinted toward the guard leaving the Barrier, logic was telling him he should keep his distance because he was not sure of what his quirk was, but he didn’t listen to it. Jirou said this man, in his fifties with a swollen belly, was capable of creating flashes of light that would confuse the enemy. Logic was telling him to stay away, Jirou on the other hand, said to get to him as fast as possible before he could start to blow into his joined hands, which would cause a chemical reaction that would create the flash. He decided to trust Jirou. He didn’t know the girl personally, but the time he had spent in the future told him that everyone looked up to her and trusted her with pretty much everything. That doomed future without Izuku.

He grabbed the man’s arm before he could form the container for the chemical substance and elbowed him in the throat making him cough out his substance uselessly. Next, he shoved him against the wall the man was previously leaning against and kicked one of his leg making him fall in a mess on the floor. He turned his arm around and grabbed the other one as well, tying up both with a piece of capture tape he had in his arm pocket. The other three had finally reached him and Uraraka’s doll pulled out a taser she used to stun the man before he could call for help.

“Alright, good job, for your first capture. Now you need to divide into two groups.”

“Okay Mr. Aizawa.”

“Midoriya, how are you doing, are they still following you?”

“I’m—“

The flux of thoughts was disrupted, they could vaguely feel alarm flowing thought the Link.

“Midoriya, if you are in danger Teleport away.”

“I can—“

Once again, the sentence was interrupted mid-way. Kaminari intervened.

“I’m going to enforce the Link with Izuku, you are going to see through his eyes, if you are in a dangerous spot right now say it, so I’ll exclude you from the enforced Link or you’ll lose your sense of reality and forget where you currently are.”
No one said anything; Uraraka spoke up out loud to Yuki, asking him to keep an eye out for new guards. Katsuki was uncomfortable about this enforced Link and so was the person who was going to share his vision. Everyone picked up on it like a collective mind and they started to question them in the background but as soon as the enforcement happened, it became very easy to ignore them.

The first thing Katsuki saw was a stone wall and he felt a chill of cold.

“Are you underground?” asked Iida.

“I-I think so… I—I’m…”

“Wait a moment…” Uraraka.

Katsuki sighed mentally. The cat was already out of the bag. There was just no way Yaoyorozu Momo was capable of keeping her identity a secret with an enforced Mental Link. Her sense of identity was too strong to be ever mistaken for a male and Izuku as that.

The others heard his thoughts, of course.

“Wait a moment, what’s Yaoyorozu doing there and why did you know, Bakugou, and where the hell is Midoriya?!” Aizawa unleashed his stern voice.

Katsuki hurried to answer before they could read the answer directly into his mind.

“I knocked Izuku unconscious so he would not take part of the mission. He would’ve done something stupid otherwise.”

“You can’t stop me, Aizawa, I’m already inside right now. I took Izuku’s place from the beginning.”

“You gotta be kidding me Momo, your father and fiancé are going to kill me!”

The use of her first name, coming from a Mental Link that was working at thought speed, was somewhat interesting.

“No, if you don’t tell anyone. The only people connected with the Link are my trusted friends and you, no strangers. No one will tell. If you keep it for yourself it’s fine.”

“Are you threatening me?!”

“No, but I can if I must.”

Katsuki felt the shock running through all of them like they were one, but they were soon distracted by the yelling of Yaoyorozu’s chasers.

“Teleport out of there immediately, this is an order, you are not a fighter Momo!”

“Alright, alright, my task is already accomplished anyway.”

They saw through her eyes as she chose a random room and shut himself in. She breathed a sigh of relief when she confirmed that she was alone. She released her Shape Shifting returning to her usual self and grabbed one of the other Cards in her possession. As she put the Teleport Card in her mouth, a man appeared from nowhere, passing through a wall.

“Who are you?! I was chasing after the Bakugou kid!”

Yaoyorozu didn’t answer, she just activated the Teleport quirk.
The Link with her became distorted as she was teleporting and Kaminari evidently decided to release it because Katsuki barely realized that now she was standing in the same room they all were.

Before the mission started, they had to think of a solution for the Barrier. Obviously, it was not possible to Teleport from inside a Barrier to outside of the Barrier, not without the owner’s permission. So, even with a Credit Card, she was still stuck inside the Barrier of Yagi’s ally. But it was a different story if she had the permission of the owner. Again, it was a little loophole of the Barrier: since the two Barriers were intertwined, she just needed permission from at least one of the two owners. Yuki opened a branch for her to enter and then closed his Barrier again recreating a closed space from where she could Teleport away. That was the solution.

