Summary

The first time they met, Tomura and Dabi hated each other; one is an anxious mess who feels too much, the other is a tired wreck who's dead inside. Seemingly, no middle ground.

But as some say, practice makes perfect.

What would happen if these two young men, that life hurt over and over again, were to lower their guard? What if they took a moment to look over each other masks? And maybe see something beautiful?

Yeah. Maybe they could make something. Something good.

Or; let's see how many cute romance tropes and cliche can I a shove in my Civilian!AU Shigabi fic about two assholes falling in love.
Girl's Night

Chapter Summary

In which their most important story begins.

Chapter Notes

Welp, there it is. My first fic. And of course, it's about Shigadabi. Of course.

It's basically an AU in which everyone in the League Of Villains got support and help, but they're still a bit messy and ... assholes. I don't have the whole logistic yet, but basically, I guess All for One never existed ??? Sort of??? Or at least he was not a villain??? Ignoring a tone of implications of course, just for the fluff.

Tomura was rescued by All Might and officially adopted by Kurogiri, who is here a good and honest bartender who loves his son very much. Also, he and Mr. Compress are dating. Tomura's proper backstory is still a bit blurry in the manga, so it's kind of my own version based on what we have. (The child neglect tag is here for a reason my dudes be careful). But he is still named Shigaraki Tomura, for a reason that will probably be explained in the fic.

As a surprise to no one, Dabi is a Todoroki here. Because we live in the "everything is fine" AU, Endeavor is no longer a hero, he's in jail, but he was around long enough to mess up Dabi quite a bit. But now the family is fine, and Dabi is doing his best to keep in touch. But yeah Endeavor is its one warning.

Everyone still has quirks, because I believe that they are integral parts of their personalities (especially for Tomura) and erasing their quirks (heheheh Aizawa) would change them quite a bit as individuals.

Also, Toga and Magne are best girls but that shit is canon, my dudes.

EDIT: In case you're re-reading the fic or just got a notification, you might have noticed some changes! It's because the fic is currently being edited to fix as many misspelling, mistakes and grammar issues as possible! I know you all love the fic no matter what and thank you all for it, but some of the mistakes are genuinely distracting and never got around to fix them. Luckily, this time, I have the lovely @stairswarning helping me! They're basically going over all the chapters of the fic to find all the mistakes and weird phrasing, and they share their notes with me so I can edit it properly! You can find them here on Ao3 or on Tumblr if you want to give them some love! They're doing a lot of work, going through my mess, and I can't thank them enough!

So yeah, we're going through each chapter one by one! It's gonna take some times because we're obviously both busy with life, but hopefully by the end the whole will be more fluid and easier to read!
“What the fuck do you want?”

Tomura realized it was a harsh welcome, even coming from him. But first of all: fuck it. And second, Dabi was the last person he expected to see when he finally went to open the door after a full minute of aggressive ringing. He was already pretty much drained out by a whole day of work at the university, where nothing had gone the way he wanted. The only thing keeping him alive had been the thought that he had the apartment for himself tonight. And suddenly, not even an hour alone, and the worst fucking guy in the world, the last person he wanted to see was on his doorstep. This guy always fucking ruins everything.

“Wow hey, nice to see you to mop head”. Dabi was grinning, because of fucking course he was, and just for that Tomura already wanted to close the door on his stupid face.

“I never said it was nice to see you, you dumbass.”

Okay, I am not explaining to you the meaning of sarcasm. I’m not here for you anyway; I’m here to see Toga and Magne. Can I come in?”

Stupid question, considering he had already walked in before the end of his sentence. Tomura hated how easy it had been for the taller man to push him aside when he had tried to block him. Dabi strolled in the middle of the living room and dropped his bag on the coffee table. Tomura was still registering what was happening as the intruder took a computer and some notes out of his bag.

The young man really wanted to slam the door behind him, but it would have given Dabi the impression that was somehow allowed to stay. And I can’t have that.

“Well tough luck because they’re not here tonight! So you can pack up your shit and fuck off.”

Dabi, who had started to read some of his notes, looked up from the papers.

“What do you mean they’re not here?”

“What the fuck do you think I mean? They’re out! It’s …”

Tomura hesitated for a second because the word was dumb, but it was Toga’s not his.

“… It’s girl’s night”
Dabi stayed still for a while as if he was processing this information. Except that, as he did, his eyes stayed fixed on Tomura. He wasn’t even really looking at him, more toward him. And yet, Tomura felt just as if these blue eyes were piercing his own red ones. Even though he was getting better at it, Tomura didn’t like to be directly looked at. He was not sure if it was a childhood thing, or it was more about his fucked up face, but the result was always crippling anxiety that made him turn his own neck into a patchwork of raw flesh. It usually took him longer than this to crack, but there was a thing about Dabi’s eye that was just ... the worst. Maybe it was how cold and detached they were... Or maybe it was because of the impressive number of times Dabi had managed to make Tomura uncomfortable in the few months they had known each other. He was about to snap when Dabi seemed to finally come to a conclusion.

“Well, shit. I had hoped we could work on some stuff.”

Tomura scoffed.

“Worked, huh?”

“Yeah on band stuff! Why the fuck do you think I brought "all my shit like" you so elegantly said, you dumbass?” As to support his claim, he waved the papers still in his hand. It looked like partitions.

“Why didn’t you call them? Did you just show up assuming they were home and had nothing better to do?”

“Pretty much, yeah.”

“Welp that’s too fucking bad, but now, you can just fuck …”

Tomura interrupted himself as Dabi dropped himself on the couch. He grabbed his mess, but instead of packing, he just started to spread everything across the table and unpack even more stuff. Tomura’s door and mouth stayed open for three full seconds, before dashing toward the couch. Oh nononono! This is not happening!

“What the fuck, what do you- the fuck do you think you’re doing” His voice was way too shaky for his own comfort, but he had to work with it. And infuriatingly enough, Dabi’s voice was as cool as ever. Maybe even a little bored, as he answered without looking up from the coffee table.

“Well, I’m here now. I’ve got stuff to do, and it’s late so I am not going all the way back home to get shit done.”

Tomura clenched his fist hard because at the moment, he took a real effort to not just reach
forward, grab Dabi’s stupid face, and disintegrate him completely.
“And you think I’m just gonna let you stay here? I live here! What makes you think you can just…”

Dabi finally looked up.

“For Christ’s sake creep, I just wanna quietly work on some stuff here before going home. I’m super fucking tired, I won’t make a fucking noise, I won’t talk to you, I won’t look at you … Fucking hell, I can’t go do my stuff in the bathroom if it calms your psycho mind!”

Tomura was taken aback by the strength in this response, but still muttered:
“… This isn’t a fucking library.”

“Look, I live almost an hour from here, and my place is a fucking mess right now. Especially with my new roommate … He is super chill but he talks to himself all the time and I can’t focus … Like honestly, what is it to you if stay a few hours? Are you gonna grab me by the hair throw me out?”

The last sentence was said with a smirk, and Tomura was reminded of easily Dabi had manhandled him a few minutes ago, just to come in. A light blush came to his cheeks.

“Urgh … Okay fine. It’s not like I give a shit anyway.”

Tomura was very aware that everything he had said and done until now blatantly contradicted this statement, but he turned around before Dabi’s mocking grin could fully form on his face.

“Awww. You’re too good mophead.”

Tomura didn’t know what he hated the most; the fact that he had just lost this battle, the fact that he considered something as stupid as this a battle or the fact that every single interaction he had with Dabi was apparently destined to end as such.

He had not allowed his anxiety to take over before he was sure to be out of Dabi’s sight. And now, he had to lie against his bedroom’s door because his legs just couldn’t stop shaking. Everything that just happened had been a disaster, and Tomura really hoped the ground was about to open under his feet to swallow him whole. Dabi showing up out of nowhere, Tomura getting all worked up over something stupid, Dabi’s stupid victory grin, and now, the perspective of an evening alone with him… He gripped to the last light in his mind, the only part of him that could still see clearly like a drowning man grabs a piece of wood. With trembling hands, he tried to take his phone out of his pocket. The operation took a while; because life is apparently a funny gal who thought it would be hilarious to give destructive hands to the guy with crippling anxiety. Besides, this phone was a gift from Kurogiri, so he had to be extra careful with his fingers until he finally found what he was looking for.
You’ve entered => And they were roommates! … Oh, my God, they were roommates.
(9.37pm)

You: hmmm excuse me But wHAt The FUCK!!!!!
Lil Gremlin: \('_' )/  
The Good One: Tomura????? What’s happening are you okay???

Somehow, the fact that Magne and Himiko had both responded immediately, even though it was
girl’s night, send some warmth in Tomura’s chest and calmed him a little. A little. In fact, he
almost felt bad for interrupting their night out. Almost. This was some fucking emergency after all.

You: I'M PRETTY FUCKING FAR FROM OKAY
You: I mean I’m alive though don’t worry
You: BUT STILL!!!!! FUUUUUUCK
Lil Gremlin: Do I need to kill a man Tomura?????
Lil Gremlin: Because I would!!!! For you!!!!!!!
The Good One: NO ONE IS KILLING ANYONE
The Good One: Yet.
You: okay but maybe though????
Lil Gremlin: I got u fam
Lil Gremlin: ^ ( `ω´ ) ^ψ
The Good One: NO. Mama Magne says NO.
Lil Gremlin: Oh shit Tomu she giving me the look right now.
You: k but
You: WHY IS YOUR FUCKING GUITARIST ON OUR FUCKING COUCH????

There was a pause at this point, and Tomura assumed that the girls were talking between them. It
was no more than thirty seconds but it was enough for his neck to scratch again.

Lil Gremlin: ( ⊂Д⊂)  
The Good One: Wait, Dabi’s here??????
You: YES. He’s sitting in the living room like he fucking lives here!!!!
The Good One: Hold on, did he like … Break in???
You: what no
Lil Gremlin: Is he stealing stuff???
You: hmmm I don’t think so? He’s working on stuff for your band I think.

A new pose in the conversation. But for some reason, Tomura really, really, really, didn’t like that
one.

The Good One: So you’re saying that Dabi is in our living room, minding his own business
because you let him in?

Really, really, really, really, didn’t like it.

You: I mean yeah I guess what’s ur point
The Good One: Well … What’s your issue here?

BETRAYAL.
You: What you mean what’s your issue???? Your asshole guitarist showed up to work with you or some shit ASSUMING you’ll be there and instead of going back home like a normal fucking person he decided to stay here????? WHO DOES THAT????
The Good One: Is he like … actively bothering you?
You: HIS PRESENCE BOTHERS ME. You know I can’t stand him!!!! And he can’t stand me either!!!!
Lil Gremlin: ………………………Or can he???? (°_°)
You: what
The Good One: Look it’s gonna be fine. We’re finishing dinner we should be back in a couple of hours. Just try not to kill each other in the meantime.
You: I see. So that’s how it’s gonna be huh?
You: Betrayed.
The Good One: He’s actually a pretty chill dude. Also, we really need our guitarist so don’t kill him pls.

Tomura let out a sigh and lightly banged his head against the door.

You: …… I’m doing it for you girls.
You: But he’s on thin fucking ice.
Lil Gremlin: YAY!!!!! ♡ ^▽^ ♡
The Good One: Okay but really stay calm. Breathe, listen to some music … You’re gonna be fine Tomura.
You: I GUESS
You: But thanks girls. Enjoy girl’s night.
Lil Gremlin: *gasp and clench my chest* he said it …
The Good One: I love (1) anxious boy …
You: urgh don’t ruin it
You’ve left => And they were roommates! … Oh, my God, they were roommates.

Tomura put his phone back in his pocket and considered his options. He had never really been a “people person”. Well during the first eight years of his life he didn’t have any chance to be one, due to … circumstances. But even later, after All Might found him, and after Kurogiri officially adopted him, it had been difficult to open fully to other people. Most of the time he just found them annoying, too loud, too agitated, too carefree … But some other times … well, he just didn’t fit in. That was probably the most pretentious and cliché way to put things, especially for an art student, but it really was how it felt. He didn’t connect or bond with people like he was supposed to. It felt like the entire world had a private joke that he was not allowed in like everybody was getting it but him. For a while he had tried to fake a laugh, to pretend he was getting the joke like everyone else, but now he was too tired. What if someone asked him to explain the joke?

“Oh, you’re laughing with us, huh? Do you even know what you’re laughing at, boy? Well, explain the joke then! Or are you faking it? Are you pretending to be like us? So you’re not only too dumb to get it, but you’re also too much of a coward to tell the truth.”

Of course, some people were easier than others; he almost always had a close relationship with Kurogiri. And even his boyfriend Sako Atsuhiro had been surprisingly more agreeable than Tomura had expected him to be when Kurogiri first introduced him. Sure, the man was flamboyant, eccentric and many other things that would have normally bothered Tomura, but somehow he made it work. Maybe because it genuinely felt sincere. That was just how the man
was, he was not trying to fit in or get attention he just was like this. It actually matched perfectly with Kurogiri more quiet and reserved personality, and even Tomura had to admit that these two were, for a lack of a better word, *kind of cute.*

It somehow explained the miracle that was his relationship with Toga and Magne. When Tomura entered University, the perspective of finding a new place to live had been terrifying, because it meant living the only two people he had ever been remotely comfortable with, either to live with strangers or maybe worst, living alone. And when Sako had said that he knew two wonderful girls, who were looking for a third member in a flat, Tomura didn’t have much faith. He knew deep down that he was too much of a creep, with his marked face, fucked up neck, awful personality and destructive quirk to be remotely attractive as a roommate to two young women. And yet, when they first met Toga and Magne, they had welcomed him like they knew each other for decades. They should have immediately annoyed Tomura with their big gestures, bright smiles and loud exclamations and declarations of affection, but, in a way, they reminded him of Sako. This loudness was sincere and real, and more importantly, it was not about them but about others. Their energy was not directed at themselves but on everything and everyone around them.

“Are you a serial killer?” had asked Toga.

“Look … I know I look like one but I’m not …”

They didn’t even let him finish.

“Do you smoke?”

“What, hum, no.”

“Do you have any pets?”

“No …”

“Are you willing to take part in the household chores and other domestic duties?”

“Hum, well yes I guess”

They had both exchanged a look, before practically jumping across the table to shake his hand.

“Welcome to the flat, Tomura!” they had shouted in harmony.

And here they were, almost a year later. The two girls had managed to join the very selective list of “People that Tomura can be around without freaking out” (as Toga called it). But right now, they were not here. Dabi, on the other hand, very much was.

Of course, the safest option would have been to spend the entire evening locked up in his room, but
there was an issue. Tomura had planned to work on his project tonight. Technically speaking, he could very much do so in his room, but he usually worked on it in the living room because the lighting was much better there. For this particular work at least. Of course, he could always order Dabi to move. He did say he was ready to work in the bathroom after all. But for some odd reason that escaped Tomura’s thought process, having Dabi kicked out of the room felt more like a defeat than anything else. Perhaps a reminder of he failed to throw him out a few minutes ago.

*I mean, it’s not like a give a shit anyway, right? He doesn’t care, and I don’t care either! I mean shit- it’s my goddamn living room. I’m going to work there, and if he has something to say about it he can very well fuck off! Yeah! Yeah, this asshole doesn’t affect me!*

When Tomura walked in with his easel and materials, Dabi was working on the computer with headphones on, probably sound mixing. As the blue-haired boy settled next to the window and close to the lamp, he slowly raised his eyes from the screen to look at him. Once the canvas was in place, Dabi took off his headphones and looked at the painter with amused eyes.

“Awwww, you missed me!” he said with a tone so overly sweet that Tomura wanted to throw up.

“As if! The light is better here, you fucking zombie.”

Dabi’s smile did not waver as he kept looking at Tomura for a whole minute, before focusing again on his work, without any other comment. He hated it, but Tomura was almost disappointed to see Dabi so unaffected by his presence. It was a drastic contrast with his own reaction a few minutes earlier. As he began to work, he wondered this indifference to everything was what he hated the most about Dabi. It probably was, because of how it contrasted with his own over sensibility. Since they first met each other, Tomura and Dabi had been arguing a lot, and it almost always ended with Tomura on the verge of a meltdown, and Dabi smiling like he had driven him exactly where he wanted him. Of course, every once in a while, Tomura managed to take the upper hand and watched Dabi grit his teeth while he muttered “whatever creep” in defeat. Tomura almost kept count of those times.

But this time, surprisingly enough, they managed to spend a whole hour both working, without any interruption or spiteful comment. Probably because they were both really tired, and really invested in their work. Dabi was still sound mixing their last song while taking notes to share with the girls later. Tomura was working on a landscape for one of his courses and had started to carefully use his fingers to spread some of the colours. He was so focused that he did not immediately hear Dabi calling him.

“Hey! Hey Jason Pollock! Hey!”

Tomura jumped, taking his finger off the canvas quickly enough to not mess up his work. Of course, this peaceful moment could not last …

“Holy shit, what do you want?!”
Dabi looked at him with the most serious face and declared: “I’m hungry.”

*You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.*

“And? Do you expect me to feed you or something?”

“Don’t you have anything to eat?”

Tomura cleaned his hand with a cloth.

“The fuck if I know…”

“You live here, dumbass.”

“Yes, I do. And apparently, when I told you this place wasn’t a library, I should have added that it wasn’t a restaurant either.”

Tomura tried to focus back on his work, cleaning his paintbrush, but Dabi wouldn’t shut up.

“Wow, you’re just gonna let me starve to death? That’s cold creep. Even for you. I mean I’m not asking a restaurant, a fast-food at most.”

“Oh my god!” sighed Tomura almost dropping his paintbrush out of exasperation. “Well then go in the kitchen, you idiot! You know, where food usually is?”

Dabi slowly laid back on the couch with suspicious and yet playful eyes.

“Nah, I know how your shitty mind works. If I accidentally eat some of your stuff, you will murder me in my sleep.”

Tomura stared at him with an exasperated confusion, before realising where the man was going with this.

“Are you serious right now? You want me to come with you? To what, watch you eat or something?”

“I mean you can eat too, I don’t care. Even cook me something yourself if you feel generous.”

The last sentence was said with an almost obscene smile, and for some reason, Tomura felt like he
had to stand up to deal with it. He planted himself in front of the black-haired man, arms crossed and still covered with paints. *How can one person be so insufferable? How?*

“You’re not gonna shut up unless you eat something, are you?”

Dabi did not answer but his smug expression was enough of a confirmation.

* Dabi opened the fridge and began to carefully examine what it contained. Tomura observed him, leaned against the sink, before quickly losing patience.

“Oh my god, we’re not going to poison you.”

“Nah, not the girls they’re good eggs,” answered Dabi, picking up some stuff before putting them back “it’s you I’m worried about.”

“If you think I care enough about your sorry ass to take the time to poison food for you, you really overestimate yourself.”

This comment actually stopped Dabi in his exploration and had him turn toward Tomura.

“Ouch. That really hurts my feelings, you know. And here I was, hoping that you were falling asleep thinking of me each night.”

For some reason, this comment startled Tomura who almost lost his balance and felt some hotness coming up his cheeks. He answered without thinking: “Yeah, well, right, I’m falling asleep thinking of you *dying*!!!”

He realized his mistake when Dabi practically purred: “Look who cares enough now … maybe I wasn’t overestimating myself after all.”

Tomura felt like dying, so he knew he had to act and change the subject. He rushed toward the fridge, pushed Dabi to the side, grabbed a Tupperware and shoved it in the man’s hands.

“Here, have Toga’s enchiladas and choke on ’em.”

Dabi warmed the food in the dusty microwave. The thing was old, here way before his current owner, and made some weird noises that almost sounded like some beast grunting.

“I am going to grant you one thing fuck face,” Dabi said, joining Tomura at the kitchen table, “if you’re using this thing every day, you’re a lot braver than I thought.”
This could have almost passed for a compliment if the sentence had not open with “fuck face”. But in a sense, it was better this way because Tomura wouldn’t know how to react if Dabi ever gave him a genuine compliment. As they both sat at the table with nothing but the microwave sound between them, the blue-haired boy try to imagine what it would feel like, but none of his imaginary scenarios worked because no matter what the imaginary Dabi said, it always felt like he was mocking him.

“I’m not really using it though,” Tomura answered, “not as much as Toga and Magne, that is.”

“Ha! I should have known that you only eat cold stuff … Your hands are always so fucking cold. I’m sure you’re cold blooded just like Spinner.”

Spinner was an honorary member of the band (whenever they needed a bassist) and an actual lizard. Needless to say, Tomura, didn’t find the comparison very flattering, and because of that, he was a bit more honest than intended with his answer.

“Fuck off, I just don’t eat much …”

That was true. It had been an issue since Tomura was a child. Back then; the doctors had said it was the consequences of his … early conditions of life. Fortunately, things were way better now than when he was thirteen. Those had been some rough years for Kurogiri and him … But even now, as he was going to therapy, and was in a loving environment surrounded by friends and family, this was still an issue he had to work on.

As he finished his sentence, Tomura winced, already expecting a blow from Dabi. But the man stayed silent. When Tomura looked up, Dabi was looking right back at him, scanning his skinny body from head to toes. But surprisingly, there was no disgust in his eyes, no mockery either. It was … Actually, Tomura didn’t know what it was.

“You don’t …” Dabi began with a surprisingly low voice, “you don’t starve yourself, do you?”

Tomura’s face flushed, and he reflexively crossed his arms.

“What? No! That’s not … That’s not it … That’s different. It’s not like that.”

“Then … What is it like?”

Tomura was taken back once more, his face getting hotter and hotter. It wasn’t so much talking about his food problem that was troubling him; it was talking about it with Dabi. And the fact that, for maybe the first time, he couldn’t detect any ounce of sarcasm or disdain in his voice or behind his eyes. In fact, those eyes, usually so cold and unfocused seemed … softer?? Tomura didn’t know what kind of outside force pushed him to answer Dabi’s question, but he did.
“It’s like … It’s … I don’t know. Most of the time I’ll just forget to eat. Other times I just feel like I don’t have the motivation or the time to prepare anything. And sometimes I just … I just feel guilty about it.”

“About eating? What would you feel guilty about that? Everybody has to eat.”

What the fuck is happening?????? Why is he being so … not a jerk right now??? Why does he look so soft??? And yet, despite his confusion, Tomura kept talking.

“Yeah I know, I know … It’s like … I also know that I don’t actually need to prepare anything, I can just get stuff out of the fridge. It’s because of my … No, wait, shit. Look I’m working on it okay?”

Holy shit I can’t believe it … I can’t believe I almost told him about my father. Holy shit what the fuck is happening????

On the other side of the table, Dabi was still listening. Like, actually listening. If he noticed Tomura’s slip up, he didn’t mention it. Which, again, was pretty odd, considering that Dabi usually never missed a chance to push when he felt that Tomura was uncomfortable. There was another short silence before Dabi asked: “Do Toga and Magne know about this?”

“Yeah, broadly.”

“Do they keep you in check?”

Tomura couldn’t help a little smile, thinking about it.

“Yes, they do. When they can, that is. You know passionate they can get … I often snap at them what they do … but I’m grateful. And they know it.”

“… That’s good.”

After that, Dabi focused his attention on a napkin still laying on the table and proceeded to slowly tear it up into small pieces. Is he … embarrassed? Tomura still had no idea what was happening. He just stayed silent and still in his chair, waiting for the damn microwave to beep. He could also just leave Dabi here and go back to the living room … But it was like something unusual was floating in the air, and he was afraid of what would happen if he just left like that. Suddenly Dabi asked:

“Hey hum … did you uh, did you eat anything tonight? Or today?”
At this point, Tomura’s brain short-circuited. He had to deal with a lot of unexpected things tonight, but somehow this was his limit. He could proceed many things, but this … The idea of Dabi being genuinely concerned about him … It was too much. It had to be a joke. In this state of mild panic, he answered with a light irony in his voice, more as a survival instinct than anything else.

“Aww … What’s that now? Are you worrying about me now?”

For a second, Dabi seemed taken aback, not really by Tomura’s tone, but more a sort of self-realisation. And when he finally processed the situation, everything on his face shut down. The soft light behind his eyes was gone, giving way to their usual cold detachment. Slowly, the sly grin that Tomura knew all too well was making his way back to his face, and when he spoke, the tone was more disdainful than ever.

“Me? Worried about you, creep? Look who’s overestimating himself now.”

Tomura let out a sigh. It was broken. Whatever it was, that had been floating between them for a few minutes, was now shattered to the ground. But apparently, not shattered enough for Dabi, because the man kept talking.

“No, but honestly Creep, if you worry me, it’s more for the human condition than anything else. Like, you are the living proof that people can always get worse. Do you even shower? Hydrate your face? Your fucked up lips? But even so, even a full makeover wouldn’t do much for your shitty personality. I mean, how would we fix your fucking temper tantrums? Is that why you scratched your neck like that?”

Tomura shouldn’t have been surprised. After all, they were back to their usual bantering. Right now, Dabi was dragging him with everything he had: his appearance, the lips, the scars, the dark circles, his attitude, the childish tantrums … All the things he had said a thousand times. And now Tomura was supposed to snap back, probably with some comments about his burned pieces of flesh stapled together, his rude attitude, his neglected attitude, or even his music taste if he really wanted to get to him.

But for some reason, Tomura didn’t want to snap back. What he really wanted was to scratch his neck, which was practically burning right now, and to go lock himself up in his room, but he resisted both of these urges. Maybe it was his fault for giving this ironic answer to Dabi earlier, but right now, the other man was going all out. It almost felt like he was beating a dead horse like he was making sure that that unknown thing that had been slowly blossoming between them for a few minutes, was destroyed for good. And even though Tomura hadn’t understood a thing about this blossoming, even though he was relieved to finally be back in a familiar territory … Tomura felt sad. For some reason.

“I bet you want to scratch your neck right now,” Dabi continued “jeez, give it a rest creep, you still have some fresh wounds on it. That’s gross.”
“I think it’s funny you know …” Tomura retorted.

“What is? To scratch your own flesh like that?”

Tomura slightly leaned toward, against the table. He really hoped his voice wasn’t cracking too much.

“I think it’s funny how think you’re insulting me with all these things I know about myself.”

Dabi seemed genuinely surprised by this answered because he stayed silent, and Tomura kept going.

“I mean, what’s your idea, what’s your goal? I’m just gonna describe him? Hoping that in his twenty-four years of existence he never once looked into a mirror? Or do you think you’re the first one to let me know maybe? I know what I fucking look like Dabi. I know what I act like. I know the effect I have on people. I know I have scars; I was there when I got them. I know my face and my lips are dry, I have been in front of reflective surfaces. I know that I’m bony and skinny. I know I look like a creep. Hell, I know I’m a creep. I don’t understand social cues, I don’t like most people and I’m not good at hiding it. I really wish I was but I’m not. I know I freak out at the mild inconvenience and I know that no matter how much I try, I cannot stay calm when things don’t go my way. All of these things Dabi, they’re happening to me. I’m aware of them. But then again, if your goal is to remind me of these things whenever you can, to make sure that I never, not for one second, forget how much of a fucking mess I am, then I guess you’re doing a good job. Congratulations.”

And just as Tomura finished, the microwave started beeping. For a few seconds, it was the only noise in the kitchen, Tomura almost out of breath and Dabi taking everything in. Tomura wasn’t sure if he wanted him to stay silent, give him an answer, or if he wanted him to straight up punch him in the face. But he just stared back at Tomura, with an expression he could not read. Finally, the blue haired-boy couldn’t take and got up.

“Enjoy your enchiladas you fucking zombie.”

And he walked back to the living room.

The rest of the evening was uneventful. Dabi ate alone in the kitchen; Tomura went back to work and did not look up when the other man came back to his computer. They did not speak to each other until Magne and Toga were back.

“Here they aaaaaaaaaare! My beautiful booooooooooys!” Toga yelled, practically throwing herself inside as Magne closed the door behind them.
“Oh my god, you’re drunk,” Tomura sighed, moving away from his easel. He knew that the young girl was about to tackle him for a hug, and wanted them to be away from his work when that happened.

“Pfffff …. No… You don’t know that” Toga muttered, crashing herself in Tomura’s chest.

“I keep telling her that mixing sugar and alcohol is never good,” Magne said taking off her coat. “But she likes to live a dangerous life.”

“I mean, with you as a chaperone, how dangerous can that be?” Dabi questioned, getting off the couch.

“Hey Dab’s! Sorry we missed you …”

“Nah it’s cool, I should have asked. I’ll call next time.”

Toga, who was still clinging to Tomura, turned toward them and screeched: “Yeah, but at least you got some alone time with Tomu!”

Tomura started to blush. The nickname was embarrassing, and only Toga was allowed to use it. As he feared, Dabi’s face lightened up upon hearing it.

“Hell yeah, I did … We had some quality bonding time, didn’t we Tomu?”

“Next time I hope the microwave blows up on your stupid face.”

The insult lost some of its spikes with Tomura’s cheek being so pink. Magne let out a deep sigh.

“Well, at least you didn’t kill each other. Toga and I weren’t sure we would find you alive …”

“ … Or dressed.” Toga half-whispered half-giggled.

Tomura felt his heart drop. His face suddenly felt very, very hot, and his neck was scratching him like crazy. What? What is she talking about? Wh- What the hell is that supposed to mean???? Across the room, Dabi seemed equally confused. His face was very pale for a few seconds, because suddenly getting coloured by some light pink, but Tomura wasn’t sure because the black-haired man dashed toward his computer, and started to back everything. Magne reacted as well, quickly grabbing Toga from Tomura.

“OKAY, I think someone better go to bed right now. Dabi do you want to stay for a bit?”
“Nah, it’s cool I, huh, I got some stuff done, but hum, it’s late now … so I should, huh, head back now. Yeah. Right. I better go.”

This response was unusually stuttering and mumbling for Dabi, but Tomura was still too distressed by Toga’s comment to properly notice. What on earth did she mean???? What???

Eventually, Dabi left, and everyone went to sleep (even though it took both Magne and Tomura to convince Toga). And now, Tomura was lying alone in his bed, thinking back on what a shitty day it had been. The worst was, of course, the evening. He tried to determine what had been the most annoying moment, from Dabi’s arrival to his departure. And no matter how he turned things, it always came back to what had happened in the kitchen. But, what had happened it the kitchen exactly? He couldn’t put his finger on it. Maybe it was the realization that Dabi and he were definitely incapable of communication whatsoever. Of course, Tomura already knew that. But tonight they had been so close to … something else. And they had both ruined it. Dabi’s voice resonated in his head: “And here I was, hoping that you were falling asleep thinking of me each night.”

God.

I hate you.

I hate you so fucking much.

Chapter End Notes

TOMURA IS A GOOD ART BOY I LOVE HIM VERY MUCH.

I just really like the idea of Tomura???? Using his hand to create?????

Anyways, these two boys have seen some shit and therefore always have their guard up but they're trying okay...

*Tomura*: kindness???? from HIM???? CANNOT PROCEED!!!! Use sarcastic comment to defend myself from what is obviously a trick!

*Dabi*: Wait ... Are those ... FEELINGS???? URGH NO!!! Asshole mode activated.

Anyway, two things:
— English is not my first language, so let me know if you find some mistake or just some weird sentences.
— I don't have the same type of food disorder as the one implied with Tomura. A friend of mine does, and I based the whole thing on him, and the way he the way he talks about it. But let me know if you feel like it's being misrepresented or if it's clumsy, and let me know how to fix it.

Hope you enjoyed this first chapter! Already working on the second one. It should open with a flashback of their actual first meeting!
EDIT: In case you're re-reading the fic or just got a notification, you might have noticed some changes! It's because the fic is currently being edited to fix as many misspelling, mistakes and grammar issues as possible! I know you all love the fic no matter what and thank you all for it, but some of the mistakes are genuinely distracting and never got around to fix them. Luckily, this time, I have the lovely @stairswarning helping me! They're basically going over all the chapters of the fic to find all the mistakes and weird phrasing, and they share their notes with me so I can edit it properly! You can find them here on Ao3 or on Tumblr if you want to give them some love! They're doing a lot of work, going through my mess, and I can't thank them enough!

So yeah, we're going through each chapter one by one! It's gonna take some times because we're obviously both busy with life, but hopefully by the end the whole will be more fluid and easier to read!
Blackout and Frying Pan

Chapter Summary

In which Tomura is a good neighbour and Dabi doesn't even know what day it is.

Chapter Notes

This chapter feels a little messier and less focused than the first one but I tried. I hope it's still enjoyable!

Also I was distracted by Eurovision and I apologize.

EDIT: Chapter 2 has now been edited as well! Thank you @starswairning!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tomura perfectly remembered the night he had first met Dabi. The worst night of his life.

It had happened a few months after he moved in with the girls. At this point, the three of them were still getting to know each other and were still finding their marks, but had also passed the point where they were comfortable around one another. Well, more like the point where Tomura was comfortable around them, considering that the two girls were already friends and had been comfortable with him since day one.

What Tomura remembered more clearly about these times, was how everything seemed new and frantic to him. Not even taking into account his own introverted personality, it was very different from the life he had lived with Kurogiri and Atsuhiro. Despite their eccentricities, the two men were of a much more quiet nature, or at least Kurogiri certainly was. Atsuhiro definitely had put some spice in their life. But for many years, it had only been Kurogiri and Tomura. Two quiet souls and two introverted minds, living together, one day at a time. Although they had fun and even had adventures in their own introverted way, the truth was that the two of them were so close that Tomura had never had many friends of his own age growing up. He was an only child, with wounds still healing, and he had never been very keen on socialising. Kurogiri was enough. That’s all it was, really … Well, that and his destructive quirk, that both children and their parents ran away from.

So moving in with the real dynamos that were Toga and Magne had been a bit of a culture shock. They were always moving, always going out, always trying new things, and more than a few times,
they had managed to drag Tomura with them. They weren't always welcome or even good experiences, but he had to admit that they did have some great times together. And besides, he was never forced to do anything and was always allowed to say no.

To Tomura, it felt like Toga and Magne had tried everything. So when the information that the two were in a band eventually came out, it actually wasn’t much of a surprise.

“A band, huh? Like a music band?”

From what Tomura remembered it was a Sunday morning, and the three of them were having breakfast in the kitchen, still in their pyjamas. Magne had made waffles, and they were so fucking good, that she didn’t even have to check if Tomura was finishing his plate.

“A rock band!” Toga had corrected, dropping a huge spoonful of honey on her waffle. “But is it rock though? Dabi says it’s more like Punk? Or was it Grunge?”

“I honestly don’t remember,” Magne had admitted a bit upset. “We should ask him, but he might get all pouty when he realises that we don’t know …”

“Who the fuck is Dabi?” Tomura had asked sipping his hot cocoa (made by Magne as well).

“Iche oursh guisharish!”

“Jeez, Toga, swallow your food.”

“He’s our guitarist!” the girl had repeated. “And our singer. And our composer. And lyrics writer. Basically our leader I guess?”

“Yeah, Dabi pretty much does everything. The band was actually his idea and he’s very passionate about it.”

“He was inspired by Stain! Do you know Stain, Tomu?”
Tomura did know Stain. Music wasn’t really his thing, but there weren’t many people nowadays who did not know who this guy was. Chizome Akaguro had started very small, playing on the pavement or in small bars, and had gone viral almost overnight when someone had filmed his performance and put it online. Since then, his popularity had exploded. From what Tomura knew, his lyrics were very political and his music was very aggressive, and spoke to a lot of young people. He seemed to have a lot of charisma, considering that his image was almost as popular as his work. He certainly had a very distinctive look and quite a personality. Soon enough, the name of Stain was in every mouth, and many aspiring musicians wanted to be just like him. Tomura, on the other hand, didn’t care much for the guy. In fact, he was sort of pissing him off.

“I see,” he muttered, “another Stain fanboy, eh?”

The reason why the girls had brought the band up was that they were about to have one of their first big shows in a bar called The Vigilante, and they both really wanted Tomura to come and see them live. It was better than to listen to them on tape, and this way, he could meet this Dabi guy.

Tomura hadn’t been very keen on the idea. But the girl had been so supportive of him, so patient and helpful, that even an asocial guy like him just couldn’t say no. But the closer the date came, the more nervous he was getting. A rock concert in a small bar seemed like hell. Loud music in his ears, sweaty drunk people everywhere, screaming teenagers … A nightmare. But he had promised to come. Toga had even insisted on picking his outfit for him.

The girls had to be there earlier to set up the material and to meet with this Dabi guy. If arriving alone wasn’t great, awkwardly waiting around while the only two people he knew were busy on technical things, seemed downright awful. So he had decided to go alone later. They had given him the time, made sure he knew where the place was, told him how happy they were that he was about to see them play, and left.

The bar was apparently some sort of secret hideout and had been fucking hard to find even with Google maps. For once in his life, Tomura had almost wanted to thank his anxiety for pushing him to leave so early. He had passed in front of the same supermarket at least twice, turned around almost all the way back, even asked directions from someone, which was a pretty big deal for him. He had reached the point when he was fully following the little arrow on his phone’s screen, not even looking up to check around him. This way, it almost felt like he was playing a video game and it had calmed him down a bit. It worked for a moment at least, because not even a minute later, he had heard some screaming mixed with engine sounds, and a huge shape appeared in his peripheral vision.

“FUUUCK FUCK FUCK! MOVE!!”

Listening to his own guts more than the voice, Tomura had thrown himself to the side and out of the way. He had heard screeching tires, some swearing and then silence. When he had looked up, a
motorcycle was lying on the pavement, and a man was crouching next to it. At the time, panic had been Tomura’s first reaction.

“Holy shit! I’m so sorry! Are you okay? Are you hurt?” he asked, running up to the man. Fortunately, he seemed unharmed, and they were in a relatively small alley late at night, so the chances of a car arriving at full speed were pretty slim.

“I didn’t see you, I wasn’t, gosh I’m so sorry …” Tomura had continued to ramble but he had immediately been cut by a deep, angry voice.

“I GET IT, you said that already, Jesus Christ”

The stranger had stood up, turned toward him, and Tomura was paralyzed. It wasn’t so much that this guy was way taller than him, nor was it the patchwork of burnt skin covering his face, but it was the two icy blue eyes staring at him that had startled Tomura the most.

“And yes, you can be sorry,” the guy had continued, “what kind of fucking dumbass just walks in the middle of the road like this? You could have killed me!”

And just like that, those eyes added to the disdainful responses had been enough for Tomura to lose all sympathy and worry about the guy.

“Well, you could have killed me too, you ugly piece of shit! I mean, who rides at full speed in the dark like that?!”

The guy had actually looked a bit surprised by the sudden aggressive tone, especially coming from this small, skinny, dishevelled, blue-haired boy who now seemed ready to fight him. But infuriatingly enough, it had only made him smile.

“Alright calm down, don’t hiss at me like that …”

“Well then maybe don’t be so fucking rude!”

“Wait, I’m the rude one? You made me crash a motorcycle that isn’t even mine, I think I’m
allowed to pissed!”

“YOU ALMOST KILLED ME WITH IT!” Tomura had punctuated his screech with a light kick to the engine’s tire.

“Hey stop that! I said it wasn’t mine!”

“DO I LOOK LIKE A GIVE A SHIT?”

“Oh, my God, stop screaming! Okay, listen, I don’t have time for this I really need to get somewhere. So shut up and help me get it back up . . .”

Tomura had actually scoffed at that, looking at the man already trying to find a way to lift the engine.

“And why the fuck would I do that, huh? I need to be somewhere too you know . . .”

“Because,” the man had said nonchalantly, “that would make you a fucking decent human being. And also I would give this back to you.”

To Tomura’s horror, the man had slowly raised his hand to show what he was holding.

“My… my phone!” Tomura had stuttered. When dodging the motorcycle, he must have dropped it in his panic, without even realising it. Of course, he had immediately tried to grab it, but the stranger was holding it over his head, way out of reach.

“You know I was gonna give it back nicely . . . But then you started to yell at me, which I didn’t really like. How about you just help me pick this up, and I give it back to you?”

Of course, Tomura first thought had been to just kick this douche in the knees, or maybe even use his quirk on him. But that was a risky move, considering that the guy was a lot taller and more muscular than him. Plus he didn’t know was his quirk was. Besides, he really wasn’t too keen on using his own quirk when he could avoid it. And it was getting late.
With clenched fists, Tomura had swallowed his pride and move to the other side of the engine, ignoring the dumb smile on the other’s face. The thing was heavy, but with the two of them working together, they had managed to get it back up. Once it was stabilized, the guy quickly had made sure that nothing was too damaged and eventually handed his phone to Tomura.

“I thank you for your help, noble stranger."

“Urgh, whatever, I hope that the thing crashes and that you die,” Tomura had mumbled, grabbing his mobile and holding it close to his chest.

“Hey, so, I kind of looked at your screen and … You’re going to The Vigilante?”

“What if I am? What’s it to you?”

“Nothing, I don’t give a flying fuck. You just don’t seem like the type.”

“Yeah well, I’m not. I’m gonna see my friends play,” Tomura had snapped at him. To this day, he still didn’t know why he had been so honest. Probably because he was tired of this guy and wanted this conversation to be over as soon as possible. But instead of shutting him down, this comment had seemed to have the opposite effect and had renewed his interest.

“Oh?” he had smiled, “your friends are playing at The Vigilante tonight?”

“And? Why do you care?”

“I don’t,” he had said mounting back his motorcycle, “Well anyway, thanks for making my night you creep. Who knows? Maybe I’ll see you around.”

“Tsk, I sure hope not,” Tomura had scoffed, already on his way. “I hope I never see your ugly face ever again.”

But of course, he had seen his ugly face again. Twenty minutes later in fact. On a stage. Making
“Thank you, thank you so much ladies and gentleman! Wow, it is a privilege to play for you tonight at The Vigilante. And I have to say- I am amazed by this warm welcome you’re giving us. It feels so good to be surrounded by so much benevolence. As you might have guessed by our name, we were very inspired by Stain, like so many of you tonight. I think one of the reasons that we all connect so closely with his lyrics, is that we live in a harsh world where no one gives a shit about you. Rude and obnoxious creeps are everywhere and they will be the last ones to give you a hand when you need help. And tonight I say fuck those people! Fuck you unhelpful creeps! Anyway, I’m Dabi, this is Toga at the drums and Magne at the keyboard and our first song is Ghosts!”

And he had somehow managed to maintain eye contact during the entirety of the song, while Tomura was trapped in the crowd with no escape. The worst had been after the show when the trio had joined him for a drink.

“Oh, so you’re the Tomura I’ve heard so much about? Wow, it is so good to finally meet you! You know what? I don’t usually say this, but you immediately strike me as a nice, helpful and generous person!”

The worst night of his life.

* 

After the “girl’s night incident”, a whole week passed without Tomura seeing Dabi. But it wasn’t like they met much anyway. To Tomura’s knowledge, Dabi didn’t go to university or college, so they had no chance to meet there during the week. They didn’t frequent the same places and Tomura wasn’t really going out anyway. So the only times they would see each other were either by total accident, or when Toga and Magne were involved. During the week, they had talked about meeting somewhere so Dabi could introduce them to his new roommate, a guy named Jin (Tomura remembered Dabi saying something about a roommate talking to himself and wasn’t sure what to make of it), but they couldn’t make it happen for a couple of weeks. Good. The less I see of him the better off I am.

And suddenly it was Friday, which meant girl’s night again.

“You know Tomu,” Toga said while applying some sharp eyeliner, “we call it girl’s night but
you’re welcome to join anytime.”

The three of them were in the bathroom, the girls getting ready in front of the mirror and Tomura sitting in the empty bathtub to give them more space. They liked to chat like this every time the girls were preparing themselves for a night out; it had become a sort of tradition. Tomura, of course, was playing a game on his console and somehow still managed to be completely engaged in the conversation. It was a mysterious talent that Toga and Magne were no longer questioning.

“I appreciate it, but pass,” he responded, barely looking up from the screen. “I think you both deserve your weekly break from me.”

“Okay hold on,” Magne said as she stopped fixing her hair for a second, “I know you’re half joking when you say that, and I know that you actually also need a break from us and some alone time and I absolutely respect that. But I want to re-establish very clearly that you are a beautiful angel and that we love you and that we are thrilled to have you here, living with us. We’re good?”

Tomura knew he should be used by Toga and Magne’s love declarations by now, but they still turned his cheek pink and made him miss enemies on the screen, every single time. He slightly sank in the bathtub and muttered a small; “Yeah we’re good.”

“Oh my Gooooooood,” Toga squealed hands on her cheeks, “look, Magne, he’s blushing!”

“Wh- Shut the fuck up! No, I’m not!”

“Aw cute, he totally is,” Magne smiled.

“Urgh! I hate both of you so much! Go out and cut some boys already!”

Tomura realised he mustn’t have been very threatening because the next second, the girls practically crashed on top of him, laughing.

Once they had left, Tomura grabbed his sketchbook and pencils and sat down in the big armchair next to the window in the living room. He had finished his landscape a few days earlier and had decided to practice some sketches. He particularly loved to work on anatomy: bones, shoulders, muscles, legs and above all, hands. His sketchbook was full of them, every size, forms, and positions … As a child, it was the thing he found the most difficult to draw and therefore practiced
a lot, almost out of spite, and now it was the thing he drew best. But if he was completely honest with himself, there was also a sort of morbid fascination to it. These hands of paper were harmless. Unlike his.

Comfortably sat, Tomura enjoyed the silence for a few seconds before taking a deep breath and opening his sketchbook on a blank page. Nice … Now I can just relax and …

**DRIIIIIIIIIING**

The doorbell’s sound made him jump, and his heart started to beat a little faster. *What the fuck is it now?* He told himself that it was probably Toga or Magne, who had forgotten their keys. It was the most probable answer for sure. But another possibility slowly made his way up to his brain. *Hell no. No fucking way. No way.* The doorbell rang a second time, and Tomura jumped out of his chair to answer. *Toga forgot her keys again and that’s all it is, or Magne let the oven on, I mean we don’t actually have an oven but …* He opened the door in one swift movement.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me …”

In front of him, Dabi looked just as dumbfounded as he did, and the two young men stared at each other in silence for a few seconds. Tomura couldn’t, for the life of him, figure out what Dabi was doing here, exactly one week after their last disaster of an evening. It couldn’t be to see Toga and Magne. Surely he couldn’t be that dumb.

“Huh,” Dabi began in a monotone voice, “I … um … I take it that the girls aren’t here?”

**WHHELP.**

“Did you …” Tomura stuttered almost more out of confusion than anger, “did you not … register what I said last time? Last Friday? About the whole … girl’s night thing?”

“I mean yeah, but that was last week. How was I supposed to know that they were gonna be out this week too?”

“BECAUSE I FUCKING TOLD YOU SO, YOU DUMB PIECE OF SHIT!”
“Uh, no you didn’t … You didn’t say that it was a weekly thing.”

“Look I’m not their private assistant okay? Why didn’t you just call them like you said you would do?”

“I ran out of battery.”

“YOU RAN OUT OF … you know what?” Tomura tried to calm himself because he was about to slam his own head against a wall. “You know what, fine! I’m not doing this tonight. Take your dumb, sorry ass in there and do whatever the fuck it is that you do. Just do your fucking thing.”

And with that, he walked back in, hands grasping at the air out of frustration.

“You do your thing and I do my thing. We don’t talk to each other, don’t look at each other, and we stay out of the fucking kitchen.”

“I knew it,” Dabi said closing the door behind him, “I’m growing on you.”

Tomura flipped him off and sat back in his armchair. The other man took the same spot as last time back on the couch and proceeded to empty his bag on the coffee table. Computer, headphones, notebooks, pens and … something else. Dabi called out before Tomura’s pen had even touched the paper.

“Hey creep!”

“OH MY GOD, what did I just say? Are you really that …”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know, no talking but shut the fuck up for two seconds. I’ve got … Jesus Christ, I’ve got something for you.”

Dabi didn’t even give Tomura the time to process this surreal sentence. He grabbed something from his bag and slammed it on the coffee table. It was a huge pack of ramen noodles, at least a dozen cups each of different flavours. Tomura opened his eyes wide, staring at the package for a few seconds, before saying the first thing that came to his mind.
“What the fuck is that?”

“What the fuck is …? Your eyes are so fucking huge, how do you not see …”

“I’m not blind, I see what it is! But, I mean, why are you giving this to me?”

Dabi seemed to hesitate for a few seconds, running a hand through his hair before answering.

“Because … Look, I bought them a long time ago, it was a cheap deal kind of thing, okay? I know I’m not going to eat them because I don’t like the brand. But that’s a bunch of them, so I can’t just throw them away like that … And… Look, you’re the only person I know who would eat that crap, okay? I mean it feeds you just fine and it’s easy to make.”

Tomura just listened to him as he rambled, without any reaction or answer. He was thinking back to their last conversation in the kitchen, and everything he had told Dabi, what he had said about not having the motivation to prepare anything for himself. But he instantly hated himself for reading too much into this. *There’s no way … It’s Dabi we’re talking about here!*

“Hey don’t right read too much into this okay?” Dabi added almost as a direct confirmation of Tomura’s thoughts. “It’s taking up too much room in my cupboard, okay? If anything you’re like a human trash can …”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it,” Tomura answered. “Well fine, okay … I guess I apprecia-”

“Oh my God, don’t!” Dabi raised his hand as an objection. “Don’t you fucking dare finish that sentence okay? I fucking forbid you to do so!”

“Geez, fine!”

They both nodded in a kind of mutual agreement, and the silence that followed was so awkward that Tomura began to pray for a literal divine intervention to put a stop to it. And he might have been heard, considering that, at that exact moment, the power went out.
“Holy shit … !” “What the … ?” they shouted at the same time. They were in complete darkness and both stayed still for a few seconds, almost as if they were expecting something else to happen. But nothing did. Eventually, Dabi let out a sigh.

“Well, shit.”

“Wait, that’s odd,” said Tomura as his eyes were slowly getting used to the darkness, “that’s … really really dark.”

“Yeah, that tends to happen during power failures.”

“No, I mean, like really dark. There are no lights outside either. Not from the streets nor from the other buildings.”