A bit too crafty and based on luck for Katsuki’s taste, but it was the only way. The Barrier was such a pain in the ass as a quirk in general.

Now that the first decoy was out of the picture Kaminari cut the Link with her definitely, Katsuki just got to hear a little of Aizawa’s lecture to her before returning to reality. So the situation now was the following: they were in the main entrance, Yagi surely already knew someone infiltrated but most of the guards were now running in circles underground. The three of them had to keep going, remaining under the Barrier protection as much as possible. Yuki, in the meantime, was to make the Barrier larger and larger as they were going, so to keep their escape route always open. Katsuki had already left the Barrier for a brief moment; Yagi surely was going to send more guards in their direction soon.

And that was when Katsuki was to become the second decoy.

They ran down the hallway. The map they had memorized was pretty good, better than the one the Task Force had. It was almost as if Jirou had the opportunity to map it herself. Suddenly three guards appeared from a side hallway and shouted to alert everyone else.

“This is my stop, go, I’ll keep them busy.”

“Be careful, try not to get captured until midnight, it’s 11:25 right now.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Katsuki abandoned the three behind and brute forced his way through the guards. Now the next decoy was going to be Uraraka, she had to protect Katsuki’s real body for as long as she could with the doll. The doll did not feel pain, so the only way to destroy it was either to use a quirk that could destroy materializations or to attack her mentally, forcing her to retreat to her real body.

“Does this have to go on for much longer?! I’m going to die!!”

“Shut up Kaminari!!”

Katsuki punched one of the guards in the sternum, annoyed by the obnoxious voices in his head. He took a sucker punch, but he barely stopped moving, his training in pain tolerance worked wonders. Now he had all the pain he needed and if possible he was going to memorize more. He started to touch all the guards he could, more kept coming. He was keeping in mind the list of guards that Jirou gave them, there were only a handful of quirks he had to be very careful about.

One of them was the Phasing quirk, the one that made it possible to pass through objects, the one that almost caught Yaoyorozu. Another one was a quirk called Acupuncture; it shot tiny, almost invisible needles that could paralyze nerves. The needles were so tiny and quick that it was impossible to see or avoid them, he would probably not even notice if some were already on him. In preparation, he
told Iida to wear a long sleeved shirt. The last quirk he had to be wary of was the Spider Master. This person was capable of controlling any spider mentally, like pet slaves. He could use them both as a spy method and to create spider webs made with a super sticky substance that could slow him down. Not to mention the tiny, poisonous spiders. He luckily didn’t have a phobia of spiders, but still he didn’t want them to crawl all over him.

One of his natural enemy appeared, the Phasing quirk. The bald man appeared behind him, from a wall. He tried to punch Katsuki, and he decided to take it, it was one of the only way to get to him and Katsuki was grateful he was giving him the opportunity. He was starting to think that this man was not really good at using his quirk, when suddenly his punch passed through him, catching him off guard. He lost his balance a bit and got a punch from another direction from one of the grunts who were still on their feet. Katsuki quickly focused on the point of contact and sent all the pain back, the grunt fainted immediately. Now in the hallway left standing were only him, the Phasing bald man and two grunts. Katsuki knew he had to take care of the small flys first and then the other one later. He tried to grab one of them but the Phasing man slapped him, or more precisely made his hand pass through his face. Even though Katsuki knew it was a trick he really closed his eyes for a second or of reflex. He was hit from behind with something really hard, something metal probably. He turned partially, seeing one of the grunt recovering an iron ball. The place where he had been hit on his back was hurting a lot; it was definitely going to bruise badly.

“Iida, Uraraka, based on the maps you’re starting to get close, soon you’ll be attacked, be careful.”

Katsuki clicked his tongue, he didn’t need a distraction right now. He avoided another move coming from the Phasing man just in time and faked an opening for the grunts to strike. Both of them were clearly long-distance fighters, they weren’t getting any closer. It was a problem because Katsuki had only a weapon for long distance; poisonous darts. He didn’t want to waste them with a Phase quirk nearby. He waited and endured, the bald man finally tried to attack again, this time Katsuki didn’t move, letting himself get hit. He ignored the pain and immediately activated Iida’s quirk at the point of contact between his face and the man’s fist. The man screamed and jumped back. Unfortunately, the contact had not been long enough to stun him, he had been a little slow, but at least it distracted him enough that he could grab him himself and do the rest.

The Phase quirk owner fell on the floor. Now that he was no longer distracted, he jumped forward and caught the two remaining grunts, they fell down immediately. Katsuki strapped his capture tape around everyone and then took a breath. He focused a little more on the Link and he could see Uraraka and Iida fighting with the person with the Acupuncture quirk, it turned out to be a woman. He checked down on his wristwatch and it said it was 11:49. It was almost time for the switch. He started running, in the meantime he could still make himself useful but taking out of the picture someone else.

“What direction should I take?”

“First right, then third left after that.”

He followed Aizawa’s directions and saw the three of them in the distance, they were still fighting, Uraraka being the one to throw punches around since Iida could not touch with Katsuki’s body. It was too big of a risk to let a novice handle his quirk. The girl looked perfectly capable of handle herself, not that he was really surprised. Iida at some point accidentally spilled the fact that she was his sparring partner. With the doll of a male body that could not feel pain she could do whatever she wanted. After confirming that he was going to only be a distraction there, he decided to go back a turn and take right instead. He wanted to find the Spider guy and take care of him before the change. He ran for a while, a little worried about getting lost, he was getting a little too far from the Barrier. Katsuki stopped, the fight between the others and the Acupuncture lady was finished, and he was
basically just wasting time far from the Barrier. He didn’t want to put Iida in needless danger. He started to make his way back when he suddenly felt a spider web hitting his face. He quickly swept the sticky substance from his face, before he could be blinded, but now his right arm was completely covered and he could not touch it again or his left hand would be stuck there as well.

He had not found the Spider guy, but Spider guy found him. Well, now he was free to run back closer to the Barrier, the guy would follow him for sure. He could not get inside thought because that would discourage him from attacking and he would change his prey, not even the spiders could pass through a Barrier. Katsuki couldn’t get inside anyway, unless he asked Uraraka or Iida to ask Yuki to open a door in it for him. He hoped that Kaminari was doing his work properly because Iida’s body was fucked otherwise.

“Yeah, I’m doing my job properly! You think about how to do yours!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

He had almost forgotten that he could hear him. Almost. He smiled a little when he heard Kaminari complain about him in the background of his mind. The Barrier was invisible, but Katsuki remembered more or less where Yuki had placed it, so he stopped and turned with his back towards it. He could not see spiders anywhere but they had to be somewhere. He decided to activate Pain Memory all over his body in a precautionary measure; spiders should feel pain as well, right? This way he was not risking a bite of poison.

He finally localized the quirk owner; he was clearly peeking from the last corner with only a bit of his face visible. He looked young, maybe a little older than him. For a split second Katsuki wondered if he was a new recruit or a child of one of the others trapped in there. Both possibilities were very likely. The age was pretty consistent with his second hypothesis, but he hoped to be wrong. If he was correct then the guy had never actually seen the outside world, no one could leave from there. In that case he was, in Katsuki’s opinion, not really a rebel, only a hostage. Nevertheless, he needed to get his job done. For Izuku at least. It was 11:56, only four minutes left.

This was quite the problem, how to force a long distance fighter to close combat? His only weapon was his body and the darts, he didn’t have anything else to use. He couldn’t use any other Credit Card either, he needed to preserve them for later, and in any case they were hidden inside his original body’s clothes, not on Iida. Suddenly he had a thought, was the guy controlling the spiders by connecting with them? Because if that was the case, then it was just like the Link. With the Link, he could feel a little of everyone else’s pain and they could feel his. If that was the case, then what about the spiders’ pain? Maybe he had the right idea when he activated pain Memory on his entire body. The spiders were probably going to die from pain, since they were so small and the pain of a lot of hits dealt to a man was a lot, but honestly he couldn’t really care less about some dead spiders, he could live with that.