Tomura carefully moved to the window and his fears were confirmed. Everything outside was only lit by the moonlight. He could distinguish some people walking around the streets, apparently as confused as them. *Maybe someone is fighting a villain somewhere?* Deep in his thoughts, he hadn’t heard Dabi joining him by the window and the sound of his voice, suddenly so close to his ears, startling him a little

“How about that huh? I guess it’s sectorial. Not something we can fix.”

“Thanks for your input, you genius,” Tomura grumbled, “anyway, there’s no way to know how long it will last. I need to find some torches. I guess I can use my phone as well but I’d rather save the battery, *unlike some people.* I’ll look for candles as well. And you’re a smoker so you should have a …”

Tomura suddenly stopped rambling when a soft blue light began to fill up the room. It wasn’t very bright, but just enough to help them distinguish their surroundings and it also seemed to flicker quite a bit. Almost like something from another world. Everything in the room looked the same and yet different. Tomura turned around, looking for the source, and saw Dabi standing right next to him with a smug expression on his face and blue flames coming out left hand.

“Oh. Right.” In his agitation, Tomura had actually forgotten about Dabi’s quirk. It wasn’t his first time seeing it though; the black-haired man often used it on stage, between songs or at the end of a show. And most of the time, just to casually light a cigarette. But for some reason, it looked different this time. It seemed brighter, but also softer somehow. It was actually … quite beautiful.
Maybe it was because they were in total darkness, or maybe it was because Tomura had never been so close to it before. And he was close. Very close.

“Hey.”

Upon hearing Dabi’s voice, Tomura blinked a few times, almost getting out of a trance, like a moth attracted by a lantern. The other man seemed very amused.

“You’re staring.”

Shit. Shit shit shit shit. Tomura practically jumped four feet backward.

“ANYWAY! That’s all nice and dandy, but I don’t trust your flames one bit so I’m gonna get some torches just in case.”

As he walked away, he heard Dabi yell, “Holy shit did you just say Nice And Dandy?”

It took him a few minutes, but he managed to find a flashlight in the mess that was his room. He was about to ask Dabi to be careful with his flames, but when he made his way back to the living room, the blue light was gone. And Dabi with it. What? Where the fuck did he go? That dumbass. He called Dabi’s name but got no answer. With nothing but his own light in the complete darkness, Tomura walked slowly to the middle of the room, his heart beating faster and faster. Oh my god where is he? What happened to him? What is …

“BWAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Tomura let out a screech as Dabi jumped from behind the couch. He had raised his dangerous hand forward out of reflex, but immediately put it back in his pocket when he realized what had just happened, and began to blush furiously. Hopefully, the dark was hiding it. Dabi, incredibly pleased with himself, burst out laughing.

“Oh my God, I can’t believe it actually worked!” He was laughing so hard that he almost couldn’t speak properly. “You should have seen your face!”
“WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU ABSOLUTE PIECE OF GARBAGE?!” Tomura was still recovering and catching his breath, but it somehow didn’t stop him from screaming. “I ALMOST DISINTEGRATED YOU!!!”

“Nah, I would have burned you before that. Oh man, I’m gonna cherish this moment forever …”

Tomura was about to tell him to cherish his arm because he was about to lose it when another noise covered both of their voices. It was like a series of crashes that ended with a loud thump, like when something relatively heavy falls on the floor. It came from above them. Tomura immediately forgot about Dabi’s dumb joke.

“Shit,” he whispered, “I don’t like that. I especially don’t like where the noise came from.”

“What, from above us? Is it one of your neighbours or something?”

“Yeah … It’s either right above us or another floor above. And both scenarios aren’t very good.”

Dabi was actually a bit surprised by Tomura’s suddenly serious tone.

“What the hell that’s supposed to mean?”

“Right above us is a lady called Saki, but she’s not here right now, she’s visiting her boyfriend or some shit, and isn’t coming back before a few weeks … She gave a key to Magne for her to water her plants, so I’m pretty sure she would have told us if she came back early … Which means that if it came from there …”

“I get it … People breaking in … Not unusual during blackouts … And what if it’s from the other floor?”

“On the fourth floor, it’s an old man living alone. So if the noise comes from there, he may be hurt and may need some help. In both cases, I need to go check. Stay here, I’ll be right back.”

“Tsk”
“… Did you just click your tongue at me?”

“Don’t tell me what to do creep. Besides, it’s all dark and dangerous out there, and if you died Toga and Magne would probably quit the band.”

#

It wasn’t until they actually left the flat that Tomura realized what Dabi was holding in his non-flaming hand.

“… Is that our frying pan?”

“Hey, I’m not potentially going against villains defenceless. And it’s not like you guys actually have guns or something.”

Tomura was looking for some traces of irony or even humour in Dabi’s eyes. But it was the most serious he had ever seen him. It was quite a vision really; this tall intimidating man covered in scars, with blue flames in one hand and a cheap frying pan in the other.

“You do realise,” Tomura continued slowly, “that you literally have fire in your other hand?”

Dabi looked at him like he had asked the most stupid question in the world.

“It’s not as precise as your danger hands. It’s kind of a wild quirk, and your building is old as fuck. Excuse me, for not wanting it to burn to the ground. Can we go now?”

“Okay, okay, just one last question; why didn’t take one of our kitchen knives? Or even one of Toga’s from her room?”

Dabi did his best to hide the sudden realisation hitting him, but Tomura saw right through him. He still tried to give an argument though.
“… I can also use the pan as a shield.”

The image, the tone, Dabi’s face … It was all too much and Tomura burst out laughing. A real raging laugh like he hadn’t had in weeks, that made him snort and brought tears to his eyes. He did his best to keep it down, covering his face with his hands but wasn’t really successful. Dabi told him to shut up once, but eventually just stared at him probably waiting for him to be done.

“Can we please fucking go now? Your old neighbour is probably dead by now, mophead.”

They walked up the corridor in silence. Dabi had kept his pan, probably out of spite, and was lighting their way with his other hand. Tomura still had his flashlight just in case and walked with one hand out of his pocket as a protective measure. They might have left with light spirits, but apprehension was slowly growing in both of them. When they got to the stairs, Tomura had to admit to himself that he was glad to have someone with him, even if that someone was the worst person in the world. And Dabi, who was usually so bored with everything, looked a bit tense by the time they reached the next floor. Everything was still pitch black, and the silence had become agonising. Finally, they were in front of Saki’s door.

“Well at least it’s not broken,” whispered Dabi, slightly relieved.

Just to be sure, Tomura grabbed the handle and struggled with it for a bit. The door was clearly locked, with no signs of intrusion whatsoever. They both let out a breath. No villains then.

“Okay so that’s good,” said Tomura, “but it means that the problem is upstairs!”

He dashed toward the staircase, Dabi following closely. He knew that the old man was tough and quick on his feet, but he was still, well … old. And in a darkness like this, anything could have happened. Once they reached the door, the blue-haired boy immediately started banging on it.

“Hey, old man! Hey! Are you there? Are you alright?”

The door opened under Tomura’s fist. *Shit. Shit, it’s unlocked. Shit shit shit please be okay.* His neck began to scratch terribly. He was unable to move, so it was Dabi who slowly pushed the door open.

“Hey, calm down creep, okay? I’m sure he’s …”
His sentence stayed unfinished because what appeared in front of them was like a blow to the stomach for the two of them. In the middle of the living room, a small man was lying face down in a dark puddle. As Dabi’s flames slowly lit up the room, they could see its bright red colour. The two young men screamed at the same time.

“OH MY GOD HE’S FUCKING DEAD!!!”

Suddenly, the dead man lifted his head.

“I’m alive!”

“OH MY GOD HE’S ALIVE!!!!!”

* *

“That was fucking, dirty Gran Torino …” Tomura muttered, sitting still on the man’s couch with a glass of water. The old man giggled and lightly hit the top of his head with his cane.

“Watch your mouth, boy.”

Dabi was sitting right next to him, eyes still empty. His flames were out but he was still holding the frying pan dearly. In other circumstances, Tomura would have made a snarky remark about it, but right now, he was still a bit shaken. The three men were in Gran Torino’s living room, lit by some torches and candles, the two youngest still recovering from what had just happened. After the blackout, Gran Torino had looked for some way to light up the room. With quirk, grabbing the torches on top of the cupboard should have been easy, especially for a pro. But in the darkness, he had miscalculated his angle and caused the whole thing to crash.

“I can’t believe that I was worried about you,” Tomura continued, “one day you’re gonna be stuck under a wardrobe and I won’t even lift my finger.”

“I just couldn’t resist,” Gran Torino explained, “I was about to clean up the mess when I heard you boys coming up. And that tomato sauce mark on the ground was just too perfect.”
Dabi, who had stayed silent until now, suddenly began to chuckle. Tomura stared at him, wondering if it was nervous, or if the guy had finally gone insane.

“That’s not funny, you idiot!”

“Mophead,” Dabi said smiling, “it’s a little bit funny. Well played old man.”

Gran Torino was suddenly beaming. He pointed to Dabi with his cane.

“You see Tomura? This kid gets it! I like him.”

“Yeah, he gets it because he is a fucking psychopath, just like you apparently! And don’t say you like him okay? Don’t betray me like this …”

The three of them actually stayed like this for a while, chatting in the semi-lit room. Tomura needed more time than Dabi to become amiable again so he mostly stayed silent, but it bothered him to see the other two get along so well and so quickly.

“Wait, hold on,” Dabi inquired, “so you’re a pro-hero right? But, then why do you live in a crappy flat like this?”

“Crappy?” Gran Torino repeated, outraged. “My flat is perfectly fine, thank you very much! But to answer your question, it’s not where I usually live. My main apartment is in Yamanashi Prefecture. I only use this one when I need to be in town.”

For the last ten minutes, the old man had been telling Dabi about some of his past fights. He was doing so without any vanity or even self-interest, the young man was the one asking and attentively listening. Tomura had heard these stories a thousand times. And way before Gran Torino … “coincidentally” moved right above him. This was actually a bit of a touchy subject that he had yet to properly discuss with the old man … But not tonight.

With the light of a candle, Gran Torino took a look at the old mechanical clock on the mantle. The lights had been out for almost an hour.
“Tsk,” Gran Torino clicked his tongue, “this blackout is lasting a lot longer than I thought it would.”

“Do you think it could be a villain?” asked Tomura getting up, suddenly worried, “two of my friends are out tonight!”

“No, not necessarily, don’t worry,” answered the hero, “but I will go on patrol just in case. Even if the cause is accidental, a lot of people would use a darkness like this to commit some crimes.”

Gran Torino equipped himself with his boots, mask, and cape as he continued, “I’m sure a lot of heroes are already out, but hey, someone’s got to show the new generation how it’s done.”

“Hey do you, hum …” Tomura hesitated for a second. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to ask this with Dabi in the room. “Do you think that All-Might is out as well?”

Gran Torino gave him a warm smile. “Isn’t he always?”

Tomura hadn’t properly seen All Might since … he actually didn’t remember since when. I had been a few years for sure. Of course, he wasn’t mad about it or anything like that. The man was the number one hero after all; he had to be incredibly busy. But he remembered a time, shortly after his rescue when both All Might and Gran Torino would visit him and Kurogiri almost once a month. He remembered that he always looked forward to it, even though he didn’t like to show it back then. As the years went by, of course, the visits became rarer and rarer. He never resented it in any way. But sometimes, during sleepless nights, when only anxiety and self-hatred guided his thoughts, he had wondered if time and duty had been the only things keeping All Might away from him. Or if maybe, as he grew up, he had started to look like her a little too much …

Tomura realised he had zoned out for a bit and was brought back to reality by some indistinct chattering noises somewhere in front of him. Gran Torino was at the window, ready to jump into the night, and was still exchanging some words with Dabi.

“Anyway, it was nice meeting you grandpa,” Dabi said, shaking the other’s hand “be careful out there.”

“Don’t tell me what to do, you punk.”
As he was about to jolt outside, Gran Torino turned around give Tomura one last smile and a thumb up. “Stay safe kid. And if I see him, I’ll say hi for you.” And just like that, he was gone.

* 

“Wow,” Dabi smiled as they closed Gran Torino’s door behind them, “I don’t even understand why you were worried about him in the first place. This guy is more of a badass that you’ll ever be!”

“Yeah well he’s also old as balls,” Tomura spat, shoving both hands in his pockets, “two months ago he asked me for help because he had stuck his hand in a jar. I had to destroy the damn thing with my quirk.”

It was a true story, but apparently, it wasn’t enough to tarnish Gran Torino’s image in Dabi’s mind, because he was still smiling thinking about all of the stories he had just heard. Once again, his blue flames were their only source of light as they made their way back to their flat.

“So,” Dabi asked after not even one fucking second of silence, “how do you know this guy?”

“Holy shit, are you really that dense?” Tomura scoffed. “He's my neighbour, you dumbass.”

“No, I mean, before that.”

Dabi had asked this question so matter-of-factly, that it took Tomura a second to realise what he was implying. He stopped in the middle of the stairs, his right hand gripping the rail with one carefully lifted finger.

“What do you mean? What makes you think I've known him longer than that?”

Dabi, who had stopped a few steps below him, just shrugged.

“I don’t know … It was something he said to me just before leaving.”
Tomura was actually wondering what those two had said to each other back then, but he had figured that Dabi would have told him to go fuck himself if he asked, and therefore didn’t bother.

“I told him,” Dabi continued, “that I didn’t understand why a cool guy like him would bother with a disgusting creep like you.” Tomura was about to tell him to go fuck himself but Dabi wasn’t finished.

“But then, he told me that I shouldn’t be too harsh on you, because you had a restless mind and a good heart. And that you were the bravest boy he knew.”

He said that?

Tomura stopped in the middle of the stairs. He had absolutely no response to that whatsoever. And even with the blue flames lighting up his face, he couldn’t read Dabi expression.

“So yeah,” he continued, “that might be a load of bullshit and all, but you don’t say that kind of shit about your friendly neighbour. And by the way, what was that thing about All Might?”

Dabi wasn’t moving, clearly waiting for answers. As his brain was slowly getting back on track, Tomura began to consider his options. He didn’t want to tell…. Couldn’t tell Dabi the whole thing. Certainly not talk about Nana … But he didn’t have the time, nor the ability for that matter, to create a quick convincing lie. Tomura had always been a terrible liar. But Dabi probably wasn’t gonna let it go, so he figured that maybe he could tell part of the truth.

“They saved me.” Tomura let out with a breath he didn’t know he was holding. “All Might and Gran Torino. They rescued me when I was a child.”

Dabi eyes went wide for a few seconds. It was his turn to stay still, as Tomura began to move forward again.

“They rescued you?” Dabi repeated.

“Yeah, I mean All Might rescues dozens of kids every day. That’s not a big deal. I’m not a big deal.”
“Yeah, okay but … I didn’t know you … That you … What happened to you?”

There it was. The question Tomura wanted to avoid at any cost. He turned around in a sharp motion to tell Dabi to go fuck himself, but any insult he had prepared died in his throat when he realised that he was only a few inches away from the other’s face. Dabi seemed taken aback as well, as he had not expected Tomura to turn around so abruptly, only one step below him. For a split second, it felt like his flames got a little bigger. They seemed to be at perfect head-butting distance, and Tomura seriously considered crashing his head into the Dabi’s. But instead, he just said: “I don’t want to talk about it.”

He couldn’t see clearly with this light, but he felt like Dabi was looking at his lips, probably thinking about how disgusting and cracked they were. He never failed to mention that. But if had planned to throw an insult at him, he seemed to change his mind, because he just walked past him.

“Alright.”

Tomura hadn’t expected him to actually let this go so easily, considering how obnoxious he was, but he was actually grateful. Apparently, even a rude brat like Dabi knew better than to disrespect some boundaries. They were back to Saki’s floor, and as they kept moving, Tomura felt like he had to ask something, just to fill up the silence.

“So, hum, did he say anything else before leaving? Not about me, just …”

“Huh yeah, well nothing special. I just asked him why he was in town. He said … he said he had some business with UA.”

This response didn’t really surprise Tomura. All Might was teaching there now, so it made sense. What surprised him was the small hesitation in Dabi’s voice before mentioning the name of the Hero School.

“Do you care about UA?” he asked.

“Not really, it’s just …” Dabi stopped mid-sentence like he was thinking carefully about what he was about to say. “It’s just that my little brother goes there.”
“Wait, brother? What? What the fuck?"

“I didn’t know you had a brother.”

“Yeah, well I didn’t know you were saved by All Might. It’s not like we’re friends, creep. We have no reason to know things about each other.”

Tomura actually took the time to process the information. Dabi was right. It wasn’t like they were trying to get to know each other or anything… In fact, he firmly believed that the less he knew about this guy the better of he was. But weirdly enough, the fact that Dabi had a family had never crossed his mind. Obviously, he theoretically knew that he had parents and such but… He had just never once tried to imagine what his life could be like, the same way Dabi had obviously never tried to imagine his. And now, they each knew at least one thing about the other. Funny night …

“Errr, Creep?”

Dabi had put his fire away and grabbed his sleeve. Tomura was about to grumble something, but the other point forward. They had reached their door. And it was open.

“You locked the door before leaving right?”

“Yeah, you saw me do it!”

They exchanged a wary look, and Dabi raised the frying pan above his head, with a determined but slightly anxious look in his eyes. It was still funny, but Tomura was a little too nervous to laugh this time. Suddenly, some noise came from inside and they both jumped a little. With nothing more than a nod of mutual agreement, they both decided to walk in. Moving very slowly, they pushed the door open and advanced. It was even darker without Dabi’s flames. Suddenly, two silhouettes charged toward them.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAHH!!!!”

The four voices had screamed simultaneously. There were a few seconds of chaos and confusion, during which the two young men grabbed on to each other, and Dabi dropped his frying pan and used his flames to light the room up. In front of them, Toga was holding a knife and Magne both of her fists in front of her, both ready to fight. But when they realised who their opponents were, they
dropped their guard and burst out laughing.

“Holy shit!” Tomura screeched, “What the fuck are you guys doing?”

“What are you guys doing?” Magne countered, “We walked back to an empty apartment! We were freaking out!”

“We went to see your cool neighbour,” Dabi answered. “But then we came back and the door was open, and we freaked out!”

“Awwww!” Toga squealed, putting her knife back in her purse, “that’s adorable! And look at the two of you holding on to each other!”

It took this comment for the two young men to realise that they were still grabbing onto each other’s arms, and they immediately took a step back.

“What the fuck, creep?! Don’t touch me like that you could have disintegrated me with your freaky hands!”

“Yeah, well you could have scorched me, you ashtray!”

“I guess you both got lucky,” Magne said with a smug smile, “lucky that Toga and I realized it was the two of you before we kicked your asses, that is.”

“To think we could have killed our precious boys,” gasped Toga, “that would have been a bummer …”

A “bummer” … Wow. Before Tomura could comment, the room was suddenly flooded with light.

“What the … Hey! The power is back on! Yay!” Toga began to jump and clap her hands, as the rest of them were squinting, eyes still used to the dark. A quick look at the window and in the corridors confirmed that light was back for everyone. It felt a bit violent. Tomura was almost missing the strange and surreal atmosphere of the obscurity and suddenly felt very exposed to everyone’s eyes. He wondered if he would still find Dabi’s flames beautiful in this light.
“Hum, what is that?”

Magne had walked to the living room and was pointing at the package of ramen on the coffee table. *Oh, right.*

“It’s for you guys,” Dabi responded, “I won’t eat them so I thought …”

“Oh that’s cute but Toga and I won’t eat them. I’m not really one for ramen, and she doesn’t like that brand. But it’s a nice thought for Tomura!”

“Yeah well, I GUESS…” Dabi snapped, walking back to his computer, still open on the coffee table. Tomura didn’t add anything, because the last time they had talked about this, it had been so awkward that it had caused a blackout.

“So, how was the night?” he asked Toga. “The blackout didn’t cause you any trouble?”

“Nah, it was kind of fun actually! We were having a drink when it happened, in a restaurant with a lot of people. The manager and the waiters all arrived with candles for us, it was super cute.”

“And no funny business on the way home?”

“Not really,” Magne recalled, “I mean, a guy tried to grab Toga’s purse at some point but she stabbed him in the hand.”

“FUCK!”

The three of them turned to the other side of the room where Dabi was fidgeting on his computer. He looked … genuinely distressed.

“Oh come on, fuck me!”
“What’s the matter?” Toga asked, jumping on the couch next to him.

“It’s the fucking blackout, I … My computer was charging when it happened, but it was almost out of battery so … Anyway, it went out when we were out, and I think … I hadn’t saved my work in awhile I don’t know, it’s all fucked up now!”

“The sound mixing you mean?” Magne joined them to look at the screen herself. “How much did you lose?”

“A lot … like, an entire night of work. Maybe more if it fucked up the backups.” Dabi grabbed his head with both hands, eyes filled with panicked agony. Tomura had never seen him so distraught before. He was usually so cold and distant … Looking at the scene, his eyes slowly drifted to the package of ramen, still on the coffee table.

“Wait here.”

He had spoken without really thinking. The three pairs of eyes looked up at him in confusion, as he made his way back to his room. He opened one of his drawers, the one where his put anything electronic and fumbled around until he found what he was looking for. He came back to the living room, a floppy disk in his hand.

“What the fuck is that?” Dabi asked, clearly suspicious.

“Relax, it’s not a virus,” Tomura sighed, “Backups are rarely lost for real, especially not because of an external cause. You just have to find it somewhere on your software. This thing should do it, I use it a lot with video games.”

Dabi didn’t look convinced.

“You can trust him Dabi!” argued Magne, “Tomura plays a lot of computer games, I’m pretty sure he knows what he’s doing!”

Dabi reluctantly grabbed the floppy disc, put it in his computer and let Tomura sit in front of the screen. As he had expected, the lost files were easy to find, and it took him less than a minute to restore everything. “There,” he said, satisfied, “is that it?”
“Holy shit …” Dabi whispered.

“Is that it? All of it?”

“Yeah, all of it. Everything is back. How did you …”

“Wooooow!” Toga squealed, practically climbing on both Tomura and Dabi’s laps to look at the screen, “You’re a real hacker, Tomu!”

“I’m really not.”

“A mastermind! A computer genius!”

“Toga please, you’re literally crushing my lungs right now …”

“Sorry.”

Dabi stared at the screen for a few more seconds, before slowing closing the laptop and putting it back in his bag. It was getting pretty late, so he started to pack everything. Toga and Magne both hugged him so hard that he almost choked, and then they proceed to race to the bathroom. Dabi and Tomura were left alone.

“Funny night, huh?” the taller man said opening the door.

“I guess,” Tomura shrugged.

“I might come back to visit this Gran Torino guy, so let me know when he’s in town.”

“Would that change anything? Even if I gave you his exact timetable, you would probably still managed to show up when he’s not here.”
“Yeah, that’s fair. But then, maybe I should show up every day just in case.”

“Ew, no. Gross.”

Dabi was about to leave, door open and one foot already out. But it seemed like he wanted to add something, and for some reason, Tomura didn’t mind waiting for a bit.

“Hum…” he began, “I just wanted to say … For the computer, I … I guess I apprecia-”

“Don’t you dare finish that sentence.”

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Dabi was sitting on the bus, on his way home. He was almost falling asleep, softly rocked by the movement of the engine. He had pulled too many all-nighters these past few weeks, and the thought of his bed, waiting for him back home, felt amazing. *I can’t believe I’m actually going to sleep tonight. What fucking miracle.* “Miracle” wasn’t much of an exaggeration, considering how close he had been to another sleepless night. He absolutely hated to think of Tomura as a “miracle” but … He was pretty much a live saver on this one. He was so tired that he let his mind drift for a bit. He was thinking about Gran Torino’s words and this whole thing about mophead being saved by All Might. He didn’t really know why he cared about this, why he was so curious. Perhaps it was the realisation that Tomura might be slightly more interesting than he had initially anticipated. Certainly more than he had thought during their first meeting when he had appeared as nothing more than an angry stray kitten hissing at him for no reason.

Holding his bag against his chest, he began to feel something odd-shaped inside. He opened it and discovered the frying pan. *What the …? How the fuck did it end up here?* He remembered putting it on the coffee table next to him when he checked his computer. And after that, he had been so confused by mophead’s intervention, that he had accidentally packed it with everything else. *How did I not realise? It’s not exactly small. Oh well …* Too late to turn around. He would give it back at some point anyway. Or maybe even keep it. Suddenly, he remembered Tomura’s laugh. The snorts, the tears coming to his eyes, his dumb hands trying to cover his dumb smile … He remembered everything perfectly, and for some reason, it made him angry.

Chapter End Notes
Can you believe that Dabi was so deep in his gay crisis that he literally shoved an entire frying pan in his bag? Unbelievable.

Tomura and Dabi's first meeting is 100% the one between Jane and Rochester in "Jane Eyre" and I have no shame.

I hope it didn't feel like a mess ... I don't know, I think I feel like this because the first chapter was mostly an exposition of their relationship and now, things kind of ... happen. I also hope that the opening flashback didn't feel too jammed-in and weird. Also having dialogues told in pas perfect might have been a mistake, but it's okay I will accept my fate.

So yeah, in this AU Stain is an underground rock star. It makes sense I promise.

Also, Gran Torino is here! Again, I hope it doesn't feel too out of place. It actually started more as a joke in my head because I wanted The Boys to investigate some neighbour during the blackout, but I actually really liked developing this. Tomura is still Nana's grandson, I want to play around with his relationship with All Might later on. Having Gran Torino here was a way to introduce this conflict early on and light a little spark in both Tomura's and Dabi's minds. Also, All Might and Gran Torino are such dads you guys ... They would 100% "accidentally" rent an apartment right above Tomura's.

Anyways, hope you enjoy this chapter! Next time, we should have a bit more of the gang with Twice and Spinner joining in!

EDIT: Chapter 2 has now been edited as well! Thank you @starswairning!
Too Much And Not Enough

Chapter Summary

In which Tomura is soft for 0.5 seconds and Dabi stops functioning.

Chapter Notes

I should really be working on my final papers right now but the power shigadabi compels me. This chapter is super fucking long so I hope it doesn't feel too messy and disjointed.

WARNING, Tomura thinks pretty badly of himself at the beginning of this chapter and comes close to a panic attack. It begins around "what if it does?" and ends when Jin arrives in the kitchen if you want to skip it.

Also what is pacing? I don't know her.

I keep forgetting to mention it, but I'm Tumblr at theteapotofdoom (same icon and everything) if you want to say hi!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It took Tomura a few days to actually open the pack of ramen noodles. In the meantime, it had stayed on the kitchen table, like a sort of modern piece of art, without anyone touching it. Eventually, Magne began to complain, asking him to either open it, put it in a cupboard or throw it away. So, he took one cup a day at the university. It turned out to be quite practical, easy to transport and big enough to fill him up for a day. Aside from an incident in which he had confused the cup with his paint water, it made his lunch breaks much more comfortable.

“You should thank Dabi next time you see him!” Toga reminded him one night, during dinner.

“I already fixed his computer” argued Tomura, “I think that’s enough.”

Besides, it wasn’t like Dabi would let him. He had made very clear that this “gift” was completely self-interested and in no way for Tomura’s sake. As Toga and Tomura conversed, Magne was silent at the other end of the table. Eventually, the other two noticed her frowned face.

“Magne please,” Toga sighed, “You can’t still be upset about it.”
“I CAN AND I WILL,” she responded, “It’s an affront, a betrayal! It’s a … A…”

“It’s a frying pan, …” corrected Tomura.

“OUR FRYING PAN! And he just straight up said to me that he won’t give it back …”

“We can buy another one!” Toga said in her more soothing voice, “It was kind of old and shitty anyway …”

“THEN WHY DOES HE WANT TO KEEP IT?”

Magne did have a point. There was no reason whatsoever for Dabi to keep this pan. Hell, there was no reason for him to take it in the first place. Who the fuck just … Steals a frying pan? Why? Just for the sake of being an asshole? That’s probably all it was. With Dabi, there was no need to look further than that. Maybe it was out of bitterness for the way Tomura had laughed at him. Yeah, he would be that petty.

“Look,” Magne continued, “I know you guys don’t care because you don’t cook. But I need my pan!”

“Again” Tomura reiterated, “We can buy you another one.”

“Tomura, sweetie, that’s not just the pan, that’s a principle.”

As Toga and Tomura exchanged a tired look, “Bohemian Rapsody” resonated in their small kitchen. In less than a second, Magne had grabbed her ringing cell phone and let out a small scream as she read the name on the screen.

“Him!!! Hold on a second.” And she left kitchen already screaming at Dabi on the other end. Tomura smiled, as he heard Magne roasting him for ten minutes from the other room.

But apparently, Dabi had a reason to call in the first place (other than confirming one more time
that he would not give the frying pan back). The three of them were invited at his place Saturday night, to finally meet the roommate that they had all heard so much about. According to Dabi, it had become a matter of survival because this Jin guy was really excited about meeting them and had reached the point where he wouldn’t talk about anything else. Tomura remembered that the guy supposedly talked to himself and he realised it meant that he possibly never shut up. This alarming thought made him scratch his neck for a bit.

Another weirdly alarming thought was the realisation that he had never been to Dabi’s place before. So after the invitation dropped, he had to ask Magne many times if she was absolutely sure that he was invited as well. But Dabi had apparently really talked about “the three of them”. Eventually, Tomura convinced himself that it was more of a formality than anything else because it would have been rude to invite everyone but him. Then again, being rude never stopped him before. Weird … As if all of this wasn’t stressful enough, he learned a few days later that Spinner was to join them as well. Tomura had met him a few times before, at some Hero Killers’ concert, and almost all of their encounters had ended in some sort of argument, for one simple reason; Spinner was probably the biggest Stain fanboy out there, and Tomura really wasn’t. This night is going to be a fucking treat. I can tell already.

Despite his best efforts to hide them, his concerns were still pretty apparent, and Toga brought it up one evening as they both played Mario Kart.

“Hey, I know going out always make you a little nervous and that’s okay, but I noticed it’s always a little more … pronounced, when Dabi’s is involved. Is there a reason?”

The question came out of nowhere and made Tomura fall of the rainbow road.

“Well, what do you think Toga? Like, no offense, but the guy is an asshole! I know he’s not one with you, but he certainly is one with me. Listen, I know that Magne and you were convinced that we would like each other but … but we just don’t.”

“Yeah, I know you guys had a rocky start, but that was before, wasn’t it? You’re friends now!”

Tomura, who had managed to get back in first place despite his fall, was suddenly hit by a blue shell.

“Friends??? Wh- What the fuck do you mean?”
“What the fuck do you think I mean?” Toga giggled, “You’re friends! He comes to visit you when we’re not here, you had your little adventure in the dark, you give each other gifts and help each other out … Friends!”

“No Toga, we …” Tomura began, suddenly feeling kind of hot, “That’s not … Look, none of this means anything. It’s a lot more complicated than that, okay?”

“How is it complicated? You’re friends or your not! And in my book, all of these things mean friendship!”

Tomura didn’t know what to answer. It could be hard to argue with Toga’s logic. Despite what some people could think when they first met her, Toga was very smart and very good at reading people. But she also had a tendency to see things in broad terms and black and white, especially when it came to feelings and relationship. Tomura sometimes found himself envying her simple views on the matter. It seemed a lot less tiring than the way he viewed everything, with double meanings and grey areas everywhere.

But Toga’s comment made him think back on the last time he saw Dabi during the blackout. It still had been awful in every way, but he also remembered the little … “moment” they had had in the staircase when Tomura ended up talking about All Might and Dabi about his brother. Of course, it had changed absolutely nothing about how they felt about each other but … It had been, something different. Something had happened there. But we’re not friends! Gross, now way, not in a million years! That’s just stupid!

* *

“One day I’m going to take you shopping,” Toga whispered under her breath, as she fixed the t-shirt she had picked for Tomura from his wardrobe, “then we will fucking see …”

“Toga, stop messing with it,” Magne said, “He looks fine!”

“These pants are way too tight …” Tomura mumbled for the sixth time since they had left their apartment.

“Hey, they were in your wardrobe you know …” Toga countered with a pouty face. “Besides, it looks good on you! You have very nice legs!”
Tomura felt his face turn red and covered it with both of his hands. Saturday had arrived so fast, he didn’t feel mentally prepared for what was about to come. In all of his mental scenarios, the night was a disaster … So when they finally arrived in front Dabi’s door, his heart was beating a lot faster than usual.

The door was opened before any of them even knocked.

“Yes!! Hello, nice to meet you all!! I’m Jin, it’s good to finally meet you! Who the fuck are you, people?!”

In front of them, was a rather tall guy with spiky blond hair, tired eyes and, more noteworthy, with a huge scar on his forehead. His odd introduction let the trio rather speechless until they heard Dabi’s voice from inside the flat.

“Come on Jin, don’t freak them out before they even stepped in.”

“Oh yeah right sorry … Don’t speak to me like that you little shit!”

Jin stepped to the side to welcome them inside. He lightly rubbed his head, like he had a headache, and seemed a bit bashful.

“Hum, yeah sorry I … I got a little excited here … It’s because of my quirk you see, I …”

The poor guy couldn’t finish his sentence, because Toga suddenly took a leap forward, looked deep in Jin’s eyes and grabbed both of his hands with hers. There was a moment of silence during which everyone, including Dabi who had stepped out of the kitchen and Jin himself, looked at Toga with surprise and apprehension. Eventually her face light up and a smile that was simultaneously adorable and terrifying formed on her face.

“Dabi!!” she exclaimed, “You hadn’t told us that your friend was such a cutie!!! We should have met him a lot sooner!!!”

Everyone let out a sigh of relief. Toga had very little impulse control, and it was hard to predict what she was about to do. Everyone relaxed, except Jin who had gone full crimson.
During the agitation, Tomura had a quick look at the flat. It seemed a bit smaller than the one he shared with Toga and Magne, and definitely not as clean. Although, Magne was the only one to thank for the cleanliness of their own place, considering that Toga and him were extremely messy. The older girl was the one to keep them in check when it came to keeping the common rooms spotless. Without her, their apartment would probably be similar to this one. *God bless Bis Sis Magne.*

Although, the living room was clearly the tidiest area, with a big brown couch, a few chairs and a coffee table already covered with snacks and drinks. It had probably been cleaned for the occasion. Dabi walked out of the kitchen with a back of beers.

“Okay, so I guess I should make the presentations or some shit. So, guys, this is Jin. He may not be one for first impressions but he is a fucking pearl and I am blessed to have him. Jin, the gremlin holding on to you is Toga. She is a little bit crazy but she means well. The girl with the rad sunglasses is Magne she is the best, and we would all be dead if it wasn’t for her.”

“Damn right you would,” Magne said with a smile.

“And last but not least,” continued Dabi, “the bony one who looks like a creepy stray kitten is Tomura but you call him “Creep”, “Mophead” or just “Dumbass”. He screams a lot but that’s not scary. In fact, after a while, you will only hear angry hissing and it becomes hilarious.”

“Got rot in a trashcan you fucking zombie!” Tomura yelled, immediately proving Dabi’s point and hating himself for it.

“Ah, yes!” Jin smiled, Toga still attached to him. “You girls are in the band, right? I heard some tapes you’re very good! And it’s nice to meet you Tomura! Dabi talks a lot about you, you know!”

*Of course he does ... I’m sure I can’t spend a day without telling this guy how gross I am ...*

“ANYWAY!” Dabi cleared his throat suddenly a bit bashful for some reason. “Just sit anywhere or some shit, I, uh, I’ve got the beers! And we also got some vodka and rum and wine ...”
Oddly enough, the begging of the night was not as agonising as Tomura thought it would be. It was even sort of nice. Once they were all settled, Jin relaxed quite a bit and turned out to be a pretty funny guy. A bit awkward and agitated, but cool. He explained to them that he had a cloning quirk allowing him to clone everyone he wanted including himself. However, he had messed too much with his quirk in the past, resulting in his current injury and some mental damages. Fortunately, he was getting the help he needed, and things were better now. But his split personality could still show up sometime when he was getting too emotional or too excited. He stayed very vague about the incident, but no one pushed him. Despite their different personalities and stories, everyone sitting in this living room had some sort of damage. Something that made them a bit different than everyone else. So they all knew better than to press on some painful memories.

“I still think it’s a pretty cool quirk though,” Magne said, sipping from her glass of wine.

“Yeah, I guess it is,” Jin responded, smiling at the compliment, “I’m getting better at it, but I still try to not use it too much, so you’ll excuse me if I don’t demonstrate.”

“Nah, it’s cool,” Tomura reassured him, “Your quirk is yours. It’s not a show for anyone. It’s personal.”

“Wow, look at you mophead being all sweet and thoughtful and shit,” Dabi grinned, sitting just across him.

“Wow, look at you being a useless piece of garbage and shit”

“Well so much for that …”

“I’ve been thinking about something for a few minutes,” Toga said suddenly, completely oblivious to the two boys fighting. “If Twice cloned me and I fucked my clone, would it be just sex, incest or masturbation?”

She had asked the question with the most serious tone and most serious look on her face like it was really bothering her. And despite their initial surprise, the rest of the group quickly got invested. They were in the middle of a hot debate, very close to the point where they would just straight up start to make power points when Spinner knocked on the door.

“Spinner, perfect timing!” said Dabi, barely welcoming him as he opened the door, “come and sit, we’re asking the real questions here!”
Needless to say, that Spinner was more than a little confused when the question was exposed to him.

“What is wrong with you people …” he whispered, looking at the group with a mix of pure terror, intense confusion and a hint of admiration.

It turned out that Spinner had already met Jin, and there was no need for any more presentation. Tomura slightly sunk in the couch. The last time he had seen Spinner, it had been at one of the concerts, two months priors, and they had spent the whole evening arguing about Stain. And judging by the rather cold “hello” the lizard gave him, it seemed that he hadn’t forgotten about it either. Tomura really hoped this particular subject won’t come up tonight because he could feel that he already had a bit too much to drink, and wasn’t sure what would happen if he got really pissed.

Tomura had never held his liquor very well. Maybe it was because of his lightweight and small constitution, or maybe because he barely drank anything before he began to go out with Toga and Magne. One would think that with a bartender for a dad, he would have been able to drink more than two beers without immediately getting tipsy but … that really wasn’t the case. It was a weird situation where Tomura both loved and hated his drunk-self. Alcohol could make his anxiety disappear almost completely; Drunk Tomura could talk to people like actually talk to them. He did not think ten times about what he was gonna say, did not hesitate to answer when people were asking him a question, he had things he wanted to talk about, and even some wit. Drunk Tomura was getting the joke. But it was a double-edged sword, because Drunk Tomura was even more of an emotional mess than Sober Tomura if that was even possible. He was much more affectionate and happy, and always down to make a fool out of himself. In case of argument or even mild inconvenience, Drunk Tomura immediately hit the point of no return, and screamed and cried and … Yeah, a mess. He really hoped that nothing bad happened tonight, because if Dabi ever saw him like this, he might just have to leave the country.

“So you never saw the guys on stage, Jin?” Spinner asked.

Fuck! I zoned out and now they’re talking about music … That’s not good …

“I didn’t have the privilege yet,” Jin answered, “But I really want to! I’ve only been hearing tapes so far … When is your next show?”

His question was followed by a rather awkward silence. Magne and Toga exchanged a look and Dabi just chugged his entire bottle of beer, eyes empty. It didn’t look like he was going to answer the question, so eventually, Magne spoke up.
“We, uh, we don’t know yet … We’re still waiting to hear back from some people, but we’ll be sure to let you know once we have a date!”

That was odd … Were they not getting any calls back? Now that Tomura thought about it, it had now been two months since their last show. Not so long ago, they had at least one show a week.

“Don’t worry guys it’s fine!” Spinner reassured them, “Remember how hard it was for Stain before he became famous! How long it took for people to recognize his genius!”

_F U C K._ It's okay Tomura, calm down, just keep your mouth fucking shut. Let them have their thing it’s gonna be fine.

“That’s true!” added Jin, “It must have been really difficult for him and look where he is now! And if anything, his pain and his failures made him who he is today. It’s in his text and his music!”

_Just shut the fuck up Tomura. Finish your fucking beer and shut the fuck up._ He proceeded to practically chug the glass of Cuba Libre that Toga had just served him. It was disgusting but he needed his head to spin to the point where he wouldn’t understand what people around him were saying. Deep down, he knew that it was an awful plan, but he really wasn’t thinking straight right now.

“Yeah, he literally changed the game” Dabi smiled, “There is a before and an after Stain. I’m sure we all remember when we were when we heard him for the first time.”

“Yeah! I immediately wanted to be just like him!” Toga remembered.

They all began to name their favourite Stain’s song, and Tomura genuinely thought it was going to be okay until Jin innocently asked: “What about you Tomura? What’s your favourite Stain song?”

_Well, shit._

“Tomura doesn’t like Stain,” Spinner grumbled before the blue-haired boy could even answer.
“Wow really?” Jin asked, genuinely surprised.

Once more, someone answered for Tomura.

“Yeah, Mr. Creep over there is too good for him…” Dabi said.

“I just don’t like him,” Tomura snapped.

“Yeah, because you’re too good for him,” Dabi continued, “Don’t you remember when you told me that he was a scam?”

Shit. Tomura did say that the night he had first met Dabi, right after their show when Toga and Magne had gone to get some drinks.

“Ah fucking what?!?” Spinner screeched, nearly spilling his drink, “Stain is the opposite of a scam! He is the most honest and authentic guy out there! How can you say something like this?”

Deep down, Tomura knew that it was time to back up and let it go. To say that he was drunk that time and that he didn’t actually mean it. But he did mean it. The alcohol in his blood was slowly taking over, urging him to stand his ground. Besides, he just hated the way that Dabi was looking at him from across the table. It's all your fault you piece of shit, what did you have to open your stupid ugly mouth?

“Yeah how authentic,” Tomura shot back, “how authentic to sing about how dirty and awful the world is when you’re a fucking rock star adored by all … Good thing the dirty world still buy your CD’s, huh?”

“This has nothing to do with anything!” Spinner yelled, “The reason he is so successful in the first place, is because he is different! He says the things to no one wants to hear!”

“Seems to me that a lot of people want to hear what he has to say …” Tomura mumbled.

“Well, yes,” Jin said, way calmer than Spinner, “Because it speaks to us! What he has to say connect with us. It connected with me! He pointed out many issues with our society!”
Tomura felt his head spinning a bit more. *What am I the only one who sees how dumb and hypocrite he is?* He continued talking despite his better judgment.

“That’s one thing to point the issues, what about solving them huh?”

“Well, he can try now that he has a bigger crowd,” Dabi said, suddenly a bit more aggressive, “You’re not making any sense! You say that he is a hypocrite for accepting his success, but it’s only from this position that he can’t be heard and make a difference!”

“Ohay,” Magne spoke up, feeling the tension rising, “maybe we should all agree to disagree!”

“Yeah, I respect Tomura’s wrong opinion I guess …” Spinner muttered, arms crossed and a bit tipsy himself, “even if it’s dumb …”

“You’re dumb!” Tomura said like some fucking five years old.

“No, you’re dumb!”

“No Stain is fucking dumb!”

“YOU TAKE THAT BACK!”

“Okay let’s stop here guys, maybe we sh- **TOMURA DOESN’T KNOW WHAT HE’S TALKING ABOUT** – shit sorry, I …”

“No you’re right Jin, don’t apologize,” Dabi said, “The creep doesn’t know what he’s talking about. You know what I think? I think he’s scared …”

“Yeah as if …” Tomura scoffed.

“You are,” Dabi grinned and continued, “You’re afraid of what Stain’s says and what he
represents. You can complain all you want, but at least he is doing something. That’s art, creep, he takes what surrounds him and makes something out of it. What do you do creep? What do you fucking do, huh? Except complaining and whining, and shitting on stuff that’s important to us? Stain helps us. You’re just destroying our happy place right now. He says how things are, he doesn’t sugar-coat shit and that makes you so fucking uncomfortable …”

“WHAT IF IT DOES?”

Tomura had spoken up without thinking, his voice suddenly trembling.

“I don’t fucking need him! I don’t need him to tell me that the world has gone to shit! I fucking know that! I see it every day! I don’t need some fucking dumbass reminding me! Why does he even bother, why … Who does he think he is? Telling us all this shit! He helps you? Well good for you because he sure as shit doesn’t help me! Telling me that everything is awful and that we’re all garbage … That’s why I paint, that’s … I take all my shit and I make something pretty out of it! Something colourful! I don’t take it to make something worst! I … I … I didn’t ask for these hands you know? I didn’t ask for this, I’m working with what I have! I didn’t destroy … I didn’t …”

His mind was chaos right now, but he still realized that he had begun rambling and that what he was saying had nothing to do with Stain anymore. He probably wasn’t making any sense, choking on each word. The table had gone silent, and everyone, even Dabi, was staring at him with wide eyes. As he caught his breath, Tomura suddenly realised that his face was wet. Oh, go please no … Nonononono I’m literally begging you right now please no. He put his hand on his face and his fears were confirmed. He was crying. Fuck you drunk Tomura!!!! Fuck you fuck you fuck you! I hate you so fucking much! I hope you choke in your sleep, I hope you jump off a building. I’ll stab you Drunk Tomura! I’ll fucking stab you.

“Holy shit …” Spinner whispered.

Jin stayed silent, Toga was covering her mouth with her hands, and Magne seemed to hesitate whether she should say something or not. Dabi’s face was empty.

“I gotta …” Tomura stuttered, “I better … I need a glass of water.”

Without another word, he got up and dashed to the kitchen, closing the door behind him. He felt like his legs were about to give up and had to lean against the sink. For a long moment, he really thought he was about to throw up, and stayed head down above the sink for what seemed like an eternity. But nothing came out of his mouth, nothing but shaky breathing and choked sobs. Before he even realised it, his hands were on his neck, scratching, scratching and scratching until he felt
some warm liquid under his fingernails. He was upset with himself for loosing control like this and showing everyone just how fucked up he really was. He had just met Jin and the guy was probably going to avoid him like the plague now, any chance of an amicable relationship with Spinner had just died, and Dabi … Dabi was never going to let this go.

He was trying to remember his breathing exercise when someone knocked on the kitchen’s door. In a panic, he grabbed the closest tissue to dry his tears and the blood running down his neck. The person knocked one more time.

“Just a second, I’m sorry, I…” he stuttered, splashing cold water on his face. He heard the door open behind him.

“Girls, I’m sorry I’m fine …” But it wasn’t Toga and Magne like he had expected.

“Hey … Are you okay?” Jin said softly, closing the door behind him.

Tomura was really confused. Wait why … Why did he come to see me? After what I just pulled? Why would he care if I were okay? He reflexively tried to cover his neck with his hair and hands to hide the fresh wounds, but Jin noticed. However, to Tomura’s surprise, he gave him a sympathetic smile.

“Dude, don’t worry about this. I’m the one who’s gonna shame you about scars! I mean …” He pointed his own, huge forehead scar with his thumb.

“Oh, right sorry I …” Tomura mumbled, voice still a little choked.

“Nah, it’s cool. How are you doing? Do you need more water? How maybe do you want a cup of coffee or something?”

“Why are you being so kind?” Tomura hadn’t meant to say that at loud, but it came out anyway. Jin seemed confused for a second, before letting out a chuckle.

“Well, I mean why wouldn’t I be? You gave us a bit of a fright out there! After you left, Toga and Magne immediately wanted to go after you, but, huh, I … I convinced them to let me talk to you.”
“Why?”

“Because, well …” Jin said walking closer to lean against the sink next to Tomura, “Because I how it feels to say things you didn’t want to say … To have your brain blur them out before you can stop it …”

Yeah of course he did. Tomura hadn’t even thought about that.

“I know it’s a bitch …” Jin continued with a sad smile. He grabbed some more napkins for Tomura to dry his eyes.

“I’m so sorry Jin …” he answered grabbing them, “I ruined everything … I don’t even know how you can look at me right now …”

Jin abruptly turned toward him and looked at him with wide surprised eyes.

“Dude,” he almost chuckled, “why on earth are you talking about? What did you ruin?”

“Well, your night!” Tomura answered, confused, “It was the night we were all supposed to meet for the first time and I ruined it … I couldn’t shut my damn mouth and now everything is ruined …”

“Tomura we had a disagreement on a singer … We … We just didn’t like the same the thing! Is that ruined for you? Is that seriously big deal in your world?”

“But … Stain he so important to you! And I just started screaming like I was hysterical or something!”

“I mean yeah, Stain did help me quite a lot. But, well he didn’t help you and that’s fine! We’re not going to stop seeing each other because we have different musical tastes! And besides, we all got a little carried away it wasn’t just you. That’s what happens when we drink! We yel, we fight, we get carried away but most of the time we get over it! I mean Spinner was screaming just as loud …”

“Yeah, but he didn’t start crying and rambling …Don’t you think I’m a freak?”
“Don’t you think *I’m* a freak? I’m not really one for first impressions either you know … - *You take that back I’m amazing* – Shit, you see?”

This actually made Tomura snort and chuckle a bit.

“I’m sorry I freaked out … I don’t know I … I always tend to assume the worst. I was convinced you would never want to see me again.”

“Dude, I can barely agree with myself … I’m not going to freak out if someone doesn’t agree with me. Disagreement happens. Fights happen. Especially between friends.”

*

They stayed in the kitchen a little longer, Tomura continuing to dry his eyes, and Jin saying stupid things to make him laugh. They talked a bit about their studies, and what they liked to do … It turned out that Jin studied psychology, and was very interested in the notion of identity. According to him, understanding your own identity was the most important aspect in life. They talked about Tomura’s art as well, which captivated Jin. Tomura had to promise to show him one of his painting soon. Eventually, Tomura felt brave enough to go back to the living room.

When they opened the kitchen’s door, Dabi, Spinner, Magne and Toga stopped their conversation, and looked at them with a little apprehension. Tomura felt a knot in his stomach, but before he could think too much about it, Jin put his arm over his shoulder and announced proudly:

“Fear not! The best boys have returned! The night is saved!”

“Yaaaaay!” Toga squealed, throwing her arms in the air.

As they both went to sit down, Tomura cleared his throat.