Hunting for spiders in a semi-dark hallway was really a lot of fun. Or more precisely it was not fun at all, it was only frustrating, he had only three minutes left and the guy maybe realized his plan and was disconnecting himself because he was not making any kind of progress. What was making Katsuki even angrier was the fact that he kept finding himself inches from a spider web, and yet no spider was visible anywhere. The hallway was getting increasingly difficult to navigate; both his palms were getting covered with a spider web created by an invisible spider. There was something wrong in the whole situation. He really should have found a spider by now. Another thought hit him, at only one minute to midnight. There was a quirk on Jirou’s list called Diversion. Katsuki had researched that quirk in the Archive, since he had never heard of it before. It was a B ranked quirk, a rare one. It was used to make other people unable to see something they were focusing on by creating a mental distraction as soon as the person was to land his eyes on the thing. In other words,
if Katsuki, who was searching for spiders, were to see a spider, the quirk would make him see something else instead, a diversion. What if all these spider webs were actually…

When he felt his very soul pulled out of Ida's body and launched upwards, he realized that it was midnight, he had been too slow. His ascent stopped and a violent descend started, making him fall directly into his body, jolting him awake.

“Ah, welcome back.” Uraraka-doll noticed the exchange.

Katsuki immediately focused on the Link.

“Iida, there is the Diversion quirk that’s helping the Spider guy. You don’t need to focus on the spiders, focus on something else, so you’ll be able to see them.”

“Got it, leave it to me.”

Katsuki returned to focus on the present, trying to understand where exactly they were in relation to the map they knew.

“We are near, only two hallways to the place where Yagi lives.” Uraraka answered his unspoken question.

So it was almost time to confront the final boss and his minion. Katsuki had played enough RPGs with Izuku to make stupid analogies like that, he shouldn’t have let him corrupt his scientific mind like this. He turned to address Yuki.

“You stay there, in that corner, you can’t come into that room, Medusa would have an easy time with you.” he ordered him and Yuki nodded.

“Alright, proceed. Iida, after you catch the other two come back, be careful everyone.”

Now that Katsuki had Aizawa’s permission he started walking, following the girl. They found another guard, but it was a Mind Reader according to Jirou, so they just walked up to him and Uraraka used her taser again. In the meantime, they followed absentmindedly Iida’s fight, he won easily after he was able to actually see the spiders and follow them to their owner. Uraraka stopped before the last corner.

“Remember, we are outside of the Barrier right now. In that room there is the Barrier user working for the enemy, the Medusa guy and Yagi. We can’t meet eyes with Yagi, we can ignore the Barrier person since he needs to focus on that, he can’t fight. But the one we must be more careful of is Medusa.” she reminded him needlessly.

Medusa was not his name, but his name was irrelevant so they were just calling him by his quirk name. Medusa was Yagi’s personal bodyguard and right arm, his second in command. His quirk was almost as bad as his, which was probably the reason. Medusa was a very old quirk that was becoming stronger as time passed. This quirk was used to petrify objects or people, to do so he needed to create a circle with his fingers and look through it. For this reason he was a little slow compared to Yagi in killing. He needed to follow the movements of his target while standing still, and if the target was far away it was even more difficult to focus on it as the circle was pretty small. Yagi just needed to meet eyes with his target, he could do it even while running. Medusa could kill, but he had to petrify places like the neck, where the blood was flowing to the head. The heart worked too, but he had to focus on that spot for a while before he could reach that deep into the flesh.

Yes, it was dangerous, but fighting him was not impossible.
The plan was pretty basic, they had created a doll with the precise intent of using it against Medusa. They had no idea how the doll would react to Mental Breakdown, but at the very least they knew that petrifying a doll meant nothing. She could just return to her actual body without problems. For that reason, she was the one that had to knock him out of the picture, not Katsuki, he couldn’t risk it.

“I know, let’s go already.”

Uraraka turned the corner first, her face filled with determination. This was her time to shine. Katsuki remained a little behind, observing the fight unfolding from behind. Medusa was already in fighting mode, he knew they were coming and was already prepared, with his hands already united in a circle. Katsuki’s doll was quite fast, she was changing directions rapidly to avoid being targeted. Katsuki left the scene with his eyes and found Yagi. He immediately turned his stare back on the two, but he had seen what he wanted to see. Jirou had been right. Yagi was indeed very, very old, he was sitting on a pile of rugs that looked only vaguely like a throne but it was not even close. The man was skinny and full of wrinkles all over, including the skin of the arms. His hair was a mass of casual length blond-white strands and he looked like he was almost unable to move from where he was.