“Hey, hum, so I realized that I was a complete asshole right now and hum … Well okay I still don’t like Stain, and I’m not gonna lie, I’m still not sure why you guys like him, but, well, you do. And I should respect that. So yeah and I’m sorry I freaked out on you, I didn’t want to spoil the night.”
“And we,” Magne said, “Should respect, that our tastes are different, and that you have every right to dislike something we like. You have your own reason, and we don’t need to know them, to know that they are real and valid. And we’re sorry if we made you feel cornered.”

As she finished her sentence, she immediately glanced at Dabi and Spinner.

“Yeah, yeah … I’m sorry too” the later said, awkwardly rubbing his nape.

Dabi stayed silent, playing with the stitches in his hand. Magne let out a loud, explicit, cough, and he mumbled some thing so low and unintelligible, that Tomura couldn’t get any of it. But that wasn’t like he was expecting much in the first place. It was already weird to hear Spinner apologize, so hearing Dabi would have been absolutely surreal.

“So …” began Jin, “I mean we can totally change the subject if you want to but, what kind of music do you like Tomura?”

He hesitate before answering, cheeks coloured with a light pink. There was two types of music that he genuinely liked, and both were terribly embarrassing. He wondered for a few seconds what answer would be the less humiliating. Eventually, he came to a conclusion.

“I, huh … I really like … Shit, this is embarrassing, but … I listen to a lot of video games soundtrack. I don’t know, it’s relaxing, it calms me and help me to focus.”

“Of fucking course you would …” Dabi smiled, still focused on his hand. But for some reason, the smile didn’t seem to mock him. Which was weird, because why else would Dabi smile upon something Tomura said …? He didn’t have time to think about it because Spinner was looking at him with strange eyes.

“Do you … Do you play a lot of videogames?” he asked with a strangely low voice.

“Hum … Yeah, I do.”

“He really does,” Toga added, “like, a lot!”
Spinner stood up from his chair, walked to the couch to sit right next to a very perplexed Tomura.

“What kind of game do you play?” he asked, his face suddenly very bright.

“Oh, hum, any kind really! Some Dark Souls, Grant Thief Auto, Mario … And also a lot of smaller games on Steam … Do you like videogames Spinner?”

“What?!” he practically yelled, beaming, “I fucking love videogames! I’ve playing them for as long as I can remember! I work in a game shop right now, but I’m actually trying to develop my own game!”

“Wow! Really?”

That was actually pretty fucking cool. Tomura began to ask a ton of question about this project, and before long, the two of them were deep in a conversation about the games they liked the most, giving each other recommendations, comparing scores, cheat codes and so on … It looked like they had forgotten everything about their recent fight, and everyone around them.

This sudden bonding made everyone laugh around the table. Well, everyone but Dabi.

Before anyone realized, it was 3AM. Tomura never would have thought the night could have ended so well, not after the early disaster. If someone had told him a few hours ago that he would ever found a common ground with Spinner, he definitely would have laughed at their face. But now, as they were getting ready to leave, the drunk lizard was grabbing his arm, rambling about Kingdom Heart 3. Of course, it didn’t mean that they would never argue again, but Tomura had to admit that the guy had some pretty good taste and knowledge when it came to videogames, and he could respect that. Not far from them, Magne was grabbing Dabi by his shirt and whispering in a tone that was too giggly to be threatening:

“And don’t think I’m stupid okay? I not very well you got me drunk because you hoped I would forget about my frying pan … But I never forget Dabi … I know it’s here somewhere, and I may not have found it tonight but I’ll be back …”

“Bold of you to assume to I would not get you drunk a second time,” Dabi answered smiling.
“Bold of you to assume I wouldn’t break in when you’re not here …”

“Touché.”

Tomura took a look at Magne, then at Toga who was trying to climb on Jin’s back, and at Spinner who still grabbing him, whispering about how brave Sora was, and suddenly understood that he was the most sober out of them and was had to be their babysitter on the way back. Who would have thought, huh? As he tried to detach Toga from him, he took a moment to talk to Jin:

“Hey, hum, thanks again for … You know …”

“It’s all good man,” he answered smiling, “See you soon, okay? And be careful with this little lady over here …”

Toga was now trying to climb on Tomura, still angrily whispering about how beautiful Jin was. Magne and Spinner were already outside the flat, aggressively shushing each other, and Tomura knew he had to get them soon, but he was now right in front of Dabi without really knowing what to say to him. Eventually, he muttered:

“Your roommate is a lot better than you are and I hope you take good care of him, you stupid piece of shit …”

“Don’t you think I know that? Now get the fuck out before these three wake up the whole building …”

As he left the flat, Tomura turned to Dabi one last time.

“Just so we’re clear,” he felt the need to add, “I’m sorry I freaked out, but I still hate Stain and I still hate you.”

Just before he closed the door, Dabi gave him a lazy smile and practically whispered.

“We’ll see about that …”
As soon as everyone left, Jin and Dabi began to clean the whole place, before giving up and finishing the beers on the couch. They stayed silent for a while, but it quickly became obvious to Dabi that Jin really wanted to ask him something. He let out a sigh, which was apparently the permission Jin had waited for.

“So…… You hate him right?”

“Mophead? Oh yes, a 100%. I mean isn’t he just the worst? He’s always …”

“I actually think he’s pretty cool, but okay. But then, there’s something I don’t understand. You hate him, but it bothers you that he doesn’t like Stain … Like it really bothers you …”

“Of fucking course it does! You know what Stain means to me! How much is music, his texts, helped me when I was at rock bottom! Everything I am, everything I do now was inspired by him … My music, the things I stand for …”

“Yeah but that’s my point though, why do you care?”

“What do you mean? I just told …”

“If you hate him so much, you should be grateful that he doesn’t like something so important to you, don’t you think?”

What? Dabi just stared back at him. He would later blame alcohol for this, but at the moment, he was incapable of forming any coherent thoughts.

“Because right now,” Jin continued, shrugging and finishing his beer, “it just looks like you really care about what he thinks of you.”
The next day was extremely painful for everyone, the hangover striking hard. Tomura, Magne and Toga spent the day at home, not living their pyjamas and from what they heard, the other three didn’t even left their bed. But after this difficult Sunday, life was back on track, and almost a week past without anyone meeting each other. Tomura and Spinner played some games in co-op a few times, but never actually met. Toga and Jin suddenly began to hang out quite a lot just the two of them, and of course, the band was still meeting for practice. But Tomura didn’t even heard anything about Dabi for at least a week. It wasn’t that he cared or anything, but he had a weird memory from Saturday night that he kind of wanted to clear up. He remembered, just before leaving, saying to Dabi that he hated both him and Stain. And he remembered Dabi answering, “we’ll see about that”. With a fucking smile. Of course, the whole thing was very weird and probably totally made up by Tomura’s drunk mind. But he kind of wanted to check. Just to be sure.

The only kind of “contact” he had with Dabi, was through Toga and Magne’s feedback from the rehearsals. These past few weeks, they had been coming home more or less tired and irritated. Nothing too bad, it just seemed that they were working harder than usual, and that there might have been some frictions. They didn’t talk about it much so he didn’t push anything, but he did remember the awkward silence when Jin had asked about their next show. There didn’t seem to be any new event during these week either … Tomura would have rather died than admit it, but he … God fucking damnit … He kind of cared????? In a way???? First of all, because it was something that Toga and Magne (whom he adored) were invested in, but also because it seemed to be the one thing that Dabi was invested in. And maybe, it was making this a little special. He clearly remembered the pain his blue eyes the night he thought he had lost their demo on the computer; it was by far the most emotions he had ever seen in them. In a weird way, Dabi’s passion for his music was his one redeeming quality. And if he was to ever loose it, Tomura feared he would officially become emotionless.

But, even if he couldn’t help thinking about it , Tomura still did his best to stay out of all of this. Because it was the only thing that Dabi cared about, he was convinced that the man wanted him as far away from it as possible, like Tomura wanted him far from his paintings. He strongly believed that he was the last person on earth that Dabi would approach for help.

Which is why he was extremely surprised by Magne’s call a few days later.

He was just leaving his History of Art class, crossing the campus to go home when his phone rang. Usually, the girls and him were communicating through their group chat, because phone called tended to make Tomura nervous, so he immediately knew that something was off. On the other end, Magne seemed slightly irritated.

“Hey Tomura, I’m sorry to call you, but I needed to get you quickly …”
“Huh, no that’s fine. But is everything okay?”

Magne let out a sigh.

“Well yes and no, I mean don’t worry we’re fine but … Look are you available right now?”

“Hum … Yeah? What’s the matter?”

He heard some noise around Magne and recognized Toga’s voice that seemed to be complaining.

“Look,” Magne continued, “I’m so, so sorry to ask you this but would you mind meeting with Dabi at Studio Bones? Like right now?”

Tomura staid silent for a few seconds, processing the information. Studio Bones was a public recording studio where you could come and register your own stuff. He knew it was pretty cheap, and that it was the studio where the Hero Killers registered all of their songs.


“I don’t even know … He was in a terrible mood during the whole session, we couldn’t even finish properly. I think he’s worried and frustrated because of … you know. And I don’t know what came to him, but he said he really needed to talk with you alone for some reason, and because he doesn’t have your number he asked me to call you.”

Dabi … wanted to see him? Alone? In a studio? The whole thing wasn’t making any sense! Had the guy finally lost his mind? Tomura’s neck was suddenly starting to hitch.

“Tomura are you still there?”

“Yeah, yeah, I just don’t understand …”

“I honestly don’t understand either. Look Toga and I are going home right now. I’m going to text you the address of the studio. You don’t have to go obviously, but … I should warn you that he
seemed very determined on this, so if he you don’t go, there is 90% chances that he’ll come directly to our place.”

“This doesn’t make any sense … Are you sure he wanted to talk to me?”

“Oh yeah, I’m sure … He was … pretty fucking clear about that.”

The whole thing stank from miles away … And yet, Tomura still found himself walking to the address Magne had sent him, without really knowing why. On the way, he convinced himself that Dabi just needed some sort of verbal punch bag to take out his rage, but it didn’t stop him. He was just genuinely curious about this. Besides, if Magne was right about Dabi being set on this, it was better to get it over with.

Once he had reached the place, he still needed to find to recording booth number 22. No one at the reception to help and the place was huge … Great. He wandered in the corridors for a bit before getting completely lost. He walked up and down some stairs, crossed some corridors from left to right, just wandered around for ten minutes before slowly coming to term with the fact that had to … ask for direction … In a weird way, it reminded of the night he had first met Dabi and he hated it. Suddenly, the silence surrounding him was absolutely obliterated by the most terrifying sound of all: an angry teenager.

“YOU’RE TOO SLOW ON THE SECOND LINE WE HAVE TO DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN!”

It was coming from the booth number 37, which was the only one occupied in the whole corridor.

“Jesus Bakugou, would just stop screaming for like … one minute?” said a female voice, a lot calmer.

“Is this it?” said another male voice, “Is this how our journey to fame ends? Are we self-imploding to each start our solo carer?”

“Tokoyami no, it’s fine …”

Tomura approached the booth, a little wary. Inside were five teenagers, none older than sixteen. An angry looking blond boy was arguing with a short black-haired girl. Another girl, with longer hair, was desperately trying to calm them down, as two other boys were watching from afar a little
worried. One had blond hair, and the other was literally a bird.

“Hum, excuse me …?” Tomura asked in a quiet voice.

The five pair of eyes abruptly turned toward him, and his cheeks suddenly got hot.

“Oh hello!” said the girl with the long black hair in a warm voice, “We’re so sorry about the noise!”

“Hum, no it’s fine, I’m just looking for the booth 22?”

“Oh! It’s on the floor right under us! First one on the left!”

“Hum, thanks …”

The minute he had left the booth, they all went back to screaming. As he walked down the stairs, Tomura wondered if every band rehearsal was like this, and picturing the ones between Toga, Magne and Dabi sent a shiver down his spine. Eventually, he reached booth number 22. Last chance to turn around … He took a deep breath and opened the door.

Dabi was leaning against a standing table in a corner of the booth, focused on his notes and computer. He looked up as soon as Tomura walked in, a mix of anger and fatigue in his eyes.

“What the fuck took you so long?” he asked in a venomous tone.

“Hey back off asshole!” Tomura snapped back, “I don’t even want to be here in the first place you ugly piece of shit!”

“Yeah well, I don’t want you to be here either …”

WHAT THE FUCK
“YOU’RE THE ONE WHO FUCKING AS-”

“Oh my god, yes I know! That doesn’t mean I want you here, I just …”

I knew it. I fucking knew it. I was a stupid idea I should never have come.

“Well then, you can rot I guess …” Tomura grumbled, already walking out.

“No, wait! Shit …”

Tomura stopped and turned back. Dabi was grabbing on the table like it was the only thing keeping him from failing. It looked like what he was he was about to say physically pained him.

“Come over here, I need to ask you some stuff …”

Tomura just stared back for a few seconds, completely confused by whatever was happening right now. He was looking for a second meaning, a joke in Dabi eyes, but he found none. So eventually, he slowly walked to the table, still suspicious.

“Better not be some sort of prank, …” he muttered under his breath.

“God I wish it was, trust me …”

There was a moment of silence as both leaned against the table, Dabi mentally preparing himself and avoiding eye contact with Tomura, before asking:

“I need you to tell me what we’re doing wrong.”

After that, he immediately grabbed his head between his hands. Tomura just blinked at him.

“Hum, what?”
“Oh my God don’t make me ask again! The band! I need you to tell me what we’re doing wrong with the band, you dipshit!”

Wait ………… Wait. Is he, asking me … my opinion … about his music?????? WHAT???

“What is happening right now …” Tomura whispered, more thinking out loud than asking an actual question.

“It’s no longer working,” Dabi said, finally looking back at him, “People are not calling us back, we haven’t played live in months, and what we put online barely gets any views! I … I don’t know. We started pretty strong, and things were fine for a while but … It’s no longer working. We’re no longer working … what I write … I don’t know what I’m doing wrong”

Tomura knew very well things were difficult for the band right now, but never in a million year, he would have expected Dabi to ask him any advice. Dabi loved his music and hated Tomura. Nothing was adding up.

“Why me? You don’t care about what I think! Why would you even …”

“You think you’re the first one I ask? Please. I’ve been talking to the girls about this for months, at every single rehearsal! I’ve asked Jin, I’ve asked Spinner, I’ve asked everyone who knows about the band! But they all keep telling me the same thing. That it’s normal … That I just have to be patient, that things are always hard at the beginning. They keep telling me that I’m doing nothing wrong, that things will just get better … But I know that’s not true. I know there’s something … something that I can work on, that I need to work on …”

Tomura was listening to him in silence, still not sure where this was going …

“And after thinking about it again and again … Well, it led me to you. Everyone else, everyone I’ve asked before, told me it was fine because they like the band. They like Stain, they like the songs, they like … me. But you don’t. In fact, you fucking hate all of those things. So go ahead mophead. Shoot. Just go ahead and tell me everything you hate about me, about the band, about my music about Stain … Everything. Who knows? Maybe I’ll actually found some things that I can work with. Please, be my guest. Because as you can imagine, I’m pretty fucking desperate right now …”
Yeah, Tomura could easily imagine how desperate Dabi really was if he was asking him about this. He was still taking everything in, as Dabi just stood there, waiting for the young man to drag him in the mud. And a part of Tomura was very much tempted to do so. But not all of him. In fact, although he would never have said anything before today, he did have some opinions about the band and unlike what Dabi was thinking, they weren’t all negatives. Quite the contrary in fact. Tomura hated Dabi and Stain for sure, but he didn’t hate the band, he didn’t even hate Dabi’s songs. But he didn’t know if he’d have the strength to confess all of this to Dabi, especially right now when it would be so much easier to just play his game and just throw insults and unfounded criticisms at him. But … He cares so much about this.

“I …” he began, still unsure of where he was going with this. “I actually have some, hum, some suggestion. But you have to promise to consider them carefully and not to get mad …”

“Do I have to tattoo desperate on my forehead?” Dabi scoffed.

“Okay so … I’ve actually seen you live quite a bit. And I’ve listened to a lot of your songs. And you’re actually … I can’t believe I’m saying this, but you guys are actually good.”

“Yeah, but? Just rip the bandage already. God, you must be enjoying this …”

“Just let me finish dumbass! You’re actually good but, I think … I think … I think you need to get rid of the whole Stain gimmick because it’s holding you back!”

He had said the last sentence very quickly and tensed up like he was expecting Dabi to just punch him. But instead, the other let out a laugh. It was a terrible, dry and empty laugh.

“Of course,” he said shaking his head, “of course that would be your fucking advice! You know what? Forget it. I can’t believe I even asked you in the first place. How fucking stupid …”

Dabi shut his laptop, about to pack everything and leave, but suddenly, Tomura slammed his shaking hand on top on the computer, his pinkie in the air.

“Shut the fuck up Dabi! I’m not done yet! You asked me, you fucking asked me and I’m not done yet! So you don’t get to do that! You don’t get to just shut me down when I say things that you don’t want to hear! You don’t have to do shit about all of this I don’t care. But at least let me finish! Let me answer your fucking question! So for once in your life, listen to me!”
Dabi’s eyes were wide in bewilderment, as he stayed silent and still for a few minutes. He had never seen Tomura so … assertive before. Although the effect was a bit ruined by the sight of the blue-haired boy shaking, with a now crimson face and panicked eyes. He wasn’t used to standing his ground like this, especially not with Dabi. But it had been effective enough for Dabi to actually let go of his bag and shut up. He didn’t open his mouth, but his eyes were saying *alright mophead I’m listening.*

“Yes, okay, so …” Tomura was still recovering from his outburst, voice low and a bit shaky. “When I say that Stain is holding you back it’s not about me … You’re restraining yourself. I get that you love and admire him, that he is your inspiration and that you want to pay homage. And okay fine, why not. Being inspired by others is not bad … I mean that’s what art is all about. But you’ve got to overcome it. You’ve got to go beyond your masters. Because let me tell you, you’re not the only one inspired by him, which means you’ve got to make a difference and stand out of the lot. Right now you’re just one Stain Band among thousands, why people would call you rather than another?”

Dabi was still listening. Tomura took a deep breath before he kept going.

“But the thing Dabi is … Shit, you’re not another Stain fanboy. You’ve got something. I mean you were right on two things; I fucking hate Stain, and I fucking hate you as a person. But yet … I don’t hate you as an artist. I don’t hate the band. I don’t know much about music, but I like your songs. I just hate how desperately you try to connect them to Stain because, shit, they work very well like they are! And you … I *can’t believe I’m saying this …* you work as you are! Shit, you might be the worst, but when you’re on stage you … You’ve got charisma. You’ve got a presence. You’ve got talent. So I’m begging you, stop trying to be the next Stain when you could be the first Dabi! You don’t need him. The band, your songs, they’re enough. What you’ve got is enough. You … *You are enough Dabi.*”

Tomura felt like his face was on fire. He hadn’t meant to say so much. By the end, he was just rambling without any control over his words. *Shit, that probably didn’t make any sense. I didn’t give him a single useful piece of advice.* Dabi, next to him, was absolutely silent. Tomura couldn’t read his expression, and his eyes seemed completely empty. He was still looking at Tomura, and a long minute passed without anyone moving or saying a word. Before he even realised it, Tomura had his hands on his neck.

“I …” he began, but as soon as he opened his mouth, Dabi was snapped out of his trance and immediately started to pack. His movements were a bit frantic, but still quick and efficient. He seemed to have two goals, avoid Tomura’s eyes at any coast, and get out of here as fast as he could.
“Dabi what …” Tomura called weakly but before the words were even out, Dabi had left the room. For a short second, Tomura considered chasing him, but a voice in his head stopped him. What are you doing idiot? Didn’t you get the message? He is literally running away from you right now. But who wouldn’t honestly …

Tomura stayed alone in the booth for a few more minutes. He didn’t know what had just happened, but it didn’t stop him from blaming himself. What did you think would happen just rambling like this? Your opinion is shit; you know nothing about music, about shows, about what people want. What did you even try? You really can’t do anything right, can you?

When he left the studio, it was already dark outside. From the corner of his eyes, his caught the group of teenagers he had seen earlier. They were all laughing now, but it wasn’t enough to cheer him up. He arrived home miserable and tired. He barely answered the girl’s question about the meeting, and despite their protests, he went to bed without eating anything. As he fell asleep, he wondered if he was going to see Dabi ever again, or if the guy was now going to avoid him even more than before. He didn’t know how he felt about that.

* 

But Tomura did see Dabi again. The very next day, in fact.

He was at school, leaving his painting class. He had just spent three hours on one of his canvas without making any real progress, because of his fatigue and irritation. He had barely slept the night before, but thankfully it was Wednesday, which meant he had no class this afternoon, and he could just go home and die on his bed. He left the building without even taking the time to wash his hands and face, even though he knew he was probably covered in paint. But what he saw outside of the building almost gave him a heart attack.

Dabi was there, leaning against a tree, with a cigarette in his mouth. He looked more bored than ever, his lanky shape and peculiar face clearly standing out amongst all of the other students around him on the campus. Tomura’s brain just plainly stopped functioning for a full minute, and he just stood there, eyes wide and mouth open, just as if he couldn’t process the image of Dabi in this environment. What ............... What is happening? Why is he here? Why is he right here under that tree? What …

As Tomura was having his meltdown, Dabi noticed him and made eye contact with him. He actually seemed a little bit embarrassed and hesitated a few seconds before eventually walking to Tomura, whose heart had begun to beat a lot faster. Shit!!! What should I do? Should I run? Should I punch him? Should I … And suddenly, Dabi was in front of him.
“Hey …” he just said.

“…hey,” Tomura answered.

And for a moment that was it. The two young men stayed silent, looking at each other at first, and then gradually avoiding eye contact.

“So, hum …” Dabi eventually said, rubbing his nape, “This is your school?”

“Huh? Oh … yeah.”

“It’s nice.”

“Yeah, it’s okay I guess.”

Tomura would never have thought that he’d miss Dabi’s snarky, venomous and bored voice, but this awkward tone was ten times worst somehow.

“I’m glad I caught you,” Dabi continued, “I was … Fuck, I was waiting for you actually. I had to ask your timetable to Magne and everything …”

“What the actual fuck,” Tomura let out, incapable of stopping himself.

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Dabi cringed, “don’t make me say that ever again. But, I … I wanted to talk to you. About yesterday.”

Oh. Tomura felt a shiver run down his spine. He told himself that he probably should have seen this coming, but he was surprised by how calm Dabi seemed to be. It wasn’t the usual boredom and detachment, nor was it the cold anger he had seen yesterday. It was something entirely new. Well … Maybe not entirely … It was hard to tell because it had been very dark back then, but this expression kind of reminded him the one he’d seen in the stairs during the blackout.

“Can we, like, go somewhere?” Dabi asked, shoving his hands in his pocket. “I don’t know, don’t
“you have some café around here, on your campus?”

“Maybe, I guess …”

“What, you don’t even know? Geez, mophead, how long have you been studying here?”

“Shut the fuck up, I’m studying, not drinking pumpkin spice lattes …”

Eventually, they found a small place next to the gymnasium and sat down on a table next to the window. For an awkwardly long moment, no one said anything, and they just sat in front of each other with mugs full of coffee in their hands. To Tomura, everything that was happening right now was surreal. After a moment, he realised that Dabi was staring at his hands, still covered in paints. It made him very self-conscientious for some reason, and it pushed him to say something.

“So, yeah. We’re here now. What did you want to talk about? I don’t have all day you know …”

“God, you’re such a fucking bad liar.” Dabi snorted looking back up, right into Tomura’s eyes. He ran his hand through his hair a few times and took a deep breath. “Okay so, about yesterday. I realised that my behaviour might have been a tad confusing, and I thought that owed you an explanation.”

“Okay …”

“Like you probably remember, I was pretty fucking pissed. And tired, and frustrated and … Anyway, so, you arrived and I was fucking ready for you to tear me apart. But you didn’t. Suddenly out of nowhere, you said… nice things. Like really nice things. And that was already pretty fucking confusing and a lot for me to take in. But then, you said something else.”

Tomura was intensely listening. He didn’t know what Dabi really wanted to say, but it looked really difficult for him to do so. He was playing with the stamps in his hands, but it really felt like an excuse to avoid the other’s eyes. Dabi bit his lips and eventually looked up.

“You said I was enough.”
There was something different in Dabi’s eyes right now, something that he was desperately trying to hide. Tomura couldn’t really get what it was, but he kind of liked it.

“It actually kind of fucked me up for a bit, I didn’t know how to process this. So I panicked and I ditched you. And, well, I’ve been thinking about it all night, and I realised that it might have given you the wrong impression. But considering I don’t have your number for obvious reasons, I had to ask Magne for your planning and stuff … So yeah.”

Both of their drinks had gone cold by now, but neither of them was planning to drink it anyway. So Dabi wasn’t mad … and yesterday he had just … panicked? And now he was apologizing. This day was absolutely unreal. As the silence between them was getting longer, Dabi clicked his tongue.

“Are you gonna say something or …?”

“Yeah, no, I’m sorry. I’m sort of just taking all in. I guess I’m sorry I freaked you out-“

“Holy shit, didn’t you listen to what I just said?”

Tomura blinked a few times in surprise.

“Well yes, yesterday when I said you were enough or something you panicked and …”

“My God,” Dabi whispered, leaning across the table, with a mix of confusion and fascination in his eyes, “how are you so self-deprecating? I mean you always kind of are but holy shit, how could you listen to everything I’ve said and think that you did something wrong? You can’t be that dense …”

Leaned like he was, Dabi was suddenly a lot closer and Tomura sank back in his chair. He felt a little hot all of the sudden. Dabi’s words were confusing him right now. It kind of sounded like he was mocking him, but not in the same way he usually did, and he didn’t know how to react to that. It probably was what Dabi had felt yesterday because right now, he really wanted to run out of here. But he decided to fight his impulsion.

“Yeah, well excuse me for not reading your mind!” he hissed, “Yesterday you asked me for some advice, yelled at me as soon as I opened my mouth, and then ran off like I had insulted you and your family as soon as I was done!”
“Yes, I’m here to apologize you dipshit! You better enjoy it, instead of twisting my words …”

Tomura wanted to respond something snarky, but he was also thinking about Dabi had said, about how his words had “fucked him up”, and a worried thought crossed his mind.

“Hey, what I said to you … you are enough …”

“Yeah?”

“I didn’t … I didn’t trigger a panic attack, did I?”

Tomura’s question and tone were dead serious. As someone who had been struggling with panic attacks since his childhood, he would never wish one to any person, not even someone he hated. The idea that he might have caused one was pretty alarming and Dabi seemed to sense his tension and answered immediately.

“Oh no! No, no, no … it wasn’t … I mean I never had one, but I’m pretty sure it wasn’t. It just made me think back on some stuff …”

“Good or bad stuff? Not that you have to tell me or anything …”

Across the table, Dabi seemed to contemplate something, rubbing his jaw and staring at Tomura, as if the answer that he was looking for was somewhere in the red eyes.

“Holy shit,” he finally whispered with a smile, “I can’t believe I’m about to tell you this …”

“Again, you don’t have to.”

“I think I do, otherwise you’re probably going to beat yourself up over the one nice thing you ever did. The things you said to me yesterday, they made me think about my dad.”
“Okay, don’t freak out before I tell the whole thing okay? Here goes. First of all, my dad is a fucking piece of flaming garbage. I don’t want to talk about it too much, especially not with you, but he is an abusive trash who beat up my mom, his other wives, and his children. He’s in jail now and he’s gonna stay there until he dies and that’s fucking amazing. But … but when he was around … He tried to train me quite a bit. He wanted me to be his successor and shit. And the one thing I remember the most … The thing he was telling me, again and again, was not good enough. He always needed me to do more. I was never good enough. I was never enough. Never.”

Dabi interrupted his story to open the large window next to him and light a cigarette. Tomura wasn’t sure that it was allowed, but he could tell that Dabi really needed this.

“And you know in a way that’s fine,” he continued, “I’m glad I never became what he wanted me to be. But despite all of this, despite how much I hated him … I don’t know. I never really thought about it before, but when you said it yesterday it stroke me, or something. I realised that you were the first person I ever met who told me that I was enough. You of all people, can you believe that? So yeah … it, huh … it actually kind of … means a lot.”

Tomura didn’t know what to say. He would never have guessed that Dabi had such a past. He wondered if Toga, Magne, Spinner or Jin knew about this, but for some reason, he didn’t think so. There was something about the way Dabi was talking that felt new and clumsy. As he was trying to collect his thoughts on everything he just heard, a memory suddenly came back from deep inside Tomura’s mind and slapped him in the face.

“Okay just to be clear,” Dabi added, “This doesn’t change anything about me, I don’t want you to go all-“

“My dad …” Tomura cut him off before he could stop himself, and he immediately shut his mouth when he realised he just interrupted Dabi. But the other guy didn’t seem mad. On the contrary, he appeared quite curious. So Tomura continued.

“My dad always told me that I was too much.”

Now Dabi was the one who didn’t know how to react. Tomura didn’t know why he had told him that. It wasn’t much, but he had never told this to anyone before. But right now, for some reason, it had felt appropriate. Dabi put out his cigarette by crashing it on the edge of the window.
“Were you …” he began tentatively, almost as if he was afraid to scare Tomura away with his question, “were you close? With your dad?”

“Ha!” Tomura let out one dry and empty laugh; similar to the one he had heard from Dabi yesterday. He immediately pressed his hand against his mouth. He hadn’t meant to let it out like that, but there was something about Dabi’s phrasing that was terribly ironic.

“No we weren’t close,” he answered crossing his arm, “My father has never been close to me. Not once in his fucking life.” *Not after my quirk.*

He hadn’t planned to be so honest about this, but it actually didn’t feel that bad. Besides, he kind of felt like he owed Dabi that much. He could tell that the black-haired man knew that they were a lot more to the story, but he didn’t press it. After all, Tomura hadn’t pressed him about his own father earlier.

*Too much and not enough.* They really were polar opposites.

“Do you know what I’m thinking right now?” Dabi asked.

“I’m absolutely sure that I don’t.”

“If you and I fused or some shit, we would become the perfect son.”

“What?! Ew, what is wrong with you?!” Tomura tried to sound mad, but he wasn’t very successful. The goofy grin forming on his face wasn’t helping either. He really wanted to be upset and disgusted by this (and he kind of was), but the image of Dabi and him performing some kind of fusion dance like there were anime characters or something, was really hilarious.

“God, what would we even look like?” Tomura continued, “And how would our quirk work? Would we just … Throw flaming hands?”

Dabi whistled, picturing it.

“That actually sounds kind of badass mophead. I mean, I would never fuse with a gross alley cat
like you, but the concept is nice.”

“Bold of you to assume that I would fuse with a fried raisin …”

Something really weird was happening right now. Tomura and Dabi were talking, or at least, they were trying to. They weren’t used to communicate without trying to annoy or even hurt the other, so they really were in an unknown territory right now. As they kept talking, they couldn’t help but throw some insults and spikes around, because, in a weird way, it made the whole thing easier, more comfortable and familiar.

*What a weird fucking day* Dabi thought. When he had decided to meet Tomura at the end of his class, he had no idea of how things would go. All things considered, it didn’t end so badly. But it was still pretty damn weird. There he was, talking with mophead in a café on a fucking campus. The conversation had gone back to the band, and the things Tomura had said yesterday.

“I still can’t believe you fucking told me to overcome my master,” Dabi remembered, “like we were in a fantasy saga or something.”

“That’s just something they keep telling us in art school,” Tomura answered, playing with a strand of his blue fluffy hair, “you’re always going to be inspired by someone you admire and that’s good. But your duty, as an artist, is to try by any way you can, to become better than that person. You can only create, and I mean create for real, the moment you say *Go fuck yourself, I’m gonna become so much greater than you, you have no idea.* It’s tough and it takes time, but that’s crucial. If you look at art history, it’s a series of students trying to top their master. Every great art movement that ever existed was an answer to a previous movement. A series of people just breaking the rules …”

Tomura than proceed to ramble about art and art history for twenty minutes. And Dabi didn’t stop him. There were a lot of things that he didn’t understand, but also I lot of things that he could relate to music. But the most striking thing in all of this was Tomura himself. Dabi had never heard him talk for so long, especially not without choking, stuttering or turning crimson. It should have been hell, but for some reason, it wasn’t. Tomura was clearly passionate about all of this, Dabi and never seen him so relaxed and dynamic. Usually, Tomura was like a raw wire, something tense and dangerous that could snap any minute and blow up to your face. He always looked like he was about to break. But right now, his red eyes were full of life, his face was beaming, and he was even talking with his hands that he usually kept close to his body. *What a weird fucking day.*

Eventually, they had to leave the café. Once they were out, the awkward silence slowly came back.
It was as if they both felt more exposed and vulnerable on the outside, far from the comfortable and cozy table by the window.

“Hey, hum, thank you for coming today,” Tomura eventually said, “you were right, I was beating myself up over this. And also, I know you don’t want to hear it but I don’t give a shit, so thanks for the ramen.”

“Oh, huh, well thanks for the computer I guess? And for the advice … About the band.”

Eventually, they left the campus, and it felt like they were both about to go they’re separate ways. But suddenly, Tomura stopped, biting his lips harshly. After what seemed to be a moment of reflexion, he abruptly turned toward Dabi.

“Hey, hum, I don’t know if you know about this but … my dads own a bar.”

Dabi’s first reaction was to snort because this information apparently came out of nowhere. But his brain suddenly made the connection. No way. It can’t be where he’s going with this.

“So I was thinking,” Tomura continued, “if I talked to them about this, maybe you guys could have a show there.”

Holy fucking shit.

“I mean obviously I’d have to ask first so don’t get your hopes too high” Tomura continued to ramble, fidgeting with a strand of his hair, “and also they’re more old school than what you’re probably used to, so you might not be able to play your most hard-core songs. Maybe the softer ones? Or maybe covers. I guess you’ll have to meet them and play something to be sure … Yeah, I can make that happen. I’m not sure how much it would help but- ”

“Tomura.”

The boy immediately went silent. He looked like he was about to run out of air. Dabi noticed he had some paint on his left cheek, which was almost as blue as his hair.
“That’d be incredibly helpful. Thanks,” he said with a smile.

“Oh. Good. I’ll call them.”

“Hey, so, maybe we should get each other’s number?” Dabi asked before he even realised what he was saying. “So you can keep me updated on this… Without having to bother Toga and Magne, you know?”

“Oh, yeah,” Tomura answered as if he was barely processing any of this, “that actually makes sense.”

They each entered their number in the other’s phone. A soon as Tomura had got his back, he shoved it in his pocket and practically yelled:

“WELP, SEE YOU.”

Tomura awkwardly waved at him before dashing across the street, on his way home. He looked incredibly graceful and incredibly clumsy at the same time. Dabi still couldn’t believe that he was going out of his way to help them. Well, more to help the girls than to help me of course. But still. On his way home, he laughed to himself, thinking about the way Tomura played with his hair when he was nervous, like a fucking schoolgirl or some shit. God, what a fucking mess… I wonder if his hair is really as soft as it looks, though?

* 

As he ran home, Tomura’s heart was beating really fast.

*He called me by my name.*

Chapter End Notes

Jin is a very good boy and these are the FACTS (but we knew that).

For a while, I wanted Dabi to be the one to go after Tomur on the kitchen, but it didn’t feel earned yet. Besides, having Jin do really felt right and I’m very glad about the
way it turned out. This is a shigadabi fic, but I want it to also be about friendship and
how the boys learn to bond with others. So Tomura making friends is sort of the
second storyline.

Endeavour is a piece of garbage but we knew that. Just to be clear, Tomura knows
who Endeavour is, but he didn't make the connexion with Dabi's dad (yet). Here, the
boys both opened up a little bit, but they are not ready to open the vanes yet. Trust me,
there is a lot more to unfold for the both of them.

Baby steps, guys.

But hey, they got each other's numbers now, so that's progress! Also, I did not re-read
the previous chapters, so I hope I didn't mess up by having Dabi call Tomura by his
name before. I think I'm good but who knows ...

Next chapter, The Dads™ are here!!!! I love them!!!

Edit: I want yall to know that as I'm writing this fic currently has 69 kudos and this is
100% what Tomura and Dabi would have wanted so thank you all so much.
Chapter Summary

In which Tomura and Dabi both take baby steps and Kurogiri and Sato accidentally adopt five more children.

Chapter Notes

guess who' back at it again ...

Yay! Now that the exams are done (not necessarily done well, but done) I can finally go back to doing what I love: writing about fictional nerds falling in love.

I apologize in advance for a possibly "off" chapter. The break was not that long, but I spent it writing academic papers non-stop, so going back to the fic, it almost felt like I didn't know how to write anymore. I feel like it eventually came back as I wrote, but yeah. So again, I apologize if the characters and their interaction feel a bit off or weird or OOC (more than usual I mean), it's just me being rusty and getting my shit together. I have re-adopt all my children.

But most importantly THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR YOUR AMAZING RESPONSE TO THE STORY! I still cannot believe how much love this fic had received! So many kudos, bookmarks, and comments! Aaaah! Thank you guys so much, I love writing this, but you really what keeps me motivated to continue! I hope I don't disappoint you, and that you keep enjoying the story!

Also at this point, I feel like I need to give a shoutout to two fics that were huge inspirations for this story. You most likely know them because they are very popular in the shigadabi fandom. But nonetheless:

Sometimes a family is two dads, an uncle and six children, by crosstie (if you know the fic, I guess my inspiration is pretty obvious, because I've read this story so much that this character's interactions are canon in my mind, and therefore, very similar to the way I write them in my fic)

A reason to hold your hand, by CubeCreep, an excellent civilian au shigadabi read! I adore it! It was basically this fic that convinced me that writing a soft civilian shigadbi au was possible!

Anyway, sorry for the long notes, I cannot shut up. Hope you enjoy the update!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You've entered => You’re my dads! (Boogie woogie woogie)
You: sup dadders

Mist Dad: Oh, hello Tomura!

Magic Dad: Hello son! It has been a while! How are you doing? Are you still living with Toga and Magne? How are they? How is school?

You: wow damn

Mist Dad: Sato my dear, don’t press him like that! One question at the time.

Magic Dad: Yes you’re quite right, I’m sorry Tomura.

You: Nah, it’s cool. It’s also my fault for not calling enough …

You: But yeah, school is fine, I’m fine and the girls are fine.

Magic Dad: Ah! That is wonderful news!

Mist Dad: Well, I’m glad to hear that you’re doing okay! But is there a specific reason for your message? Do you need anything?

You: uuuh

You: Yes and no

Mist Dad: ?

Magic Dad:?

You: I want to ask you something, but I thought we should maybe talk about it over lunch or something?

Mist Dad: Are you okay?????

You: Yeah dad I’m fine I want to ask you something. It’s about Toga and Magne. Papa, did you know that they had a band? With a guy name Dabi?

Magic Dad: Hmmmmm, I don’t think I did, but it doesn’t really surprise me! These girls have always been extremely creative!

You: Well, to give you the gist of it, they’re having some trouble playing live right now and the band is really important to them.

You: So I thought they could maybe play here?

Mist Dad: In our bar?

You: Yeah, I’ll explain more when we meet. Can we have lunch together tomorrow?

Magic Dad: Yes of course! It’s been a while since we ate the three of us together!

Mist Dad: Yes good idea! You can come to the bar, I’ll make the risotto you like!
You: dad no it’s fine don’t bother

Mist Dad: It doesn’t bother me! I know you love it!

You: geez

You: well thanks I guess

You: I mean I do like it

You: thanks dad

Magic Dad: Kurogiri dear, look at our beautiful bashful son … I love him!

You: jfuzhfjqsjbc okay well, see you tomorrow then …

Mist Dad: See you tomorrow son!

Magic Dad: See you!!

You: yeah

You’ve left => You’re my dads! (Boogie woogie woogie)


The bar was originally opened and owned by Kurogiri, and he had been handling it alone for many years, only with a few waiters and one cook. When his relationship with Sato became serious and the magician moved in, they had decided to extend their life partnership to a working one. The place certainly had grown and changed with time, it was now more of dinner than a bar, but the spirit and atmosphere of the place were still the same. Tomura had a lot of memory in this bar, some delightful and some agonizing. In a way, the place was just as much of a home to him, as the actual flat where he grew up. Actually, for while, the flat and the bar had been connected, because Kurogiri and he used to live in the small place right above it before moving to a bigger place. It used to be Kurogiri’s place when he was living alone, but when he had suddenly found himself with small eight years old boy to raise, some changes had to be made.

It had been a few months since Tomura had last seen his dads, but the way to the bar felt just as familiar as it used to. They had planned to meet in the early afternoon after the rush of lunch, and when he walked in, only three tables were still occupied. Tomura immediately saw Kurogiri at his usual spot behind the bar. As soon as he saw his son, the man was absolutely beaming. Well, as much as a black mist can beam.

“Ah! Tomura! Just in time. Wait, I’m calling Sato!”
In an instant, the magician came out of the kitchen. Tomura still remembered when he had first met him. He had seemed so intimidating back then, with his mask, top hat, his cane, his mannerisms and his suave tone … Of course, he had quickly realised that the man was actually just a huge overdramatic dork. Just like Kurogiri, he was wearing a rather fancy suit, but his was slightly more colourful and matching his bright ginger hair. The two men rushed toward him but suddenly stopped, hesitating. They exchanged a look.

“Hum, right,” coughed Kurogiri, “you’re, uh, probably too old for hugs now.”

They both kept their arms alongside their body, restraining themselves. Sato looked like he was in some sort of physical pain, so Tomura let out a deep sigh.

“Nah, it’s coo-”

Before he finished his sentence, the two men were on him. Tomura tried really hard to pretend that he minded. But he couldn’t help but smile.

Tomura and Sato sat at the table while Kurogiri disappeared in the kitchen a few minutes to prepare Tomura’s risotto himself. The boy showed some pictures he had taken with Toga and Magne to Sato. The two girls use to take drama classes with him, and that’s how Sato had met them and was able to introduce them to Tomura. He was always eager to get some news about his former students. When Kurogiri came back with the food, they caught up for a few more minutes before getting to the point of Tomura’s visit.

“So what was it about this whole band business?” asked Kurogiri, a bit wary.

“Yeah, right, so, like I said, the girls are part of a band created by a guy named Dabi. The band is super important to them, but they haven’t played live in a while. So I was thinking that playing here would help them. At least to get their confidence back you know?”

“What a splendid idea!” Sato exclaimed grabbing Kurogiri’s arm, “this place could definitely use a bit more panache! Don’t you think, love?”

Kurogiri didn’t seem as convinced as his boyfriend.
“Well, first of all, I think it’s wonderful of you to help your friends like this Tomura. But I hope you understand that we might need some more precisions.”

“I mean yeah, that’s kind of why I’m here. And even if you agree, I think you should still meet them before.”

Tomura tried to describe the band and its music as well as he could, while still using terms and analogies that his dads (especially Kurogiri) could still understand. Sato already trusted Magne and Toga with his life, so Tomura didn’t have to add anything about them. But oddly enough, the trickiest part was when he tried to describe Dabi to them. The young man was putting so much of himself in his music that it seemed like a necessary thing to do for them to completely get an idea of the whole project. But right now, describing Dabi was a lot more difficult then it would have been a week earlier. Last week, his opinion of Dabi was simple; a complete, pretentious and disdainful asshole who thought himself to be above everyone else, incapable of saying anything that wasn’t rude or stupid and who had swore to make Tomura’s life hell on earth. In fact, even though their music was good, Tomura wasn’t sure he would have asked his dads to help the band back then. But now things were … different. He wasn’t even sure how and why, because Dabi was still very much an asshole. And yet Tomura wanted to do this. He wanted his dads to agree to this. He wanted to help. This change had only happened a few days prior, so he hadn't had the time to deal with it properly yet. Right now, he was acting on instinct more than with any logical thinking.

“Wait, hold on,” Kurogiri politely interrupted as Tomura was finishing his speech “they’re inspired Stain? Did I get that right?”

“Unfortunately yes …”

“But … you hate Stain.”

Kurogiri pointing out how strange his request was, wasn’t helping Tomura with his conflicted thoughts. And yet, he knew exactly what to answer.

“Well, Dabi might be inspired by Stain, but he’s not Stain. He’s actually, uh, he’s actually really creating his own path right now. Or working on it at least. Again, I think a live performance could really help him to figure things out.”

“Absolutely!” Sato said, completely on board with this, “That is true for any kind of performing art! Music, theatre, dance, magic … all of these things are living arts, and therefore live performances are essential parts of them.”
He turned toward Kurogiri, taking both of his hands in his.

“My love,” he said with his smoothest and deepest voice, “it is our duty as distinguished members of the society, no as humanitarians, to be patrons of the arts. And this duty includes supporting young artist such as these youthful fellows! Help them to grow and bloom, so they can make their mark in this world and add to our cultural legacy.”

Tomura couldn’t help but snort. God, he is always so extra. I love him. Kurogiri, as always when Sato used his suave voice, became excessively bashful. Not everyone could pick it up, but Tomura could tell that his mist dad was definitely blushing right now. They’ve been together for almost eight years now, and yet Dad still turns into a blushing schoolgirl when Papa flirts with him. I cannot believe …

“Hum, well yes, that’s all nice and dandy,” Kurogiri stuttered, “but I still worry a little bit. You see, I don’t know much about Stain, but I believe his music is quite … aggressive, yes? I’m not sure that it would feat with our usual crowd. Besides, I assume they would have quite a bit of material …”

“Yeah, that’s why I want you to meet them, or more precisely for them to come here. This way, they can play some stuff for you and see how you feel about it, and we can do some test to see if they all feat in here with their stuff.”

Kurogiri stayed silent a few minutes, thinking over this. He was actually very proud and pleasantly surprised to see how much Tomura had thought about this. The boy was usually one for messy last minute decisions. Furthermore, he was very happy to see Tomura actively doing something with other people of his age.

“Well,” he eventually said, “I assume that I can at least agree to meet them!”

“Wonderful! Splendid!” Sato smiled, clapping his hand, “It’s going to be great! I’m going to look over my old material see if there’s anything they could use! In the meantime, we could …”

He was interrupted by one of the cooks who had a few questions about tomorrow’s menu. Kurogiri and Sato argued for a few minutes, each one telling the other to sit down and that he’d take care of it. Eventually, Sato won and got off his sit to gracefully run to the kitchen.
“Every time he moves, it looks like a choreography,” Tomura chuckled.

“It does. God, I love him.”

“Yes, me too.”

Now that they were alone, Kurogiri looked at his son with soft, misty, yellow eyes.

“I’m sorry I’m not as fun as him … He is just so spontaneous, that sometimes I have to think logically for the two of us.”

“What? No, don’t be sorry! You complete each other like this; honestly, he would get in a lot of trouble if it weren’t for you. Also, I think you’re fun too …”

Tomura wasn’t sure how he knew that the mist was smiling, but he did. He understood his dad almost perfectly.

“I know I may sound a bit skeptical, but I really hope we can make this thing work! He does sound a bit fun … besides; it’s not often that you introduce us your friends! I’m glad that you’re trying something new!

Tomura smiled.

“Yes, I’m glad too.”

* *

“Dabs, are you even listening?”

Dabi blinked a few times before focussing again on Jin, sitting at his desk across the room. He was looking at him with irritation, which led Dabi to the conclusion that he had tuned out longer then he thought he had. Near Jin, sitting by the window, Spinner chuckled and Dabi already regretted telling him that he could crash here for the afternoon.
“Obviously not, he isn’t,” the lizard boy answered for him.

Jin sighed dramatically. Dabi, who was lying on the bed, leaned on his elbow.

“Yeah, sorry dude, I was … out”

“For a change” Spinner added.

“Hey, what’s that suppose to mean?” Dabi frowned.

“It’s just that you’re being weird lately,” Jin said. “As, abnormally non-hyper verbal and self-centered, weird.”

“Less bitchy and pretentious than usual” Spinner translated.

Dabi smiled and laid again, hands behind his neck.

“Then why are you complaining?”

“Because like I said, it’s weird,” Jin answered almost as if a weird shiver had run through him, “You may be a pain in the ass but you’re our pain.”

“Well, I’m not complaining …” Spinner muttered under his breath.

“I was just wondering something,” Dabi whispered almost more for himself, with closed his eyes. He couldn’t believe he was about to ask this. He had delayed the moment as much as he could, knowing exactly how Jin and Spinner were going to interpret his question and he did not look forward to the obligatory teasing that was going to follow. But he was desperate.

So he took a deep breath and asked:
“When you guys get a number, how long do you wait before texting?”

There was a second of silence. Jin broke it.

“Dude. What the actual fuck?”

Dabi wished he could sink into the mattress.

“Yeah, I know, I know,” he said covering his face with both hands.

“You are asking us about this kind of stuff?” Spinner almost yelled. “Dude we are practically virgins next to you. You get like 10 numbers a week! It’s almost as if you asked us how to breathe!”

“No but wait it’s not like that, it’s not …” Dabi stuttered, slightly more panicked than he thought he would be, especially considering that he knew that this assumption was coming.

“And besides, I never saw you follow some kind of rule, before calling anyone,” Jin continued. “Sometimes you call them the next minute, sometimes the next morning, sometimes the next week … Hell, I even saw you calling a guy two years after you got his number! And you still banged him!”

“And don’t get us started on the one you actually never call …” Spinner said with a hint of saltiness.

“Oh my god shut up and listen!” Dabi snapped, probably a bit too quickly. “It’s not about that! No, that would be super gross! It’s a work thing okay? It’s, uh, it’s … it’s a guy that said that he would help the band … And I just want to know if it’s weird to ask some news to quickly … It’s all business okay?”

Yeah, that’s business! Like, it really is just business. Nothing else. Tomura is helping out. That’s it. That’s all there is so WHY IS MY FACE FEELING SO HOT RIGHT NOW WHAT THE FUCK.

Dabi had already bragged several times in his life that he was genetically incapable of being embarrassed, that the part of his brain in charge of shame simply did not exist. He now stood corrected. And he could tell that for some reason, the two guys across the room were not buying any of this.
Dabi eventually got sick of the other two idiots giggling behind his back and took the first opportunity that presented itself to go out. It turned out to be grocery shopping. Dabi didn’t feel like walking right now, so after some negotiation he was allowed to borrow Spinner’s van that was parked right in front of their building. The engine was extremely old and objectively very ugly. Spinner had it for years, and it was pretty obvious that he took it everywhere. It probably was bright orange at some point, but the dust and dirt had tarnish the colours. Dabi’s shopping was done quickly but he didn’t want to go home yet, so once he put the groceries in the back, he began to drive aimlessly in the street. He was thinking that it would be pretty sweet if his text dilemma could solve itself before he went home, when he spotted Tomura literally just a little further down the street. *Wait what? What the fuck? Where did he come from?* It actually took him a few seconds to process and accept that it was actually Tomura, because it just seemed way to convenient. But there was so mistaking the slightly hunched posture, the thin silhouette, the skinny clumsy legs, and of course, the mass of messy blue hair. Even though he would later be embarrassed by his own thought, he was so tired at the moment that he seriously considered the possibility that Tomura had just appeared out of a puff of smoke like a fairy or some shit. And because of how dumbfounded he was, it actually took him another few seconds to realise that this was exactly what he needed right now. *Holy shit wait fuck this is great! No need to call him … Okay how can I tactfully get his attention? Better be smooth about this …* Dabi slammed his hand on the horn and passed his head through the open window to scream.

“*HEY! HEEEEEEEEY! HEY MOPEHEAD HEYYY!!! OVER HEEERE!!”*

Tomura jumped something like two feet up in the air, before turning toward him with eyes that were both terrified and murderous. It reminded Dabi of these cat videos on the Internet when they jump in a weird position like their possessed or something, and it made him smile. Even though Tomura had obviously seen him, he continued to honk his horn with one hand while waving with the other, until Tomura literally was in front of him. He had put on his hood out of embarrassment, and even though he was trying to hide his face underneath, Dabi could still see his pink cheeks. That was almost cute. Almost.

“I feel like I shouldn’t have to ask that by now,” Tomura gritted his teeth, “but are you fucking insane?”

“I wasn’t sure you saw me.”

The other boy clearly wanted to snap something back, but he seemed to change his mind and bite his lips instead. Dabi wondered if this nervous twitch was the reason why the boy’s lips were so fucked up. It was something that he had noticed since the first time they met, and now every time that Tomura was doing it in front of him he couldn’t help but stare for a few seconds. And because he was so used to this sight, Dabi immediately noticed this bite-lip was a bit different from the ones he had seen so far. It usually was a result of Tomura’s anxious nature and of his attempts to swallow back his screams. But right now … it looked more like he was trying to hold back a smile.
Okay but that’s weird, I never saw him do this before and I never thought I would. But then again, I never would have thought that I would ask for his number and … Shit! I’ve been staring at his lips for way too long now this is weird, uuuuuuh, quick say something! On instinct!

“Yeah, so, first of all, I’m not stalking you.”

S H I T. INSTINCT BAD. BAD INSTINCT.

Dabi mentally kicked himself, doing his absolute best to stay composed and hide his internal screaming. But trough the van’s opened window, Tomura actually appeared to be just as surprised and embarrassed as him.

“I … I didn’t think you were! It, uh, it didn’t even cross my mind! I didn’t … I don’t …”

“Yeah well okay cool, so, uh, I’m glad that’s settled so … Yeah. But actually, it’s cool that I ran into you because I was wondering about, you know, the band and your dads and stuff.”

“Oh, yeah, well I just left them actually. And, well, they’re super down to at least meet you all. Well technically, Sato already knows Toge and Magne but … I don’t know if you even knew that actually? But anyway, so the better would be to meet when the place is empty so you can try stuff without bothering anyone … And technically it would mean either very late or very early, but next Tuesday is actually a bank holiday so it would work better? So yeah, if everyone is down with that … yeah.”

“Oh. Okay. Cool. Thanks.”

For a few seconds, none of them could think of anything else to say so they kind of just … nodded at each other for a while. This new relationship between them was still slippery, clumsy and different. They had seen each other only once since the café, and it had been in a busy bar with Toga and Magne, which always made things easier. Right now, it was their first time alone like this since their … their what? Their conversation? Confessions? Apologies? Dad talk? But in a way, this awkwardness didn’t bother Dabi that much. Well, it bothered him sometimes, especially when it included getting flustered in front of his two stupid friends (whom he adored). But when he was with Tomura, not so much. The whole thing was still very awkward and raw, but Dabi had always liked to try new things. Right now his relationship with Tomura was an experience. Good or bad, only time would tell, but Dabi was genuinely curious about the result.
“Well,” Tomura finally said, “I guess I’d better . . .”

“Hey, where are you going right now? Want me to drop you somewhere?”

Tomura stayed silent for a while trying to figure out if the black-haired man was serious about this. And Dabi, who had very poor impulse-control, absolutely was. He was just as surprised as the other boy by his own proposition but he still decided to go with it. *Let’s experiment this shit.*

“I actually was thinking about going to the paint shop,” Tomura answered, “you know, the big one downtown?”

“Perfect! This beast will help to carry your stuff. Get in.”

*#

As they drove, Tomura took a look around the inside of the van that was just as dirty as the outside.

“Is it yours?” he asked

“Nah, it’s Spinner’s. Do you really think I would treat my car like this?”

“Yeah maybe not, considering you almost burned me alive over a motorcycle that wasn’t even yours in the first place.”

Dabi laughed at the sudden throwback. The way he had run into Tomura today was kind of similar to the way they had met. It was funny to think back on it now, with everything that had happened since then.

“Okay so, first of all, I wouldn’t have burned you alive. You looked way too small and harmless. Punched you, yes probably. But second, I wouldn’t have even considered punching you if you had been fucking decent in the first place.”

“Wh- How was I not decent?” Tomura scoffed, crossing his arms like a kid who was offended, “I
was super worried! I literally ran to you in a panic, asking if you were okay! You were the one who acted all shitty!"

“Yes, because I was minding my own business, on my way back to the bar after buying some cigarettes, when your dumb ass came out of nowhere, walking in the middle of the street, and made me crash!”

Tomura opened his mouth to say something but nothing came out. He frowned, hands deep in his pockets and put his feet on the dashboard. Even though the boy was considerably smaller than Dabi, he was still quite tall by ordinary standard, and it was funny to see him try to maneuver his long skinny legs in the small space. In any other vehicle, Dabi would have stopped him, but the van was already as trashy as it was ever going to be.

“Well still … You didn’t have to be so rude …” Tomura said playing with a strand of his hair. After a moment of reflexion, he added, “Thinking back … I think what really bothered me was that you looked way more worried about the motorcycle than about me …”

Oh … Well, that was … honest. Dabi didn’t really know how to answer to that, so he cracked a joke.

“I mean that was a really nice motorcycle, can you bla- Hey! Stop that! Get your foot of my face we’re going to die!”

Because Tomura was apparently a fucking five years old, his response to Dabi’s remark had been to shove his foot in his face. In other circumstances, Dabi might have been impressed by this unexpected suppleness, but right now, the red shoe blocked his view of the road. Eventually, Tomura put his leg back on the dashboard, snickering like an idiot.

“Jesus fucking Christ, and you call me insane …” Dabi muttered under his breath, “You know what? I’m glad I ran into you today. Because this way I didn’t have to text you! Having your number is already weird enough, so I don’t need to have an actual trace of you inside my phone.”

As soon as he finished his sentence, Dabi felt his phone vibrated in his pocket. It was a text from Tomura. Well, not really a text but an emoji. The hand flipping one. Right next to him, Tomura was looking at the road ahead but had the goofiest grin on his face. He had just sent it from inside of his pocket, out of Dabi’s sight. The black-haired man stared at him in disbelief for a few minutes.
“You little bitch … In fact, you know what?”

Keeping an eye on the road, Dabi fidgeted with his phone changing Tomura’s contact to “Bitch”.

“There! That’s what you deserve!” Dabi said, showing him the screen.

“I mean yeah, that’s accurate,” Tomura shrugged, “I’m kind of surprised that I wasn’t saved under bitch in the first place. I can’t image that you would have saved me under my name.”

“Damn right I didn’t.”

“So? What was I saved under?”

“Hey look we’re here.”

Tomura adored art shop. Ever since he was a child, when most of the kids around him begged their parents to take them to the candy store or the toy store, young Tomura was always dragging Kurogiri to the art shop across their streets. He always wanted to buy everything, every type of pencils, every box of paint and all of the art books (ignoring the dozens he already had at home). Even today, walking in gave him the same feeling of wonder he felt when he was twelve. Of course, he knew that he had to stay focus on his objective and shouldn’t wander too much, but his heart still felt a little lighter.

“Wow, damn,” said a voice behind him.

Tomura had almost forgotten about Dabi Behind him, the taller was looking around with wide eyes as if he had stepped in another world or something, which might have been the case. The same way Tomura had never stepped inside instrument store, Dabi had probably never stepped into an art store. He would never say it out loud, but the sight of Dabi looking around with a bright smile and star in his eyes was … endearing. When they had reached the place, Tomura had expected some comment about lame this place was, how stupid Tomura was to get excited over this. Maybe he had jumped to conclusions. That wouldn’t be a first.
“This place is fucking huge!” Dabi continued, “I didn’t know you needed so much shit … Hell, I didn’t even know so many colours existed.”

Dabi was now looking a huge wall that was basically a shelving unit with hundreds of tins of paint.

“That’s not even half of all of the colours that exist,” Tomura informed him, “Besides, you can mix colours together to created your own.”

Tomura was about to go back to his business when Dabi called him again. He reluctantly turned toward the other man who was pointing a tin of paint with one hand and hiding its name with the other.

“Hey, mophead, what’s that colour?”

“That’s cobalt blue, why?”

“Haha! Nice. Okay, this one now!” Dabi picked another colour, hiding its name again.

“Vermilion. Look, I don’t get …”

“Okay, okay! This one now!”

The game continued for a full ten minutes without Dabi ever getting bored. But eventually, Tomura let out an exasperated sigh.

“Look, are you done? I need to do some stuff … I promise you what I’m doing right now is not as cool as you think it is …”

“Aw, come one Tomura don’t talk yourself down like that … I can’t tell the difference between two kinds of purple, so I think it’s pretty impressive that you know all of this stuff! It shows you’re really passionate about this, you nerd …”

Tomura. It was the second time he ever heard Dabi say his name, and like the first time, it made
him feel weird stuff. The first time, he had decided that it was out of surprise. But now he wasn’t so sure. It was weird. But not a bad weird? It gave him goosebumps and he felt his heart drop in his stomach. It was like being on the highest point of a roller-coaster, the millisecond before the fall. Besides, Dabi had said that his knowledge was impressive which was nice, even if he had called him a nerd in the same sentence.

“Hey, can I ask one last colour?” Dabi asked.

Tomura was still feeling the goosebumps and weird thing in his stomach, but did his best to sound as exasperated and disinterested as he could.

‘Urgh … Fine, I guess …”

Dabi’s smile was the definition of “shit-eating-grin”. He walked along the shelving unit, pretending to think about which colour he would pick. But suddenly, he shifted his direction and walked very slowly toward Tomura. The boy began to panic, trying desperately (and failing) to look unmoved until Dabi was right in front of him only a few inches away from his face. Despite his best efforts, he couldn’t hide his uneven breathing and burning cheeks. *Shit shit shit shit what is he doing shit shit …*

“Hey Tomura,” Dabi began in a low voice.

*S H I T*

Before Tomura could even comprehend what was happening, Dabi, still grinning, slowly raised his finger and pointed at the boy’s crimson face.

“What colour is that?”

“FUCK YOU, YOU LITTLE …”

Tomura suddenly cut himself, when the other customers in the store turn tower him, giving him weird looks. Tomura was redder than ever and covered his face with both of his hands, while Dabi was quietly chuckling next to him.
“I hate you … so much …” Tomura angrily whispered from behind his hands.

“I’m so sorry, but I can’t help myself. You’re just … it’s so easy and funny to tease you.” Dabi smiled.

Eventually, Tomura bought the new paintbrush and bow of magenta he needed, with a light pink still on his cheeks. As they left the shop, Dabi felt the need to comment.

“You may know your shit with colours, but you got some awful taste … This pink is ugly as hell …”

“That’s a primary colour you dipshit. You rarely use them alone, they’re usually mixed with other colours to create something new.”

They were making they’re way back to the truck in silence. Once they were back on the road to get to Tomura’s place, Dabi asked another question.

“Okay so, it might be dumb to ask, but how did you get into painting? Or drawing or art in general?”

“I don’t think there is a particular reason,” Tomura shrugged, “it might come as a surprise to you, but I didn’t have many friends as a child. None, actually. I was the weird lonely kid, you know …”

Tomura waited for a comment from Dabi, saying that he was still weird and lonely or something like that. But nothing came. Dabi was still listening, looking at the road. So Tomura continued.

“So drawing became a sort of hobby … It was a thing I could do alone in my room without anyone bothering me. I didn’t need any help, or … Anyway, I discovered that I liked it. Really liked it. And I became very good at it. So I thought, well, if I can do this shit every day and be paid for it that would be pretty sweet. So yeah. I just really like create stuff with my hands for a change.”

Fuck. Tomura bit his lips. His last sentence was a little too real, he hadn’t meant to go this far. He risked a glance at Dabi and realised that the guy was staring at his lips. As soon as he understood that Tomura had caught him, his eyes nervously shifted back to the road. Tomura felt a wave of self-consciousness overcome. He covered his mouth with the back of his hand and not so smoothly changed the subject.
“What about you? And music?”

“Oh … Well, kind of the same story actually,” Dabi answered, “I might sound unbelievable, but I wasn’t always the suave confident motherfucker that I am today. I wasn’t a very social kid. But instead of drawing like you, I listened to a lot of music. Like, a lot. I always love to try new things discovered new bands … It fascinated me, you know? These people had found ways of expressing things that couldn’t be said with words. They took all of their pain and misery and created something with it. And soon enough, I wanted to do the same.”

Tomura remembered everything Dabi had said about his father. He realised that music had probably saved Dabi’s life, the way art had saved his. He suddenly felt extremely happy that his dads had accepted to give the band a chance.

They parked under Tomura’s building not long after that conversation.

“Well,” Dabi said holding the handbrake, “that was surprising fun. I kind of want to visit more art store, now.”

“It actually was,” Tomura answered. He hesitated a bit before adding, “uh, maybe … maybe next time you can take me in a music store or something.”

He immediately cringed at his own proposal, but Dabi actually smiled.

“A music store, uh? Yeah. Yeah okay, let’s do that.”

Dabi helped Tomura carry his material to the door.

“Hey, is it okay if I go up with you? If we have to impress your dads, I would like to review some stuff with girls tonight.”

Tomura stared at Dabi whit wide eyes, in utter disbelief.
“Dabi, are fucking kidding me right now?”

“… No?”

“Dabi, we’re Friday night.”

“And ..? What do you …? … Oh. Oh! Oh, yeah.”

Tomura could actually witness the realisation hitting Dabi, and it was pretty hilarious. He began to wonder if actually just didn’t know what day it was, or if he was just really that dense and forgetful.

“Well so much for that,” Dabi continued, “for my defense, I hadn’t realised that it was so late and also I never know what day it is. Eh, I’ll just go up to see Gran Torino instead. I kind of miss the old guy.”

“Oh, hum, he’s not here right now. He went back to Yamashi last week. But I’ll tell him you wanted to see him! He’ll be pleased. He likes you.”

This information had Dabi crack a smile. He shoved his hands in his pockets, seemingly thinking about something. Eventually, he said something.

“Well, I guess I’ll think of something to do upstairs. I still have my computer to work.”

Now Tomura was completely confused. Why would he want to go up if neither the girls nor Gran Torino are here? The other times it made sense. It had come all the way to the flat by mistake and didn’t want to have to go all the way back walking. But today he had a car, with grocery in the trunk. Wouldn’t be simpler to just drive home? Why on earth would he want to be alone with Tomura upstairs?

“But … But there’s no one but me tonight. You know that. Isn’t it easier to go home with a car?”

Dabi stared at Tomura, expressionless, or rather with an express an expression that he couldn’t read. He had a soft smile on his lips, but his eyes seemed … disappointed? He couldn’t be sure,
because he had never Dabi disappointed or even sad. No, it has to be something else ...

“You really don’t want me to go up, right mophead?” Dabi suddenly said with a surprisingly soft voice. Weirdly enough, he sounded almost vulnerable right now.

“What do you mean?” Tomura asked his heart suddenly beating very fast for a reason he could not understand.

“Nah, nothing. Never mind, don’t worry about this,” Dabi said suddenly back to his cool confident self. “Thanks again for your dads. Really, you didn’t have to do any of that. But you did anyway. So thank you, Tomura.”

That weird shiver again ...

* 

Tuesday arrived extremely fast, and before Tomura even knew it, he was sitting in the back of Spinner’s van with Dabi, Toga, Jin and the band’s material. With the hard ground, heavy objects rolling around them and the whole vehicle shaking at every turn, it wasn’t comfortable for any of them. Well except for Spinner who was driving and Magne who got to sit on the passenger seat.

“I can’t believe I’m gonna die in a shitty van surrounded by idiots,” Tomura whispered, holding his knees tightly.

“Noooo! Don’t say that!” Toga said in a tone that was trying to be comforting. She was sitting right next to him and softly leaned her head against his shoulder. “You can’t die before introducing us to your dads! I never got to meet Kurogiri!”

“Also we’re not idiots you’re an idiot- shit sorry …”

The shakiness of their vehicle had made Jin quite tense and nervous, which meant that is other self was more vocal than usual. Magne turned over to speak to him.

“Jin, for the seventh time, we can switch places.”
“Nah, don’t worry it’s fine. Spinner said we were almost there.”

“Yeah, well Spinner also said his car worked fine so …”

“Hey!” Spinner yelled, looking behind him as well, “my car does work fine, so don’t talk shit or I-”

“JESUS CHRIST SPINNER EYES ON THE ROAD” Tomura screamed, scaring Toga who was still leaning on him.

Spinner abruptly turned right back, just in time to turn as he the van was getting dangerously close to the sidewalk. The brutality of the turn had all of the instrument and material rolling around in the back for a bit with the four young people desperately trying to stop them. Eventually, everything stood still and unscratched and everyone let out a relieved sigh.

“There, you see Tomura, it’s fine!” Spinner declared, way too proud and confident for a guy that had almost driven directly into a lamppost, “How many time should I tell you that…”

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Tomura cut, voice still shaking, “you know your car and she knows you. It has been past on the family for generation. You already told me that dozens of times.”

“Exactly!” Spinner beamed, “Good to know that you’re listening when I’m talking to you! It’s a family treasure!”

“The story of how your mom used it to woo your dad was kind of cute, I’ll admit,” Tomura said with a smile.

Dabi, who had stayed silent during the whole trip, suddenly stopped playing with the staple in his hand to look directly into Tomura’s eyes, right across him.

“What, do you guys hang out or something?”

“Uh, well yes and no,” Tomura answered, quite surprised that it was this information that had got
Dabi’s attention, “We play a lot of game in co-op during the week, and because we both have headsets, we can chat at the same time.”

“We’re a fucking dynamic duo, my dudes!” Spinner added, “last week on Call Of, we had a team of little shits that thought they were killing the game, but we showed them! We showed good!”

“I still think that they were a bunch of thirteen years olds,” Tomura commented.

“Well, that makes us even more impressive then! Thirteen years olds are the scariest shit on this god damn bitch of a earth my dude…”

“Well, would you look at that …” Dabi muttered under his breath, “you both like videos and now you’re fucking best friends or some shit …”

Spinner was now in a deep conversation with Magne about thirteen years olds and hadn’t heard Dabi’s comment. But Tomura had. He wasn’t bothered by the comment in itself, because it was a pretty dumb thing to be upset about. He would have ignored it if it wasn’t for the fact that the tone and spirit were dangerously close to the type of thing Dabi and him were saying to each other when they first met. And for some reason, the thought of going back to this type of interaction really bothered him.

“We do something that we like together, and we chat while doing it. Is that a problem for you?”

Tomura’s tone wasn’t aggressive or even angry, it actually sounded like a question. Right after he finished his sentence, something immediately shifted in Dabi’s expression and his eyes got a lot softer. He awkwardly rubbed the back of his neck.

“No. No of course not. I’m sorry, uh, that was a dumb comment. I’m sorry.”

*Wow. Just like that? That’s new.* Tomura was so surprised by this reaction from who he considered the rudest guy in the universe, that his own “Uh, yeah no problem” sounded maybe even more awkward than Dabi’s apology. They were both so bashful that they didn’t notice Toga and Jin exchanging a knowing look.
They parked close the bar, and Spinner was deeply insulted to see Jin and Toga literally kiss the ground as soon as they got out of the vehicle. As they were unloading the material, Tomura was hit by a sudden realisation.

“Uuuuuuuuh, before we go in I should probably tell you that one of my dads is literally mist.”

He had already mentioned this to Toga and Magne a few times, but the three guys stopped what they were doing and stared at him with huge eyes.

“What the fuck …” Dabi whispered.

“Yeah, I know it sounds weird but it’s cool you’ll see. Just … Don’t stare at him too much.”

But of course, the three of them stared as soon as they walk in. Kurogiri, who was reading a newspaper at the bar, immediately got up to welcome his son and his friends.

“Ah! Welcome, welcome! So there is the band I heard so much about!”

Tomura introduced the members of the group one by one, and Kurogiri shook each of their hands, with his own misty one. After that, he immediately went to get Sato that was in their office upstairs. As he walked away, the three boys were still staring.

“The mist,” Dabi whispered, “he is actual mist. The Mist Man.”

“I mean I just told you.”

“I love him!” Toga squealed, “He is no nice and classy and polite! No wonder Sato fell in love with him!”

“Yeah,” Jin agreed, “and it’s kind of pretty!”
“It’s super pretty,” Tomura retorted with pride, “my dad is the prettiest.”

The gang didn’t have the time to tease Tomura on his sweet comment, because a clear, theatrical voice was heard from up the stairs.

“What’s my son! Where are my girls! I want to see my beautiful son and my beautiful girls!”

Sato stormed in with graceful steps, Kurogiri on his feet. He let out a dramatic gasp when he saw the little group still standing by the door. Before anyone else could react, Toga and Magne had dropped everything they were holding and they ran to Sato’s open arms. Despite his slender stature, the man was surprisingly strong, and he managed to carry the two giggling girls off the ground and soon enough, the three of them was spinning around in the middle of the bar.

Although he didn’t carry them, he wasn’t any less enthusiastic when he introduced himself to the three other guys, shaking their hands vigorously. And before Tomura could stop him, his papa planted a quick affectionate kiss on the top of his head. Soon enough everyone was sitting around a table with drinks that Kurogiri had prepared for them. It actually took them almost an hour to actually begin to talk about the band, as they were busy to catch up and get to know each other. Tomura was relieved to see that at least, everyone seemed to get along and to have a good connection. Kurogiri who had started the conversation a bit tense and nervous was slowly relaxing, even cracking some dad jokes. The guys were also getting used to a black mist, even though they couldn’t help but stare every once in a while. They apologised for their weird gaze but it didn’t bother Kurogiri that much.

“It’s fine I’m used to it,” he said with what Tomura knew to be a smile, “I know that my appearance is a little unusual, even in the world we now live in! I still get some stares in the street.”

“That’s because you’re so handsome, dear,” Sato whispered quite seductively, before turning toward the group, “You have no idea how stressful it can be to walk with such a gorgeous man at my arm. All of these people checking him out … But when that happens, I hold his hand a little tighter, and I give them a look that says No today bitches. Not today.”

Sato had finished his sentence with a low solemn voice, which confused the other quick a bit. But Tomura knew that Sato was completely serious about this and he smiled at his friends’ puzzled expression. His papa was a complete sweetheart, but also the pettiest person in the universe. He wasn’t afraid to step up when he thought it was necessary and his confidence had completely change the life of the ever so anxious Tomura and Kurogiri. He was the one who asked to speak to the manager when the other two were terrified by the idea of making a fuzz. And every time he was speaking up, Kurogiri looked at him with utter love and admiration in his eyes. It was the same way that Sato was looking at Kurogiri when he was being a nerd about opera. God, I love my
Eventually, Dabi, Toga, and Magne began to explain what kind of music they usually played. Kurogiri and Sato listened attentively, only asking a question once in a while. Dabi admitted that their usual style was a bit loud, but they also had a bunch of softer songs that they could play for them. When the time of demonstration came, it took another thirty minutes to install everything, from Toga’s drums to the speakers. There actually was a small podium, in the corner next to the French window that opened on the terrace, which was now used mostly for aesthetic purpose. But once they had moved some tables, it was actually the perfect size for the band to perform. Once everything was settled, the trio began to play and everyone else took a seat.

It was weird to see them playing something so different. The songs definitely weren’t ballads either, but it really felt different than anything Tomura had heard before, in small-crowed concert rooms, when Dabi sometimes had to scream to be heard. But considering how comfortable they were playing this, this different type of music wasn’t unusual for them. In fact, Tomura was surprised to see how many original songs Dabi was proposing them right now. He had definitely worked on this before. It really was a different side of him. But Tomura liked it. The slower rhythm really fitted Dabi’s deep voice, and because the instruments were softer, it was easier to appreciate how easily he could hit every note, the higher ones like the lower ones. He really is talented.

After their final song, everyone enthusiastically clapped, especially Sato and Kurogiri. The former magician actually had teary eyes and began to rumble about how talented these kids were. There were a few more talks, but everything was already decided. In fact, the only notable disagreement concerned the band’s remuneration, because Dabi and the girls refused any kind of payment, saying that the exposure they offered them was enough, but the couple insisted intensely until the band agreed. Eventually, it was settled that, if the public liked them, they would play at least once a week. Kurogiri, who had had little glass of wine, suddenly decreed that, if it was okay with everyone, they should have their first show tomorrow night!

“My, my, Kurogiri darling,” Sato said with a surprised hand on his chest, “how … spontaneous!”

“What can I say?” Kurogiri chuckled seductively, putting his arm around his boyfriend’s waist, “I am inspired by this fierce youth!”

“Okay that’s officially the cutest shit I ever saw,” Magne decided, and Toga and Jin both nodded vigorously.

It was getting quite late so they decided to have dinner together. Everyone was too tired to try to prepare something in the kitchen, so they ended up ordering pizza at the only place that was open on this bank holiday. The phone call to order was supremely chaotic and took way too much time,
but eventually, the food arrived safe and sound and they all eat around a large table. Tomura looked at everyone around the table, eating, laughing, yelling, giggling and even singing. This. This is nice. A bit loud and bit messy, but nice.

As everyone seemed to be deeply engaged in whatever the conversation was, Dabi appeared in his field of view, scooting his chair closer to him.

“So,” he said leaning on the back of his chair, “turns out your dads are pretty fucking cool.”

“Damn right they are. And it’s okay, you can make your comment about how weird it is that cool guys like them ended up with a kid like me, because I actually agree with you on that one.”

“Well, I am the one who disagrees then,” Dabi smiled, as Tomura looked back at him with confused, “because I totally see it. I’ve seen you both quiet and shy like Kurogiri, and loud and emotional like Sato. The perfect mix. Also, I’ve heard Kurogiri say nice and dandy at least three times since we arrived so there’s that.”

Tomura was almost too surprised to be embarrassed. He looked deep into Dabi’s eyes, searching for the slightest hint of irony or mockery, but found none.

“That might actually be the nicest thing you ever said to me,” he said with a small voice.

Dabi looked away for a few seconds, biting his lips. When he turned back to Tomura he was obviously trying to look detach, but for once, it wasn’t really working.

“Yeah, well enough with that. I came here to make sure that you were eating your pizza. So less talking more eating.”

Tomura obliged, but before biting in his slice, his mind went back to café next to the gymnasium, and to Dabi’s father. So he added: “They really like you, you know. I can tell.”

Dabi didn’t answer. But he smiled.
Tomura wasn’t really an optimist, but the next day, even he, could tell that the show went supremely well. After the initial surprise of seeing a band play here for the first time, the customers turned out to be really appreciative of the music and the songs, clapping at the end of every single one of them, and Kurogiri was asked many times the name of the band, and where to find them. As they were playing next to the opened French window, they caught the attention of a few passers-by who end up walking in. And to Sato’s delight, by the end of the evening, a certain number of people even got up to dance. The night was a total success for everyone.

Spinner, Jin, and Tomura spent the night there as well, sitting at their own table, and their cheers getting louder and louder after each drink they had. Well, at least until Kurogiri, as a worried dad, actually stopped putting alcohol in their cocktails without any of them noticing. During each of their break, the trio went to join them, completely high on the adrenaline of the stage, and therefore just as excited as they were. But in the middle of this glorious mess, Tomura was only seeing one thing. Dabi’s face. How wide his smile was, how bright his eyes were, just how open, passionate and happy he was. He had never looked more alive. And in Tomura’s drunk mind, a very self-indulgent thought was growing. I made this.

Around 1 am, they performed their last song and thanked their audience. The last few customers were leaving, and it was time to clean up the stage. As the six of them were all putting the equipment away, Tomura caught from the corner of his eyes two giggling young girls walking up to Dabi. He gave them a crooked smile that made them giggle even more. Tomura pretended to fold some cables that were already perfectly folded to discretely get closer and hear what they were saying. The girls were squealing so much that he couldn’t catch a full sentence, but from what he got they were complimenting Dabi about his performance and his voice, asking when he would play here again and where they could find him. By the end, it turned into some awkward flirting and not so subtle attempt to get his number. Dabi stayed cool and charming the whole time, cracking some jokes that made their giggling even louder. At this point, Tomura wasn’t really pretending to fold anything. Eventually, the two girls handed him a piece of paper and walked away, waving goodbye.

“Is that their number?” Tomura asked as soon as the girls had left the bar, incapable of stopping himself.

The fact that Tomura had obviously listened to the whole thing didn’t seem to bother or even to surprise Dabi. He walked right next to the blue-haired boy, with a cheeky and amused smile on his face.

“It sure is! Look, with the little hearts and everything … That’s kind of adorable. At some point, they must have realized that I wasn’t going to give them mine, so they went for it.”

“Are you going to call them?” Tomura asked with a voice that sounded way too serious and invested for his own liking.
“Nah, no way. Judging by the way they spoke they were probably still in high school, so that’s a big no-no.”

They were both leaning against the bar. Tomura could feel the heat emitting from Dabi’s body due to both the performance and his quirk. At some point during the show, he had taken off his trademarked black coat and was now only wearing a white t-shirt revealing the burnt flesh on his toned arms. Although he was only wearing a three-quarter sleeve t-shirt (which was already pretty revealing for him), Tomura began to feel quite hot himself.

“But uh … I suppose you’ve already done that right? Getting numbers from fans?”

Tomura hated himself for being unable to drop this, but his mouth was working on its own right now. Dabi, on the other hand, didn’t seem to mind, because he answered immediately.

“Oh yeah! I mean I don’t really do it anymore. Maturity and such. Experience taught me it usually wasn’t a good idea. But yeah, when I was 20, I slept with anyone who said they enjoyed the show.”

Tomura turned crimson. He was about to say that it was a lot more information than what he had asked for, but that wasn’t true. That was exactly what he had asked for. Right now, his brain was screaming him to stop, to shut up and go back to folding some cables. But he still asked one last question.

“Anyone? So … not just girls?”

Dabi looked at him like had figured out something that Tomura himself didn’t understand. They were so close at this point that Dabi practically whispered his answer.

“No. Not just girls.”

“HEY! Are we bothering you or something?” Spinner yelled from across the room, carrying some heavy speaker. “Get your asses back at work! I want to be done before sunrise!”
Fortunately, they didn’t have to work until sunrise, because only one hour later, the whole place and stage were neat and tidied up. Kurogiri had some coffee for everyone to get some energy back and sober-up.

“Well,” Sato said hands on his hips, “although the cleaning might have been more efficient, I think we can safely say that this night was a complete success.”

“We rocked so hard!” Dabi smiled.

“You sure did!” Sato continued, “So when you all become rock legends with international fame, you better not forget about your humble beginnings!”

“But I don’t want it to be over yet,” Toga whined, dramatically collapsing on the bar, “I want to sing and dance some more!”

“Couldn’t you have said so before we put everything back in the trunk?” Magne asked.

“Well, it’s not worth your live performance,” Kurogiri said bringing everyone’s cups back behind the bar, “but we do have some vinyl’s here if you want one last dance.”

The proposition was accepted with enthusiasm, as no one really the night to be over yet.

“And I think,” Jin said putting a hand on Tomura’s shoulder, “that Tomura should be the one to choose the song considering that everything that happened tonight was mostly thanks to him!”

Tomura felt a mix of embarrassment and pride overcome him as everyone in the room cheered to that. Even though he had partaken in the cheering, Dabi felt the need to add some sarcastic comment as Tomura went to look at the vinyl collection.

“Get ready to dance on some sweet Mario Paper jam everyone.”

But Tomura had found exactly what he wanted. Two weeks ago, he wouldn’t have dared to put this
on with anyone else than his dads in the room. But things … things were actually changing. And after the night they had, he felt confident enough for this. Also, he knew that it would surprise and maybe even annoy Dabi and that was always a nice bonus. He placed the vinyl on the turntable, making sure that no one could see what it was.

“Okay,” he said turning toward the group, still holding the arm above the vinyl, “so you guys remember when I said that I only liked videogames soundtracks? It wasn’t totally true. There’s another kind of music that I like.”

He let go of the arm, and soon enough, George Michael’s voice was filling up the room.

*You put the boom boom into my heart,*

*You send my soul sky high when your lovin’ starts.*

*Jitterbug into my brain,*

*Goes bang bang bang till my feet do the same.*

“So yeah. I kind of dig cheesy 80’s music.”

Before anyone else could react, Toga squealed loudly and immediately got up to twirl in the middle of the room, singing the lyric the best she could remember, which wasn’t much. But at least her rhythm was on point. Eventually, everyone got up to join the dance, even Dabi who had initially cringed at the first notes of the song, because yes, George Michael’s power was that strong.

The last two sitting at the bar were Tomura and Kurogiri, who looked at everyone dancing in the most disjointed ways, with smiles on their faces.

“So you still like that song?” Kurogiri asked his son, “Even after all these years?”

“Of course I do,” Tomura answered, beaming, “It’s a great song by a great man.”

“It sure is. I have to say, I’m glad we did this. I’m glad that you came up with it, and pushed everyone to go through with this. And I’m glad I’ve met your friends. They’re a little odd and messy at times, but I must say that I like them all very much.”
“Yeah, they’re all right I guess,” Tomura agreed with a smile.

Kurogiri looked at his boy. He was all grown up now; so different from when he had first met him. Suddenly, Dabi waked directly to Tomura with a grin, still breathing hard from the dancing.

“Pardon my French, but what the fuck you think you’re doing mopehead? No offense Kurogiri.”

“None taken.”

Because Tomura just blinked at him in confusion, Dabi rolled his eyes, and grabbed both of his wrists, pulling him of his seat toward the dance floor where he was welcomed by the cheers of everyone.

“If you think that you can pick the cheesiest and catchiest song in the universe, and be exempted of dancing with us,” Dabi continued with the brightest smile Tomura had ever seen, “I’m afraid you’re sourly mistaken.”

“Yeah, Tomura!” Toga agreed, “show us what you got!”

“I … I don’t know about that …”

“If it can ease your mind,” Magne said with a warm smile, “you can’t possibly be worst than Jin and Spinner. And yet, look at them living their best life!”

“How dare you our moves are awesome!”

In the middle of all of this, Dabi walked a little closer to Tomura, to stand a few inches in front of him.

“Hey look at me,” he said softly, “it’s all good. Just go with the flow. You can just move your shoulders like this … Do it like me.”

This soft tone helped Tomura to feel better. He began to mimic Dabi, swinging slowly to the
rhythm of the song and eventually, he got comfortable enough to move his hips a little. This was acclaimed by everyone.

“Wooo! Look at him go!”

“Get it Tomura!”

“You show them!”

“I hate you all so much …” Tomura said, grinning like an idiot.

Kurogiri looked at the scene in front of him, looked at his son, surrounded by people that he loved and who loved him, people who were cheering for him, smiling at him, making him blush and making him dance. It was nice. A little odd and messy, but nice. He suddenly felt a funny warm feeling fill up his chest, as his mind was thrown back years in the past. The very same place. A very large room, with a very small boy standing in the middle.

Kurogiri walked in the bar, Tomura’s bag on his shoulders, and the boy walking closely being him. Finally. After all this time spent on administrative nonsense, after days of questions from the social services, days of discussion with All Might and the heroes and days when he could only Tomura at the social center, he was finally bringing him home. His home. Their home. Kurogiri dropped the bags on the ground next to the bar. These bags that supposedly contained all of Tomura’s belonging were way too few and light to his liking, but that was a question for another time. Right now it was all about the little boy in front of him. God, he was so small and skinny … He was practically floating in shirt and shorts, although Kurogiri suspected that it was also because his clothes were the wrong size. Tomura looked around with his big red eyes, half of his face hidden by the mass of messy blue hair that hadn’t been brushed or cut in a while. Against his chest, he was tightly holding a very small backpack that, to Kurogiri’s knowledge, was only containing an old Gameboy, a blank notebook, and a pen. The eight-year-old boy was looking at Kurogiri with a mix of confusion and expectation. Okay, Kurogiri thought, we’re doing this.

“So here we are Tomura!” he said with his most cheerful voice, “This is your new home! Of course, you already know the place, but now that you live here, you can really make it your own!”

Tomura had a look at his surroundings, but stayed silent, only nodding, and holding his backpack
at little tighter. But it wasn’t much of a surprise; Kurogiri knew from the very beginning that things would take work and time. It was all right. They had all the time in the world now.

“As you know, we will actually leave upstairs. I prepared a room for you! Although I think that now that you here, it would be better to look for a bigger place!”

“Oh … I’m sorry …”

It was the first thing Tomura had said since they had left the center, and Kurogiri received it like a punch in the stomach. Why was he apologizing? Had Kurogiri said something wrong? How could he fix it?

“Tomura why are you apologizing? You did nothing wrong!”

“But … Because of me, you have to leave your home. I’m causing you trouble.”

“No, thanks to you I get to look for a better bigger home! For you and me! It’s not trouble, it’s change and change is good. It’s going to be a bit of work but that’s okay! Besides, you don’t have to apologize for creating some work for me, because I’m your dad now! Being a parent takes time, efforts and work and that’s exactly how it should be! I want to take care of you and you shouldn’t have to apologize it.”

Tomura listened to everything with wide eyes as if he was hearing and understanding all of this for the first time. He probably was. God, Shimura …

They staid in the bar for a little longer, as they were both too tired to bring the bags up right now. Kurogiri had helped Tomura to sit on the barstool that was otherwise way to high for him, and he was now on this other side of the bar serving him some juice. In a way, this setting felt a bit familiar. Tomura’s father use to work as Kurogiri’s accountant, which was how he had met him and his son in the first place. Of course back then; he had no idea of what was happening at home. To him, Shimura was only a sad, tired man who had been through a lot, and his son was just a shy quiet kid. How had he not see? How had he not realized that something was terribly off in all of this?

“Oh! Tomura!” Kurogiri exclaimed, “The other day when I filling up the papers, I saw your date of birth, and I realize that your birthday was very soon! You’re going to be nine next week!”
Tomura didn’t answer this time either, playing with the straw in his juice rather than actually drinking it. But he still tried to give a little smile to confirm the information.

“That’s great news!” Kurogiri continued genuinely thrilled, “So what do you want to do for your birthday? And what do you want as a present?”

Tomura just shrugged, so Kurogiri pressed the matter a little further.

“Any desires? Special wishes? What do you usually do for your birthday?”

“We …” the boy began, before stopping himself biting his chapped lip. He hesitated for a few more seconds during which Kurogiri stayed silent, letting the boy take his time. Eventually, he continued. “We usually didn’t really do anything. At all.”

In a terrible way, Kurogiri felt like he should have been able to predict this, but it still felt like a punch the throat.

“You never celebrated your birthday? But … why?”

“I don’t really know. We just never did."

“Did you ever ask your dad?”

Kurogiri had walked around the bar to sit on the barstool next to Tomura, suddenly disliking the huge piece of wood standing between him and his son. Tomura was nervously twisting his fingers, and Kurogiri could still the scratches and scars and his arm. He had some more on his neck.

“Well … I did ask him once. He said that he just didn’t feel like celebrating the day I killed my mom.”

Shimura you awful piece of garbage. Once again, Kurogiri should probably have been able to expect an answer like this with everything he knew now, everything All Might and Gran Torino had told him, everything he had heard from the social services and from Tomura himself. But it he didn’t make him any less furious. He couldn’t believe he had given this man a job, that he had even
considered him an acquaintance, maybe even a buddy at some point. He knew that his wife had
died giving birth to their son, and he knew that the man was associated to a famous and hero and
that he and the boy were under a sort of witness protection kind of thing. But he wouldn’t have
imagined any of this. If only he had paid more attention to the boy’s silence, maybe if he had
listened to his own instinct that told him, again and again, there was something weird going on …
If hadn’t been so afraid of confrontation, maybe things wouldn’t have ended in the worst way
possible. He was still feeling his blood boiling inside his misty body, but it did his best to control
his anger, because he knew that if he let it out, the boy would immediately assume that Kurogiri
was angry with him, which couldn’t be further from the truth. He got off his barstool to get closer
to Tomura and to make sure that their eyes were on the same level.

“Well … Listen Tomura. I’m very sorry about your mother, I really am. I know that it’s sad. But
the thing is, I didn’t know your mother at all. But I know you. I know you very well and I love you.
So I completely disagree with your father here, because I love you more than her, and because of
that, I am happier that you were born than I am sad that she died. I am so happy that you are born
Tomura! I am so happy that you are here with me right now, and we’re going to be together for
such a long time! Can you imagine all of the things we’re going to do together? All the things that
we’re going see? It’s going to be so great Tomura! You make me so happy! So I want to celebrate
your birthday! Every year! We can do whatever you want. We can throw a party, we can go on a
trip, or we can just stay home, playing videogames and eating candy! But we’re going to celebrate
this together! Okay?”

Kurogiri would have this image engraved in his brain for the brain for rest of his life. The smallest
boy in the world, sitting on a barstool in front of him, his big red eyes full of tears not yet rolling
down his now pink cheek, but a shy but goofy smile on his lips. Kurogiri couldn’t possibly imagine
everything that was happening in his head right now. He was taking in all of these new pieces of
information, all of these words he had never heard before and slowly processing all of it. He
sniffled a bit, drying his eyes with his forearm, as Kurogiri gently pulled his hair off his face.

“Well,” he answered with a small but happy voice.

“Good. In fact, you know what? We’re going to celebrate something right now! We’re going to
celebrate your arrival! Your first day with me as your dad! We’re going to go out, and buy some
cake and sodas, and put some music on or watch a movie! Okay?”

“Okay!”

Before going out, Kurogiri looked at his vinyl, looking for a song that would cheer up the boy a
little bit before they go buy some dinner. Eventually, he found the perfect song.

“Hey Tomura, listen to this!” Kurogiri said as George Michael’s voice was filling up the room.
You put the boom boom into my heart,
You send my soul sky high when your lovin' starts.
Jitterbug into my brain,
Goes bang bang bang till my feet do the same.

The boy was standing next to the machine watching his Dad tentatively shaking his shoulders and moving his feet. Kurogiri had never been much of a dancer, but at this moment it felt perfectly awkward in the best possible way. He knew that his moves weren’t great and that he was probably a little out of the rhythm but at the moment it felt right. And he realised why. Kurogiri was dancing like a dad. Because he was a dad. And his son was right here with him.

“Wake me up! Before you go, go … Come on Tomura dance with me! Look how easy it is!”

After a moment of hesitation, the boy walked up to his day and grabbed the two misty hands, with his own, pinkies up in the air. They were both slowly swaying to the music, Tomura feeling more and more relaxed as seconds went. Kurogiri realised that the boy’s rhythm was actually a lot better than his. He made Tomura twirl during the chorus and the boy giggled.

And here there were. A misty dad and his blue-haired son, awkwardly dancing in an empty bar on the cheesiest song in the world. And for the first time since he had gone to see Tomura in the hospital, right after the incident, Kurogiri was absolutely sure that they were going to be fine.

* 

And here they were, sixteen years later. In the very same bar, Kurogiri was watching his son dancing with his friends on the very same song. He was a lot taller now, still skinny but not as much as he used to be. Still awkward and anxious but making some progress. Dancing with a black-haired boy that was looking at him with eyes that Kurogiri knew very well, and Tomura was looking back at him the exact same way. Kurogiri wondered if any of the two had realised it yet … Probably not. Oh well! They would work it out. These things took work and time. He took Sato and him a whole year before going on their first date after all. His boyfriend joined him at the bar, passing his arms around his neck. Just as if he was reading Kurogiri’s mind (and maybe he actually was) he whispered his misty ear.

“I think our son is going to be fine.”
“I think so too.”

Chapter End Notes

Do you ever stay awake in your bed at night, crying and thinking about how much you love Tomura and Kurogiri? Because I sure do.

Also, I want you all to realize that Dabi is a suave confident motherfucker, but he is also a nerd that yell at his crush in the middle of the street only to immediately have a gay panic. Also, he stares at his lips so much that he can tell every emotion behind every bite-lip. Unbelievable.

Horkoshi will not give Sato's canon hair colour so I hereby declare him ginger.

This chapter was 90% pure fluff with no conflict and I have no shame. You will definitely get some more flashbacks with Tomura and Kurogiro (and maybe Sato) because I love them. And also to give more info about Tomura's past so don't worry too much if it's still confusing right now. I'll definitely come back to it.

The other members of the band kind of took a back seat in this chapter because I really wanted the focus to be on the dads here (and on the boys of course), but it should be more balanced in the future!

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed the update. And once again, I apologize for if it feels a bit different or more clumsy, it's just me getting my head back in the game!

I'm on tumblr as theteapotofdoom is you want to say hi!
Someone Is Going To Fall In Love With You

Chapter Summary

In which Dabi worries and Tomura gets scared.

Chapter Notes

Don't you just love it when AO3 doesn't work, doesn't load, crash and delete your work? Fun times. Bitterness aside, this chapter is finished and edited around 3am, so there is probably a lot of mistakes that I will try to fix later.

Other than that, I apologize for the delay!!! I keep overestimating myself, and I forget that although and chapter may seem short and straight to the point in my brain, it takes a lot more time to type it and upload it. It was a chapter I had in mind since the very beginning, so I wanted to re-write again and again to have it perfect!

I should probably mention that this chapter is a bit heavier than the precedents, a large part of it is about a potential sexual assault. It doesn't happen, it's not descriptive at all and everything ends well for everyone, but it's there. I don't really know how I can help you to skip it if you really want to skip (if someone knows how ...), but I assure you that's only talked about in a "it could have happened way."

Once again, I thank you all for the incredible support! I've got a lot of new comments that I didn't have the time to respond to yet but I will very soon! Thank you all so much!!!

I hope you enjoy the chapter!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In a way, the success of that night brought some fresh air for everyone. With their weekly performances, Dabi, Toga and Magne's moods were definitely lifted, relieving them from the stress they had all been under these past few months. Especially Dabi. Consequently, their group dynamic was back at its best, and their rehearsals were much more productive than they used to be not even a week before. It allowed Dabi to be more creative, writing new songs that he could test with a live audience before uploading them online. The shows had also become a way for everyone to meet more regularly, as they tried to attend to every performance they could. It was a sort of guaranty for everyone to meet at least once a week when they couldn't always get everyone’s planning to match during the rest of the week. They met more when they could, but when they couldn’t they at least all tried to make it to the shows. It often ended like that very first night, with everyone drunk and happy, dancing on some dumb song chosen by one of them.

But after a little less than a month, cheesy 80’s music became more and more rare for their little dance party, as Tomura progressively became too busy to come regularly. It was almost June by now, which meant that the end of the first term was approaching, but also something far more important to him. Each year, the School gave a chance to one student of each promotion to be
selected by the school comity among thousands of classmates, to organize their own exhibition. It was entirely sponsored and paid by the school and considered the opportunity of a lifetime as thousands of artist, gallery owners, managers, editors and art critics would visit these exhibitions, looking for future talents. Every student who wanted to take the chance had to meticulously prepare their candidacy, filling up the application forms, preparing a book, some models, a thesis statement and much more. The proposals were sent at the end of June and looked over during the summer. Ten students were then selected to the second round, during which the projects were no longer looked over by the school comity, but by a jury of professionals. And they were the one to select the best student.

During his first year, Tomura had not even tried to submit a project, absolutely petrified both by his fear of crushing failure and by his fear of paperwork. His anxiety made every single administrative task a nightmare, causing him sleepless night during which he was thinking about every document he had forgotten to add to the file, every question he had misunderstood and every paper he had fielded wrongly. For many years, he had been incapable of accomplishing any of these tasks by himself and had always requested Kurogiri’s help when he applied anywhere. He was learning to deal with it and was getting better at it. But even today, he often requested Magne’s helps to deal with anything related to school administration or even to their flat. He was filling the papers on his own but had Magne be with him the entire time to double check everything with him, and she always obliged with a smile.

During his second year, he had felt a little braver, and had begun the whole procedure, but got overwhelmed at the last second and never sent his candidacy to the comity. During his third year, he had gone all the way through with everything. He had filled everything correctly, proposed a project that he was very proud of. But hadn’t been selected. It had been a terrible blow, and he didn’t like to think back the few days that had followed the news. He had thought and said… awful things about himself back then. He had also never been more grateful to have his dads, Toga and Magne in life. Now Tomura was in his fourth and last year. It had taken him some time to make the decision, but he had decided to try it again, telling himself that the most terrifying thing that could have happened had already happened and that he would never forgive himself if he did not try it one last time. He was very proud of himself for coming to this decision.