Jirou had said that he had contracted a very bad case of pneumonia last year and since then he had been very weak and he wasn’t leaving the room at all. The rebels, she said, were all aware he would die soon, but the Task Force wasn’t. For that reason, she said it was useless to catch him alive. Of course they had kept it a secret, they didn’t need them to change their plans at the last minute, they had planned all this for too long to give up now. Anyway, Yagi was still pretty dangerous even from his position. Yagi started to speak calmly.

“Ah, so the Task Force has finally decided to retrieve me. It’s been a while since last time I had something to do with them directly. You must be Bakugou Katsuki. I read a lot about you in the papers my guys have brought me. The Task Force must love you; your quirk is perfect for them to keep everyone disciplined. Have they made you mark everyone yet?”

Neither Katsuki nor Uraraka answered. Uraraka was getting closer to Medusa inch after inch and Katsuki was still waiting in his corner.

“What do you think? You like the Task Force and how it handles things? Your quirk is not that different from mine, I can impose my will on people and make them bow to me. I’ve spent a good amount of time in there, I know everything about the people that are leading this nation by now. I know many things that you don’t. You think you are capturing a dangerous criminal right now, but look at me… What do you see? I’m just a trapped old man. You think they are afraid of me? No, that’s not it, they are afraid of freedom. What they oppose with all their might is the possibility of letting people decide what they want to do with their lives. They are not afraid of me, you or anyone else. They are just afraid of our minds, of our potential. They want us all to think only what they want us to think. We are all just tools for them, we are not even considered people.”

Katsuki took a step forward, he was sure Yagi knew he was the real one anyway, no use in hiding or hesitating.

“Are you trying to get me to join your ‘rebellion’? If so, please, spare your breath since it doesn’t seem that you have much left. What do you want me to join exactly? This farce of an organization? You think I’m blind? I can see you clearly; you are not what everyone thinks. You are not a glorious example to follow. You are just a drowned sewer rat.”

Uraraka’s doll had an arm and a piece of its chest turned into stone, she was getting too close and so the targeting was becoming a little too precise. Luckily, she wasn’t feeling pain. Katsuki made his way to Yagi, Jirou had assured him that he could not get up no matter what, so he was safe as long
as he avoided his gaze. He focused on his skeletal hand, rested on his stomach.

“Your rebellion is just a pathetic excuse. Everyone thinks you have a lot of people under your wing, that you are the leader of a very large and powerful group, that’s why people on the outside romanticize you and your cause. But look at this place, you don’t have medicine, you can’t even save yourself. True, all the people that are not able to fight are hidden in the basement, away from here, but still how many people have you really gathered in this dump of a place? A hundred? Fifty? Twenty? You are here, hidden like a coward, while the people who believe in you are getting hurt and being imprisoned in the name of a rebellion that barely exist at all. How does make you feel? To be doing the same as the people you hate? You are fueling their ignorance and make them fight and hurt for you, while you do nothing. Once, you were really a symbol, you were really a hopeful ideal for the future, but no more. Your time is up, this is not your fight anymore. I don’t want to join anything like this.”

Yagi remained silent for a little while then smiled.

“I see, so you have plans of your own then. Well, your quirk is more useful than mine is in that regard, you could reach farther than I could’ve ever had. But isn’t that abuse of your power as well?”

“I have no idea what are you babbling about. I’m not here because of you, the Task Force, or even the ‘greater good’. I’m here because the guy I love just won’t shut up otherwise.”

He had reached him, he was standing right in front of him.

“Bakugou, I’m almost completely turned into stone, I need to retreat now, I can’t help you any longer. You got this?”

“Yes, you can go now.”

Uraraka threw her doll body full force against Medusa, causing him to fall on his back because of the excessive weight. That moment was all he needed. He extended a hand forward, ready to touch Yagi’s face.

“Toshinori!” both Medusa and the Barrier guy screamed at the same time, but it was too late.

Katsuki jumped back with all his strength.

In the space he had just abandoned, now were Jirou and Izuku, the real one. Izuku had his hand already prepared, a dull sound resonated the room when his palm connected with Yagi’s cheek in a slap. A black mark of four fingers appeared on it and it was as if the time had been frozen for a moment. No one, not even the ones on the other side of the Link, reacted. And then Izuku spoke.

“I want you to keep your eyes closed, no matter what, until the end of your life.”

Yagi’s eyes closed, and it was done.