It bothered him to miss some of the performances, but he didn’t feel guilty about it, which was good. The whole thing was on track; his dads and his friends were comfortable enough to see each other without him so he was able to focus on his project. Everyone knew why he was missing the shows and was extremely supportive. Magne and Toga had gone full mama bears, being even more attentive than usual and making sure that he ate properly and stay hydrated. Kurogiri and Sato sent him messages almost every day, most of them being simple reminders that they loved him and were very proud of him. Spinner sent him his “special relaxing and focus playlist” mostly composed of video games soundtrack.

“I’m telling you, dude!” Spinner had said over the phone, “most of video game’s soundtracks are specifically composed to help the players to focus and relax! It’s been proven scientifically! With science!”

Tomura also got to see Jin quite a bit. Toga and he were often hanging out together, and therefore he was often at home. Tomura realized that it was easier for him to think when he was explaining his thought process to someone. So every once in a while, when he was stuck in his reasoning for his thesis or when he no longer knew where he was going with a piece of art, he would walk out of the room and explain the whole thing to the trio that was chilling in the leaving room. Sometimes, they answered with questions or suggestions, but other times, they didn’t even have to, as the simple act of thinking out loud would unlock Tomura’s reasoning.
The project was still extremely stressful in many ways, but not as stressful as it had been the previous years. In fact, with so much support, Tomura felt like he was more productive and efficient than he had ever been. His friends, his family ... everyone’s signs of support, no matter how small, were making a difference. And the oddest thing was that he wasn’t feeling guilty about it. Usually, seeing people going out of their way to help him always triggered a form of shame in him, as if he didn’t deserve any of it. This feeling had been getting smaller and smaller with time, but it might have been the first time when it was completely none existent. *How about that, huh?*

And as if things couldn’t get weirder, he even got a text from Dabi one night.

**Da Bitch™**: hey
**Da Bitch™**: hey u ok?
**Da Bitch™**: i mean I know ur working and shit i’m sorry
**Da Bitch™**: but u ok?

Tomura stared at his phone in disbelief for a few seconds. This was literally the first text he ever received from Dabi, hell, it was the first text any of them had ever sent to the other. Well, besides the flipping emoji. At this point Tomura was finishing the final draft of his thesis statement, so he could technically take the time to answer to that … Except that he didn’t really know what to answer to that.

**You**: what
**You**: uh
**You**: yeah I guess?
**You**: I mean I’ve been better and I’ve been worst …
**You**: but it’s not going too bad?

The response was immediate, which surprised Tomura even more because tonight was the night when the band was performing.

**Da Bitch™**: okay good
**You**: why are you texting me right now though? Aren’t you performing?
**Da Bitch™**: we’re on a break right now
**Da Bitch™**: I think we’re gonna perform one last song and call it a night.
**You**: k
**You**: are you with everyone right now?
**Da Bitch™**: nah, they’re all at the table. I’m at the bar ordering drinks.
**Da Bitch™**: so it’s just me and your dad
**Da Bitch™**: the mist one
**You**: tell him I say hi
**Da Bitch™**: he says hi too and also that he loves you
**Da Bitch™**: omg this nerd legit just blew a kiss toward my phone
**You**: urgh
**You**: lame
**You**: but tell him I catch the kiss though
**Da Bitch™**: r u fucking kidding me right now
**You**: tell him bitch
**You**: did u tell him
**Da Bitch™**: …
**Da Bitch™**: yeah. He was so fucking happy that was kinda cute
Tomura caught himself smiling at his phone.

**Da Bitch™**: okay but did u eat???

**You**: yeah yeah

**Da Bitch™**: tell me what you ate bitch

**You**: I finished ur ramen noodles Monday so I had to make a sandwich like a fucking animal

**Da Bitch™**: k good

**Da Bitch™**: wait hold on they’re screaming @ me from the table

**Da Bitch™**: they want their drinks, alcoholics

**Da Bitch™**: k no it’s good ur dad is gonna bring it to them

Tomura frowned at the screen. *Why isn’t he bringing himself? Does he not want to go back to the table? In fact, why is he texting me during his break instead of drinking?*

**You**: I mean ur an alcoholic too. Why r u not drinking with them?

**Da Bitch™**: I already drink too much I wanna be able to sing the last song

**Da Bitch™**: wait

**Da Bitch™**: shit

**Da Bitch™**: I’m distracting you from ur shit I’m so sorry

**You**: nah it’s okay I’m almost done anyway

**Da Bitch™**: what the whole thing????

**You**: … actually yeah. Almost. Wow.

**Da Bitch™**: aren’t you like super ahead of the deadline???

**You**: what u know the deadline?

**Da Bitch™**: ur dad told me

**Da Bitch™**: the magic one this time.

*Oh, okay yeah that makes sense … Papa has probably told everyone in the bar by now …*

**Da Bitch™**: it’s for like an exhibition right?

**You**: yeah this is the first round if I’m selected I gotta do some more stuff

**You**: and then pray to be the one out of thousands

**You**: yay

**Da Bitch™**: holy shit I can’t believe ur gonna have ur own gallery

**You**: uuuuuuuuh

**You**: I mean I can’t believe it either because it’s not real

**Da Bitch™**: yet

**You**: ?????????????????????

**You**: you don’t know that!!!!

**Da Bitch™**: I mean neither do you

Tomura covered his mouth with one of his hand, covering the exasperated smile forming on his face. Dabi could still be so fucking annoying when he wanted to … *Who does he think he is? What the hell does he know about this? AND WHY IS HE SUDDENLY TEXTING NICE THINGS WHILE STILL CALLING ME A BITCH THIS IS WEIRD.*

**Da Bitch™**: hey also it’s not important or anything but do you think that you will be done by the 21 of June?
You: uuhh, honestly probably yeah
You: unless shit happens
You: but yeah why?
Da Bitch™: nah it’s not important I just
Da Bitch™: i
Da Bitch™: no never mind that’s dumb
You: omg what a fucking tease istg
Da Bitch™: I mean yeah true especially with you
Da Bitch™: it’s fun to watch you squirm

For some reason, Tomura felt a weird hot feeling ran through his body like a shiver. *This guy is so stupid!!!!*

Da Bitch™: anyway so do your thing, crush ur enemies and come back to the bar.
You: why do you miss George Michael that much?
Da Bitch™: idk
Da Bitch™: maybe I do

Tomura felt like something had just flown under is radar, like he had missed some kind of joke in Dabi’s answer, but he couldn’t for the life of his, figure what it was.

Da Bitch™: welp better get back on stage I guess
Da Bitch™: and you better go to bed
You: fuck u
Da Bitch™: u said a bad word I’m gonna tell your dads
You: snitches get stitches
Da Bitch™: come at me bitch
Da Bitch™: k Toga is yelling @ me right know
You: better go she gonna stab you
Da Bitch™: awwww u do care
You: ew no gross go away
Da Bitch™: k see u
Da Bitch™: and go to sleep
Da Bitch™: bitch

Later around 2 am, Tomura got another text that said “u better be sleepin bitch”, immediately followed by another saying “oh wait shit did wake u up?????? shit” and a third one saying “u better not answer that go to sleep.” It was so dumb that it made him smile.

After that night, Tomura continued to get texts from Dabi, with the same weird aggressively yet reluctantly caring tone, reminding him to sleep, eat and stay hydrated. And he didn’t really know what to make of them.

“I think it’s sweet!” Toga commented one night when he showed some of the texts to Magne and her, “he is looking out for you in his own weird Dabi way!”

“It feels like he is yelling nice things at me,” Tomura said scrolling through their exchanges, “It’s confusing!”

“Yep, the Dabi way” Magne confirmed as she served them the tea she had prepared, “he is too cool to care about things, so he finds weird digressions to express himself.”
“But I think it’s cute!” Toga continued, “You both used to pretend to hate each other, and now he is being all thoughtful and asking some news about you every time we meet!”

Tomura choked on his tea.

“He what now?”

“He tries to be all smooth about it, but every time we meet for the show or for rehearsals, he subtly asks how things are going with you if you don’t stress yourself too much … He even asked Sato about your deadline!”

As Tomura was processing this surreal information, something came back to him.

“Hey, the other day, he asked me if I would be done by the 21 of June. I said I would be, but he didn’t want to say why he had asked … Do you know what’s happening on the 21?”

The girl exchanged a surprised look, which turned into a knowing look, which turned into a fit of giggles. Tomura just sat there with his honey tea, confused.

“Oh my goooooooood,” Toga squealed, “that’s adorable!”

“Why, what? What’s happening?”

“The 21 of June is Dabi’s birthday,” Magne answered with a smile.

…………… What?

“I can’t believe that Dabi is secretly a soft boy who wants to celebrate his birthday with his all of his friends …” Toga sighed.

“But … but that’s even weirder!” Tomura stuttered, “I mean why would he ask me that considering that we’re not even friends? That doesn’t make any sense!”

His declaration was followed by a long silence, as Toga and Magne stared at him without blinking. They weren’t judging him really, because they would have never judge Tomura over anything, not even over a statement as stupid as this one. But they clearly looked at him with eyes that the boy had seen before and that were saying Tomura, honey, please.

“What?” Tomura asked, probably a bit too defensive, when the silence was too heavy for him to bear.

“Nothing,” Toga said, taking a sip of tea, “I just think it’s funny how hard it is for the both of you to admit that you are friends, despite the fact to you both constantly talk together, see each other, and go out your ways to help on another.”

“What do you mean for the both of us? And besides, how many time do I have to tell you that we don’t … I mean … none of this necessarily means … I not doing this for this for him, I’m doing it for the two of you!”

“My, my, aren’t we lucky …” Magne muttered.

“Wh- what do you mean?”

“I mean that you hand Dabi had been doing quite a lot of stuff for us lately … Between you helping Dabi’s band, the one he is so invested in, for us, and Dabi constantly asking about you and your well being, for us … Aren’t we lucky to have two boys who care so much about the two of us?”
She took a sip of tea. “But that’s none of my business.”

A week later, Tomura had finished his project. Technically, he had finished it a lot earlier than that, but he had needed some more days to double check everything, re-read his entire thesis and think again about every work he was sending. Eventually, he allowed himself to be satisfied, or at least to acknowledge that he probably couldn’t do any better than that. With everything put together, he brought his project to school, sat twenty minutes outside of the comity’s office not daring to come in, and eventually walk inside, stated his name to the nice lady at the desk, gave the product of months of sleepless nights and walked out. *I did it. I fucking did it. It’s done. Well not really, got to wait for the results, and hopefully work for the second round but … But it’s done! There’s nothing more I can do for now!!! It’s done!!!*

His heart suddenly felt a lot lighter, and he caught himself grinning like an idiot. He decided to not go home immediately and to wander around the streets for a while. He had no particular direction in mind; he was letting his instinct guide him from one street to another without any restraints. Eventually, his mind began to wander as well … And he thought about Dabi.

Had he really wanted to make sure that Tomura would be available around his birthday? No matter how many he twisted it, it was the only explanation that made sense. He had been thinking about this these past few days and had remembered that it technically wasn’t the first time he was around for Dabi’s birthday. They had first met in early June of last year, and did remember now that Dabi’s birthday had followed shortly; but back then, the boy’s mutual hatred had been at its peak, so Tomura’s brain had immediately deleted this information. No wishes, no gift, and no nothing … But that was a year ago. What about now?

That was a weird thing to think about. He didn’t like to admit it, but his relationship with Dabi was no longer what it used to be, they simply did not interact the same way anymore. Tomura felt like he needed some more time to put words on it, but he might actually have to do it sooner than expected as a question arose: how was he going to deal with Dabi’s birthday this year?

To ignore it didn’t feel right, no after helping him to play his parent’s bar, and not after their talk in the café next to the gymnasium. He couldn’t … No, he didn’t want to ignore it. And it didn’t seem like Dabi wanted him to ignore it either. So what to do then? Buy a gift? God that feels weird … Tomura realized that if he chose to offer Dabi something, there was no going back. No going back to their old ways, no going back to ignoring his birthday ever again and it would be even harder to argue that they weren’t friends. So far, every change between them had been feelings, dynamics, sensations … With a gift, the change was going to be material, physical, and significant. In a weird way, it felt like an investment.

Still deep in his thoughts, Tomura had a look around to see where his aimless wandering had got him. And he almost wanted to laugh. He had stopped right in front of a music store. *How the fuck? What kind of destiny bullshit …* Through the window, the inside looked kind of nice, with instruments disposed all around, old poster and vinyl’s covers on the wall and with a warm light that actually felt very inviting. It wasn’t like Tomura had many comparisons, having never step inside a music store before, but this one looked pretty cool. He suddenly remembered how Dabi and him had decided that they would go in a music store next time they saw each other. Oddly, going in kind of felt like breaking a promise. *But I guess if it’s to find a gift for him … Then that’s okay? Alright yes. So we’re doing this. We’re getting Dabi a gift.* Tomura had no absolutely no idea whatsoever what he was going to offer Dabi, but a nice-looking music shop didn’t seem like a bad place to start.
The inside was just as warm as it looked from the outside. The place felt strangely cozy for a shop, with soft lights and a nice music that Tomura didn’t know playing in the background. It just seemed like a nice place to hang out. Tomura walked around, looking at the guitars on the wall with a sense of wonder and discovery. He wondered if it was what Dabi had felt walking in the art shop the other day. He was turning his back to the empty counter, just looking around with wide eyes, when he suddenly heard a voice he knew all too well.

“Hey, sorry I was in the back when I heard you coming, how can I—”

The voice stopped mid-sentence, probably petrified in surprised and confusion, the same way Tomura was. Very slowly, the blue-haired boy turned around, and saw Dabi behind the counter, looking right back at him with huge eyes and his mouth slightly open. Within seconds, Tomura felt some heat spread all over him, from his cheeks and crawling down his exposed neck. For a while, the two boys stared at each other in silence.

“What are you doing here?” they both asked at the exact same time, which only caused another embarrassed silence. Eventually, Dabi let out what started as a nervous laugh but became more and more genuine by the second. This sound was enough was Tomura to relax.

“I uh … I actually work here …” Dabi eventually answered rubbing the back of his neck. Tomura had noticed that he was always doing that when he was embarrassed. For some reason, he kind of liked it. It was nice to look at. “But, uh … Wh- What about you?” he continued, looking at Tomura from under his dark bangs.

“How? Oh, uh … I didn’t know you worked here, I promise!”

“I mean yeah, obviously not, looking at your face. You know that you’re not really good at hiding your emotions right?”

“Ha … Yeah, I know.”

“So? What are you doing here? I don’t think you frequent many stores like this one.”

“Yeah, no, it’s … it’s actually the first one I’ve ever walked in.”

“Holy shit …” Dabi muttered, visibly just as shocked by the coincidence as Tomura was, “well I guess I’m honored? But why? Are you looking for something?”

SHIT. Shit shit shit shit. Okay, what do I say???? What do I … How??? What???

Deep down, Tomura knew it was too late. He probably crimson by now, and he realized that one of his fingers had already begun to scratch his neck. He kind of looked around, looking for a distraction, but he was done for. He was a terrible liar, he knew that all too well. So he had no choice but, to tell the truth. Of all the shop in this stupid town …

“I, uh, I …” he coughed, trying to control his fingers, “I actually was … shit. I actually was looking for a gift for you.”

He had mumbled the last sentence under his breath, but judging by Dabi shocked expression and the very light pink on his cheeks, the man had heard it very clearly. But the slightly embarrassed expression turned into an amused grin, its shape amplified by the stitches from each side of his mouth.

“Awww …”
“You better shut the fuck up.”

“What? Am I not allowed to be emotional?”

Tomura shoved his hoodie on, as a desperate attempt to hide his embarrassed expression.

“I just can’t believe …” the boy practically whimpered, “Of all the shops … I didn’t even want to go here! I just wandered around and walked in by chance! What kind of curse … ?”

“I’ll say that I appreciate the effort,” Dabi said, going around the counter and walking up to Tomura. He tilted his head to try to look under the hoodie that the boy was using to cover his eyes. “Hey, that’s fine don’t sweat it. You don’t have to get me anything you know?”

“But I do!”

“Why?”

Tomura almost stopped breathing, remembering that he still didn’t have any answer to this question. He peaked from under his hoodie, hair still covering a part of his face.

“I … I don’t know. It would be weird not to, because you know … stuff. That happened.”

He cringed at his own answer, but Dabi seemed to get exactly what he meant. It was another weird thing that Tomura had noticed. Tomura wasn’t good at expressing himself, he stuttered, he rambled, he panicked and choked on his words. But most of the time, Dabi seemed to be able to make perfect sense out of his mess. To understand what he desperately tried to communicate when he sometimes didn’t understand himself.

“But now it’s ruined … I mean I guess it was going to be ruined anyway because I know jack shit about music and instruments. But I thought that I could at least ask the shopkeeper … But … yeah.”

“I mean … at least you know what I love and you went for it. Even if it was a little broad the feeling was there and I can appreciate that. And besides, you’re not the only one who got caught in an embarrassing situation, so that’s a consolation!”

Dabi’s words reassured Tomura quite a bit but also confused him. An embarrassing situation? Him? What does he mean? He took off his hoodie, and Dabi stared at his hair with absent eyes for a moment. Shit! My hair always gets disheveled under this thing, I must look like a mess right now!

“What do you mean an embarrassing situation?” he asked trying to fix his hair, running both hands through it, “You didn’t do anything embarrassing!”

Dabi kept staring at his hair and hands for a moment, before blinking in confusion and answering the question.

“Well, you know I work here now.”

“And?” Tomura asked, waiting for a second part that never came, “I mean it’s a nice place.” Dabi looked at his feet and shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Yeah, but now you know that I need money! That the band … It’s just … Not enough.”

Not enough, uh? Tomura saw what the problem was. Maybe he was actually beginning to understand Dabi as well as he understood him.
“Yes but, right now, it doesn’t have to be. It’s a work in progress, a creation, a … It’s something you keep on building. And I know you’re doing a lot of changes and self-evaluation right now. These things take time, you know? Work and time.”

Dabi slowly looked up. From this angle, black strays of hair were slightly covering his bright blue eyes, and for the first time, Tomura was struck by the contrast of the two colours. His painter’s spirit must have taken over, because for a moment he could only think about how well the deep black and icy blue went together. *It’s so soft and intense at the same time … How did I never notice?*

“You know,” Dabi said, taking him out of his thoughts, “I keep expecting you to rip me apart every chance you get but, uh … You actually keep surprising me. I guess we don’t do that anymore.”

*I guess we don’t … But … what do we do, then?*

“I mean, I’m not gonna reap you apart over something like this … You have a job. That’s good! I mean, I’m pretty sure we all have jobs on the side … Magne does, Toga does, I do …”

“Wait, you do?”

“Well, yeah. You don’t think that my dads still pay everything for me, do you?”

“No, uh, it’s just … What do you do exactly? I don’t mean to be rude for once but … I don’t exactly see you working with … people.”

“Oh yeah no you’re right … It’s … It may sound stupid because it doesn’t actually sound like a job but I … I do art commissions online. I also have a Patreon page.”

Tomura wasn’t sure why he was so embarrassed about this but he was. Which was pretty ironic because his initial goal had been to stop Dabi from being embarrassed about his own job.

“Hey, that’s cool!” Dabi said, apparently genuine, “It kind of makes sense in a way. I know you like art and video games … So art on a screen … Yeah …”

For some reason, this subject really seemed to interest Dabi and asked a lot of question. Was he using a tablet? Or was he scanning traditional art? Since when did he have his Patreon page? These very practical questions slowly left room for more … well, Dabi question? What was the weirder request he ever had? How much porn had he drawn for money? How much furry porn?

“I mean, most of the people are actually pretty kind and chill,” Tomura said, actually getting into the conversation, “only asking for some fanart of their favourite characters, or even for some portraits and landscapes. And honestly I don’t even mind drawing basic porn. You gotta eat you know? But yeah, eventually you get some really weird ones …” For dramatic effect, Tomura marked a pose and looked into the distance. “I’ve drawn some shits you know …”

“Do you have any limits? Like, any rules, any stuff that you refuse to draw? When you read some things like and just go … not today Satan.”

“Yeah, I mean the very obvious nope are incest, abuse, rape … Oh, and I don’t do any scally porn.”

“Any what now?”

“Scally porn. Scallies are like furies, but with scaly animals.”
“So … like Spinner?”

“Exactly like Spinner. You kind of see my problem here?”

The realisation hit Dabi and a shiver ran down his spine.

“Holy shit …” he muttered in shock, “I try so hard not to see it. But hey, it means that you value your friendship Spinner more than money, and I think that’s beautiful.”

“Hey, I never said I was smart …”

They kept chatting like this, the initial awkwardness long forgotten. Tomura had almost forgotten where he was and why he had come here in the first place. He only knew was actually saying funny things for once, and it was fun to talk with him like this. But eventually, Dabi looked at his phone, and they were both surprised by how late it was.

“Holy shit I’ve actually got to close the store.”

They both made their way back to their respective place, walking side by side.

“Also, I’m sorry, I forgot to ask,” Dabi said when they reached the bus station, “but seeing you actually out today, I assume that you’re done with your project?”

“Yeah, I send it today, right before coming to your store actually. So now I can only wait …” he stayed silent for a while, and add almost reluctantly, “And I guess you don’t have to send me texts anymore …”

“Ah … yeah sorry about that I guess,” Dabi said looking away.

“No! No, it was fine … I mean they were really confusing but they did kind of helped.”

Dabi abruptly turned back to him, genuinely surprised by this answer.

“Wow, really?”

“Yeah. They made smile. Sometimes.” Tomura shrugged, trying to sound detached.

“Oh. Well good. Because I … I think I felt bad.”

“What? Why, what do you mean?”

“I don’t know … I think … I knew that this was a tough moment for you. You’re simultaneously extremely anxious and extremely passionate about art so I actually was … worried? Worried that you would beat yourself over this. But I didn’t know what to do to help. Everyone around me was helping you in some way, even Spinner with his playlist … But me I … I just didn’t know what to do. You help so much for the band, and I didn’t know what to do to help you. You were surrounded by the best people in the world, and then there was me. Who just sent weird texts.”

Tomura didn’t know what to answer to that, hell, he didn’t even know how to react to that. He had been very confused about why Dabi was sending these message to him but this was … this was nothing he could have expected. Now it was Tomura who didn’t know what to do, so he just repeated what he had already said.

“It helped a lot. They made me smile.” *Always. They made me smile every single time.*

On his way back home, Tomura decided that this had been a nice afternoon. Not exactly what he
had in mind when he had left his school, but he’ll take it. Retrospectively, he actually was glad that Dabi was the first person he had run into, and the first person to know that his project was done, although he didn’t even know why. Before they separated, Tomura had made Dabi promise to not tell anyone that his project was finally done, because he wanted to surprise everyone by showing up to the show tomorrow night. Dabi had been 100% on board with this, loving the idea of being part of a sort of secret conspiracy. He looked so happy that Tomura didn’t want to comment on the ridicule of said “conspiracy.”

The next day, Tomura’s surprise show up at the bar had been a complete success. Everyone acted like he had been gone for decades instead of a month, and like he had been secluded in some kind of prison somewhere. Most importantly, they all seemed extremely … relieved. Tomura couldn’t blame them, considering that most of them knew for a fact how bad this could have gotten if Tomura had crumbled under the pressure like he did the years before. Kurogiri, Sato, Toga, and Magne had been first-hand witnesses after all. But this time, everything was well. Actually, they still had to wait for the results and that could still go … badly. But that was a question for another time.

* 

To Dabi, birthdays were still a weird thing. He didn’t really know how he felt about them. Sure it was the occasion to party, get drunk and go out, but he could still do these things without celebrating getting old an closer to death. As a kid, birthdays were actually nice. Some of the only good memories of his childhood, mostly because his rotten father had no interest in them, and usually let his siblings and him celebrate them on their own without showing up or interfering. Good.

But after he left home, birthdays became … bittersweet, to say the least. His seventieth and eightieth had been the first one he had spent alone, away from his family. Not very nice memories. Later, he had met some good people and got to celebrate them again but it wasn’t the same anymore. The warm fuzzy feeling from his childhood was gone … now it was just drinking to forget that he was getting old.

But this year, for the first time in a while, he was actually curious about this. It wasn’t going to be his first birthday with Magne, Toga, and Spinner, but it was going to be the first one with Jin. And technically, the first one with Tomura. He remembered that the boy was already around last year, there was no way Dabi would have come anyway near him back then. The guy was rude, creepy, obnoxiously loud and nervous, just plainly irritating really. *It was like I couldn’t say anything to him without him immediately snapping back like he had no filter for his emotion … Everything with him was just so … raw and sensitive.* And in many ways, Tomura was still the same anxious and nervous shell, showing sharps splits and cracks from every side. So what had changed?

Because yes, things had changed. Tomura had turned out to be a lot more interesting than what Dabi had anticipated. There was something touching, impressive and remarkable to his attachment and dedication to the arts. Something Dabi could relate too, and it made their conversation much easier and relaxed like they had found a common language to finally communicate properly. And, actually, there was another relatable aspect to Tomura … another common ground they had been able to bond on.

Retrospectively, Dabi should have been able to realise more quickly that there was some damage with Tomura. He was nervous and jumpy, so shy and loud at the same time … There was also his odd habit of scratching his neck, and the whole food issue. *Is this why he is always so skinny? How does one come to feel guilty about eating food?* And of course, there was the “too much” thing. "My dad always told me I was too much …" Dabi already had a vague knowledge that Tomura had
been adopted, and meeting the boy’s dads had been the ultimate confirmation. But now it made him wonder about the boy’s biological father. He had obviously known him long enough to have memories of him. And what memories … Who says that to his child? Who looks his child in the eyes and says “you are too much”, too much to take care of, too much for me to deal with you … Too much for me to get close to you … Especially a child with a quirk like this …

He had never met this man but he hated him. He hated him because he knew, he just knew that he was at least half of the reasons why Tomura was suffering today … Why everything made him so anxious, why he blamed himself for the most stupid things … And yet, the boy was still growing. Dabi had not known him for very long, but he could see it. It wasn’t so hard for Tomura to look at him in the eyes anymore, and talking with him no longer felt like walking on a minefield. Talking to him was … nice. In fact, Dabi realised he had been talking with him quite a lot these past few months, and most importantly, he had talked to him about things he had never talked with anyone before … and he didn’t mind.

Actually, he couldn’t believe that Tomura used to make him nervous … It wasn’t making any sense, because now, Dabi felt like there was something very relaxing about him. In his presence, in his face, in the nice contrast between the bright red eyes and the soft blue hair … there was something in his voice as well. It low, soothing and relaxing, gentle at times and rasp some other times. For the past few weeks, Dabi had been trying to found a way to make Tomura sing one day. It probably was an impossible mission, considering that the boy’s nervous restless heart might not survive it, but Dabi was convinced that it would sound amazing. As a musician. Yes, that’s what it was really. A musical experience. Nothing else.

Dabi wondered how he could help. Tomura was now surrounded by helpful loving people, how could he fit in the equation? The only thing he thought himself capable of, was to help to break the anxious shell surrounding him. To show him that the world wasn’t his enemy. He actually had an idea that could help … and that he had a plan to execute on his own birthday.

*  

Although it wasn’t there performing night, on the 21 of June, the whole gang met at the bar for celebratory dinner. Kurogiri and Sato were ecstatic about the whole thing and a prepared the best table especially for them, and Dabi had to warn them in advance that he didn’t want any banderols, any surprise jazz back coming out of nowhere or anyone even singing happy birthday to him. Sato had seemed a bit disappointed, but they both promised not to go overboard.

Dabi, Jin, and Spinner were the first to arrive in the lizard’s shitty van, so they were all a little pale when they walked in. Well, all but Spinner who was loudly complaining that the two had a weak heart and weren’t made for “real cars”. Magne, Toga, and Tomura arrived shortly after them.

“Sorry for being late!” Toga yelled as soon as they arrived at the table, “but I had to fight with Mr. Grumpy over here for him to actually wear something nice!”

She was dragging Tomura by the wrist, and the boy grumbled something about how he thought that Toga was going to stab him at some point, which made the whole table laugh. Except for Dabi, who hadn’t register a single thing other than Tomura himself since he had walked in. If Dabi’s mind had been functioning properly, he would have hated himself for reacting this way, because it honestly wasn’t that much of change, the boy was still only wearing black, his hair was still as messy as usual and he still looked grumpy. The only difference was that was wearing a shirt, with actual buttons and shit and maybe nicer pants. But Dabi was seeing a lot more skin than usual … The sleeves were rolled up to his elbows revealing long white arms, and the buttons were down enough to reveal Tomura’s prominent collarbone. It was nothing, it was absolutely nothing,
but Dabi stared anyway. He stared until Tomura caught his glare and blush began to spread all over him.

The dinner was actually pretty nice. They were all around the table, including Sato and Kurogiri, drinking, laughing, yelling and enjoying a nice meal. At some point, Dabi insisted that they drink to both his birthday and Tomura’s project and the cheers that the proposition receive turn the boy sitting next to him into a blushing stuttering mess. For them, Kurogiri and Sato had pulled out the champagne and no one at the table, except Tomura and his dads, had had such quality alcohol before. It was sweet, sparkly and easy in their mouth, making some warm fuzzy feeling in their mind … Everyone had pink cheeks, even Kurogiri somehow. At some point, Jin and Spinner were caught in a hot debate about High School musical.

“Listen … listen to me just listen!” Spinner spluttered, “Sharpay and Ryan, deserved the roles!!! They obviously gave the best performance!!)”

“But that’s not what theatre is about bitch!” Jin yelled back, almost crying with emotion, “it’s about welcoming new people! People who think that theatre isn’t for them isn’t their thing!!! And show them that they can do the thing!! It’s about breaking conventions!!”

“Children please,” Sato whispered angrily, “this debate has no reason to be because High School Musical 2 is obviously the masterpiece of the trilogy and the only one that should be relevant.”

No one remembered how the conversation came to this, but everyone took part in it anyway. At some point, Dabi’s attention shifted to Tomura next to him. He seemed so relaxed, like this, giggling laid back against his chair … It was unusual, but it was too nice of a view for it to be weird. For a moment, Dabi had a memory of the last time he has seen Tomura completely drunk at his place a few months ago now. The tears, the screaming, the scratching, Jin being the best and the guilt that had crushed Dabi for the rest of the evening … everything was still very clear in his mind. But that’s different. It’s going to be different. He is nearly not as drunk right now … Let’s just … No talk about Stain.

“Hey, Tomura …” Dabi whispered, leaning close the boy’s ear so only he could hear him.

Tomura jumped a little, startled by the sudden closeness. He looked right back at Dabi without a word but with attentive eyes.

“Do you want to go out after this?”

“W-What?” Tomura asked stuttering and bit too loud. His cheeks were as red as his eyes right now.

“After dinner, I want to go clubbing,” Dabi explained, “To dance, drink some more and have some fun … I’m gonna ask everyone after dinner, and I think everyone will be in, but I’m not sure that you’ll be and I don’t want you to feel pressured or cornered. So do you want to?”

Tomura seemed to consider the question intensely. He was even more expressive when he was tipsy, and Dabi tried not to laugh as he could practically see his train of thoughts on his face.

“I, uh …” he finally answered, avoiding Dabi’s eyes, “I’ve never been clubbing before … I don’t go out much …”

“Yeah, I kind of assumed so … Do you want to try it? It would be the six of us, in a nice safe place, and we’ll be with you the entire time.”

Back in his thoughts, Tomura reflexively bit his lips, and despite his best effort, Dabi couldn’t help but stare for a short moment. Fortunately, Tomura was thinking too hard to notice.
“Yeah …” he ended up saying, “Yeah okay … I want to try it. We’ll stay together, right?”

“Promise.”

After the cake, their table looked like a battlefield, but fortunately, Kurogiri was too tipsy to mind. Also, Sato was (somehow) kissing his misty face, which distracted him quite a bit. As everyone awed at the scene, Dabi stood up to make his announcement.

“Ladies, gentlemen and lizards,” he began as Spinner flipped him off, “I, first of all, would like to thank you for this wonderful dinner. The delightful food was only rivalled by the even more delightful company! You have made this now 26-year-old man very happy …”

The speech was followed by claps and whistled from his crowd. He continued.

“And as you know, for this evening, we have to thank our wonderful, elegant and handsome hosts! They are pure treasures, and they know that I adore them! Which is why I hope that they won’t resent me too much for proposing my younger comrades to continue the night without them. Basically, who wants to go clubbing?”

As Dabi had predicted, everyone wildly acclaimed his proposition. Toga was already up on her chair to dance, and Magne and Jin had begun to chant “clubbing, clubbing, clubbing!” while Spinner was beatboxing. Only Kurogiri raised an eyebrow, looking at his son.

“You’re going too, Tomura?” he asked.

“Y-yeah!” he answered, trying to sound confident, “I kind of want to try it, you know?”

“Don’t worry dadders!” Magne said, passing a protective arm around Tomura’s shoulder, “We will protect this beautiful, pure boy with our lives!”

“We sure will!” Toga nodded, “I will stab a man for Tomura!”

“I know you will, sweetie,” Sato said with a weird pride in his voice.

Dabi had picked, the safest, most mainstream club he could think of. When they walked in, the place was huge but crowded, and dark but full of neon’s lights. The music was so loud that they could instantaneously feel the beat in their bones as they walked. Dabi loved that feeling, this almost unbearably loud noise and flashy lights that overcame all of his senses every time he walked in places like this, places where he could stop thinking, where his brain exploded, leaving his head like an empty shell to be filled by every new sensation of the night. Around him the rest of the group seemed equally excited, considering that Toga was already jumping up in the air, almost knocking out three guys with her purse. But in the corner of his eye, he noticed Tomura. He was staying close to Magne, being the only one taken back by an atmosphere so alien to him. Dabi knew that Tomura’s introvert nature wouldn’t make things easy, but he was still hopeful. After all, a few weeks ago, he had managed to make him dance for the first time. So anything could happen really. Yeah, I believe he can have fun tonight.

The movements of the crowd pushed a part of the group forward, leaving Tomura and Dabi slightly behind.

“It’s so loud and dark!” Tomura complained, trying to speak over the music, “I can’t see or hear
anything!"

“That’s the point,” Dabi said, getting closer to be heard properly. “In a place like this your senses have to work differently, you have to feel things differently!”

“Fe- feel?”

Tomura stayed silent for a while and looked at his two open hands. They were shanking.

“Am I not going to be … dangerous? In a place like this?”

Dabi knew that this would be one of the boy’s first concerns. Carefully, he closed Tomura hands into fists, and he felt the boy shivered at the touch. But he stopped shaking. He looked at the taller man with incredulous eyes as if he couldn’t believe that Dabi had apparently no fear of touching him like this. The black-haired man kept his hands on the blue-haired boy’s, as he answered him.

“You’re going to be fine. I trust you.”

That was true. Dabi didn’t know how much it would help, but it was the only thing he could bring himself to say right now. Tomura slowly processed the information and nodded. In this light, his eyes seemed like to bright rubies, and their intensity was piercing Dabi’s skulls. *They’re so alive … There is so much fire in them!*

Eventually, they met the others at the bar. They weren’t hard to find as they had somehow already managed to establish themselves as the loudest group in here. They were fighting over the cocktail menu, decided to drink even more, before investing the dance floor. Jin had declared that he would not move a hair before he had his Piña Colada.

“Toga and I need some strength for our choreography” he explained to everyone, looking at the Cocktail Card.

“Your what, now?” Tomura asked, blinking in confusion and thinking he had misheard over the music.

“Jin and I watched *Dirty Dancing* for the first time two weeks ago,” Toga explained matter of factly, “And we’ve been learning the final dance since then.”

“Wait, really?” Magne asked with wide eyes, “With the jump and everything?”

“We have yet to land a successful jump,” Jin admitted, “But tonight is the night, I feel it!”

“And you want to try that tonight? On the crowded dance floor?” Dabi asked half amused half incredulous.

“I mean, yes?” Jin and Toga answered together, completely failing to see Dabi’s point.

The group freaked out even more when it was revealed that Toga was dancing as Patrick Swayze and Jin and Jennifer Grey, but the duo was confident, saying that Toga had carried Jin at least a thousand times already. Their argument was becoming completely surreal and somehow went back to whole High School Musical debate. Leaned against the bar, Dabi and Tomura were both laughing and snorting like idiots. As he often did when he laughed, Tomura was half hiding behind one of his hands, and was Dabi reminded of that time during the blackout, when he had laughed at him and his frying pan. *This goddamn frying pan … I’m glad I kept it …*

They were all still arguing about … whatever it was that they were arguing about when suddenly
the bartender appeared out of nowhere in front of them. But no one had the time to order anything, because before anyone could open their mouth, he swiftly deposed a large Blue Lagoon with a red cherry on the top, right in front of Tomura. This action was followed by a complete silence of stupefaction. Well as complete as a silence can get in a crowded nightclub.

They all considered the drink for a long moment before Tomura finally asked the bartender: “What is this?”

“This, sir,” he answered, “Is a Blue Lagoon with extra Cherry.”

“No you didn’t, it was the gentlemen over there that ordered it for you. He said it was for, and I quote, “the pretty boy with soft blue hair and a graceful neck at the other end of the bar.””

And right then, the floor opened under Dabi’s feet.

Wh-what???? What is this??? What??? What the fuck??? What the …

Tomura was now redder than the cherry in his drink. His breathing seemed to stop for a while, before suddenly getting faster and heavier. He slowly turned his head to follow the direction pointed by the bartender, and the rest of the group not so discretely looked at well. A few feet away from them, at the opposite side of the room, a man with sharp cheekbones and long purple hair was looking back. He was obviously ignoring the rest on the group, focusing on Tomura only when he smiled, raised his class to him and fucking winked.

Dabi’s first immediate thought was that the man was the plainest looking man he had ever seen in his entire life and that offering a drink to a stranger was the worst move ever, completely cliché and even creepy. But the others didn’t seem to agree with him because Spinner loudly whistled, and Jin and Magne began to clap.

“Aaaaah!” Toga squealed, hands on her cheeks, “That’s adorable!!!”

“Holy shit,” Jin laughed, “Tomura’s got game!”

“Look at you being all seductive and shit …” Magne said rubbing his back.

But Tomura stayed silent and completely still, eyes empty. Dabi suddenly realized that it might have been the first time in his life that anyone had openly flirted with him like. And in his self-loathing and self-deprecating mind, the thought that someone could like him, could find him attractive, could want him …simply did not register. Right now, there was a look in Tomura’s eyes that Dabi knew all too well. It was the look that Tomura often gave him when he was looking for sarcasm and mockery in his words. The look that said, “I don’t believe that you can possibly be genuine about this.” But the purple-haired man was committed to this. Tomura couldn’t see it, but Dabi knew it for sure… there was thirst in those eyes. Dabi felt a weird, unusual tension overcome him.

Tomura seemed to finally be able to move, as he turned toward his friends.

“Wh-what should I do?”

“Well, that depends,” Magne answered, “do you like him?”

“I don’t know! I don’t know him!”
“Do you want to know to get to know him?”

“I don’t know!!!” Tomura panicked, yet trying his best to not appear too freaked out as the man was still looking at him from across the room. “I don’t … I don’t know these things!”

Everyone began to give their own advice, but as they kept talking, Tomura suddenly turned toward Dabi right next to him, looking at him with panicked eyes. *God, they’re so bright.*

“What do you think?”

Dabi was stunned. He hadn’t actually planned to give his opinion about this. *Why are you asking? Everyone is freely giving you advice right now, so why are you seeking mine? Why does mine matter more to you?? It can’t be … It can’t be because …? ……… No. No, of course, I’m stupid, it’s because I’m the one fooling around! Yes, that’s it … It’s because I’ve been telling you about how I use to sleep with anyone … haha …yeah, that makes sense …*

The look in Tomura’s eyes was desperate and it made Dabi grip his teeth. He tried to sound as disinterested as it was possible to be when he gave his answer.

“I think that he’s not worth it. I know guys like him, they’re players, but they’re plain and boring and just … Yeah. And also, it’s my birthday night and I want to spend it with all of you. Together.”

The rest of the group let out some understanding but a disappointed groan, as their previous excitement was crushed. Tomura stayed silent, looking at Dabi as if there was something else, another reason that the young man wasn’t sharing with them. But eventually, he looked back at his untouched drink.

“Okay, but what about this then? Am I still allowed to drink it? Is it rude not too? Or is it rude to drink it and not talk to him? What are the rules here?”

Eventually, the drink was left behind, as the group moved to another side of the room to avoid any awkward interactions. As it could have been predicted, Jin and Toga were the first to chug their drinks and to run out to the dance floor, screaming about their warm-up. They were apparently still focused on doing their choreography. Magne and Spinner weren’t long to join them, leaving Tomura and Dabi behind. The sounds surrounding them seemed to get slower and slower by the minute, and the colors seemed much more vivid, probably because of the shots they had all taken not even five seconds ago. Usually, when Dabi went to places like this it was, paradoxically, to isolate himself. It was to drown his agony and his worry in a faceless sea, to be shaken by its waves until he forgot his own name. But tonight he was surrounded by familiar faces, faces that he knew and that could spot from miles away in the crowd, as they shook themselves to the beat. And there was another face, right next to his. A bit of an odd one, with huge red eyes, a pointy nose, a scarred skin and cracked lips … but Dabi had decided that he liked it.

Somehow, alcohol was capable of reducing Dabi’s impulse control even more, which is why he didn’t think twice when he leaned toward Tomura, probably closer than necessary and said: “Hey, Tomura. Dance with me.”

It sounded like an order and a request at the same time. When he turned around, Tomura was surprised by the lack of distance between him and the other man.

“What-wh-what?”

“You heard me.”

“I don’t know how to dance!”
“Bullshit. I taught you, remember.”

“But that was … it was in my parents’ empty bar! Not in a crowded nightclub!”

“People won’t pay attention to us. People don’t look around them in places like this one, you know? It’s too dark, too packed and they don’t care. Come dance with me. I’ll be the only one looking at you.”

There was apparently something in that drunken statement that convinced or touched Tomura in some way because after a last moment of hesitation he stuttered “O-okay!” and let Dabi grab him gently by the wrist to bring him at the heart of the dance floor.

This specific spot in the crowd had always been the more intoxicating for Dabi, this feeling of being at the center of everything, to be part of something bigger than him, a flow, a movement, an organism … But somehow being there with Tomura was even more exhilarating. It was a different type of feeling because right now, he didn’t want to disappear or forget like he usually did. Not when Tomura looked so goddamn beautiful. Under the neon’s lights, his blue hair almost seemed to glow, and his red eyes almost seemed incandescent. With the alcohol, the beat and the adrenalin, it didn’t take long for his unsure smile to turn into the brightest, goofiest most beautiful grin Dabi had ever seen. His movements were incoherent but somehow still fitted the beats perfectly, and Dabi was pretty sure that just like him, he felt the bass thrum in his bones and vibrate in his veins. Right now, other people’s gaze that Tomura usually feared so much seemed to completely slide on him. No eyes mattered but Dabi’s. It was such a possessive, such a self-indulgent thought … But he couldn’t help himself. Not when Tomura looked at him like that.

But suddenly, Dabi was taken out his trance, as Tomura’s eyes drifted from him, focusing on something behind him instead. The red eyes went wide. The two boys were already pretty close, but Tomura still leaned forward to whisper something directly into Dabi’s ear.

“He’s here again … the guy from the bar. With the purple hair. He is looking at me again …”

Tomura’s breath against his skin was a surprisingly pleasant sensation, but it was ruined as the information went up to Dabi’s brain. He turned around not so discretely and immediately saw the guy, dancing a few feet away from them. And, God, he was not just “looking” at Tomura he was shamelessly staring. If there was thirst in his eyes earlier, right now it was straight up lust. In front of him, Tomura was still looking at the guy, his mind surely clouded by alcohol and by how alien this situation was to him.

“He is still looking … He is smiling at me now, what do I do?”

“I don’t know!” Dabi snapped. He didn’t even know why he was so irritated by this situation. It actually bothered him that the guy had apparently looked for Tomura in the crowd, even after he had turned down his drink at the bar. He wasn’t aimlessly hunting; he had set his mind on Tomura. This guy doesn’t take no for an answer …

“I don’t know what you should do, okay?” Dabi continued, trying to calm down, “My obvious response would be to ignore him and avoid him but like … You keep asking me what you should do, what do you actually want to do? Do you want … do you want to talk to him or something?”

He didn’t know why, but it hurt Dabi a little that Tomura took the time to consider this and think about this, even if at the end he just shrugged.

“No, I don’t think so, no. He is just nice to look at I guess … Also … I don’t know”
“Well that’s settled then,” Dabi decided and grabbed Tomura by the wrist and moved in the crowd, “come on let’s find the others.”

Once they were back with the group, still on the dance floor, things were kind of nice again for a while. Everyone cheered when they realised that Tomura was actually dancing, Magne tried to dance with a drink in her hands spilling it on everyone’s shoes, including Spinner super expensive sneakers, and the lizard let out a scream that might have been heard in the entirety of the place. Jin and Toga were still warming-up, but they kept repeating again and again that they were about to start. At some point, Dabi began to feel every drink of the evening catching up with his bladder, and after yelling to the group that he’ll be right back, he made his way out the crowd.

No matter how filthy, in places like this one toilet always seemed like a peaceful oasis of calm and quiet. The perfect moment to sober up a bit, and meditate on every dumb decision made with alcohol in the brain, or just to think about the meaning of life. Once he had done his business, Dabi looked at himself in the mirror. He knew that the light in these places was never flattering, but he still looked like shit. He splattered some water on his face, to stop his mind to drift back to Tomura and the purple haired guy. Who does he think he is? Thinking he can snatch him like that when he wouldn’t be here in the first place if it weren’t for me!

When he made his way back to the dance floor, he noticed that there was now a large space in the middle of the crowd, as if people were watching something. He made his way through and found Spinner alone, looking and laughing at what was happening in the center. Toga and Jin were in the middle, somehow mid-way between waltzing and break dancing, and just basically having the time of their life as the crowd cheered for them.

“What the fuck is happening?” Dabi asked Spinner.

“They finally decided to do their little dance show, only to quickly realize that they had forgotten half of the choreography. So they began to improvise their own moves and they are somehow killing it …”

Toga was absolutely killing it, and Jin, although he wasn’t the best dancer, had so much fun and confidence in what he was doing, that he was actually killing it as well. Dabi looked at their show, amused for a few seconds, before looking around him in confusion.

“What’s everyone else?”

“We kind of got dispersed. When Jin and Toga began to dance the crowd moved around quite a bit. But I think Magne is at the bar.”

“And Tomura? Where is Tomura?”

“Right now I don’t know. But earlier, I saw him dance with the purple hair guy from earlier, you know, the one from the bar …”

Dabi’s heart straight up stopped beating.

“What?!” he yelled, “What the fuck did you say?!”

“Oh my God don’t scream like that! It’s fine … They must be around.”

“I don’t fucking see them around!!! God, why the fuck would you let that happen!!!”

“Stop screaming! I don’t know, I just saw them from the corner of my eyes, the guy came up to dance with, and Tomura didn’t seem to mind one bit, so …”
Dabi was already gone. He began to walk through the place, looking desperately for some bright blue hair within the crowd. He was trying to calm himself by thinking rationally, but his logical train of thought worried him even more. The guy had his mind set on Tomura. He had already been turned down twice now, the first time when Tomura had refused his drink, and the second time when Dabi and he had walked away from him in the crowd. And every time he came back. This guy knows exactly what he wants, and he’s not going to stop. And Tomura … Tomura, on the other hand, was drunk and clearly … inexperienced, judging by his reaction to a guy simply offering a drink. This is not good This is really not good.

Eventually, he went to find Magne at the bar, grabbing her by the shoulder.

“Holy shit, Dabs! Careful, my drink!”

“Have you seen Tomura?”

“What? No … no, not in while. Why, is there a problem? Did something happen?”

“He was with the guy!!! You know, from the bar!”

“But … I mean that’s not an issue, right? He is allowed to flirt with cute guys you know. Especially when the guy is smart enough to actually show that he likes him …”

For some reason, Dabi felt like there was a spike hidden in there, but he decided to ignore it.

“I don’t trust this guy one bit Magne! I can’t find them! I’ve looked all around the dance floor, all around the bar! Tomura wouldn’t step away from us like that, so the guy took him somewhere else! In a secluded place! And you know that Tomura is really drunk right now.”

Magne seemed to connected the dote because suddenly, Dabi could literally see he Big Sis instinct light up in her eyes, even through her iconic sunglasses.

“Okay, got you. You keep looking, I’m going to grab everyone else. The four of us will split into two teams to search the place.”

After that she chugged her drink and walked quickly through the dance floor, pushing people around to make way. Even in his current state of panic, Dabi couldn’t help but be impressed. God Bless Big Sis Magne.

Suddenly, he thought about a place that he hadn’t check. At the back of the nightclub, there was sort of secluded area, a dark corner between the emergency exit and the condemned stairs. He quickly made his way across the room. As he got closer, the music became more and more distant, and it was easier to hear the sudden scream from around the corner.

FUCK

Fuck fuck fuck god please no fuck.

Dabi sprinted around the corner, and what he saw … actually surprised him.

Two persons were standing there. The one that immediately caught his eyes was Tomura. The boy was standing there, is back against the wall, hair messier than Dabi had ever seen it, panting heavily and hands shaking. The most striking thing, the one that made Dabi’s blood boil, was that his nose appeared to be broken and was heavily bleeding all over his face. But the second most striking thing, the one that Dabi wasn’t expecting, was the smile on his face and the look in his eyes, manic, terrified, and excited had the same time. This overall sight had stopped Dabi in his
tracks, and as his eyes ran over Tomura from head to toes, he forgot how to breathe for a full ten seconds.

But he quickly switched his attention to the other figure, crouching on the ground a few feet away from Tomura. It was the purple hair guy, and judging by his pained expression, he was actually the one who had just screamed. It took Dabi a moment to realise that the guy was holding his arm in agony, and another moment to realise why. It was just like most of the skin on his left forearm had just … crumbled, revealing raw flesh underneath. His quirk … Decay … Dabi had already seen Tomura’s quirk in action before, but with napkins or some pieces of trash. Never on flesh. Never as a defence. Dabi, realised that, in is own dread, he had never considered that Tomura could actually fight back.