The Barrier guy and Medusa finally understood the situation and both prepared to fight, but Katsuki was faster. He knocked the Barrier guy unconscious pretty easily with a punch while Jirou grabbed Medusa and sent him away, to a little trip into time and space just like Katsuki had been sent off that one time. In moments, Jirou, Izuku, Katsuki and Yagi were the only left.

“So...” Yagi was the one to break the moment first. “Who are you, young man?”

“He is the stubborn guy I love.” Katsuki answered in his place, Izuku smiled a little.
“Ah… A Wild Card I assume? *How peculiar.*” he started to chuckle.

Katsuki had no idea what it was that he found so funny, but he didn’t care. He walked up to Izuku, standing right in front of him.

“Are you alright?”

Izuku pulled out Katsuki’s notebook.

-Yep-

Katsuki smiled sadly. The situation had been completely reversed. When they first met, Izuku had a dormant quirk inside of him and Katsuki was the dangerous person that marked people and couldn’t speak. Now, Katsuki was the one with a dormant quirk and Izuku was the one that could not talk.

Katsuki barely heard Aizawa and the others freak out on the other side of the Link. Yes, this was a surprise for everyone, Izuku and Katsuki kept this a secret even from them.

-We don’t have a lot of time, we have to escape from here before the Task Force is sent here to deal with us traitors. We broke every kind of rule possible. They will be here shortly-

Katsuki nodded, he noticed a refreshing silence in his mind. Kaminari had cut the Link before Aizawa could catch their next step. If he ever was to return to Japan alive, he had to remember to thank him.

“I’ll miss your voice.”

Izuku hugged him.

-I know-
Izuku and Katsuki were standing inside Shouto’s room, he was watching them discuss in silence from a distance, on his bed.

“I already told you a million times, absolutely not!” Katsuki insisted.

“And I’ve already told you a million times, I won’t let you mark Yagi, I’m going to do it!” Izuku retorted.

“Absolutely, a hundred percent, no. I won’t let you waste your lifespan on something so stupid, you are not marking him!”

“Well, Kyouka agrees with my plan, I don’t need your permission! And you’re really a fool if you think I’m letting you waste your precious lifespan. We already have a very limited amount of time to find the Exorcist; I can’t have it cut in a half!”

“So what are you planning to do exactly? To come with me and mark him in my place? Your role is being the first bait, Aizawa is going to notice immediately that you aren’t where you are supposed to be.”

“No, Momo talked to me, she said she wants to take my place as the first bait. This way I can avoid taking part in the plan.”

“And then what? If you don’t come with us you can’t pass through the Barrier. You don’t have a Credit Card for Barrier, do you?”

“No, Momo will try to collect Yuki’s quirk before the mission, but that’s not what I plan to do. I talked to Kyouka, she said that the person who will mark Yagi needs to have their Tracker removed before then. After the mark is placed, that person cannot move in time again or the mark will be erased, and that’s not what we want. We both need to remove our Trackers before escaping, so the person doing the marking has to make a little trip in time before the crucial moment. And so my plan is revolving around that. Since I need to travel with her anyway, I’m going to appear back directly in the Barrier, right in front of him and mark him in your place. She said she could do it.”

Katsuki hesitated a moment, looking away.

“Is this the way we did it in the future she already saw?” he asked in the end.

Now it was Izuku’s turn to hesitate a moment.

“Yes, we did it this way.”

“The other me accepted this shit?” he gritted his teeth.

“Please… have some faith in me. If… I can’t save you, I promise I’ll ask Kyouka to help me erase the mark and so I’ll only lose a year and a half. It’s an acceptable compromise, right?”

Katsuki sighed loudly.

“You are completely absurd. I can’t believe how stupidly stubborn you are. No, wait, I can.”
Izuku chuckled softly.

“Thank you.”

“I haven’t accepted yet.”

“No, I guess not. Thank you.”

“Tsk. Shut up.”

Izuku hugged him, ignoring Shouto’s stare in the background. Katsuki sighed again, returning the hug.

“You won’t be able to talk anymore.” he said.

“I know, it’s fine, you’ll be with me after we escape.”

“You’ll be lucky if I don’t ditch you somewhere random. You can’t speak at all, let alone in another language.”

Izuku chuckled and snuggled him on the neck.

Tsuyu closed her Book of Memories.

“Thank you Tsuyu, I wouldn’t have been able to do all this without you.”