Something weird was happening in the pit of his stomach, but he had to ignore it. Because right now, purple hair douche was getting back up, ready to lend a new blow.

“Fucking bitch!” he yelled.

This snapped Dabi out of his trance as he saw the guy moving toward Tomura who seemingly hadn’t fully recovered from his shock and wasn’t going to dodge or block in time. Within less than a second, Dabi had closed the distance that separated him for them, punching the guy’s jaw as hard as he could, putting him to the ground once more. Without paying him a second thought, he immediately turned toward Tomura. At the sight of Dabi, the manic look in the boy’s eyes had completely disappeared, leaving only room to surprise, confusion, and helplessness. Without even thinking about what he was doing, Dabi grabbed Tomura’s face with both of his hands.

“Tomura are you okay??? Did he touch you??? Did he hurt you???”

The boy wasn’t responding, only looking back at Dabi with the most vulnerable eyes the man had ever seen. In an attempt to bring him back to him, Dabi gently rubbed his thumbs against his cheeks.

“Do you hear me? Are you okay?”

“You’re here …” Tomura only whispered with a voice so quiet that Dabi almost missed it.

“Wh- well, of course, I’m here!” Dabi was surprised by the reaction, but way too happy that actually got a reaction to question it.

“Hey, you!”

Dabi clenched his jaw and closed eyes. This was exactly what he had feared. Guys like that were almost always moving in a pack, precisely in case something like this happened, or sometimes for reasons even worst. He turned around, making sure to stand in front of Tomura, and saw three other guys literally walking out of the shadows. One of them was really big. Dabi had been in similar fights before, and he knew that for as long as they could, everyone would try to avoid to use their quirks because it was usually the point of no return and the moment things became even more illegal. However, good old bluff could sometime work, especially with a flashy quirk like his.

“Everyone back off!” Dabi ordered lighting a blue flame in his left hand.

“Nice try fire boy,” said the purple guy slowly getting back up, “but we got a water type with us.”

Well shit.

“Holy shit, I’m having Pokémon flashbacks,” Tomura whispered behind him. This comment
almost seemed inappropriate in this situation, but Dabi was so glad to hear Tomura slowly coming back to himself that he smiled anyway.

“Hey, you dildos!”

They all turned toward the source of the voice, and Dabi and Tomura grinned like idiots to the sight of Toga and Magne walking forward.

“Back off bitches,” said the big guy, “that’s not …”

He couldn’t even finish his sentence, because Toga had caught a glimpse of Tomura’s bloody nose and, after a high pitched battle cry, had violently kicked the big guy in the balls. Magne rolled her eyes and sighed, realising that the peaceful outcome she had hoped for was done, and she proceeded to body slam the guy who ran toward her. They all fought at more or less equal forces for a while throwing kicks and punched around, until …

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!!”

Everyone froze and turned to the source of the feral scream. From the other side of the room, Jin and Spinner were sprinting at full speed toward the fray, both screaming at full lung capacity. The two young men throwing themselves at two of the guys was enough to shift the balance in their favour and for the other group to finally back off. Well, that and the fact that Toga had actually stabbed purple hair in the hand.

Of course, this riot had also ended up attracting the crowd, and soon the security was trying to make their way to them.

“RETREAT!” Jin yelled with an authority that no one would have ever thought him capable of.

They all grabbed each other’s hands and arms to stay together as they swiftly made their way out of here.

*

Even once they were outside, they all kept running for quite a long time. It wasn’t really necessary because absolutely no one was chasing them in any ways, but they needed this. They all needed to keep running, screaming, laughing, yelling, and crying … Anything to run off the adrenaline still strong in heir body, anything to prove that they were young, alive and unafraid and ready to fight again if someone else ever tried to hurt one of them ever again. During these few minutes, the world was theirs and they were unstoppable.

But eventually they had to slow down, and even to stop. All panting and sweating, they ended up sitting by a fountain on a mostly deserted plaza. Despite their exhaustion, their spirits were still high and their hearts were still full. Jin's other personalities had gone out, and the young man was yelling contradictory things to none of them in particular, saying that it was both the best and worst night of his life. Spinner was yelling some random curses and laughing at the same time, and Magne was recapping the entire event of the night with the excitement of a little girl on Christmas morning. Tomura was sitting on the edge of the fountain, his head thrown back and was laughing with a borderline hysterical laugh. And Dabi just stood in the middle of this mess, completely dumbfounded.

Eventually, everyone calmed down but one person. Toga was crying with big heavy tears, and unlike everyone else, she didn’t seem ready to stop.

“Tomuraaaaaaa!” she cried, throwing herself in the arms of the confused young man, who almost
fell backward in the fountain as he caught her.

“T-Toga, what is it? Are you okay?” he asked.

“Tomu, I’m so sorry!!” she sniffed; drolling from both eyes and nose all over Tomura’s shirt. “I’m so sorry I left you!! This is all my fault, I should have protected you! I wasn’t here for you, I’m so sorry, I’m such a bad friend!!!”

Although Tomura was still a bit puzzled by this, Toga’s obvious worry and affection for him send a warm feeling in his chest. Still holding her, he gently patted her head to calm her sobs.

“It’s all good little Toga. I can’t have you look after me all the time, you’ve got to live a little don’t you think? You already take such good care of me every day. And I mean you did stab someone for me tonight.”

The blond girl let out a choked giggle, burying her face deeper in Tomura’s shoulder.

“She’s got a point though …” Spinner said, awkwardly rubbing his arm, “I think most of us owe you an apology … I mean if Dabi hadn’t been so worried and stressed about you, who knows what might have happened!”

Tomura’s eyes went straight to Dabi, who immediately let out an embarrassed cough.

“Uh … Honestly, it was Tomura himself that really surprised me!” he said changing the subject no smoothly. “I mean, the guy was already on the ground when I showed up.”

“Yes, but he still had the time to break my nose, so I’m not sure how good I did …”

“What actually happened though?” Magne asked, sitting on the edge next to her two roommates, “If you don’t mind telling …”

“Nah, it’s cool, but uh, it’s just the most stupid thing. So yeah, it was the guy from the bar who kind of followed me around the whole evening. And at some point we all kind of scattered and I was alone, so he came up to me and just … just began to dance with me. And at this point, I didn’t really mind because he was pretty and smelled nice. But then he, uh, he became kind of touchy and … Anyways, I was completely drunk at this point so I didn’t protest when he took me in the back. But then he tried to kiss me and I didn’t want to so I just kept avoiding his lips. At first, it made him laugh and he called me a tease … but after a while he got mad. He told me to get on my knees but … but I said …”

Everyone was attentively listening Tomura marked a break in his tale because retrospectively, he couldn’t believe that he had actually said that.

“But then I said I’m not your mom last night. And he punched me.”

This sentence was followed by a short silence before everyone in the group collectively lost their mind.

*They had decided to finish the night at Dabi and Jin’s place, mostly to get ice for Tomura’s nose and for everyone else bruises, and also because the night was still young and they had all decided that I bunch of creepy assholes were not going to ruin Dabi’s birthdays. On their way there, Dabi and Tomura ended up walking next to each other. As the rest of the group was in a deep active conversation, the two have them actually stayed silent all the way. But at many different points,
they would look at each other, and exchange a friendly, complicit smile. And nothing else. But they did it quite a few times.

As soon as she walked in the flat, Magne let out the loudest scream that anyone had ever heard from her.

“DABRIEL YOU FUCKING SOULLESS BITCH!”

Inside of the flat, on the wall right in front of them, in the living room in plain sight, the frying pan was fixed, like some sort of sword or weapon. Dabi had never been more proud.

“I tried to stop him, I promised …” Jin whispered.

“Nah you didn’t,” Dabi commented, “It’s okay Magne, I’ll accept my death with open arms.”

“Honestly, you know what?” Magne said after a moment of reflexion, “I’m not even mad anymore. I’m … I’m impressed. I bow down. With so much insolence, you actually deserve to keep it. I’m very proud of you Dabi.”

As everyone took place on the couch, Tomura followed Dabi to the kitchen for the ice, and said to him: “You know, I believe I can only dream about reaching this level of petty.”

“Hey what do you mean?” Dabi protested, falsely offended, “It’s the weapon I used when you and I saved Gran Torino’s life! It deserves to be exposed! Also you Magic Dad is way pettier than I will ever be.”

*Somehow, despite everything, the night ended perfectly. Everyone was laughing on the couch, reliving some moments of their epic fight, commenting on how much of secrete savage Tomura was.

“Hum, can I just ask something?” Jin requested at some point, “I really don’t want to die so young, so if Tomura agrees to this, can we make the pack to never ever ever ever tell his dads what happened tonight? And make something up for the nose?”

The look of dread that passed through everyone’s eyes absolutely delighted Tomura.

“Sweet,” he said with a smirk, “now I got blackmail on everyone …”

Later in the evening, Dabi went out to smoke a cigarette. The flat actually had a small balcony on the living room’s window, and he just had to walk over the couch to get outside. Even, though it technically was the longest day of the year, it was pretty dark out there, the only lights he had was the one from inside the flat, the ones from the city below him, and his own blue flame.

He could hear the laughs of his friends from inside and thought about what a fucking miracle it was that the night had ended so well. But yet, unlike his pals, he didn’t feel relieved yet. He couldn’t really explain why, because Tomura was obviously happy and safe right on the other side of the wall he was leaning on. But it was … it was like the dread and panic that had grown in his body after Tomura’s disappearance had followed him around, like a curse or a virus. His heart was still beating loudly in his chest. He couldn’t get the image of Tomura’s bright red out of his mind, how desperate and vulnerable they were back there. “You’re here …”

It’s my fault, it’s all my fault, I was the one wanted to go out, the one who insisted for him to come, the one who …
“Dabi?”

Deep in his thoughts, Dabi hadn’t heard Tomura join him on the balcony, and was surprised to suddenly see him so close to his face.

“Oh, hey! What are you doing here, you’re gonna get cold …”

“Your birthday is the first day of summer you dumbass …”

The silence that followed wasn’t very long, as Tomura immediately broke it.

“Thank you, Dabi.”

“For what?”

“For coming for me.”

There was something about the way Tomura said this that really stuck with Dabi.

“Spinner told me that you were the one who noticed I was gone, who warned them and looked around. Who looked for me. So thank you. Because, even though I can genuinely laugh about it now, even though these guys seemed really dumb and stupid in retrospect, even though I will still remember this night as one of the greatest of my life, even though I thought … God, I was so scared Dabi. I was so fucking scared back there.”

Dabi literally dropped his cigarette. Tomura looked so small, right now, so fragile, like he was about to break at any seconds. So different from the manic Tomura he had seen when he arrived at the scene, and so close from the vulnerable Tomura whose face he had softly taken between his hands.

“And then suddenly you were here,” he continued, “And, I don’t know … when I saw you something happened … At first, I thought that something had broke in me, but now I think … I think that something was fixed, perhaps? Gosh, I’m not making any sense right now …”

“Tomura, I’m so sorry …”

Dabi perfectly heard how emotional he sounded right now, but for once in his life, he didn’t give a single fuck about it. Tomura looked right back at him, eyes wide in surprise.

“What on earth are you talking about?” He sounded almost amused as if he couldn’t possibly imagine what Dabi was talking about.

“It’s my fault! It’s entirely my fault. We had a perfect night at the bar, and I ruined everything, insisting on going out … Insisting to drag you out there when you were clearly uncomfortable with that …”

“Hey, hey, hold on! I agreed to everything! You didn’t pressure me once! And besides, what happened in there was my fault and no one el-”

“Don’t you dare!” Dabi actually yelled, “Don’t you dare blame this on yourself, for once in your life please don’t. I forbid you to even think that it was your fault!”

“But it was!” Tomura yelled back, “It absolutely was! I’m not that stupid Dabi, I knew what this guy wanted!”

This actually shut Dabi up. The balcony wasn’t very large, so the two boys were standing very
close to each other right now, and Dabi could see some tears appear in the smaller boy’s eyes.

“Hey, hey it’s okay calm down …” Back there, grabbing Tomura’s face had seemed the most obvious and easiest thing in the world, but right now, he didn’t dare to touch him, no matter how desperately he wanted to. “Calm down, it’s fine I’m sorry I yelled. I’m sorry. But what do you mean?”

Tomura clumsily dried his eyes with his forearm, ashamed of his own weakness.

“I wasn’t even that drunk in the first place,” he explained with a choked voice, “not enough to not realise what kind of guy he was and what he wanted from me. He … he wanted me. And I didn’t even wanted him back, but … It just felt so good, you know? To be wanted … to be desired … And he wasn’t even that good you know? What he said to me was easy and cheap, things I had heard in movies thousands of times. But no one had ever said it to me. So I was weak. I let him flatter me, do his thing because it just felt so good. He told me that I was pretty; he told me that I was beautiful … he told that I was hot. He told me that he wanted me. And no one has ever wanted me. No one wants me. Not like this. No one ever touched me.”

With his last sentence, he looked back at his hands, slightly bruised from the fight. To Dabi, there was something fascinating about how two things so small, so pretty, almost childlike, could be so destructive. If we added a garbage father to the mix, how could a child not grow up as insecure and damaged as Tomura? How do you get close to another person in these conditions?

“You … never had anyone before? Not even a kindergarten sweetheart?” Dabi absolutely hated himself for asking this, but it had gone out all by itself.

“Well, does pinning over the same boy during my three years of high school, without ever touching him counts?” Tomura asked with a sad smile.

Dabi had figured a while ago that Tomura was surely extremely inexperienced, and definitely a virgin. But now he realised that he had never kissed anyone, never confessed to anyone, never even hold hands with anyone.

“How pathetic is that?” Tomura commented in a low voiced, “Anxious touched-starved 24 years old throws himself at the first person to ever tell him that he kind of looks nice …”

“Hey …”

They were now both leaning against the wall, facing each other. Tomura finally looked up from his hands, and into Dabi’s eyes.

“When I was 16 I left my home,” he began, “and I met a girl.”

He couldn’t actually believe that he was about to talk about her. But he had to. He had to tell Tomura about this, so he wouldn’t make the same mistakes as him.

“I met barely a few weeks after I left. Back then it felt like love at first sight. She was one year older than me. Maybe two. She was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my entire life, with long golden shiny hair, like actually shining. That was her quirk. She had this very classic and angelic beauty, with bright green eyes, soft features, and a bright smile. Looking at her, it was like looking at the sun. And I got blind.”

Dabi wanted to light another cigarette but he didn’t have any, so he kept going.

“She was my first everything. First love, first kiss and first time. I was completely devoted to her, I
felt like we were connected like she understood me like no one else. I wanted to cherish her until my last breath. I genuinely thought that we would be together forever. But she … she wasn’t a good person.”

“What did she do to you?”

There was genuine concern and worry in Tomura’s voice and it made Dabi feel weird things that he was too tired to analyse right now.

“She played with me. She used me. I thought that she was my savior, the most selfless person in the world, but she actually was the most selfish. She began to blame me for stupid things; making me feel guilty about things I had no control on. Her specialty was to play the victim, the martyr even, reminding me constantly of everything she had supposedly done for me and that I should pay her back, that I owed her. She constantly made me feel like I had no one else but her. And eventually, she got tired of me. And that’s when it hit me. I was a distraction. She was the perfect daughter and perfect student, and I was the drop out that had run away from home, I was the bad boy with cool scars. I was a way to get back at her parents.”

Dabi was surprised to see how easy it was for him to talk about this, compared to a few years ago. It didn’t affect him as much. Good. Good riddance.

“So after that, I hit rock bottom for almost a year. Very nasty years. But it was around this time (don’t get mad) that I discovered Stain, only a year before he became so famous. And I discovered other fans like Toga, Magne, and Spinner. And technically Jin, although I met him long after. But it’s more difficult now … To get attached, to connect with people. It’s easier to sleep with them one night and act like you don’t care. To act like you … like you …”

“Like you get the joke.”

Dabi looked at Tomura in surprise. \textit{That’s it. That’s exactly it. How did he know? Is it how he feels as well?}

“Yes, exactly. And even today, I wish I could take back everything I gave this bitch but I can’t. It’s hers forever. So as your elder my advice to you his, don’t settle for the first person who makes you feel like you matter. Found someone who actually thinks that you matter. I know it’s hard but I’m sure it’s worth it, although it’s not like I would know. But there’s one thing I know Tomura Shigaraki; you are smart, talented, interesting, sensitive and pretty. And someone is going to fall in love with you.”

Right next to him, Tomura felt like he was about to cry again, but he did his best not to. It was the weirdest feeling, he wanted to laugh and cry at the same time, he felt like all of the feelings in the world ran through him. His whole body was shaking like it was too small and his heart was too big.

“Shit, I told you you’d be cold!” Dabi laughed, seeing the younger boy shiver next to him, “Wait, hold on…”

To Tomura’s surprised, Dabi took off his own coat and almost forcefully put him on Tomura’ shoulders.

“What the fuck are you doing? I’m fine!”

“No, you’re fucking cold. If you get sick, Toga is going to stab me good and Magne is going to kill me slowly with my own frying pan. And don’t get me started on your dads.”

“But … what about you?”
“My quirk keeps me warm. I mean if you really don’t want the coat, I can stay close to you like some fucking electric heater …”

“Wh-what? Hahahaha … Ew, gross no way … Haha …”

“Haha, yeah … I thought so … I was totally joking haha …”

※

“Please tell me I’m not the only one seeing this fucking bullshit right here …”

“Shhhh, Spinner, stay quiet!” Magne angrily whispered, “And stay down they're going to see you!”

“I seriously doubt it, they’re too busy drowning in each other's eyes, I mean look at this shit!”

“It’s almost fascinating,” Jin commented, “How it’s absolutely adorable and terribly painful to watch at the same time.”

“Yeah, that’s what awkward flirting will do to you,” Toga confirmed trying to move around to get a better view without getting caught, “but they’re doing they’re best!”

“Are you fucking kidding me?!” Spinner almost screamed, “Are we not gonna talk about how Dabi just gave him his fucking coat, and now Tomura is leaning against the wall giggling like we’re in some fucking shoujo bullshit????”

“I really want to help them, they look like they’re suffering!” Jin wined.

“No! Mama Magne says no! Whatever is happening between them right now is between them and them only! I want you all to swear on your lives that we’re staying out of this and letting them figures things out. Now, swear!”

They all reluctantly, but genuinely, swore.

※

After everyone left and Jin went to bed, Dabi realised two things. First, what he had felt tonight was the closest he had ever felt of the warm and fuzzy feelings from his former birthdays.

The second was that Tomura had left with his coat.

Oh no.

How terrible, how awful.

I guess I have to go see him tomorrow to get it back.

Tragic.

Chapter End Notes
OKAY FIRST, the Dabriel Todoroki joke was made by dabimutual on Tumblr and they should get all the credit!!! Go check them out they're great!!!

Also, I feel like a should mention that purple hair douche is in no way related or connected to Perfect Boy Shinsou Hitoshi. But I lowkey feel bad for picking this color now because every time I wrote "purple hair" I felt bad.

Yeah, so this chapter was a bit of a downer, but I try to keep some humor in there and some lighter moments.

The feeling that no one will ever want you, that you should have dated someone by now, that it's weird for you to so unexperimented at your age is a something I'm very familiar with. And if you are too, I can only paraphrase what the fic already says, there is no "too late." There is nothing wrong with you because you actually don't have any expiration date of any sort, and you should take your first steps with someone that you want to take these steps with. I know it's hard and scary, but you can do it!!!

Okay, I apologize if I sounded very preachy right now. You do you, my dudes!

Next time, we begin with what was initially supposed to be the end of this chapter! (Yet the chapter was supposed to be even longer, like a lot longer, because I have yet to find my chill when it comes to Shigadabi).
Chapter Summary

In which Dabi and Tomura open up to possibilities.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay!!! One day I'll have a schedule and my together!

No real big event in this chapter, especially compared to the precedent. I hope it's still enjoyable! It's a sort of transition chapter I guess. But still some introspection and awkward flirting! Yay!

Also for those of you who are interested, I made a little playlist for the fic. Don't see it as anything official, it's songs that inspire me, help me to think about the plot or that I just like to listen while writing. So a lot of them don't have any logical connexion to the story really, but others do!

There it is if you want to check it out!

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4SOLV7pwIzvcVPx8RCv3KhOl1is7P_iw

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Have you looked everywhere? Are you sure?”

“The room is empty, he’s gone!”

“Quick! Send the team out! Gran Torino, secure the perimeter!”

“All Might, what about the boy?”

“Tenko! Look at me! It’s going to be fine …”

But Tomura knows it’s not going to be fine. Not even because of the weird logic of dreams that gives him a knowledge he wasn’t supposed to have back then. No. No even then he knew. He knew things weren’t going to be fine, no matter what All Might said. So he waits, he waits as all of these
heroes, policemen, all of these adults, panicking around him.

Suddenly there’s no one. He is alone, floating in the darkness drifting without anything to reach. He stays like this for a while, struggling against nothing, before feeling something reaching for him.

Hands. Disembodied hands, suddenly grab him all over his frail, oversensitive body. He doesn’t like it, doesn’t like to be touched so suddenly by these alien, unfamiliar things.

“Stop! Let go of me!”

But the hands are holding tight. They hold his arms, his shoulders, his chest, the back of his head and even his throat. The more Tomura struggle, the tighter they get. And suddenly, there’s another one. Another disembodied hand, floating right toward his face.

“No! Please no!”

But it’s too late. The hand is on his face, holding firmly.

“Father … Father please no stop …”

But his father’s hand doesn’t let go, blocking his eyes, his mouth, and his breathing.

“Father … I can’t … I can’t breathe … Father …”

But as Tomura thinks he is about to pass out, all the hands let out, finally allowing him to take a deep breath. As he wonders what drove them away, something very soft falls on him. It’s like a cloak, slowly surrounding him protecting him from the emptiness and from the suffocating hands. He loves the feeling, he surrounded and protected and comfortable. The cloak is soft, warm and smells good. It smells … kind of familiar actually … like ash and cigarettes … like smoke.

Tomura woke up in a sweat, tangles in his sheets and something he hadn’t properly identify yet. As he opened his eyes, it took him a moment to identify his surroundings and remember where he was. My room … Yes okay good … He recognized the old dusty fluorescent stars fixed on his wall and
heard the familiar buzzing of the computer in the corner on his desk. He tried to get up, but a sharp pain in his head immediately pined him back on the bed. Is only then that he realized in what state he was: his head was throbbing, his insides were all messed up, and his mouth was dry and his muscles sores. Also, his nose hurt.

The curtains of his window were wide open and with the sun shining so bright it was a miracle that he had not woke up earlier. *Guess I was really really really drunk.* Memories from last night slowly came back to him, from Toga picking his shirt, to Dabi giving his coat on the balcony. *Speaking of …*

Tomura realized that he was so tired last night, that he had fallen asleep on his bed still wearing all of his clothes: the tight pants, the now almost completely unbuttoned shirt, and Dabi long black coat. *Shit! What the fuck is wrong with me? He’s gonna be so pissed … I bet it’s all sweaty and crumpled now. God, I hope I didn’t threw up on it or anything … I hope it doesn’t smell too bad …* Instinctively, he brought a pan of the coat to his face and breathed in. *Oh …*

The coat didn’t smell anything wrong or disgusting. In fact, it smelled … good? Well not really good, because it kind of smelled like beer and cold cigarettes, but it smelled familiar. Like ash and smoke. *Wait … This is the smell I … The smell I just …*

Tomura couldn’t finish his thought, because suddenly the bell started ringing. The sound was like a blade piercing his brain, and for a while he actually chose to ignore it, assuming that Toga or Magne would get. But the bell kept ringing. Again. And again. Eventually, Tomura came to the conclusion that the girls were either out or even drunker than him. In either case, he had to get it. He slowly dragged himself off his bed, still wrapped in the coat like it was some sort of dressing gown. As he passed by the living room and saw a little note on the table.

*Toga and I went to the SPA! (To get over the pain …) We tried to take you with us but you were way to deep asleep! We couldn’t have waked you if we tried. There is rests in the fridge and aspirin in the kitchen!*

See you tonight!

Magne B)

The girls often went to the SPA after a particularly drunken night. Tomura kind of felt bad to have missed it … *Eh, next time …* Meanwhile, the bell kept ringing. With a grunt, Tomura moved toward the door. And somehow, his nauseous mind immediately got a lot clearer the moment he saw Dabi standing in front of him.

He was a little paler than usual, and Tomura felt he could somehow see dark circles on the burned
skin under his eyes, but other than that, the taller man looked rather fine. Surely a lot better than how Tomura looked right now. It was almost infuriating to see that the guy could have such a trashy night, and still look incredibly good the next day. Well good … I mean good as decent … As normal looking. Obviously. Holy shit, he so tall … and lean … Also, his hair looks really nice right now … The only real notable difference was that he wasn’t wearing his iconic long black coat, and Tomura legitimately spent a whole five seconds wondering why, until he remembered what he was wearing right now. Oh. Oh … OH. OH SHIT. YEAH RIGHT.

In front of him, Dabi was silent as well, taken by a whole different crisis. Tomura with the most incredible bed hair he had ever seen, with a now completely opened black shirt, contrasting with the very pale chest revealed underneath, and wrapped in his own black coat that was way too big for his small frame, was … a sight. To say the least.

“I was gonna say good morning, but you don’t look so good right now,” Dabi lied.

“Uh? Oh yeah … Yeah, I had a tough awakening …”

“I can see that,” Dabi smiled, “And to be honest, I kind of predicted it, which is why I brought coffee and breakfast.”

Tomura only now noticed the brown packaged in Dabi’s right hand, as he handed it to him. The smell of warm coffee and pastries overcame his senses.

“Holy shit … Thank you for my life …” Tomura whispered, holding the package against his chest. He walked back in, expecting Dabi to follow him inside, and having already forgotten that he was wearing his coat. But Dabi didn’t mind if the boy kept it a little longer, so he followed him inside with a smile.

They sat in the kitchen, drinking the coffee and eating the warm cinnamon rolls. Tomura felt himself slowly coming back to life with each sip and bite in took. Dabi looked at him, absolutely devouring his breakfast. He felt good to see him so unapologetically, with no hesitation whatsoever.

“So where are the girls?” he asked.

“At the SPA,” Tomura answered before even properly swallowing his bite, “they often do that in cases of tough hangovers. Magne’s aunt own one not super far from here, so they can show up
without any reservation and get some cheap prices.”

“Why are you not with them?”

“Because they both handle alcohol a lot better than me. I was still deep asleep when they left, I can only blame my own weak constitution for this.”

“That’s rough. You could have been spending your day relaxing in a warm pool with the two most wonderful girls in the world, and instead, you’re stuck with me.”

“I mean it’s not …” Tomura began, unsure if he wanted to finish his sentence or not. He hesitated for a bit, hiding his face behind his carton cup of coffee, which was too small to hide the blush spreading all over him. “It’s not that bad.”

He immediately looked away out of embarrassment, missing the pink flush on Dabi’s cheek, as he was slowly processing the sentence.

“Tsk, you only said that because I brought you food and coffee,” Dabi snickered taking a sip of his own drink.

“I mean, maybe, but it doesn’t mean that I don’t appreciate the attention. So thank you. Although now I’m wondering if there’s another reason why you showed up so early like that.”

“I’m nice.”

“No one is that nice early in the morning with a hangover.”

“Well, okay, I actually specifically came for two things” Dabi admitted, “First of all, I actually … I actually wanted to see how you were doing. After … you know …”

“Oh.”

Tomura remembered his conversation with Dabi. He remembered the balcony, the beautiful city
lights below them, and he remembered Dabi yelling that all of this was his fault. And Tomura had gotten so mad. How could he think it was his fault when he had saved Tomura? How could Tomura make him understand what he had felt when he had appeared between him and the other man? How hard his heart was beating, when he was thinking about it even right now? Last night they were both way too emotional. Hopefully today, they would be able to talk about this more calmly.

“Well, thanks I … I’m doing okay I think. I mean, the worst thing I can’t think of is the weird dream I had last night, but I don’t think it was even really related to this. No, really the alcohol is the bigger pain this morning. So yeah, thanks to you I’m fine. So again, thank you for coming for me. Thank you for saving.”

Dabi seemed like he looking for something to add, for something in Tomura’s face that would indicate that he was hiding something, that something. But he found no such thing and had no choice but to take the compliment.

“Okay … Well, I’m glad then. That’s good.”

“And what about the second thing? You said that you came for two reasons?”

“Well …”

Dabi let the end of the sentence in suspense, looking at Tomura from head to toes with a cocky grin on his face until the boy took the hint and remembered again what he was wearing.

“OH, RIGHT! Wait, sorry, shit, uh, I’m so sorry, shit …”

It was almost scary to see how quickly and easily he had forgotten about it, how comfortable and natural the coat felt on him. His first reflex was to immediately take it off, but he stopped mid-shoulder when he realized how revealing his black shirt had become.

“I … shit … just wait a second, I’m just gonna … I’m gonna get dress … like actually dressed, I uh, I’ll be right back!” he stuttered, stumbling out of the kitchen and bumping against a chair on his way out. Dabi grinned the entire time.

Tomura came back a few minutes later, now wearing a big light blue sweater and his usual black
pants. He walked up to Dabi, now holding the coat in his hands.

“Yeah, so thanks again for this. And, uh, I’m sorry if it’s all crumpled I … Okay, this is embarrassing but I was drunk and tired last night that I kind of fell asleep wearing it? Sorry …”

Dabi’s eyes went wide for a short second. He what now?? He … Okay. Okay, this is fine … He gently grabbed his own from Tomura’s hands, as if the old thing as suddenly become the most precious object in the universe. When Dabi put in on, it was still warm and it sent a shiver down his whole body.

“Don’t worry about really,” he said to the boy, “this thing is way past its expiration date. We’ve seen it all together. I should be the one apologizing for giving you something old and dirty …”

“No … No, it was fine …”

They both stood face to face for a while, not sure what to do now. Dabi had his coat, the thing he had come to get. What other reason had he to stay?

“Well, I guess that’s it,” he said awkwardly shifting on his feet, “I’d better …”

“Hey, do you want to do something today?” Tomura suddenly blurred out, with clench fist.

For a second Dabi thought he had misheard.

“Do … something? Uh, I don’t know like … like what, what do you mean?”

“I don’t know …” Tomura hesitated. He had kind of spoke without thinking, but he realized that he didn’t want to take anything back. “I guess … I mean Magne and Toga shouldn’t be the only one to have fun today, right? Instead of feeling bad that we’re not doing something with them, we could do something together!”

For some reason, the fact that Tomura actively wanted to do something with really shook Dabi. Until now, it felt like a lot of their time together was happening because of specifics reason or by total accident. And yes, technically Dabi came to get his coat in the first place, but right now, went
Dabi had all the reasons to live, Tomura wanted him to stay. He wanted to spend time with him for no other apparent reason that … he wanted to spend time with him.

Tomura was also well aware of this shift. And that it brought them dangerously close to the “friends” area. Is it … really that dangerous, though? Tomura wasn’t sure. At this moment, he couldn’t remember for the life of his why being friends with Dabi used to seem like such a bad idea.

“Okay,” Dabi answered, “uuuh … want to you want to do?”

“Well, actually, I was thinking about going to the Art Museum today. But uh, we can totally do something else if you …”

“What, no are you kidding me? That’s a rad idea! I feel like I haven’t walk into a museum for decades! Also, you’re gonna be able to impress me with your sick art knowledge …”

And just like that, they were on they’re way to the town center. On this end of June, the weather was warm, with a bright sun that brought everyone outside and they decided to walk there without taking the bus. The museum was a large luminous place, very agreeable and worthy of visiting on its own. Dabi remembered visiting it with his sibling when he was younger and was pleased to see that place still had the same impact on him more than a decade later. Next to him, Tomura was over the moon, despite visiting the place almost every two weeks.

“I assume that I don’t need to take a plan or an audio guide, having you with me. What do you want to see first?”

“I was thinking we could do I a sort of chronological tour. This way, you can get a big idea of some of the big major movement?”

Dabi was half joking when he had compared Tomura to an audio guide, but during the next hour, he realized that he wasn’t that far from the truth. But he really didn’t mind, Tomura’s knowledge was impressive but he also managed to share in a clear, concise and interesting way. Dabi was genuinely drinking every word coming out of his mouth. It was like their talk about masters at the campus café, only at full power. It turned out that Art history was a lot more interesting than Dabi had imagined, at least with Tomura as a teacher. He learned that painting that he would have otherwise considered classic and boring were groundbreaking and even scandalous in their times.
“A lot of these guys were punks and rebels you know,” Tomura explained, “all of these works existed in a very précised context and a lot of them were going against the conventions of their time. It’s like a told you, art only moves forward when people break rules. That’s why it bothers me when people call some pieces of modern and contemporary arts “lazy” or “scams”. It may seem easy to just paint a black square on a white canvas, but we should never forget everything it took to get there. You may not like it, and yeah, you probably got some hustler out there, but arts is experimentation and art is trying new things.”

“That’s almost crazy to think about …” Dabi admitted, “And all of them, they stood their ground?”

“They sure did! The ones we remember at least. There was this French painter named Matisse. At his beginning, he painted a work called La femme au chapeau. It was just a woman with a hat, put painted with extremely bright, almost violent surrealist colors. Critics compared his work the one of an animal, calling him a beast, a fauve in French. And Matisse was like, eh I kind of like that. And he called his entire movement fauvism.

“Nice, I like his style. But does it mean that you like everything?”

“No, absolutely not. Like a said, it’s perfectly okay to hate any piece of art with no other reason than “it doesn’t touch me” or “it doesn’t appeal” to me. There are movements that I love and some others that I hate. But I’ll say that at least … I respect everything.”

They arrived in one of Tomura’s favorite room, the one dedicated to French painter Claude Monnet. Monet was one of the founders of the Impressionism movement that he was particularly fond of. And it actually really pleased him to see that Dabi seemed to enjoy it as well. Although the young man had been attentive in every room, it was easy to tell that he liked some painters more than others. And right now, his eyes wide open and full of stars.

“Hey, I like this one.”

“Yeah, Monet’s pretty great. He worked a lot with colors, lights, and sensations. He didn't necessarily paint things how he saw them, but how he felt them. I’d say he is my biggest inspiration.”

Dabi was listening, but also deeply lost in the contemplation of Tomura’s favorite painting, Impression, Soleil Levant, representing the sunrise on Havre’s harbor. He looked at with an odd expression for a few more minutes, in complete silence, before eventually turning toward Tomura with a smile.
“Hey, this one looks like you!”

This statement shook Tomura quite a bite. On one hand, this was his absolute favorite painting but Dabi couldn’t have possibly known that, so that was a freaky coincidence. And on the other hand …

“What do you mean it looks like? It’s a landscape! A harbor!”

“Yeah, I know but …” Dabi hesitated for a second as if he was looking for a proper way to express himself, “It just looks like you. It’s different shades of soft blues that reminds me of your air, but at the center of it, there is that very small but very bright red sun that reminds me of your eyes. Also when you first look at it, it looks kind of messy and chaotic, with no real shapes. But the longer you stare … the longer you watch … It suddenly becomes this very relaxing and calm picture. So yeah, I don’t know.”

Tomura listened to the whole thing without knowing how to react. As often with Dabi, he kept waiting for the incoming spike hidden somewhere in his speech, but it never came. I guess … I guess we really don’t do this anymore.

“Wow damn, uh thanks. I guess … Shit, I’ve got to take this seriously now.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“Well, now I’m trying to think of a painting that looks like you. But what sent the bar way up, I can’t just make a dumb joke now …”

Dabi watched Tomura who appeared to be in a very intense reflexion, arms crossed and face frowned. Eventually, lighted up again.

“I know!” he exclaimed, carefully grabbing by the wrist with one finger lifted, and dragging him across gallery until he found the one artist he was looking for.

“Edward Hopper …” Dabi read on the wall.
“This one!”

Tomura was pointing at a painting called *Nighthawks*; it represented a bar at night with only four people inside. This image gave Dabi an odd warm feeling, a form of nostalgia for nothing that had never existed. It was like seeing a window light up in the night.

“I guess you could say that you remind me of Hopper in general. There is something very classy and cinematographic about his work, but also something a bit surreal at the same time. It’s always very elegant but … there’s often a feeling of loneliness as well. In *Nighthawks*, there are these people next to each other… They don’t talk, but you know they could! And they might … The lines are pleasing and the colors are soft and warm, even though it’s kind of dark and purple. But then, it contrasts, there is this bright light inside and …”

Tomura interrupted himself, feeling that Dabi’s eyes were no longer on the painting but on him.

“Aaaah … Sorry, I’m rambling again, aren’t I? I’m probably not even making any sense, your version was so much better and …”

“No! No, it’s fine … I just … I just realized that you knew me a lot better than I thought you did …”

Dabi looked back at the painting.

“But I’m glad. I really like this one, to be honest. I thought that you were going to show me something kind of stupid, or a weird portrait to mock me but … I don’t know. I don’t know. I guess we don’t do that anymore.”

Tomura twisted a lock of his hair between his fingers.

“I guess we don’t.”

They had a late lunch at the Museum’s cafeteria. They kept talking about what they had seen, what had been Dabi’s favorite paintings or favorite artists, and other works that Tomura wanted him to see. As they spoke, Dabi was trying to fic of a way to educate Tomura about music the same way
he had just educated him about painting. *Maybe I should take him to a music store, buy him some albums? Or just to a concert or a music festival?* But these didn’t feel quite enough. Then another thought crossed his mind for a second. *Maybe I should make him a mixtape …* But Dabi immediately sent this thought away. Dabi had some very strong opinions about mixtapes. He had only made a mixtape for one person in his life and was still regretting it. *What the hell am I thinking? I can’t make him a mixtape! Mixtapes are precious, important and intimate. They’re personal! They’re a glimpse into one’s heart! A blueprint of the soul! Mixtapes are declarations, confessions… love letters …*

“Hey, are you okay? Do … do I have some sauce on the face?”

It took Tomura’s question for Dabi to realize that he had been staring at the boy in front of him, even as his mind had drifted. Tomura was now anxiously rubbing his cheeks and mouth with the back of his hand.

“No no no no no! It’s fine you’re fine. Sorry, my mind wandered for a bit …”

Reassured, Tomura took a sip of his soda. It had been a pretty great afternoon. He was often visiting this museum, but he was doing it alone most of the time. Having someone around was surprisingly fun. Dabi had been surprisingly attentive and invested in the tour. It was pretty cool to explain to him some things and to see his reactions to some specific works.

“Did you have a favorite painting?”

“Wow, hey, I can’t choose a favorite yet. I mean I just discovered them I need some more time. But I’ll say … that I really liked the one you picked for me.”

Tomura knew it was dumb, but this made him feel extremely proud of himself for some reason. And it made him want to confess something.

“That’s funny you know,” he said fidgeting with his napkin, tearing it in small pieces with careful fingers, “Because the painting you said looked like it’s … it’s my favorite painting.”

“Oh.”

By the time they left the museum, the sky had got overcast and it was threatening to rain any
Dabi raised an eyebrow and looked at Tomura with curiosity, interested in hearing an eventual solution because right some thunder was roaring in the distance. Tomura suddenly seemed very interested in the trash can next to them, because he wasn’t looking at Dabi when he muttered his proposition.

“I mean it’s not that late. You can come to the flat with me for a while we live pretty close. At least to try to avoid the rain, you know? I don’t know we could watch a movie or some shit.”

Tomura proposing Dabi to hang out in his flat just the two of them shouldn’t be that big of a deal, considering that they had already spend evenings there, including one in the dark. But none of these time had really been intentional, or least of all, suggested by Tomura himself. So right now for Dabi, it was a little bit of a big deal.

“Uuuuuuuuh, yeah sure I guess why not,” he answered as nonchalantly as possible, and as the rain was already beginning to fall.

* 

They walked as fast as they could, but not enough to completely avoid the downpour. It was just crazy how fast the weather had changed within a few hours, but none of them really minded. The drops were warm, and they both loved the smell of summer rain, the one of the water falling the very hot concrete. But it was still a relief when they finally got inside.
“Take of your shoes,” Tomura ordered closing the door, “Magne is going to kill us if we get water everywhere.”

“Well, my shoes are definitely not the part of me that’s the wettest right now …”

Tomura, who was only standing on one leg to take one of his red sneakers, almost fell down hearing that comment. He leaned into the wall at the last second, but it was still embarrassing.

“Wh-what do you mean?” he asked.

“I mean that my coat and my hair are a lot more soaked than my shoes,” Dabi said with a smirk, “What else could I have meant, Tomura?”

Oh… Oh yeah right of course that … that makes sense. Yes of course. Yes.

“Yeah, okay, well let’s not soak the place,” Tomura tried to assert as he got back up, “So take of your coat and the hanger next to the door. I’m going to get us some towels and …”

Tomura choked on his sentence because Dabi had already taken his coat, now only in a white t-shirt that had become quite … transparent. The purple burns that Tomura could usually only guess under the clothes had become pretty apparent, and he even thought he saw some traces of dark ink on some still smooth part of the skin. However, he didn’t get the chance to investigate too, as Dabi let out a caught that finally got Tomura to look up from his chest.

“So … Those towels?”

“Uh? … Oh! Yeah right, uh I’m gonna …”

Tomura dashed toward the bathroom, head down. Despite all the recent shifts in their relationship, Dabi couldn’t but tease the boy a little every once in awhile, if only to see him blush like this. But there was a little more to this. After everything that had happened last night, Dabi had been doing some thinking and encountered a … possibility. But he still needed to experiment a little before he could be sure about this. But once he was … Dabi was taken out of his thinking as a pink towel was thrown at his face.
“Try to dry as much of you as you can,” Tomura advised, “If Magne comes for your life I won’t hide you …”

“Shit, mopehead that’s cold …”

“It’d be like that sometimes …”

After having vigorously dried his hair, Dabi had to be a little more careful while rubbing the towel against his body because of the staples and stitches, holding the burned pieces of his skin together. On daily basis, his scars weren’t really bothering him anymore, he had learned to live with them. It was even part of his look now in a way, and the crowd dug it. But sometimes, as he had to put extra care in little action as trivial as this one, he was reminded suddenly reminded of the nature of these purple marks. They weren’t a look. They were scars.

“Hey, you okay?” Tomura asked, genuinely concerned, “Your eyes are kind of empty right now.”

“Hm? No, it’s fine I …”

Dabi interrupted himself, a huge grin growing on his stitched face when he saw Tomura’s hair. Dried with the towel, it had never been so messy or so fluffy and Dabi was taken with the weird desire to run both of his hand through Tomura’s hair.

“Oh my gooooooood!” he practically squealed, “It’s like a little cloud!”

“Urg! Stop it! Don’t …”

The end of his sentences was muffled by Dabi’s towel, as the young man had taken upon him to rub it trough Tomura’s hair and accidentally on a part of his face too.

“There,” Dabi said satisfied with his work, “all dry and clean.”

And by some kind of miracle, Tomura didn’t try to murder him, but smiled and whispered “dumbass” instead.
Outside, the storm kept on building, and it felt nice to sit on the couch safe inside the flat, with some warm tea made by Tomura. His was not as good as Magne’s, but Dabi thought it was fine.

“You’re sure that you don’t a sweater or something?” Tomura asked. Dabi was dry now, but his coat was still hanging by the door.

“Don’t worry, it’s not that cold really. The weather may be shitty, but we’re still in June you know, it’s not actually cold or anything. Besides I told you, my quirk keeps me warm.”

“Ah, sorry,” Tomura apologized taking a look at his own sweater, “It’s just that I’m always cold for some reason. Even when it’s officially summer!”

They just sat there for a while. Both Tomura and Dabi were the type of people that weren’t bothered by silence, as long as they were comfortable with the person sharing it with them. So it wasn’t out of embarrassment, but out of sheer curiosity when Tomura asked: “So, do you want to watch a movie or something?”

“Yeah sure,” Dabi shrugged, “what do you propose?”

Tomura slightly shifted in the couch to look at Dabi. He actually had a movie in mind, but he as afraid that Dabi would laugh at him, so he felt like needed to make eye contact to be more convincing.

“Uh, so there’s this movie that I really like and that I use to watch when I was a teenager. I just found it on DVD last week, and I didn’t get to watch it since. But it’s kind of an old movie. One I use to watch with Kurogiri.”

“Yeah sure ... How old?”

“Black and white old. It’s from 1963 I think …”

“I mean why not? I don’t watch many old movies, but it can’t be that bad. What it is called?”
“The Haunting.”

Tomura barely caught it, but an odd shadow passed across Dabi’s face. For a few seconds, his face turned quite pale and his eyes were unsure.

“Is it … a scary movie?”

“Y-yeah!” Tomura actively nodded, jumping on what he thought had caught Dabi’s interested, “I mean you’re probably going to think that it’s kind of lame because, well it’s old. They really don’t show much, but I think it still holds up pretty well!”

For a moment, Dabi considered the excited boy sitting right next to him. Man, he is really enthusiastic about this movie ... Okay. It's okay Dabi you can make it ... It’s old after all! And black and white it’s going to be fine.

But it was, in fact, not fine.

As Tomura skipped the preview and navigated through the menu, his eye was attracted by Dabi on his left. The young man was holding a pillow tightly against his chest and his jawline was quite tensed.

“Uuuh, are you okay?”

Dabi slightly jumped at the sound of his voice, and force a smiled when he turned toward.

“What? I’m just … getting comfortable?”

“Really? You don’t look very comfortable …” Tomura commented, raising an eyebrow.

“Look would you … would you just put on the movie? Please?”
The beginning was not too bad. The eerie, creepy music from the opening gave Dabi some goosebumps, but it wasn’t anything he couldn’t handle. Although a pretty twisted suicide scene right at the beginning immediately got him, and he jumped at the hanging dead body suddenly appearing on screen.

“JESUS FUCK” he let out, immediately embarrassed as Tomura turned toward him.

“Are you okay?” Tomura asked. He couldn’t help but smile a little. He had never seen Dabi so tense, and he genuinely thought that the young man was being overdramatic to give him a show.

Dabi didn’t answer, avoiding his eyes to focus back on the movie. After that, for a while, nothing terribly too exciting happened. The plot was that a doctor studying paranormal had decided to conduct an experience in an old house with a rich tragic history. He invented some having already been confronted with supernatural to spend a few with him in the house to see what would happen and of course, everything went downhill.

As the movie kept going, Tomura noticed that Dabi was progressively retracting his impossibly long legs against himself on the couch. He was still holding the pillow like his life depended on it and his sunk back into the couch. Tomura was happy to see that the movie was just as good and creepy as he remembered, but he still couldn’t believe that Dabi was truly as affected as he looked. *Come on, he’s got to be mocking the movie …It’s really not that scary, he must have seen a lot worst.*

At this point of the movie, two women part of the experience were awoken in the middle of the night by loud banging against their door and their walls, and by the sound of children screaming and crying. The scene was extremely efficient, even no ghost or creature was actually shown. So efficient that Dabi let out a surprisingly high-pitched scream and instinctively jumped closer to Tomura.

“What the FUCK!!”

“There, calm down!” At this point, Tomura was beginning to consider that Dabi might not have been acting, after all, that scream was way too authentic. *Besides, it wouldn’t have jumped this close to me if he wasn’t acting on pure instinct right now …*

“Dabi are you okay? We can turn off the movie if you want it’s fine!”
“N-No it’s fine! I’m gonna … it’s fine …” Dabi stuttered, doing his best to sound composed.

Tomura couldn’t think of any reason why Dabi would to keep going if he really was that scare, so he decided to trust him. They kept watching, but Tomura was now much more attentive to Dabi’s reactions than to the screen. Eventually, they reached the scene that even Tomura considered the creepiest of the movie. The main character was in her room at night in complete darkness, and grabbed a hand the thought belonged to her friend with her in the room. But once the light was on, she realized that her friend was on the complete opposite of the room and couldn’t possibly be the one holding her hand.

“AH, TOMURA!” Dabi shrieked, “FUCK THIS!!”

All right that’s it! Without giving Dabi the chance to protest, the boy grabbed the remote and turned off the movie.

“W-why did you …?” Dabi asked, slowly calming down and visibly confused.

“Because you’re obviously uncomfortable, idiot!” Tomura answered, half irritated half amused, “I don’t know hat got to you so hard with this movie though, I mean I assume that you’ve seen worst things.”

Dabi didn’t answer. He avoided Tomura’s eyes, playing with some loose thread from the pillow he was still holding. Slowly, Tomura began to put two and two together, and his red eyes went wide as he slowly came to what he considered an improbable conclusion.

“Dabi are you … afraid of horror movies?’

“Not all of them!” Dabi immediately added, “not all of them like, I don’t mind gore and serial killer stuff. But I … I don’t know. As soon as it comes to ghost and supernatural and shit I just can’t. I just can’t do it … My God that’s so fucking dumb …”

He buried his face in his pillow to hide the embarrassment growing on his face. Tomura thought he looked very soft and vulnerable right now which he kind of liked, but it was almost overshadowed by how dumb he found him. He couldn’t help but laughed. The nice clear sound made Dabi slowly picked from under his pillow.
“Well, why didn’t say so, you doofus?” Tomura asked, still laughing, “we could have watched something else!”

Tomura doing the thing again. The thing when he was trying to hide his goofy smile behind his hands. Dabi looked at the boy’s face for a moment, slowly emerging from behind his pillow. He thought about the possibility.

“I don’t know …” Dabi answered, “I guess because you were so excited about this?”

“I mean I appreciate, but it’s not fun if I’m the only one having a good time you know? But also, I’m sorry that I just assumed that you liked horror movies … I don’t even know why I was so sure about this.”

“Yeah, a lot of people do. I guess it’ the look? The scars, the black leather, the heavy boots … I also know that a lot Stain’s fan like horror movies as well, it kind of fit the aesthetic. So I don’t blame you really. Besides, it’s not like I’m super open about this little phobia of mine … I kind of feel bad that you saw me screaming like this.”

“Why?”

Dabi was actually taken back by this question. Tomura was looking at him with genuinely curious eyes, head slightly tilted to the side. God, he really does look like a cat sometimes. But that was … actually a pretty good question. He thought back on this whole shame thing. This belief he used to have, that it was physically impossible for him to be embarrassed by anything. A belief that had been shattered quite a bit these past few days, especially when Tomura was involved. So what was it? What was it about this skinny blue-haired boy that was different, that was cracking the armor of disinterest that he had built carefully over the years?

He suddenly remembered something had said to him quite a while ago now. Something Jin had said to him the night Tomura and the girls had visited their place for the first time, the night of the whole Stain debacle, that had started with tears but ended with laughs. Right after their guest had left, right after Dabi had declared how much he hated Tomura, Jin had pointed out some … flaws, in his reasoning.

“Because right now, it just looks like you really care about what he thinks of you.”

Goddamnit Jin.
“I think …” Dabi began, finally answering, “I think it’s because I really care about what you think of me.”

This simple sentence made Tomura’s blush spread all over him. Oh … Oh okay. He needed a moment to process this because, in an odd way, this declaration went against the entirety of Tomura’s belief system. Dabi … Dabi didn’t care. About anything. Although he was something he would have never openly admitted, Tomura had always been a little envious of this, which was he used to hate him so much. Because Tomura always cared too much about everything, especially about what people thought of him. So to think that Dabi, of all people, could about what Tomura, of all people, thought of him, opened a whole new world to him.

Yeah, a whole new world of possibilities really … Which means … maybe … There was something that Tomura wanted to ask Dabi. Something that he had been thinking about for awhile now since that Mario Kart race with Toga. And for the first time since then, Tomura felt that he might be brave enough to bring it up.

“Hey … Are we friends?”

The question was bit of a shock for Dabi, as he had never really thought about this before. He hadn’t really tried to put words on his relationship with Tomura, as he still considered it a sort of experience more than anything else. Well … not until last night. Not since he had considered this … possibility.

In a way, it kind of reassured Tomura to see that Dabi was genuinely considering the question and thinking about it. It meant that his answer was truly going to be honest, which what Tomura wanted most of all, and it also meant that Dabi didn’t have a clear idea of their relationship’s nature either. And he also was happy to realize that Dabi’s thinking silence didn’t sink him in a totally anxious mood.

“I mean …” Dabi began, “I do know some things for sure. Like, I still think that you’re kind of weird and even a little annoying sometimes, but … But I also know that I like when you talk to me about art and that I like when you let me talked to you about music. I know that I feel more relaxed when I’m with you … and I know that I’ve talked to you about things that I’ve never even mentioned to anyone else. And I think that I’m correct when I assume that you did the same with me. So … yeah. I think we’re friends. What, uh, what do you think?”

“I-I think … I agree,” Tomura answered, trying to stay composed and to hide the weird emotion that was growing in his throat, “I… I … I know that I still think that you’re kind of rude and inconsiderate about some things. But, I know that I like when I hear you sing. I know that your text
and your songs touch me. I know that I like that you’re always willing to try new things with me, even when you know nothing about them. I know you really make me laugh sometimes and put me in a good mood. I know that when you’re around I feel … safe.”

Dabi took everything in. Similarly to Tomura, he didn’t know how to react to this.

“Also,” Tomura added with a shy smile, “You literally fought yesterday so … Yeah, I think we’re friends.”

“Yeah, I guess we are,” Dabi agreed with a nervous but happy smile.

It was no longer raining outside, and the sun was shining through the window on the two boys, stupidly smiling at each other in silence.

Dabi was slowly processing this information. We’re friends. I’m friends with Tomura. Which means … which means that everything is going to be taken care of now! God that explains so much! This fixes everything! Since last night, since everything that had happened in the nightclub, Dabi had been considering a possibility.

The possibility that he was … attracted to Tomura.

Dabi still had vivid images of how beautiful Tomura looked under the neon light, and he remembered very clearly how his brain had waxed lyric poetry about how good he looked. Last night, he wanted nothing more than to look at him, to talk to him, to listen to him, to touch him … He just remembered being intoxicated by Tomura in every way possible. When he had woken up this morning, he had blamed all of these thoughts on alcohol. So coming back to get his coat this morning had also been a way to check how he felt now. And even though he had tried to consider this during the whole day they had spent together, deep down, he had known exactly how he felt the moment Tomura had opened the door with his coat and messy hair.

But now, to realize that they were friends was fixing this whole mess! It was going to clear the chaos and confusion in his mind! Because for Dabi, attraction and friendship were two notions that were completely incompatible with one another. In his mind, it was impossible for him to be attracted to a friend, or to be friend with someone he was attracted. Attraction was something short, fragile and flimsy, something that was meant to be consumed. And once it was done, the attraction just ceased to be, and the object of the attraction was to never be seen again. Any sort of attachments or lingering feeling were out the question. So once he had realized that he was attracted to Tomura, Dabi had been in a bit of panic because he couldn’t just stop seeing Tomura. His best hope was that the attraction would eventually wear off, which was now guaranteed!
Because Dabi couldn’t be attracted to a friend. He just couldn’t. These two notions were just incompatible, conflicting, opposing. Right now, the possibility had become impossible.

*This is perfect! Now I just have to be chill and relax until the attraction wear off?

*

After that, Dabi and Tomura just kept talking sitting on the couch for a couple of hours, until the heard the girl’s keys turn in the lock.

“Gasp!” Toga said out loud as she walked in, “Not one, but two beautiful boys on my couch!”

“Hey girls,” Tomura greeted them as both he and Dabi stood up, “how was the SPA?”

“Pretty good,” Toga continued, “I mean the first hour was terrible because we both felt so guilty for leaving you behind. But after the warm pool we completely forgot about you.”

“As you should.” Tomura agreed with a smile.

“Oh and also!” Magne added, still standing on the front door, “we got a surprise guest that we met downstairs!”

She dramatically stepped to the side, revealing a tiny old man with a cane, standing behind her.

“Gran Torino!” Tomura and Dabi yelled at the same time equally excited.

“Greetings you punks!” the old man answered with a laughed.

It turned out that the pro hero had just come back in town today, and that Magne and Toga had invited him for dinner. In the general enthusiasm, Dabi slowly made his way to the door to grab his coat.
“Hey!” Tomura called, walking up to him, “do you, uh do you … do you want to stay for dinner?”

The two boys were so busy smiling at each other, that they didn’t even hear Toga add “Do you want to stay forever?” before Magne swiftly kicked her in the knees.

After that everything happened really fast. Dabi agreed to stay for dinner, Toga decided that it was unfair to Jin and Spinner and decided to call them, Magne yelled that there wouldn’t be enough food for everyone, Gran Torino explained that he knew a very good pasta receipt that could feed a legion, Jin and Spinner were told to bring some condiment with them, and soon, everyone was in the kitchen, following Gran Torino’s orders as if they were about to walk on a battlefield. The kitchen surprisingly survived this, even though Gran Torino flew around quite a bit.

It was fun to get the gang back together so soon, and Gran Torino added some spice to their night when he began to talk about previous fights to Dabi’s request. Similarly to the first time, Dabi was listening to the tales with wide eyes and smile, only this time, it no longer bothered Tomura. Quite the contrary in fact. Jin and Spinner were listening as well, completely entranced by this tiny old man that they were meeting for the first time.

There was a moment of panic at the table when Gran Torino asked what had happened to Tomura’s nose. Although no one knew about Gran Torino’s connection with All Might and Tomura’s past (except Dabi in some extent), Magne and Toga knew that he was a friend of Tomura’s parent, and they had to kick Spinner under the table as he was already starting to talk about their crazy fight. They all collectively improved a clumsy lie. Gran Torino clearly didn’t buy it but he smiled and didn’t press the matter.

At some point in the evening, Gran Torino and Tomura found themselves alone in the kitchen, to clean some plates.

“Toshinori says hi, by the way,” Gran Torino says in a relatively low voice, so he wouldn’t be heard the rest of the group back in the living room.

Tomura slowly raised his eyes from the plate he was washing to look at the old man next to him.

“He says he’s sorry he hasn’t visited in a while,” Gran Torino continued, “but I’ve told him everything about you, about your studies and your art and he is very proud.”
“Oh …” Tomura only said. Even years later, as a young adult, hearing that All Might was proud of him filled him with a childish glee.

“I don’t mind you know,” Tomura continued, “I- I know he’s busy, I understand. Tell him next time.”

“I did tell him. He knows that you’re not angry. But he wants you to know that you’re very important to him and that he thinks about a lot even though he can’t see you as much as he used too.”

“Okay,” Tomura smiled, before adding, “But, is he okay? I watch him quite a lot on TV, and I know most people can’t notice, but I feel like he gets a little … slower.”

Gran Torino put down the plate he had finished to watch and didn’t look at Tomura right away.

“He’s getting old you. He has been fighting for so long … so it’s wearing off. The power your grandmother gave to him.”

One For All. A name he had only heard whispered for many years by the adults and heroes surrounding him until All Might finally explained it to him. Tomura didn’t get the whole logistics behind it, and he knew that All Might hadn’t mentioned the more technical or the more secret aspects of the quirks, but he knew enough to grasp the connection between All Might and his Grandmother and while villains had been targeting his family for years. That’s all he needed to know really.

“Is he going to be okay?”

“Toshinori is going to be fine if he’s careful. But All Might’ days are numbered.”

“Is this … Is this why he came to UA? To find a successor?”

Gran Torino chuckled, leaning against the wall.
“You’re a smart boy. I can’t say too much about this, but I can tell you one thing. He met a quite … interesting kid. A kid who kind of reminds me of you in many ways. With enough help, he could be a great Symbol of Peace.”

The news made Tomura smile. He came to lean to the wall next to Gran Torino. From where they were, they could see the rest of the group in what seemed to be a very hot debate. The old man’s eyes focused on Dabi.

“So you’re friend with this kid now? The last time I saw you, I thought they the two of you were going to murder each other.”

“Yeah I thought so too back then,” Tomura’s said with a smile, “but turns out that when he’s not being a jerk, he’s actually pretty great.”

“Oh is he now?” Gran Torino asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah … I don’t know how to explain it but … But he makes me feel good somehow. When I’m with him, I feel relaxed and safe. Everything is always so complicated, but he makes things simple and pure and clean. I don’t know … I don’t have to fake or hide anything with him. I don’t have to pretend that I get. I just get it. I don’t really know how to explain it.”

Gran Torino had listened to the whole thing with a knowing smile.

“Well, I’m going to let you figure this out then.”

When they had been told to bring condiments to the dinner, Jin and Spinner had somehow understood that it included back of beer. So, as often, everyone was a little tipsy when it was time to say goodbye. (Of course, the fact that Gran Torino had actually gone up to his place to get them a bottle of old scotch didn’t help. But Magne had really instated that scotch was disgusting and when Gran Torino had a point to make he had a point to make).

Tomura assumed that it was the reason why Dabi had managed to leave his coat behind. A little tipsy himself, he decided to run after him as Toga and Magne were cleaning the glasses.

“Hey! Dabi! Hey!”
Dabi was still in the staircase, alone, as Jin and Spinner had left a little before him to get the van. He stopped in his tracks, looking with wide eyes as Tomura who was running down the stairs to meet him.

“I’m not going to accuse you of leaving it to me on purpose,” Tomura laughed, handing the coat to him, “but you’re on thin fucking ice, buddy.”

For a moment, Dabi considered the coat that Tomura was holding between four fingers, before laughing as well.

“Man… I’m so sorry, I … thank you I guess …”

As he finished his sentence, Dabi grabbed the coat and pulled forward. But his movement was a little too strong and sudden for Tomura’s slightly intoxicated mind. So when Dabi pulled on his coat, he pulled Tomura with it. The actions followed one another quickly. Tomura who was a few steps above Dabi lurched forward; Dabi seeing the boy arrive on him opened his arms to catch him, and in a weird instinct, he attempted to avoid their fall by shifting toward the wall.

And before any of them knew it, Tomura was pinned between Dabi and the wall, only the coat between them. It was a weird sensation really, to feel the cold cement wall against his back, and Dabi’s hot body against his torso. As close as they were, the taller man was really towering right now, and he had to lift his head to look at him in the eyes. Dabi still had arms wrapped around the boy’s tiny waist; he was surprised to see how perfectly Tomura fitted in his arm.

The whole thing had happened so fast, and their minds were still so clouded by beer and scotch, that for a full five seconds, none of them react. They just … look at it each other, letting their mind wander.

*He caught me. He really caught me just like that, wow that was so easy for him. His mind is so fast and his arms are so strong … he didn’t hesitate for a second. He saw me falling and he caught. He caught and now he’s holding me.*

*Wow … Honestly, I can’t wait for this whole attraction thing to wear off, it’s gonna make my life a lot easier. Because right now … right now I can’t focus on anything but his fucking beautiful face like holy shit … Like his hair is so soft and his eyes so bright … Hand his mouth so close … so fucking close I …*
“YO FIREBOY MOVE YOUR ASS WE’RE WAITING FOR YOU DOWNSTAIRS WITH THE …”

Spinner immediately went silent, when he realized what he had walked on, although he barely caught a glimpse of it as the two young mean immediately jumped a foot away for each other.

“O-or you guys could just finish what you were doing, I don’t …”

But Dabi was already walking to him and Tomura was already climbing the stairs.

“SO YEAH THANK YOU FOR THE COAT MOPEHEAD!”

“HA HA! NO PROBLEM SEE YOU TOMORROW”

Now that their minds were back on normal speed, it was easy to blame this little awkward moment on the alcohol and on Tomura’s clumsiness. The night ended with the two of them, trying to mentally laugh about what just happened, and Spinner screaming internally.

* 

After that day, something weird happened. Tomura and Dabi began to hang out.

Like actually hang out, no longer by accident, with others or under contrived circumstances. They were not even trying to make excuses; they just wanted to see each other. Because they were friends. And they were allowed to hang out as much as they wanted. And they really wanted to. This made Tomura realized one of the reasons he had been so afraid to consider Dabi a friend. He had been afraid of rejection. The scary thing was not to have Dabi as a friend, but that Dabi wouldn’t want him as a friend back. That he would laugh at him for even thinking that. But it wasn’t what happened.

They would go the cinema, to an art or a music shop, to the museum, to disc stores or sometime they would just crash at either Tomura’s or Dabi’s place and do nothing. Tomura had taken the habit of going to Jin and Dabi to paint. Since their night on the balcony, he had been thinking about the view quite a bit and he was now allowed to show up with all of his material, sit on the small
balcony and paint. Jin and Dabi were thrilled about this as they finally got to see some of Tomura’s
painting. One day, Dabi spent the whole afternoon with Tomura, just watching him paint and draw
for four hours. He did nothing else but watch, without getting bored once. Tomura didn’t mind so
they did that quite a bit.

They just kept enjoying each others company for weeks, blissfully unaware of a certain group chat
that had been created behind their back, which might or might not have been called The Fucking
Shoujo Bullshit™ and may or may not be mostly filled Spinner’s screaming, Toga’s key smash,
Jin’s second-hand embarrassment and Magne’s attempt to calm everyone down.

And in the middle of all of this, the shows at the bar kept going. The band’s night became busier
and busier, as Dabi was so productive that the audience never got the chance to get bored with their
songs. It was just crazy to Tomura how different each song sounded, while still having something
very distinctively … Dabi about them.

He also really liked that he got to see his Dad’s at least once a week now. But on one particular
night around mid-July, he noticed a little shift in his parents’ attitude. It wasn’t like they had a fight
or anything; on the contrary, they seemed quite complicit, whispering things to each other while
looking at the kids. But it wasn’t their loving mood either, it was more of like when he was a child
and they had bought the Christmas present they knew he wanted and were really proud of
themselves. And he wasn’t the only one who noticed.

“Hey Tomura,” Jin whispered in his ear at their usual table, “what’s up with your dads? They're in
a weird mood today …”

“I don’t know,” Tomura confessed in an equally low voice, “I think … I think they’re about to tell
us something …”

Tomura was right. By the end of the night, after they were finished to clean up the room, Sato and
Kurogiri stood side by side, hands on each other’s shoulders, like some fucking royal couple or
something and cleared their throats.

“Alright,” Kurogiri began, “so, kids, we might have a bit of a big news. Sato and I actually have a
friend who works in the music industry. His name is Giran.”

The announcement was received with a surprised exclamation from everyone, even from Tomura
himself. After some reflexion though, he did remember this guy. Giran had started as a regular
customer at the bar, very fond of the food, the drinks, and the two owners. Back then, Tomura was
only a teenager, seventeen at most, but he remembered the guy’s round glasses and missing front
tooth very well. He and his fathers had become quite close, even seeing each other out of the bar. Tomura liked the guy, with his cheeky smile and smell of cigarettes. He remembered having a vague notion of him working in the music industry, but back then he really wasn’t interested in that, so he had completely suppressed the memory. He also remembered that Giran had a son, who was only six or seven back then, an angry little shit. What was the brat’s name again? Ketchup? Mayonnaise? Something dumb like that …

“But how come you never talked to us about this guy?” Dabi asked the two men.

“Because we hadn’t seen him in years!” Sato answered, “Four years ago he moved to America for his jobs, and we didn’t think we would ever see him again. But two days ago he messaged to tell that he was back in the country for good and that he couldn’t wait to see us again!”

“So naturally,” Kurogiri continued, “We talked to him about you!”

After that, everyone stayed silent for a minute. Suddenly, everything could get big really fast; it seemed almost too convenient, too perfect. Tomura’s eyes immediately search Dabi’s. The young man face was an odd mix of terror, excitation, and confusion.

“But … so … what did you say?” he asked with an almost choked voice, “What did he say?”

“About you, not much. We wanted to wait for your consent about the whole thing. We just said that we had a great band playing at our place right now, that we really like and very popular with the crowd. We said that we’d give him more detail later. And he sounded … intrigued, to say the least …”

Another silent as everyone took everything in.

“I know that this is all very sudden,” Sato said with calm paternal voice, “So we’ll wait for your green light to move things forward. But … but we also don’t want to get your hopes too high. Giran is a good friend, but he doesn’t owe us anything. So there’s no guaranty or anything. But if you all agree … I think it’s worth a shot.”

All eyes turned toward Dabi. When came to the band, he was the one making all of the big decisions. After a short hesitation, a small smile grew on the young’s man face.
“I think it’s worth a shot too.”

*

And just like that, within a few days, the whole thing was arranged. Giran was to visit them on the 18th of July, probably with his son, who, it turned out, was named Mustard. At the beginning of his career, Giran used to be a manager for small, breaking bands. With time, he had moved to other things, but he had said many times to Sato and Kurogiri that he really missed that period of his life, and he wished he could go back to this. So everyone had their finger crossed and the band practiced hard.

And just like that, it was the evening of the 17th. Magne and Toga had decided to have a relaxing self-care night to be ready for tomorrow and had planned to spend the night making masks and doing their nails. Tomura was sitting in the living room with them, playing on his console as they were braiding each other’s hair when he felt his phone vibrating in his pocket, and saw the name Da BitchTM on the screen.

It was surprising because Dabi and him had never called each other before, only texted. Without even really knowing why, Tomura felt like he had to take the call in a more private place, and walked to his room. Once the door was closed behind him, he picked up.

“Dabi? Are you all right?”

On the other end, Dabi’s voice was a bit too shaky for Tomura’s liking.

“Hey … I … yeah I’m fine I just, uh. I wanted to …”

There was a few seconds of silence, after which Dabi let out a dry laugh and continued.

“Uuuuuuuh … actually no … no, I’m not … I’m not all right now I … I mean I’m fine, I’m not in danger or anything I just … I don’t know. Jin is working tonight so I’m alone in the flat and I just … I keep thinking about tomorrow and about this guy who’s gonna …”

“Hey, hey, hey, it’s okay,” Tomura said with his most calming voice, “It’s fine it’s all good. Just try to breathe a little. Take a long, slow breath in through your nose … good… hold your breath to
the count of three … and now exhale slowly through pursed lips, while you relax your muscles.”

On the other end, Dabi did as he was told. On he got a little calmer he spoke again.

“I’m sorry … I’m sorry I just keep thinking about what could happen tomorrow.”

“Try to think about something else, relax, read a book or watch a movie …”

“Hey … Tomura?”

“Yes?”

“Tomura, could you come over? Please?”

The request sent an electrifying shiver through Tomura’s entire body. His heart was suddenly very loud in his chest, and his face was on fire. He had never heard Dabi so completely vulnerable before.

“I just don’t want to be alone … I want to see you.”

A few weeks ago, Tomura would have protested, would have been confused. He would have asked why him? Why not Toga, Magne or Spinner? But tonight, with everything that had happened before, it made sense. It made sense that Dabi would want to see him. Because we’re friends. And that’s what friends do. It also probably explained why Tomura was feeling so compelled to run to Dabi at this exact instant.

“Okay, I’m on my way,” he without an ounce of hesitation in his voice.

“I’m sorry I …”

“Don’t be silly. It’s really not that late. Besides I want to see you too.”
Tomura was ready to go within seconds. He yelled to Toga and Magne that he was going to see Dabi, and left so quickly that he didn’t even see the girls grab their phone to log into a certain group chat.

* 

Once Tomura got there, the first minutes were a little awkward. Dabi was visibly embarrassed that he had asked Tomura to come in the first place, and Tomura was suddenly a little anxious, thinking about how they were alone, just the two of them. He didn’t really know why, because they had alone, just the two of them in each other’s flats thousands of time by now, but this time felt different for some reason.

But eventually, they were both so happy to see each other that the awkwardness dissipated pretty quickly. They sat on the couch facing each other, each of their back against each armrest. With their respective stupidly long legs, it was a bit awkward at first, but they made it work.

“It was good the, uh, breathing stuff that you made do on the phone,” Dabi said, “it really helped.”

“Oh, yeah, it’s something that’s pretty useful in case of panic attack. You got variants depending on people but it’s the most basic one.”

“Do you have them often?”

“Less and less, thankfully. But as a kid, and even as a teenager, it was pretty bad.”

They talked like that for a while. Dabi talked about tomorrow’s show, what he meant for the band, what it meant for him and how afraid he was to screw this up. Tomura had to remind him about the hundreds of people who came to listen to him every week.

“Besides,” Tomura continued, “It’s absolutely natural to be nervous about this. If anything it shows how much you care about this. And people see that you know? They see the guys who just do it because it’s fun and it gets him laid, and they see the guys who just … put their heart and soul into this. Guys like you Dabi.”

Tomura was very pleased to see that he had made Dabi smile. He was an odd change, to be the one to calm a friend for once, to be the one with the reassuring words and gentle smile. It felt
really good to see Dabi slowly come back to him, with his crooked smile, lame jokes, and playful eyes. *God his eyes … I can’t believe that I ever thought that they were cold or lifeless … They’re … they’re oceans …*

Eventually, he managed to take Dabi’s mind away from tomorrow’s performance. They talked about everything and nothing at the same time, of things that made them laugh. When the conversation went back to music, Dabi got the opportunity to ask Tomura something he had wanted to ask for a while.

“Hey, do you have a favorite song? I know that you keep saying that you don’t know that much about music, but I feel like we kind of all have that one song that really resonates with us. Either because of what it says, because of some history we have with the song or just because it got a really good beat. Do you have one?”

Tomura blushed slightly. As a matter of fact, he did have a favorite song, one that he was listening again and again. One that he was listening for the sounds, for the music, for the lyrics and for what it made him feel in general.

“Take On Me.”

“What?”

“Take On Me, by A-ha. That’s my favorite song.”

Dabi considered him for while. There was no mockery or disdain in his eyes, just surprise.

“Really? I mean don’t get me wrong, it’s a nice song and all, and it has got a nice cheesy feel to it but as a favorite song? Do you have any personal memories attached to it?”

“Not really, no. That’s not why I like it at least. It’s just … I don’t know it really speaks to me? The story it’s… it’s the simplest, dumbest thing in the world. But it speaks to me it’s … it’s a guy who’s in love with someone and doesn’t know how to express it.”

He didn’t really know why, but a hot wave ran through Dabi’s body at this exact moment, and he was suddenly very aware of the fact that his feet and Tomura’s were kind of rubbing against each other in their current position.
“That’s so simple …” Tomura continued, “But you know me. You know I’m not the best at expressing myself. So the story of this guy who just can’t say what he wants to say is kind of relatable. It’s all in the lyrics … “Talking away, I don’t know what I’m to say, ‘ll say it anyway” He's trying to get to know them but he's babbling, he's not saying what he wants to say. Even the chorus “Take on me, take me on, cause I’ll be gone in a day or two” he can't tell them how he feels so he's hoping that they’ll be the one to do so, to take him on because he feels like if they don't, it won't go anywhere and he'll just end up giving up. But it’s not hopeless! I mean the music and beats are punchy and happy and beautiful! It’s not a sad ballade! My favorite line is “shying away, I’ll be coming for you anyway” because it’s a promise you know? Even if it’s scary and complete he made up his mind, “it’s not better to be safe than sorry” you know? Their shying away from each other, pushing each other away, but he’s not giving up on them! Because he loves them!”

Tomura suddenly stopped himself; slamming his hand against his mouth, face red. He didn’t know what had got into him, why he had gotten carried away like this … What am I saying? It's just a song! A dumb cheesy 80’s song made by Norwegian band!!!

“Yeah, anyway, so what’s your favorite song?” Tomura asked in a not so subtle attempt to shift the focus.

Dabi had listened to the whole thing without saying a word or without shifting anything in his face. His knee kind of bumped into Tomura’s and a shiver ran through his body. He looked back at the blue-haired boy who was hiding his face between his hands peeking from behind. Dabi thought about his question for barely five seconds before answering.

“Holy shit …” he whispered with a smile, “I think it’s Take On Me.”

“W-what?” Tomura asked, confused and slowly letting his hands fall on his knees, in fists, “What do you mean?”

“It’s my favorite song. You just … you just made it my favorite song!” he laughed shifting a little closer to Tomura.

When he realized that Dabi was completely sincere, Tomura laughed as well. But for the first time, he wasn’t hiding his smile behind his hands. He was laughing at loud, his head slightly thrown back, snorting, shoulders shaking, and the mess that was his light blue hair slowly falling in front of his face to match his bright red eyes. He playfully kicked Dabi’s leg a little, and Dabi softly kicked back, chuckling. But even though he had never felt more relaxed, there was a little panic in the back of his mind.
How long is it supposed to take for this attraction thing to wear off? How long does it last????? It’s been almost a month now!!! Why doesn’t it go away even though he’s my friend??? WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS????

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was just a big piece of propaganda for my favorite painter, my favorite scary movie and my favorite song, I have no regret.

And as we can see, even though Dabi is making a little more progress than Tomura (who is a FUCKING BRIC) they are both still very very dumb and gay and soft. But hey, at least they're officially friends now.

(I hope that Dabi's whole attraction and friendship was sort of clear! If not, I'll try to explain better later or even edit this part a little!)

Next chapter we get Giran and his Gun Son!!!!
Chapter Summary

In which Tomura and Dabi talk about space whales and Giran tries to be a good dad.

Chapter Notes

Hello! Sorry for the delay everyone! It's ever later that I thought it would be!

I also want to apologize because this chapter is a lot shorter than usual. As often, I had actually planned the chapter to a lot longer, but as I wrote I spent more time on things that I thought were only going to be details. So instead to add a whole other segment that might have ruined the rhythm, I chose to stop a little earlier, but at a point when it made sense. I hope it's still enjoyable!

I mentioned last time that I made a playlist for the story, and some of you might have noticed that it got a lot longer! It's because a lot of people have been recommending a lot of great songs on Tumblr, thank you guys so much! I invite all of you to do the same if you feel like it, either in the comments, on Tumblr as well!

IMPORTANT: I've learned on Monday that I have to retake two of my exams. Fortunately, it was two take-home assignment and their only flaw was to be under the number of characters required. The whole thing should not take too much time, but I want to do it as soon as possible to get read of it. So the update might get a little slower next week. We'll see how it goes, but I might have to go on another short 1week/2week break, I'm so sorry!

I'll try to give updates on Tumblr, so you can check or ask at theteapotofdoom (or just say hi!)

All of that being said, I hope that you still enjoy this chapter :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Giran hadn’t changed that much since the last time Sato and Kurogiri saw him. Hair a little greyer perhaps, and face a little thinner … But not much else really. The one they were curious about was the young Mustard who was probably thirteen by now, but he had stayed at home for the evening. I wise decision, as a dinner with three old men catching up, would have probably bored him to death. The couple didn’t mind, they would see him tomorrow for Giran had promised to take him to the bar to watch the band tomorrow night.
It was getting late, but the three men had no intention of leaving each other yet. They had finished their dinner by now and were just chatting around the table, surrounded by empty plates and glass that kept filling up. Giran was allowed to smoke, but only because he was sitting by the open window. Both Kurogiri and Sato had felt that it was a good idea to invite Giran for dinner at their flat, just the three of them before he met the kids the next day. This way they could have their own little catch up; how was America? How was the bar? How was Mustard? How was Tomura? All the good stuff. This way, they could directly talk business tomorrow.

*Business* ... But that was still the question in the air. Were they really going to talk business tomorrow? Even right now, with smiles on their lips, laughs in their throat and wine in their bellies, Sato and Kurogiri were both very aware that Giran hadn’t promised them anything. Even though everything was planned, and even though that Giran had agreed to listen to the band, knowing very well what they hoped from him, he had said nothing more about the whole thing than: “I’m interested in checking them out.” But as far they knew, it was possible that nothing would come from it. Even if Giran decided that he like the band, it didn’t mean he was going to help them or become their manager, which was what everyone secretly hoped for.

But surprisingly, it was Giran himself you brought up the subject.

“You know,” he said lighting another cigarette, “I feel like I know the two of you pretty well by now, and you don’t strike me as the type who would suddenly welcome a band in their bar. Especially a band influenced by Stain.”

“Well, they’re really becoming their own thing! Creating their own path, you know?” Kurogiri explained, realizing that he was re-using the words his son had used to convince him a few months earlier.

“It was Tomura who introduced them to you right?” Giran asked, almost as if he was reading Kurogiri’s mind.

“It was,” Sato answered, “But you know how much we care about our business, we wouldn’t have accepted if we didn’t think they were good! I know we’re not really specialists, but you’ll see, the nights they’re on stage are always the most crowded nights!”

Giran rubbed his badly shaved chin for a while. In the years he had known the couple, they had only seemed to be only interested in his work because they were interested in him as a person and as a friend. They had never asked him any favor in this field, never used his contacts and his position in any way. Also, they were the two god damn biggest sweethearts he had ever met, which meant that they truly believed in what they were saying. They truly believed in these guys. And just for that, Giran wanted to believe too.
The truth was that Giran was tired. Tired of this business that could be so cruel, nasty and unforgiving. Moving to America was supposed to be a promotion, and it had been in almost every ways. He had a better post, a better paycheck, but had started to hate his job. He was in the high ups, the one taking big decisions for big stars, and he had gradually become disgusted with the level of cynicism surrounding him. Eventually, it had been too much too take, and after a few years he had chosen to go back to Japan with a lesser post, but at least he felt a little better about himself. A little.

But now, for the first time in a while, he was genuinely curious and intrigued about something.

“IT must quite a special band if Tomura went out of his way to help them,” he said with a smile, “I don’t remember the kid being particularly into music. Or people for that matter. Actually didn’t he use to hate Stain?”

“He still does,” Sato smiled back, “but like you guessed, these guys are pretty darn special.”

“I know it might not mean much to you who has seen so many band rise and fall,” Kurogiri continued, “and it’s true that Sato, Tomura and I don’t know nearly as much as you about this business. But we know this. When they sing, the people sing with them. When they play, the people dance. And when they’re on stage, there is a fire burning in them.”

Kurogiri didn’t add sometimes the fire burned quite literally.

Giran listened to them with attention. A fire, uh? This is what Giran had been looking for for so long. The burning passion he had felt at his beginnings and that had grown colder and colder with time, slowly extinguished by time. He remembered he had some hope when Stain became famous. The guy had changed the game, done and said things no one had ever done or said before. But if his fire was still burning hard, he had paradoxically extinguished a lot of potential young talent, because today, every emerging young musician aspired to be like him, following him closely without a step back. Giran no longer counted his deceptions, the number of young talent he had believed in, thinking they were the one, only for his hopes to be crushed. So … could this band be the one?

Giran didn’t want to promise anything, didn’t to get his hopes and everyone else’s too high, but he couldn’t deny that they had picked his interest.

“So, they have the burning passion uh?” he asked with a distract smile, spinning the wine in his
“They sure do!” Sato exclaimed, leaning against his boyfriend, a shit eating grin on his face “Wait until you see them tomorrow! When they’re on stage, they’re having the time of their life, like they never felt before!”

“Do they?”

“Yes I swear, it’s the truth. And they all it all to …”

“Okay, you’re just quoting Dirty Dancing now.”

When he woke up on the morning of the morning of 18th, Tomura thought one more time that it had been a great idea to go to Dabi the night before. I wasn’t as anything spectacular or life-changing had happened. They just talked and laugh for a very long time, until Dabi was tired and relaxed enough to go to sleep. Tomura had left the flat feeling that the young men was much more relaxed, and he’ll manage to have some good sleep. He wasn’t really sure of how he had help, but he was glad that he did. Besides, it had been a nice evening for him too. It’s funny how it no longer feels weird to think of a talk alone with Dabi as a nice evening. In fact, the two are kind of synonyms now. Tomura realized just how glad he was that he was friend with Dabi. He would never have expected the black-haired to make such a positive change in his life. He remembered the frying pan that Dabi kept on his wall like a trophy, a memory of their adventure in the dark. The first night something good had ever happened between them. Still lying in his bed, Tomura smiled to himself. I wonder he feels the same way … I wonder he thinks the same thing waking up this morning … I wonder if he’s thinking about me right now.

This last thought suddenly seemed to put him out of a trance, as if it was a signal that his sleepy mind had drifted too far. He rubbed his eyes and lightly slapped his cheeks to wake up properly and got out of bed.

As he walked in the kitchen still in pajamas, he was welcomed by a strange vision. The two girls were already sitting at the table, with no food nor drink in front of them, both anxiously staring at the wall with empty eyes. Once the initial confusion had passed, it didn’t take long for Tomura to realize that the stress that the two girls had been so efficiently casting away these past few days was finally catching up to them this morning. These two were such constant balls of sunshine and positivity that it could sometimes be easy to forget that they had they’re own fears and insecurities, and even if Dabi was the driving force behind the band, they were very invested in it as well. This
was a big day for them too.

Without a word, Tomura proceeded to prepare the best breakfast he possibly could with his limited cooking abilities. He made tea, coffee, milk, toasts, and pancakes, even bacon, and eggs. He uses everything he had both as condiments and skills. He progressively put the food on the table and the nice smell slowly brought the girls back to life. When they realized what was happening around them, Tomura couldn’t dodge the hug attack that fell upon him.

“Such a wholesome pure boy!” Toga practically cried.

They ate their food in a much lighter mood.

“Sooollllooo …” Toga said at some point, trying to sound complete detached, “You want to see Dabi last night?”

Magne didn’t say a thing, but she smirked and looked at Tomura from behind her sunglasses.

“Oh, yeah, yeah I did,” Tomura answered, feeling like he was missing something.

“How was it?”

“It was nice. He was pretty nervous so I helped him to relax.”

“And how did you help him to relax exac-” Toga couldn’t finish her sentence because, for some reason, Magne suddenly kicked Toga under the table.

“We … we just don’t, I don’t know. What do you want to know exactly?”

“Nothing,” Magne intervened, “because it’s none of our business. Right Toga?”

“Yeah, yeah ..” the young pouted, beating in her toast in defeat.
Tomura just stood there with a pancake on his fork; feeling like something was going way over his head right now.

The whole day went by like the blink of an eye, and soon, everyone was meeting by Spinner’s van to charge up the material. Tomura’s eyes immediately search for Dabi’s, and he was relieved to see that Dabi still looked relatively relaxed. Maybe not as much as when he had left him last night, but he definitely wasn’t nearly as bad as when he had called. Tomura subtly tried to get along with him for a moment as everyone else was counting their stuff.

“Hey, uh, so … How are you doing?” he asked in a low

“Well, I’ve been better but I’ve also definitely been worst so …yeah.”

“Did you get any sleep last night?”

“Surprisingly I did. I’ll even say that I slept pretty well thanks to me. Uuuuuh, you know, thanks to the talk and the advice and stuff.”

Tomura blinked at him slightly confused but didn’t press the matter. Dabi thought that he was an idiot for even feeling the need to fix his sentence. It wasn’t like Tomura would hear the accidental innuendo. It wasn’t like Tomura was seeing him that way …

But he didn’t get to dwell on this for too long because the van was ready to go, and suddenly, the primal fear of driving in this shitty van with Spinner behind the wheel took over whatever else it was that he was feeling right now.

During the ride, everyone tried to get Tomura to talk about this Giran guy. Was he scary? Was he mean?

“I wouldn’t worry about him too much,” Tomura confessed as they parked, “It’s actually his son that’s terrifying. When he was six he threatened with a gun. A fake one but still …”
The gang was still sharing a worried look as they walked inside. Giran was already there, chilling with the dads by the bar. This first meeting actually went kind of smoothly, with not too many awkward silences. Giran could have a sort of scary aura, looking more like a gangster than a manager, but he had a warm and charming personality to make up for it. Tomura was actually kind of glad to see him again after all this time, and Giran was apparently glad to see him too.

“You’ve got nice broad shoulders now!” the man commented, “That’s good! Still the same hair though …”

Fortunately, he quickly shifted his attention to the band. Tomura was grateful because he really didn’t need Giran to remind him of his most awkward teenage years, especially not in front of the gang. Especially not in front of Dabi.

As their conversation kept going, Tomura’s attention shifted for a while, and he noticed a silhouette in the corner. The place wasn’t really full at this hour, so it was hard to miss the lonely boy sitting by a table behind them. He definitely had grown but Tomura recognized the light brown hair and jet black eyes, and above all, the pouty face that was now focused on a smartphone’s screen. Tomura walked toward him.

“What’s up Ketchup?”

Mustard raised his eyes and sighed.

“Years later that’s still not funny, chapstick.”

Mustard and Tomura had never been friends, but they didn’t hate each other either. They used to see each other quite a lot a few years ago because of the friendship between their parents, but the almost 10 years age gap and their mutual bad tempers had prevented them to get close. But Tomura couldn’t deny that it was kind of nice to see the brat again. He hadn’t missed him or anything, but it was bringing back some memories. He took a chair next to the boy and shamelessly looked at his phone.

“Whatchu playing at?”

“Hey! None of your business!” Mustard protested, hiding the screen, “And don’t lean on me like that! Oh my God, you’re still so fucking dumb!”
Tomura couldn’t suppress a smile. It had always been kind of fun to annoy Mustard when they were younger, as the boy would always end up chasing him screaming in the apartment, often with a toy gun. When he had seen him sitting with his phone, Tomura had feared that the teenage was no too cool for tantrums. He was glad to see that it wasn’t the case.

“Ah, I see that the two how you are having a nice reunion,” Giran said, turning his attention toward the screaming, “Come on Mustard, come to say hi!”

The teenager let out a loud “urgh”, before angrily glaring at Tomura and dragging his feet to the bar.

“Don’t be shy son, say hi …”

“Hi …” Mustard muttered hands in his pockets.

“Excuse him, he can be a little grumpy sometimes.”

Toga was no longer listening to Giran. She swiftly leaned toward a suddenly very confused Mustard, both of her hands on her cheeks.

“Awwwww! He is so cute! It’s okay little dude! We’re not going to bite! Look, Magne, he’s so cute!”

“Sh-shut up!!” Mustard stuttered, “I’m not cute okay???”

“You sure are little buddy,” Magne said with a smile on her face, “And it’s okay, I know it’s always kind of annoying and scary to meet a lot of new people at the same time, especially when they’re not the same age. But don’t be fooled, boy. We’re all kind of crazy and immature here, especially the boys. So you’re probably going to be the coolest guy at our table tonight.”

In front of Giran’s amazed yes, Mustard unexpectedly seemed to relax quite a bit. He took his hands out of his pockets and raised his eyes off the ground to look at the two smiling girls next to him. His cheeks were still a little pink, but his face was far from the crimson coloring him only a few seconds okay.
“Uuuuh … Okay? I guess. If you say so.”

Toga then proceeded to compliment him on his phone case which made the boy smile, and he began to explain where he got it. Giran perplexed, turn toward the rest of the group, as his son was now in a deep conversation with Toga and Magne.

“What just happened?” the man asked.

“My dear Giran,” Sato said, smiling smugly and leaning on the bar, “You’ve just witnessed the most wonderful and pure and powerful magic in the god damn rotten world. The magic of Toga and Magne.”

“Pretty crazy, right?” Dabi added, “Their specialty is to help and adopt angry little dudes with big emotions and fluffy ha-”

He couldn’t finish his sentence, because he received Tomura’s elbow between his ribs. But he glanced to the side and saw that, even though he was trying to hide it behind his hair, Tomura was smiling with this wide goofy smile that Dabi had learned to appreciate so much. *Worth it.*

And then it was time for the show. Dabi, Toga, and Magne were clearly still a little nervous, but nearly not as much as they could have been. Their little conversation with Giran had really helped, making him more human and approachable, he was no longer some faceless judge, but a real person. And a pretty cool one. As they took their positions on stage, the three of them exchanged a fierce smile, a smile that translated how much these three trusted each other, and how far they wanted to go together. *We got this.* And they began to play.

Tomura, Jin, and Spinner were at their usual table, joined by Mustard. If the teenager was pretty relaxed, calmly enjoying the show and swaying to the rhythm, the three young men were now way more nervous about the whole thing then the actual musician. They were practically holding on to each other, their gaze shifting from the stage to Giran, occasionally passing by Mustard. If the boy seemed to genuinely enjoy the performance, this father’s expression was unreadable. He seemed completely neutral and controlled, especially next to Sato and Kurogiri who were exchanging nervous little glanced behind the bar.

“He doesn’t react …” Tomura whispered nervously, eyes on Giran, “Spinner, Jin, why doesn’t he
“It’s okay dudes, calm down,” Spinner whispered with an even more nervous voice, “it’s fine they got this! Right?”

“Ye-yeah! They totally got this- **Everything is screwed we’re done**, shit no sorry I’m fine!”

“Relax, Jin!” Spinner continued practically shaking now, “And remember guys, whatever happens, tonight, we still love them!”

“Wh- But of fucking course we still love them!!!” Tomura practically yelled in the lizard hear with a regrettably shaking voice, “What the fuck is that supposed to mean???”

“I just meant that …”

“You guys really need to chill,” Mustard suddenly said, turning toward them with half annoyed and half amused eyes, “It’s fine. Your friends are doing great.”

The three young mean exchanged a confused look, and leaned over the table toward Mustard in perfect sync and began to bombard him with questions. How did he know? Could he read his father's expressions? Did he know his father’s taste? Did he have any influence on his father’s decision? Spinner proposed to bribe him but was stopped by Jin and Tomura. The teenager didn’t answer immediately. He just turned toward his father at the bar, and for a moment, his eyes became surprisingly soft. Loving, even.

“I don’t think that you guys would be able to understand … I can’t really describe it’s just … Yeah. It's all good.”

Mustard smiled to himself, ignoring the confused trio next to him.

*

*Fire*. Fire on stage.
Giran had never been tempted by the lights of fame, by putting himself forward and glory. It didn’t mean that he didn’t care about success and profit, quite the contrary, but he knew since the beginning of his career he wasn’t one of those who shined and burned, one of those who entranced and inspire. He didn’t mind really, he didn’t feel any bitterness toward the people who had this rare and peculiar power. Because years ago, Giran had discovered his own gift: he was a fire keeper, a fire nurturer even. He looked for sparks, and kept them burning, made them bigger, brighter, tamed them sometimes if necessary. And God, he loved it. He loved it so much. To be able to find the rare glow amongst thousand, and to make grow … There was nothing more gratifying, more satisfying than to see a spark finally catch fire, to witness a flame reach his perfect intensity before sharing it with the world. That was his job, his passion, to nurture the musical world with new talents. It wasn’t much, but it meant the world to him.

But these past few years, Giran had got cold. The sparks had become rare and the sparks even rarer. He had kept trying for so long, searching, scratching, hunting even for the one band, the one artist that would light the fire again … Many time he had believed, many time he had thought he had found the one. But what he had thought were flames had ended up being nothing more than artificial light with no heat nor warmth. So eventually he had tried to move on. To use his talent in different spheres, even a different country, praying to find something, anything that would light the fire in his heart once more. It had been a failure. His post in America had prevented him from looking closely, to get invested and passionate again. And this detachment had affected his son.

Mustard never said anything about it, never mentioned it, but in America, he had closed himself to the world. And Giran had been terrified that he son would lose his fire too, that their relationship would lose their fire too … That was when he made his final call when he had decided to go back home, even if it meant a lower post. As soon as their plane had landed, Mustard had smiled again, and just for that, Giran knew he had made the good decision.

How course, Giran hadn’t expected his problem to disappear as soon as he came back to Japan. In fact, by now, he no longer expected his problems to disappear at all. Just having his son smile again enough. And yet something had happened. Two of his oldest friend had suddenly invented to listen to a bad. A bunch of kids, friends of their son, a boy who had never in life seemed interested in music. And just like that, a sparked had light itself in is mind. It was small and fugitive, but enough to intrigue.

And here war, sitting at the bar, watching at the brightest, warmest flame he had seen in years. It wasn’t that big, it was even kind of small … but it was such so … intense. Three young people on stage, and an entire room singing and dancing with them. The three of them were moving, sweating but also smiling and laughing … just … having the time of their life. The girl at the drums was rather small, but seemed huge by the way she moved and danced while maintaining a perfect rhythm, smiling with all of her teeth out, eyes almost glowing with fun and ecstasy. The other girl at the bass, seemed so fluid and flexible, as she herself had become part of the sound’s wave coming from her instrument, her bright red hair creating halo around her. And there was the young man, the one singing with guitar … The smile on his face was almost the one of a child, filled with wonder and pleasure, with hint mischief and cockiness that assured the audience that he had never
felt more alive. And his eyes … his eyes that he had first thought blue like ice, turned out to be as blue as the hottest flame, as intense and burning as the purest fire … Right now, there was one thing that Giran knew for sure. These kids were not going to stop. No matter what he said to them, they would never stop trying, never stop playing, never stop writing, never stop singing … They will never stop burning.

*

The show went as well as every other night. The trio had soon forgotten their own anxiety, taken over by the ecstasy of the stage and of the performance. However, during their breaks, they still made a point to not get too close to Giran, going directly to the table. Progressively, the band’s energy dissipated the stress of the three guys waiting for them. Mustard was a little more talkative now, especially with Toga and Magne, and he didn’t hesitate to express his admiration and how good he found them, which he immediately regretted because the three musicians trapped in him in a sweaty hug.

“Ewwwww!!! I take it back!!! Get away, you idiots!!!”

“He loves us …” Magne whispered, pretending to wipe a tear, “what a good boy.”

As the girls kept hugging the poor boy, Dabi stepped away to slide right next to Tomura on the bench seat. He was still extremely sweaty, even now that he had taken his coat off, but Tomura didn’t mind.

“I know you’re gonna hit me again,” Dabi said leaning on him, “but I won’t be silenced! This boy is a mini you …”

“He really isn’t!” Tomura scoffed, resisting the urge to elbow Dabi again because he didn’t want to prove him right, “I actually think that he is a lot like you! He is rude and doesn’t miss a chance to insult any of us …”

“Hey! Both are true …” Spinner added, looking at the boy was back in a deep conversation with the girls on some cat game app, too busy to listen to them, “He kind share qualities from the two you … That’s kind of funny!”

“That’s really funny!” Jin agreed. At this point, he already had three beers, so he couldn’t stop himself when he added, “Mustard could be Dabi and Tomura’s secret love child!”
The declaration was followed by silence during which gave Jin a murderous gaze and the young slapped his hand against his mouth. The two girls and the teenager hadn’t heard a thing, but Tomura and Dabi sure had. For a moment, they had no reactions as they were still processing what Jin had just said. It didn’t come up to their brain right away. For a few seconds, it just meant that Mustard was a weird mix between them, this fusion they had laughed about in the café … but then a word stuck. Lovechild. And the penny dropped.

As they simultaneously turned toward each other, they both realized how close they were standing, Dabi being practically leaned against Tomura’s smaller frame. They hadn’t properly realized before how comfortable with each other … physically. Tomura was no longer bothered by Dabi’s sweat and his smell of nicotine, in fact, it had become quite comforting. Dabi didn’t mind if Tomura’s dry skin was rubbing against his, he even kind of enjoy this unusual feeling. But suddenly, this weird word had been thrown between them. Lovechild. Their lovechild. Their … love … child … Their … Love? Love? Their love????

Within seconds, Dabi had jumped from the bench seat, practically grabbing Toga and Magne by their collars, rambling about going back on stage to keep the energy going. They both complained that they didn’t have the dink to drink, but they were dragged on stage nonetheless. Tomura sank a little on his sit, covering his face with his hands to hide the blush growing on his pale skin. Oh, my God … He was so shocked and repulsed. That’s no wonder, he was already so disgusted when we joked about a fusion between the two of us … so an actual child …. He was so sickened when he got up. Who can blame him? Who would want to have a child with … me? A love child … With both of his hands covering his face, he missed the mute yet agitated conversation between Jin and Spinner, with active hands and a silent over articulation. Mustard looked at the whole thing with wide eyes, thinking that these grown-ups were super fucking weird.

* *

And just like that, the night was over. The last clients were leaving the place, the usual fans came to congratulate the trio, and everyone came to help them clean the place. As the gang was putting the material away, Giran stood by the bar, face still unreadable to everyone else. Well, everyone but Mustard. The young boy smiled to himself. The night had been a lot less lame than expected, the band was actually pretty fucking good, he would never admit it but he was kind of glad to see Tomura again, and the rest of this weird gang wasn’t so bad. But the most important about this evening was his father’s face right now. His was … for the lack of a better word, shook. And want it came to music; it was almost better than his was father being happy.