Tsuyu turned toward her bed, Kyouka was sitting there swinging her legs a little.

“It was a pleasure, reading a good story is the best pleasure of my life, and this looks like the best story ever. I still have questions though. This all worked out in the end, Izuku and Katsuki are on their way, but I wonder why these two specifically. You travel through time, I don’t know what you saw in the future, but I’m sure you met a lot of other people that meet your requirements, right?”

Kyouka stared at the ceiling for a moment before answering.

“It was more complicated than you may think. I needed to choose people that had a good chance of meeting the Exorcist, and not only that; it had to be someone that was alive in the same time span of my informant. Not to mention I needed a specific set of quirks. And later down the line I would have a lot more difficulties finding everything I need. I had to do a whole lot of research, I had to search through all the people who passed the test and who had their quirks registered. There were surely people who had the quirks I needed when I needed elsewhere in this world, but other nations don’t have a system like Japan does, it was too big of a pain in general.”

“So you needed Mark of Submission?” Tsuyu asked.

“Not at all. I don’t need his quirk for anything.”

“But you always said he was necessary.” Tsuyu tilted her head, a little confused.

“He is. As a person. Not his quirk, I don’t care at all about that.”

“What does he has that no one else does?”

“No… that’s not it. As strange as all this may sound, my objective was Izuku all along. I need a Wild Card and I need some other quirks as well. The problem was… either I had to change his whole life or no matter what I did, it would only backfire. Once I found the right moment, using my informant’s
lifespan as a comparison, I searched for the most accessible Wild Card. Izuku, in that timeline, was found as a Wild Card at 36 years old, way later than Katsuki’s death, and he used his absorbed Mark of Submission until he died at 54. When I tried to meet him he refused to help me, he had been found so late, he had already a life before this whole S rank quirk thing came crashing hard on him and he wasn’t as open as I had hoped. I’m not so down on forcing people to help me. I left him alone. But when I tried to do some in-depth research on his life, I discovered Katsuki’s existence and the fact that he died after his test, never meeting Izuku again. I know it was selfish… but I decided to change Izuku’s destiny, to make his quirk known in a way that would force the two to meet again. I wanted him to take this specific test, not another one maybe later, so he would have a friend and lover with him and he wouldn’t take all this so hard.”

“I see. I don’t know about his previous life, but I think he is happy right now.” Tsuyu nodded.

“Happy, but in danger. Well, that can’t be helped in any event, but I at least hope to give him the opportunity to forge his own future, not the one that the Government would have chosen for him.”

“You said you made sure to make his quirk known?” she wondered what she had done.

“Oh yeah. Don’t you think the timing was a little too perfect? He found out his quirk three days before the test that Katsuki was taking part of. You read how he found it, right? In that pub? I paid that guy to kiss him.”

Tsuyu’s eyes widened a little as she stared at Kyouka, she didn’t look ashamed at all about what she just said, Tsuyu chuckled.

“You were really dead set on making the two meet.” Tsuyu said in the end.

“Well yeah. Unless I were to force Izuku and Katsuki to never met at all… The destinies of those two were tied up together. No matter what, as long as Izuku has his quirk, the two need each other. I don’t regret any of this.” Kyouka shrugged.

“Yeah, I think this was for the best as well. You still won’t tell me what are you trying to do?” Tsuyu asked, trying to not sound pushy.

“There was a time… when I thought I had found a defective future, a future that had been doomed by humans. But I was wrong, it’s not simply the humans that are a problem, is the conjunction between them and quirks. I could’ve chosen to live in a timeline where one of the two things never existed, where quirks never start appearing at all. But then what would I’ve become? A monster? And… even though I don’t feel like I belong anywhere, in any time or place, humans are still my people, I can’t live in a world without them. So yeah, at first I thought about giving up, living what I had to and leaving this matter to someone else. But you don’t have any idea how lonely and boring this life gets after a while. I needed a goal, a reason to live, something to hope for. Discovering the reason for everything had not been difficult per se… But finding the origin and a way to stop it was a whole another level. I need Izuku’s Wild Card, I’ll try as many time as I need to, I’ve got all the time in the world after all. Literally.”

Tsuyu let her words replay in her mind a couple times, trying to understand her, but to no avail. Tsuyu had never met someone she could not empathize completely, like this. She had tried to create her book, but she had failed. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that she was never there for too long. Or maybe because Kyouka’s real existence was not on this mortal level, that was a possibility as well. Her quirk was more suited for a god than for a mortal. Tsuyu had never met a more interesting person than her, she wanted to know as much as she could get.

“So you devised the whole plan with the Katsuki’s exchange to make sure they would both pass the
“That’s right. I tried to just let them meet each other and be happy with that, but then they were both so incredibly stubborn… One of them would try their very best to get them both killed, one way or another. Either one would fail the test and the other die immediately after or something like that. All the times… if it wasn’t for you lending me Izuku’s book, I would have never been able to see what caused the problem that one time. I had to solve them personally, one by one. I had to keep a close eye to the possibility of Aizawa and the Task Force learning about Izuku’s Mark of Submission before the right moment. That would have lead to Katsuki’s death. And I had to make sure Katsuki was not doing anything stupid for Izuku and get himself eliminated in the process. Really, I felt like a babysitter a bunch of times!” Kyouka chuckled without humor.

“That future Katsuki… what happened to him?”

Kyouka looked away, she didn’t look very happy to talk about that part.

“We got them out of Japan as scheduled, just like right now, everything was going well…” she stopped. Tsuyu waited in silence. “But it went too well. Katsuki underestimated some aspects of the mission because he trusted himself and Izuku too much. I worked hard to reach that point… and correcting that mistake was not useful, not with how the two were at the time. Even if I was to save them, they would commit the same mistake again a day later. It was not caused by facts, but by how the two had taken the whole thing. There was no easy solution to that so… I was cruel.” she sighed before continuing. “I decided to force Katsuki to live with his mistakes, to learn from them. I needed him to teach a valuable lesson both to his younger self and to Izuku. I still don’t know if it worked, it’s too early to tell. And this is why I need you Tsuyu. I won’t be able to follow them directly. I hate the fact that I get thrown wherever at any moment.”

“I don’t mind lending you the book at all, you can come and read it whenever, but how are you keeping contact with your informant if you have so much trouble?” she was really curious about what kind of person it was, Kyouka always talked a lot about them like they were almost invincible or something.

“Oh, my informant is never in a place for too long, he moves around a lot. He is capable of passing all the borders he wants, when he wants. Spy on whom he wants. He is basically impossible to find, I don’t even try. But… that won’t be a problem for much longer.” she smirked and Tsuyu tilted her head. “I told him to keep a close eye on our wonder boys, I think soon he will start to appear in your book.” Kyouka chuckled again, this time really amused. “I can’t wait to see the two interact with him!”

Tsuyu had no idea what she meant, but she was always down for an interesting read. Kyouka got up, probably getting ready to leave but Tsuyu had one last question for her.

“What about Momo?” that caught Kyouka’s interest immediately.

“What about her?”

“I don’t know, you tell me. She is very confident that you’ll be able to help her and I’m curious to know how. She is in a very bad position, but she is trusting you completely. Are you positive you know what you are doing, yes? She even took part in the mission because she trusted you so much.”

Kyouka’s expression was unreadable. Tsuyu waited for her to do or say something.

“You have kept a copy of her memories from the prison like we asked, right?” this was not the
answer Tsuyu was looking for but she answered anyway.

“I did. I’ve copied the memories on paper, so even after they get deleted they are still there. Simply materializing the book would not be enough to preserve them. I can’t recover memories that had been deleted by a quirk.”

“Then I can help her. Just keep them safe.” she started to walk away again.

“I’ve read her book.” Tsuyu stopped her again. “I know about you two.”

“So?” it was a slight threat.

“Nothing. Just be careful. You can jump in a different timeline anytime and save yourself. She is not so lucky. If you abandon her behind…” Tsuyu closed her eyes. “I can’t swear that I’ll punish you, since I won’t even notice you are missing forever. But if you abandon her, I hope your conscience won’t let you sleep for the rest of your life.”

Kyouka chuckled without humor.

“I’ll keep it in mind. I’m glad that you are all taking her future so seriously.” she stretched her arm above her head. “Now, if you don’t mind, I have to go.”

“Alright, good luck in your journey. Stay safe.”

“I’ll try, but the world won’t save itself.”

END OF PART 1

Chapter End Notes

*If anyone is wondering where is the second part; see the little arrow down here? The one saying ’Next work’? Try there ;)

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