Eventually, everything was packed. They were by the bar, in complete silence, everyone waiting for Giran to speak. Now that the adrenaline of the night was being washed off, the anxiety slowly made his way in everyone’s heart. Eventually, Giran spoke up. First, he tried to stay coherent, vaguely detached and professional, speaking in very technical terms without giving a clear opinion. Eventually, he began to compliment and praise Dabi’s voice and writing, Toga’s energy, and
Magne’s rhythm. As he went on and on, he was less and less composed, and more and more excited and alive. He talked about them, about their presence, their energy and eventually, about their fire.

“You kids … You’ve some fire burning in you! Something that I haven’t seen in a very long time … And I just can’t let it go to waste can I?”

This final declaration was welcomed was a loud relieved cheer from everyone. Kurogiri and Sato jumped in each other’s arms, Dabi had to lean on Magne for emotional support, and Toga grabbed on to the closest thing, which happened to be Tomura.

“I’ll see how I can help you,” Giran continued rubbing his chin, “I could give you some contact, some names to call … But I’ve got to look into properly … With the wrong person, things can end quickly … You need someone that’s reliable.”

“Why not you?” Mustard suddenly said.

The boy had been silent for a while, so everyone turned toward him.

“Me?” Giran asked with wide eyes, “what do you mean?”

“You say that they need someone reliable. Someone they can trust, someone who believes in them. What they need is a manager. Why can’t you be that manger?”

Everyone stayed silent. Mustard had said very calmly and very matter of factly what everyone had been thinking since the beginning of the evening. No one dared to say a word, as if the first sound might break Giran’s deep reflexion and ruin everything within seconds. The man was still looking at his son with confused, but curious eyes. Eventually, he said: “Well I … I don’t know. You all know that I’m not really a manager anymore.”

“But you used to be,” Mustard commented, “And you loved it. And you miss it. And you were good at it.”

There was yet another silence, during which everyone was holding their breath. Tomura glanced at Dabi who was a little tense once again.
“I don’t know,” Giran finally said, “I … Can I think about it? For a night? I’ll call you tomorrow.”

On their way home, Dabi was the one to drive the van because Spinner had had one too many drinks. He fact Tomura and him seemed to be the only still relatively sobers which gave the boy the privilege of the passage seat, while the rest of the gang was stumbling in the back. Though Giran had not given them a clear answer, it was unmistakably positive one. Even if he refused to be their manager, he was going to help them. As a celebration, everyone in the back was singing loudly and completely off-key. Dabi smiled, thinking that the two girls yelling were actually his back up singers. Unbelievable.

He glanced at Tomura right next to him, who was smiling and moving his head to the rhythm (if you could call that a rhythm). It was a nice sight, but he caught himself regretting that Tomura wasn’t trying to sing with, as he was still hoping to hear his voice someday. Another time perhaps … Maybe with fewer people, when he would be more comfortable … Tomura’s eyes met his and the boy’s smile grown even wider. Fuck.

“How are you feeling?” Tomura asked.

“Well … Pretty good? I guess? I don’t know. I mean I know everything went well and everything, but I’ll be completely calm when we hear from him tomorrow. You know him, what do you think?”

“I think he’s going to say yes,” Tomura said after a moment of reflexion, “I think … I think you helped reconnect with something, and it’d be foolish of him to let go. And trust me, Giran is not a foolish man. Even his son said he should do it.”

‘Hey, yeah, that’s right! I should be the kid an ice-cream next time I see him.”

Tomura snorted and shoved his long legs on the dashboard. Dabi vaguely Spinner drunken protest in the background, but Tomura looked really comfy like this so he didn’t stop him.
Giran and Mustard were sitting in the car, on their way home. For once, the boy wasn’t looking at his voice, which Giran appreciated. He was very pleased by his son’s behavior tonight, despite a rocky start he had been especially smiling and open. It sent a nice warmth in Giran’s chest. *What a night … What a fucking night …*

“Hey …” Giran asked his son softly, “do you really think that I should do it?”

“What I think,” Mustard answered looking at him, “is that you want to do it. So yeah, you should.”

“It’s just …” Giran hesitated, eyes fixed on the road, “Manager is … I haven’t done that in years …”

“Yeah, but you didn’t stop because you no longer liked it or became bad at it. You stopped because you couldn’t find the good flame anymore. And looking at your face the whole evening, I think you’ve found it.”

Giran stayed silent for a while, taking everything in. He kept forgetting how much his son had grown, and how easy it was for him to read him. Mustard was still young when Giran had lost his fire, and when they had moved to America. He had not expected his son to understand what was happening back then but now realized that he had been a lot more aware of the situation then what Giran had given him credits for.

“Hey Mustard … I’m sorry it took us so long to move back here.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m sorry that it took me so long to realize that things were not working that … that you were so unhappy … I’m sorry I wasn’t careful enough …”

“Oh …” Mustard was actually taken back by this declaration. His father and he hadn’t really talked much about this whole thing. Back in America, their relationship had gotten quite tense and complicated. For a while, Mustard was not sure that just going back to Japan would help to fix anything, but tonight … well, tonight things had been quite nice. *More than fine actually.*

“You know,” Mustard continued, “It’s true that I wasn’t super happy back there, but I think it was also because I could tell that you weren’t happy either. I would come home, and you would look so
miserable and tired … I didn’t know how to deal with so … Yeah. I know I made things difficult too, so I’m sorry too.”

They drove in silence for a while, but they were both smiling. The air in the car felt a lot lighter.

“You’re right,” Giran finally admitted, “I want to do it. I want to help them and make them grow … I want to be their manager. I wanna keep their fire burning. I’m going to do it!”

“There you go, dad!” Mustard answered actually laughing, “I mean, you could have told them before leaving …”

“Is it too late to made a dramatic drift?”

“Yeah. They’re all gone now. But you should call them as soon as we get home!”

As they park in front of their building, Giran added: “You know, meeting these kids is the second best opportunity we would have missed if we had stayed in America!”

“Really? What’s the first one?”

“Well, you wouldn’t have been able to apply to UA next year.”

Mustard was surprised that his father even remembered about this. When he was a child, he never shut up about this school, it was his dream, what he wanted the most … When they had moved to America he had pretended that he no longer cared about it. But he did, he really did. He wanted to become a hero more than anything.

“I love you, dad.”

“I love you too, son.”
The news of Giran answered had dropped around 4 am that night. And for Tomura, it had quite literally dropped because it was announced by Toga jumping on his bed and dropping on him in the middle of the night. He pretended to be mad, but it didn’t last long. How could he be made when Toga and Magne were both so happy?

By sunrise, it had been decided that all should have a celebratory dinner the very same night with everyone: the gang, Giran, Mustard, Kurogiri, Sato … Only this time, Magne insisted that they would not have dinner at the bar but at their apartment, because she could no longer bear having Sato and Kurogiri having to take care of everything and do all the work. Tomura suspected that she just really wanted to organize a party and cook for everyone. Magne loved receiving, and she had always said that if the band was not working or if they were to separate, she would become a party planner.

Everyone was put in contribution to the organization, for grocery and decoration shopping, and for the actual preparation before the guest arrived. It was a miracle that the whole worked out, considering that besides Magne, no one knew what they were doing. But apparently, the power of Magne was enough to keep the ship from sinking. God bless big sis Magne.

Although it was bigger than Jin and Dabi’s, the flat was not that spacious with ten people inside. They knew that they would not all fit around the table, so Magne had decided to prepare tapas easy to eat, and to have everyone sit in the leaving room around the coffee table. And even though for a while, everything had seemed to work against them, everything went perfectly.

Giran had been welcomed with cheers and acclamations, and Spinner had carried Mustard on his back all the way to the living room. Now, they were all around the table, eating pasta, drinking wine and talking business.

“Okay so,” Giran began a glass of wine in his hand that kind of made him look like a mobster, “you already have a very clear identity, with very distinct looks and personality so that’s good. But there is still a few things we need to define. It’s gonna sound like a bad word to you but … music is still a business. To move forward you need to brand your self in some extent.”

They talked like that for a while, everyone else taking part in the conversation as well. Giran explained that they needed some logo or at least distinct aesthetic to begin with, something they could put on eventual album covers and merchandise, or on their YouTube channel. They also needed to be more present on social media like Instagram and Twitter. Toga who basically a little Instagram gremlin, squealed at the prospect and it was decided that she would be the one in charge of social media. They also needed a professional website where people could contact them, which Spinner volunteered to create. Tomura listened to the whole thing with wide eyes. He had no idea that there was so much work behind a band.
“You should also turn more elaborate video clips, but I can help you with that. The three of you have a lot of charisma so you should show yourself more. Now, about the name …”

“Yeah about that …” Dabi interrupted. He seemed to hesitate for a second, turning toward Toga and Magne who both encouraged him with a nod. So he kept going.

“As you know our name the Hero Killers but … we were thinking about changing it.”

“Really?” Giran asked, “It was a reference to Stain’s song right? I’m going to be honest, changing it might be a good thing, and it’s better to make to make your name your own.”

“Yeah, that’s what we thought” Dabi agreed, “A while ago a very wise person told me that I should overcome my master … so I’m doing just that.”

He quickly glanced at Tomura right next to him. The boy had turned had turned crimson and suddenly seemed very interested in his empty glass. *God that’s so fucking cute …*

“Besides,” Dabi continued, “I also chose this name when I was eighteen. I was a different person back then. A lot angrier and a lot … well edgier. Back then I hated heroes. But now I’ve met a lot of cool heroes, like your neighbor Gran Torino! I don’t hate them so much anymore. Well, not all of them. And also I … okay not to sound corny and shit, but I feel like I think of heroes differently? Heroes are not the guys in spandex saving lives. They’re also in our everyday life doing small things. Sometimes being a hero is just helping a lady crossing the street, sometimes it’s picking up the trash, sometimes its …”

He actually seemed to hesitate for a second. He swiftly glanced at Tomura before adding: “Sometimes it’s agreeing to meet your friend at night just because he needed to see you.”

Tomura was stunted, and for a few minutes, he was incapable of hearing what was happening around him. He felt his heart beat a little faster. Did Dabi just…? Called him…? Compared him to …? *Oh my God, don’t be fucking stupid! Not everything is about you. He just took an example amongst thousands! You’re not special Tomura! So calm down and stop thinking you’re so god damn important. Do you think he cares that much? Do you think you matter??* Tomura was suddenly brought back to the present by a hand on his wrist. For a moment, he just stared at the half purple hand covered in stitches softly holding him, and his eyes slowly made their way up the arm and shoulder, to Dabi’s smiling face. As soon as he saw that he had successfully brought Tomura back from wherever his anxious mind had taken him, Dabi slowly let go of him and went
back to the conversation with Giran. The whole had lost no longer than three seconds. Just three seconds of contact under the coffee table, away from everyone eyes, three seconds only to bring his attention back to the present.

And yet, the moment Dabi’s skin was no longer on his, Tomura’s mind a screamed.

*Please don’t go.*

*Please don’t stop.*

*Don’t stop touching me.*

*Bring Me The Heroes.* That was the new name that the trio had come up with. The conversation was back on track with everyone, including Sato and Kurogiri giving their opinions, and discussing the future of the band. Giran was all fired up, talking about someplace that like received some debuting bands and that he could call. Tomura was listening without a word, still feeling Dabi’s hands on his wrist. He brought me back. Just like that. This kind of … drifting happened to Tomura a lot when he was a child. And when he still lived with his biological father. He was just so lonely back then, so isolated. There was no one to stop him when his mind spiraled in self-doubt and self-hatred when he blamed himself for things that he had no control on. So for a long time, it was normal to him. He didn’t like it, but he just assumed that it was the way things were supposed to be.

Of course, many things changed when Kurogiri adopted him, but these old habits die-hard. It had often taken Kurogiri entire hours, even longer to bring his son back to him when he felt his presence fade away, and when his eyes turned glassy. He wasn’t easy for people to reach him when went there. And yet Dabi did. In an instant. He had found him, grabbed him and brought him back.

He looked around the room, at the table and the people surrounding it. His friends, his family … Yeah. This was good. He couldn’t believe how much how within a few years. He remembered high school, when spent days, sometimes weeks without leaving his room, avoiding people, terrified of any contact with strangers. He remembered sitting in a classroom surrounded by thirty people, and filling like he was the only boy on earth. That was a weird thing really … How could he feel so lonely with so many people around? Even today, no matter how much had changed, no matter how happy he was, he still felt like something was missing, like something was stopping him from really connecting with people. He loved his parents, he loved Magne and Toga, he loved
his new friends, but right now, as they were joking and chatting together, he still felt like he didn’t quite get it. The joke. He didn’t stop him from being the happiest he had ever been, and to enjoy life with those that loved him in return. But sometimes, he wondered how it would to really click with another person. *What would that person even be like?*

“Hey Tomura,” Dabi called.

Tomura blinked a few times and realized that the entire table was looking at him. *Shit! Nice fucking job Tomura they probably asked you something …* Dabi smiled at him, and it made him feel a little better.

“You weren’t listening were you?”

“N-no, sorry I checked out for a second …”

“That’s okay. We were talking about creating some image and art for the band, some logos and album covers and … well, actually the girls and I were talking and we want you to do it.”

Tomura looked around the table in confusion. It had to be a joke, Dabi was messing with him because he wasn’t listening to them, he was testing him … *They wouldn’t trust me with something like that … No way …*

“Wait really?” he asked anyway.

“Yeah really!” Dabi confirmed with a smile, “we all adore your work! It would be great if you could do something for us this summer! This way in a few years when you will be super famous and in great demand, we will the first one to have some of your original work!”

Seeing that Tomura wasn’t responding, Dabi suddenly panicked a little.

“I-I mean unless you don’t want too that’s fine!”

“No!” Tomura immediately answered a little panicked as well, “No, yes absolutely I would love too! I mean we would have to talk about it for uh … what … kind of design to you … You know
what I mean. But yes absolutely!”

A relieved smile grew on both of the young men faces. They kind of nodded and smiled at each other for a few minutes, Tomura twisting his hair between his fingers while Dabi was awkwardly rubbing the back his neck. The whole scene lasted so long that Spinner literally had to leave the room.

A little later, Magne, Toga, Jin, Spinner, and Mustard were all in the kitchen to get ice-cream for everyone and to wash some dishes, when Mustard suddenly blurted out with no warning: “So what’s the deal with Dabi and Tomura? Are they dating or some shit?”

There was a second of silence, after which Jin suddenly dropped the box of pistachio he was holding, walked in the corner of the room and stood there in total silence, his head against the wall. Spinner had to go get him, rubbing his shoulder nicely. Mustard looked at the whole thing, confused, while Magne and Toga were chuckling.

“Excuse us Mustard,” Magne said, “It’s just that it’s a little … complicated. At the moment.”

“How is it complicated?” Mustard asked, “do they like each other or not?”

“I wish it was that easy …” Magne sighed, “But honestly looked at this mess …”

Mustard followed Magne’s eyes. Back in the living room, he witnessed the most awkward and clumsy thing he had ever seen, as Dabi was trying to clean off some sauce on Tomura’s face with his own napkins. It was a symphony of embarrassed giggles and messy gesture, the two them two flustered to function properly.

“Oh, I see … They’re just dumb.”

“Yes. Very.”
It was now close to midnight, but no one was even thinking about leaving. They were doing a blind test, seeing which one of them could guess the most song in the shortest amongst of time and Mustard smiled looking at all of these dumb adult and young adult yelling at each other with conviction. Sato and Kurogiri had decided to team up even though the game was supposed to be individual. Everyone was yelling at them, but Sato, offended, had practically jumped on Kurogiri’s laps declaiming that they would get in the way of their love. Kurogiri was a blushing mess, but he did nothing to push his boyfriend off his laps.

But Mustard had noticed that these two weren’t the only alliance. To everyone’s surprised, Tomura was actually winning so far, despite his almost non-existent musical culture, and Dabi was actually way behind. The reason was that since the beginning of the game, the black-haired man was whispering every single answer directly into the boys hears. The two weren’t even discreet about it, as Dabi completely leaned on Tomura every time he whispered into his hear, and Tomura was giggling like an idiot as Dabi’s breath tickle his neck. *Oh my fucking god ... someone’s got to do something ...

“Oh wow, would you look at that!” Mustard suddenly yelled above everyone else, “you guys are out of wine!!! Holy shit, someone better go buy some!”

Everyone looked at him with wide. Mustard cringed a little, realizing that he could have been subtler. Fortunately, Magne seemed to read his mind because she grabbed the empty bottle on the table and let out a dramatic gasp.

“You’re right! Gosh darn it, that’s my fault, I put a half of a bottle in my sauce recipe. You’re right Mustard, someone better go buy some!”

“Do we really need some more?” Giran asked, completely oblivious to what was happening right now.

“Well, I understand that you won’t drink more because you have to drive, but what about us leaving here, uh?”

“Yeah,” said Jin was slowly catching on, “Think about the girls Giran! So, who volunteers to go out? There’s a small supermarket still open near the park!”

“Well Magne and I can’t go,” Toga added with a complicit smile, “We’re girls after all and it’s quite late! We should send boys instead!”
“Oh! I can just warp you there if you want too!” Kurogiri proposed, almost everything.

“No no no no no!” Spinner panicked, “Don’t bother, it’s not that far, besides it shouldn’t be any of our elders who do the work! Some of us youngsters should go instead”

“Tomura you should go,” Magne suddenly said, “we’re the hosts after all, and if Toga and I can’t do it, you should represent us!”

“Oh really? Uh, well okay I guess …”

“But you shouldn’t go alone, it’s late!” Toga added, “When don’t you take Dabi with you? He’s scary looking, people won’t bother you!”

“Yeah, you can be a lot scarier than me you now,” Dabi commented, offended, “But, uh yeah alright let’s go then …”

“You don’t have to go it’s fine,” Tomura said already getting up.

“Nah, it’s all good I don’t mind. I could use some fresh air.”

When they reach the door, Dabi whispered with a smile: “And besides, I kind of like behind your official bodyguard …”

Tomura blushed profusely, and the color looked so nice on him that Dabi couldn’t help but be proud that he was the one responsible for this magic. As soon as they closed the door behind them, Mustard and the gang all high-fived each other in front of a very confused Giran. Sato and Kurogiri were too busy making out to notice anything.

By the end of July, the air was still warm this late at night. The street almost completely deserted, giving Dabi and Tomura the impression of being last two people on earth. They didn’t mind.
Their made their way to the shop without any incident, talking and joking all the way, and bought two bottles of vines. On their way back, they decided to make a little detour. The city was crossed by a river, and they wanted to pass by the dorks before going home. The city lights were not as numerous and as bright in this part of town, and it was easier to see the stars reflect in the water. As they walked in silence, Tomura glanced at Dabi who was looking up with an almost childlike smile at the stars above his head. In this semi-obscurity, the lights of the sky reflected in his bright blue. Tomura was completely mesmerized. They’re shining so bright … It’s like he has an entire galaxy in his eyes … Maybe he has. He remembered the night the power had gone out, and they had found themselves in darkness, with Dabi’s soft blue flames for the only source of light. Somehow, everything seemed to back to that night, as if something had begun back there. What it was, Tomura didn’t know. He only knew that he cherished it.

“Hey look!” Dabi said lifting his finger to the sky, “You see this very bright their over there? That’s part of the golden whale constellation.”

“Oh is it?” Tomura said with a smile, actually knowing the constellation pretty well and smelling the bullshit from miles away, “Wow, can you tell me more about it?”

“It came from a Greek myth,” Dabi continued, totally oblivious to the situation and genuinely thinking that he was impressing Tomura with his fake star knowledge, “It’s about two ladies who fall in love and run away from their respective kingdom to live on the back of a whale. They love each other so much that it gave the whale wings and they all flew to the sky where they lived happily ever after.”

“Nice,” Tomura nodded, “That should be the solution to all of our problems. Get your favorite person; get yourself a while to live on, and boom. Space.”

“Who would you take on the whale?” Dabi asked almost against his own will.

“Well, uh …I honestly have no idea” Tomura lied, “… Who would you take?”

“Oh geez … With who I live on a false space whale forever? I don’t know either,” Dabi lied in return.

During the silence that followed, Tomura thought that a space whale carrying space lesbians would make a pretty cool painting. Maybe he would make it the band’s first album cover. Their first album cover. Is this really happening they really want me to do it? Surely they have better options.
“Hey, uh Dabi you …” Tomura began hesitantly, “You know, you don’t have to choose me as an artist just because we’re friends. You should fin real one, who’s talented...”

Dabi abruptly turned toward him and firmly posed his hands on Tomura’s shoulders, almost dropping the bag containing the wine in the process. He looked directly into his eyes, with such intensity that for a moment, Tomura felt like his own body was covered with Dabi’s blue flames.

“Tomura, listen carefully. I cannot stress enough how much I want you to be the one make art for us. Album, posters, merchandise, logo … I want to see your art everywhere, I want to see next to everything we produce because it makes proud and happy. Because you are talented and sensitive, your brilliant and gifted, your hard-working and creative. I want your art because you’re my favorite artist. You remember when you asked who was my favorite artist at the museum? It’s you. You’re my favorite.”

Dabi let go of Tomura’s shoulders, and the young men actually took a few steps in light shock, as if listening to this had had some physical impact on him. Dabi was surprised by his own reaction. He hadn’t planned to say any of this, almost as if he had spoken with another voice. He had just heard Tomura only even beginning to talk badly about himself, and suddenly something had snapped in him, and the rest had happened automatically. He meant every single one of his words, and he really wanted Tomura to accept all of this, so he didn’t regret what he just did. But right now, the boy looked so stunned and confused, that he feared that he had been a little too impulsive.

“Just …” Dabi began, suddenly stumbling on his words, “Just don’t forget that okay? Don’t forget how great you are.”

“O-okay … I’ll … I’ll try,” Tomura promised, moving back next to Dabi. “I want to do it you know? I just want to be sure that you guys have every chance on your side.”

They start walking again. The silence was a little too heavy, so Tomura commented: “Bring Me Heroes, uh? I like it a lot better than the Hero Killers.”

“Of course you do,” Dabi smiled, “But I like it better too. Besides, I wouldn’t have been able to invite Gran Torino to any of our shows without feeling terribly ashamed. Also, I learned that Mustard was applying for UA next year, so it would have made things awkward with our new manager.”

“Hey, I wanted to ask you something. You don’t have to answer or anything but …”
“Just shoot, mopehead.”

“Did you ever want to be a hero? It almost feels weird to ask because I honestly can’t picture you doing anything other than music. But you got a pretty cool and flashy quirk.”

“Oh … Uh. I… I actually considered it for a while. But, uh … my father kind of ruined that for me.”

Dabi stopped and looked at the river for a while. Tomura stopped right next to him. It was obvious that Dabi didn’t intend to develop this but he didn’t have too. These past few months, Tomura had been thinking about quite a lot, and he had been thinking about what he knew of him. Dabi had never said anything clear about his father, besides that he was an abusive scum and that he wanted Dabi to succeed him. But he also knew that Dabi used to hate heroes and that he still hated some. And like Tomura had mentioned, a fire quick like Dabi’s seemed pretty fitting to a hero career, so it would make sense that it was what his father was training him for. And will of these … Tomura could even theorize a little further. He didn’t know Dabi’s last name because Dabi was actually keeping him from everyone. But he a knew that powerful fire quirk tended to be passed down from parent to children.

And Tomura knew one fire hero that now in jail for violence against his own family.

Tomura hated this man. He had never met him, never cared for him, even before his arrest, but for months now he hated him. He hated him for he had done to his family, to his son. He hated him for what he had done this past few. There had been some occasion these past few months during which Tomura had looked at Dabi’s scar, the ones covering his body, the one still hurting sometimes, and had then quietly grabbed a stone, a napkin, or piece of trash, and had disintegrated it imagining he was holding the man’s head. This is what you get. This is what you get for hurting Dabi like this. For pushing him to detach himself from the world, as he still does sometimes. Fuck you. Fuck you. And you know what? You failed. You failed because your son is not happy and safe, doing what he loves the most and living his best life. I hope you see him from your cell. I hope you see blossoming in a better man than you will ever be? But it was Dabi’s business and only his own. Tomura had decided long ago that he wouldn’t say anything until Dabi actually brought it up. Whenever he was ready. If he was ever ready.

Dabi’s gaze went from the river to Tomura’s eyes. His crooked smile was back on his face.

“And what about you? Ever wanted to be a hero?”
“Hardy har har.”

But Dabi kept looking at Tomura with confused eyes. Tomura was now confused as well. *Wait … He can’t possibly … He is not serious is he?*

“Dabi …” Tomura whispered in utter disbelief, “have you seen … do you even know what my quirk is?”

“Of course, I know! Why are you even asking?” Dabi had said this almost laughing, and Tomura felt a weird anger overcome him. He didn’t want to get angry, he really didn’t want to. But what Dabi was saying was so stupid. He clenched his fist inside of his pocket. Did he have any idea what it was like? Never being able to touch anything fully? To constantly be alert and careful every single second of his god damn life?

“It’s called fucking **decay**, dumbass. I don’t know if you remember, but it’s this little thing where I destroy everything that I touch with five fingers. A little inconvenient to grab orphans don’t you think?”

“I don’t know …” Dabi said, actually fucking shrugging, “I think it’s great rescue quirk.”

…………………………………. a what?

Tomura didn’t react. He just stared at Dabi in silence, processing what he had just said to him. He was not really angry anymore. Just … speechless. *A rescue quirk? Me rescuing people? How would that even work? Is he mocking again? What does he mean? How …*

“I mean, it’s a great quirk in case of earthquakes or any kind of disaster,” Dabi continued. He saw that Tomura couldn’t process what he had just said to him. Dabi hated that it wasn’t surprised by this reaction. He hated that somehow he knew, that not once in his life Tomura had considered his quirk good, helpful and beautiful, that he surely had lived his entire life thinking that his hands were twisted and ugly. From his birth, he had been told that he and he quirk were too much to handle, too complicated to handle. Surely Tomura had no idea how gentle his quirk, his hands really were. So Dabi was going to tell him. “Within seconds, you free and help thousands of people trapped under debris. You would be like the rescue hero Thirteen! Their quirk is actually very précised! I mean don’t get me wrong, I super happy that you didn’t want to become a hero, because I would never have met you otherwise. And you probably never would have created all of these beautiful things either. But I think it’s fun to think about all the ways you could use it! Like you could also help people in fires by creating a way out. You could open locked
doors, you could also help the environment by destroying trash .”

And Dabi kept going. He kept listing all of the wonderful, beautiful things that Tomura’s quirk was capable of, things that Tomura had never heard in anyone’s mouth, things he never would think about … It was almost too much too difficult to process. His entire system of belief was crumbling upon itself, things he had taken for facts, for universal truth since he was a child were suddenly thrown to the trash. He was both terrifying and exciting, but above all bewildering. It was like he was floating in space, there as no up, no down, nothing made sense anymore. Nothing made sense but Dabi, and the words coming out of his mouth. Beautiful … Helpful … Good … Rescue … Hero. They all contrasted perfectly with other words told by another voice, a voice he hadn’t heard and decades and would fortunately never hear again. But he could still hear the words sometimes. But … not this time. This time … right here … right now … he only heard Dabi.

Until he stopped.

Tomura didn’t understand immediately what was happening. Dabi’s eyes suddenly got terribly worried as he stared at Tomura. He stepped a little closer and anxiously whispered: “Shit I’m … I’m so sorry Tomura … Are you okay? What did I do wrong?”

This is only then that Tomura noticed the tear abundantly rolling down his cheek. He hadn’t even realized he was crying, but it didn’t feel awful and terrified, like he had felt month ago at Dabi’s place, the night of his Stain break down. Crying in front of Dabi wasn’t so scary anymore. It was like his body understood his emotional state at the same time as him because it was only when he noticed the tears that he began to sob. The first one was so loud and shaky that Tomura realized that he had also been holding his respiration the entire time. He was now a crying sobbing mess, shaking from head to toes.

Dabi stepped even closer, only a few inches from the boy now. Somehow, he seemed to understand that he had said nothing, quite the contrary in fact and that the cause of this mess in front of him was rooted much deeper, so he relaxed a little.

“Hey … hey … it’s okay,” he whispered, “Please don’t cry …”

“I-I’m so sorry …” Tomura whispered back between sobs, “Gosh I don’t even know … I don’t even know why I’m crying right now … This is so dumb I’m so sorry … It’s just … I hated my quirk for so long you know? I’ve … I’ve hurt people with it.”

Very softly, very delicately, raised his hand toward Tomura’s face, almost as if he was trying to touch a butterfly. With gentle fingers, he grabbed the blue lock covering Tomura’s face and
tenderly put it behind his ear. The ruby eyes seemed almost phosphorescent in the darkness, shining with the tears still rolling down the boy’s cheeks.

“Do you even realize how amazing you are?” Dabi smiled, “The world kept telling you that your quirk bad and dangerous, that your hands were made to destroy. And to the world, you said fuck that, my hands are made to create. And after that you just kept painting and drawing, creating one beautiful after another … So many beautiful things Tomura.”

Before he even realized what he was doing, Tomura leaned forward and buried his still sobbing face in Dabi’s shoulder. He had acted on pure instinct, only listening to the was in his head that was telling that he needed to be as to Dabi as possible right now, or might not survive the night. Of course, once he grasped what he had done, his was reflex was to immediately step away, but he didn’t have the chance, because, in less than a second, Dabi had dropped the bottles, letting crash to ground, and had thrown his arms around Tomura to hold him as close to him as possible. It took the boy a moment, but he slowly raised his own arms to grab on to the back of Dabi’s coat with careful finger lifted. Dabi was warm and solid against him, and as Tomura’s face was buried in his coat the smell suddenly him of something. It reminded him this dream had had a few weeks ago, the one with his father’s hand grabbing his face until soft comforting shape had surrounded him, making him feel safe and protected. This … this was exactly how he felt right now. It was the exact same sensation as the one from his dream. Suddenly despite how good it felt to be in Dabi’s arms, Tomura felt extremely sad. Sad that they couldn’t stay like this forever, that was happening right now would surely never happen again, that he was just a result of Tomura’s weakness and Dabi’s kindness, and that soon, Tomura would have to let go. I can’t believe that he bears with me like. I can’t believe I ever thought that he was rude and obnoxious when he is so patient and so kind. God, he is so fucking kind. His father has put him through so much, he tried to make him so mean and broken, but he is so bright and caring. He had all of the reasons to give up on the world but he didn’t. How is someone like him friends with someone like me? How can he look at me and see all of these beautiful things?

Dabi was fascinated by how perfectly Tomura fitted into his arms, and it reminded of the stars accident a few weeks ago. He remembered how easy it had to catch Tomura in his arms, what an evidence it had been. And this time again it felt so right, to have his arms wrapped around his small waist, and his face buried in his fluffy hair, to feel the frail body shiver in his arms. But at the time ... Dabi also felt awfully powerless. What should I do? Please Tomura, tell me what I should do. What can I do to protect you from these demons that seem to torture you restlessly? How can I cast away the clouds always floating above your head? I know I can’t be a good friend right now, because I still have these stupid feelings, this stupid attraction that won’t go away. But as soon as I get rid of it, I promise I’ll be a better help, a better friend … I promise I’ll enough then.

They stayed like this for quite a long time, breathing into each other’s hair and clothes, with the noise of the water next to them, and the splashed vine and broken bottles at their feet. It was a bit of an odd situation, in which none of them wanted to let go, but they were both persuaded that the other wanted to. And here they were, two stupid boys, convinced that the other was only bearing with them when they wanted nothing more but to be together.
Eventually, they loosened their grips on each other, to actually look at each other’s face. Tomura dried his eyes with his sleeve and let out a few still choked chuckled, and Dabi couldn’t help but smile at the sight.

“God I’m such a mess …”

“So am I …” Dabi said softly, “Don’t let my bullshit fool you, I’m just better at faking it.”

Tomura laughed but suddenly heard a weird crunch as he moved his feet on the ground. They both look at the rest of bottles.

“There you see …” Dabi said, “Well R.I.P, I guess ..”

On their way home, Tomura wondered what it would be like to live on a space whale with Dabi. He looked at the young man, walking right next to him and he was suddenly reminded of what he had told him on the balcony the night of his birthday.

Someone is going to fall in love with you.

Tomura still didn’t really believe it, but back then, Dabi had said it with such conviction and confidence that it was hard not to trust him. It was hard for Tomura to ever consider someone liking him when he himself had never fallen in love with anyone. Eventually, it all came back to the joke, the damn joke that he wasn’t getting. Even admitting that he could find someone who liked emotional mess with danger hands and dry skin, it was hard to build a romantic relationship when you couldn’t connect with the person in question. But then … he thought about something else that Dabi had said on the balcony that night. Dabi had said how hard it for him to connect with people, that him too, wasn’t getting the joke. At this moment, a crazy, stupid self-indulgent thought crossed Tomura’s mind. He immediately cast it away, threw it to the trash out of shame … But it still stuck a little. Long enough for him to formulate him in his mind.

If someone is going to fall in love with me …

I guess it could be anyone …

So does that mean …
Does that mean that Dabi could fall in love with me?

Chapter End Notes

I'm posting this a little late, so I probably missed a lot of mistakes in the text, I'll try to fix them tomorrow!

I hope that the chapter didn't feel too short. What happened is that I spent a lot more time then I thought I would on Giran and his gun boy, so I decided I had to restructure quite a bit. I really liked writing these two though, so I thought that they were fun for you!

I feel like the first half hasn't much shigadabi and is actually much more plot oriented??? Holy shit I got a plot who knew ... I hope that it was still fun though, that the second part kind of made up for it.

Again, I'm just really bothered by how short it is ...

But!!!! I hope you still enjoyed this new chapter!!!

Next time, we get some ghost from the past >:D
Take Me Out Of Myself

Chapter Summary

In which Tomura fights for Dabi, Dabi understands, and they both spend the night outside.

Chapter Notes

Very big delay on this one I'm sorry!!! But I should mention that I'm moving out right now and have a bunch of things to do, so the updates will be a little less regular these next few weeks! Not really a break, just a more busy schedule, so the updates will have to fit around the schedule and not the other way around!

But be reassured! I cannot stress enough how much I love this story and how incredibly excited I am to share the rest with you!!! I will not stop until we reach the end of the story!!! I adore the boys, and I adore writing this!!!

This story has received so much love from everyone! Thank you all so much!!! :D

I hope that you enjoy the story ... And guess what? We get some progress.

Also, I'm about to expose myself as a fake LOV fan ... Compress's name is not SATO but SAKO ... I can't believe none of you all told me ... I am a disgrace ... (I'll edit the mistake soon!!!)

For years, Tomura hadn’t care much about summer holidays. To a lonely teen like him, there were no real differences between breaks and school days, as he spent them alone with his dads no matter what. He didn’t hate it by any means, he even remembered a few great years when Kurogiri and Sako would take breaks from the bar and the three of them would go on trips, but these vacations had become rarer and rarer. With the growing success of their place, it was more difficult for the couple to leave for too long. Besides, Tomura was growing up, and it wasn’t exactly the same anymore.

Tomura had never mind being alone. But for the first time in a long time … he really wasn’t. Quite the contrary in fact.

He would forever remember this summer as the busiest of his life, which wasn’t completely true considering that he would have many busier and crazier summers in the years to come. But this one
stood out the most because it was the first one, and because of that, everything that happened during that summer seemed breathtakingly new and beautiful.

With Giran as a manager, it implied a lot of workshop, rehearsals, and discussions. The band registered a demo, in a professional studio this time, and even though it wasn’t an album yet, it filled everyone with a sense of wonder and accomplishment. They also filmed a music video that Giran could then send to different disc companies and concert room. Everyone got themselves involved in the project one way or another. Tomura spend a lot of time with the band during these days, as he had become their … “official artist”? Yeah, that’s what he was at the moment. The designs weren’t needed yet, but Tomura still wanted to get some sketches in preparation and so he spent entire days with the band, just sitting in the back and drawing what the atmosphere of the room inspired him. Sometimes it was completely unrelated to what was actually around him, just some ideas based on the ambiance, things he heard and felt. Other times, a specific movement from Magne, something in Toga’s expression would be the source and he would just sketch his friends. Well, he sketched Toga and Magne.

Tomura bit his lips, twisting his pencil in his hair. Drawing Dabi turned out to be … quite difficult. He didn’t even know why. Maybe it was because he had sketched Toga and Magne many times before, but never Dabi. Yes, that’s got to be it! I’m just … I’m just not used to his features yet … That’s why I … That’s why I can’t … But there was still something wrong in this theory, because every time Tomura closed his eyes, he could still see Dabi’s face perfectly, from the length of his cheekbones to his number of lashes. So why was it so hard to put on paper? He began to nervously twist his pencil between his fingers. Across the room, Dabi was taking a long ship of water from his bottle, his head thrown back, and for a very long second, Tomura was hypnotized by the movements of his throat. When Dabi was done, he caught Tomura’s eyes and smiled, and Tomura almost decayed the pen in his hands.

When they weren’t working, they found things to do together; either by little groups but most of the time altogether. There even was a camping episode, that Tomura though he was gonna hate. And he did hate it. But he also loved it a little? He couldn’t forget the very uncomfortable environment, but also couldn’t forget the laughs by the warm blue fire lit by Dabi, Jin’s dumb scary stories, and that morning when toga put Spinner and his mattress to float on the lake.

But with all of this agitation, Dabi and Tomura didn’t found themselves alone together for a while. They had their own private moment within the group, but it wasn’t the same as being just the two of them. And because of that, they didn’t get the chance to talk some about what had happened on the docks. Maybe it was a good thing … maybe there was nothing to talk about … but Tomura couldn’t help but feel like he had missed something very important back then. I was like an itch, like the ones he usually had on his neck, but this time it was something a lot deeper. Something he couldn’t reach. And it was tortuously agonizing.

And before anyone knew it, it was mid-August. And by that time, Giran had some good news for everyone. He had gotten a call back from a concert room in the city, a pretty big place that liked to introduce new bands to the big stage. They usually had something like five bands per night, but it
was still a pretty good place to get spotted. So suddenly, everyone was packing the material to charge it in Spinner’s van.

“Could we not at least … repaint it a bit?” Dabi asked bringing a bunch of cable to the vehicle, “Or just fucking wash it, you know …”

“Why, are you ashamed to showing up with this beauty?” Spinner scoffed.

“As a matter of fact, I am.”

This was a particular trip because Giran, Mustard, Kurogiri, and Sako were to join them in their own car. Giran and Mustard for obvious reasons, and the couple, because they were dramatically lamenting that now that the band was famous they were going to forgot about them. At least that’s what Sako said, but everyone knew that they were just very excited about seeing them play on a big stage. So it really felt like a big deal.

The car trip was about as uncomfortable and as scary as usual for everyone, except for Dabi and Tomura who managed to sit right next to each other in the back. Being this close to the black-haired man, Tomura got a sample of the warm reassuring feeling that had overtaken him that night on the docks. But he felt a little guilty about it as if he was using the context and their environment to get a little bit of that closeness at Dabi’s expense. He was ashamed, but it also was too good to stop.

Sometimes, Tomura was still thinking about the first night he met Dabi. There was almost something ironic about their relationship, considering that Dabi had almost killed him then, and now … well, he was one of the people that Tomura trusted the most. If not the person he trusted the most. Not to say that he didn’t trust anyone else but it was a different feeling. He trusted people like his parents or Magne because it was logical, they were capable, pragmatic smart and organized and had helped him many times. It was a decision of the mind. But with Dabi, it was little different. He knew that he could trust him on many things, but there was something else. It was like … a feeling, more than a decision. Like an aura emitting from him, a warmth or a smell, something that was comforting and made Tomura feel safe. The feeling was illogical, and yet, even his terribly anxious mind couldn’t ruin it. It was … dreamlike. Yes, it’s like these things that happen in dreams and make no sense, but you don’t question them. Being with Dabi makes … sense. I guess if the other type of trust is a decision of the mind … This one is … it’s a … a decision from the …

Tomura’s brain suddenly shut down, forbidding him to finish his thought. A cold shiver ran through him, so he instinctively leaned a little closer to Dabi.
“Hey, you ok there?” Dabi asked, feeling the smaller body shiver against him.

“Uh? Oh hum, yeah …” Tomura stuttered reluctantly leaning away from the warmth.

“Nah, it’s cool … I just thought that you were falling asleep for a second.”

“Haha, no don’t worry I’m fine …” Tomura said looking down and fidgeting with one of his locks.

Dabi wasn’t actually worrying. In fact, maybe it would have been nice to have Tomura lying his head softly on him … like he trusted him … as if he was allowing himself to be vulnerable with Dabi because Dabi was capable of taking care of him. The blue-haired boy bit his lips a little, and Dabi licked his own. *God he so fucking cute right now … Why is he so fucking cute??? Why can’t I live???* Dabi ended up thinking about the night they first met. He couldn’t believe he had found him creepy looking at the time. How could he have been so blind? So stupid? Maybe if he had been smarter back then things would have been a little different now. If he had been kinder, softer … Maybe they would have wasted less time. Maybe they would have become friends sooner. Maybe by now, they’d be …

Dabi’s thoughts were interrupted as Spinner very suddenly hit the break, shaking everyone in the back. It was so brutal that Tomura’s light body suddenly flew against Dabi’s broad chest. Like in the stares of Tomura’s building, and like that time on the docks, Dabi’s reflex was to catch him. Except that this time, they were not drunk and not as emotional as the last two times, so when Tomura found himself practically on Dabi’s laps, they both had the full capacity to realize their position. And to blush terribly. In only lasted a second before Tomura jumped out of Dabi’s embrace, stuttering some confused apologies, but during that time, it had felt like everyone in the car had held their breath.

“Wow guys I’m sorry I really didn’t mean to break so brutally,” Spinner said. You know. Like a liar.

* After that, the drive continued without any incident. As they were looking for a place to park downtown, Toga let out a high-pitched scream and pointed at something through the front window, almost blinding Magne as she did. Outside on a huge plaza, was a pretty big funfair, with many booths, a bunch of roller coasters, some carousel, a haunted house and even a Ferris wheel. Everyone in the car let out a loud impressed gasp. 
“Okay, we have to go there!” Jin decided.

“Our show doesn’t end too late,” Magne said, “so we should go once it’s done.”

They met up with the rest of the group at the showplace, next to the bar. It was huge, a lot bigger than everyone had expected. A band was already playing on stage when they arrived, and the place was pretty full, with people going from tables to tables with drinks in their hands.

“Well, that’s a lot bigger than our bar for sure,” Kurogiri admitted.

“Well, well it’s uglier,” Sako added with a salty expression on his face.

“Nooooo!” Toga worried, “Don’t be sad! We’ll always like your place the best you know!”

Sako tried to stay mad but he couldn’t fool anyone. He was smiling against Kurogiri’s shoulder.

After that, a lot of things happened very quickly. Magne and Giran went to look for a member of the staff to announce their arrival, Spinner and Jin went to found a place to stock the material, Kurogiri, Sako, Mustard, and Toga went to have a look around and Dabi and Tomura were left behind at the bar. They exchanged an amused smile.

“Do you want to drink something?” Dabi asked, “I’ll pay.”

“What? No way, that’s your night! I’m not gonna let you pay!”

“Precisely! I’m gonna get paid tonight, but you’re here for free! Let me offer you something!”

They kept arguing like that for a surprisingly long time before Dabi literally took Tomura’s wallet away from him. When their drinks arrived, Tomura mumbled some empty complaints, but it only made Dabi smile. And when Dabi smiled Tomura smiled as well.

They chatted idly for a while, laughing about Sako’s pettiness, and anticipating the funfair outside. Although Dabi wouldn’t let anything out, Tomura could tell that there was some nervousness
growing in him, which was completely natural, so he tried to distract him and help him relax as best as he could. And even though none of them mentioned it, they were both acutely aware that he was the first time in a while that they were alone together in almost a month, and it felt good. There wasn’t any noticeable change in their conversation or their behavior; they were just more relaxed somehow. They both felt the same way. This. This is good. God, I’ve missed this.

And within seconds, everything was ruined.

“Oh my god. Dabi?”

They both turned around at the same time, but the first thing that Tomura caught was that Dabi suddenly turned extremely pale and that his eyes were now empty. So Tomura was already tense and worried when he looked at the person who had just spoken. It was a young woman of their age, dressed in an elegant cute dress. She was objectively very pretty with soft features, a very classic angelic type of beauty. The most noticeable thing though, was her long golden hair. Shinning golden hair. Like actually shining. That’s when Tomura realized.

Oh.
Oh!
Oh, shit shit shit. Fuck holy shit.

Dabi still hadn’t moved, he seemed completely petrified and Tomura’s heart began to race in panic. In the front of them, the girl was completely oblivious to their little breakdown and kept on smiling.

“Oh my God, it is you! I can’t believe it! Gosh, how long has it been?” she laughed. Her laugh was factually beautiful, but there was something about it that bothered Tomura.

“Uuuuh, it’s uh …” Dabi stuttered quite a bit, slowly coming back to himself, “I … don’t know … a while?”

Not long enough, Tomura wanted to add for him. But he stayed quiet, as the girl kept looking at them expectedly.

“So,” she continued with the same bright smile, “are you gonna introduced me or …?”
“Wh- Oh! Yeah, uh so, Tomura this is Sun. Sun this is my friend Tomura.”

Sun laughed and Tomura began to hate that sound. She walked toward them with the confidence of the people who are used to be loved by everyone.

“Oh, Dabi! You’re still so awkward! Hello, Tomura lovely to meet you! I’m Dabi’s old flame!” Beaming, she raised her hands to Tomura who showed no intention of taking it and only looked back at her with uninterested eyes. He could be wrong, but Tomura felt like his reaction made her flinch for half a second.

“Hey,” Tomura said flatly, “sorry I don’t shake hands. It’s because of my quirk you see.”

“Oh, you poor thing …” she said with a sorry voice that would have been convincing if Tomura hadn’t heard it a thousand times as a child during the month he spent in social services. “Well, Dabi how are you doing then? Getting better I hope?”

Dabi didn’t have much of a reaction, but Tomura clenched his fists against his jeans. What kind of condescending bullshit …? Yes! He’s getting better! Better than people like you and his father! Tomura tried to control his breathing. He needed to calm down, after all, he only had Dabi’s version of the story … Maybe this girl wasn’t that bad … Or maybe she was a better person now … But Tomura had difficulties believing in his own theories when next to him Dabi looked so tense and vulnerable. Besides, there something familiar in the girl’s tone and eyes … something Tomura had suffered from in the past.

Dabi awkwardly rambled for a bit about the band and why he was here. It was so weird to see him like this, he was usually so confident and witty, but he looked so uncomfortable right now. Still, he managed to explain that he was here for a show with his band, his manager, and his friends. Sun looked at him with eyes that could have been tender if they weren’t so terribly patronizing.

“Awww, it’s so cute that you’re still holding on to that dream!”

BITCH THAT’S NOT CUTE. THAT’S BRAVE ADMIRABLE AND REAL.

“But you know,” she continued as Tomura was fighting to keep his hands away from his neck, “some things are just not meant to be. Don’t you think that if it was to happen, it should have happened by now? I only say that because I care about you, you know. I wouldn’t want you to get
How dare you. How dare you talk about his dream hurting him when you hurt him almost more than anyone else. That was what Tomura wanted to say. But he said something else instead.

“Actually, and I’m sorry to correct you here Sun, it is happening right now.”

They both turned toward Tomura with surprised eyes, but it was a very different kind of surprise.

“I mean,” Tomura continued, “He now has one of the most reputed veterans of the music industry as his manager, every single show he had so far was a massive success, tonight he is playing in one of the biggest concert room in town where thousands of great artist began. His fan base keeps growing, he shot a bunch of music videos not long ago, and he has an album in preparation.”

Tomura turned toward Dabi with a smile before concluding: “And he just keeps getting better and better. So I’ll say that we’re thriving right now, don’t you agree, Dabi?”

Dabi didn’t answer immediately, pretty shook by this sudden declaration. But slowly colors were coming back to his face, and fire to his eyes. He gave Tomura his legendary crooked smile before answering: “Yeah. I think I’ve never been better.”

Sun had stayed silent during the whole thing. Right now, her smile was a little tense.

“I see you’ve made good friends Dabi,” she noted her voice back the jovial, oversweet tone, “I’m not surprised. You’ve always needed to rely on people, didn’t you? That’s okay, some people are like that. Still relishing in self-pity I see.”

And this exact instant, Tomura would have probably grabbed her so pretty hair with both of his hands if the rest of the group hadn’t come back. Magne was loudly gushing about how well organized this whole thing was, the boys were still talking about the funfair, and Toga, Kurogiri, and Sato were singing, but they all went silent in a second, feeling the weird tension between this three people.

Sun had suddenly gone back to her princess image, beaming as she wished Dabi good luck for the show and walked away gracefully. Kurogiri began to ask what was happening, but before he could even formulate the sentence, Dabi asked Magne where their waiting room was and dashed. After
less than one second of hesitation, Tomura ran after him.

When he walked in the waiting room, Dabi was livid, kicking every chair and yelling one profanity after another. Tomura closed the door behind him, and stayed silent, looking at Dabi and waiting for him to calm down. The whole thing went on for a few minutes until Dabi finally slammed his fist against the wall with one last scream, after he stayed still and silent, panting heavily. Slowly, Tomura walked toward him.

“Please don’t hurt your hand,” Tomura almost whispered.

The shadow of a smile past on Dabi’s lips, but he was still shaken. After a moment of uncertainty, Tomura slowly raised his hand to carefully grab Dabi’s, still against the wall. He was probably imagining things, but it felt like Dabi’s muscles relaxed under his palm … Dabi slowly turned toward him still panting, his eyes seemed to grow a little softer but he was still clearly upset. *It’s okay Dabi take your time. I’ll wait.*

Eventually, Dabi took a step back and ran both of his hands through his hair. He let out a nervous laugh.

“Unbelievable … I can’t … can you believe this? Can you believe this shit? How she fucking … How she just …”

Tomura was fully aware that Dabi wasn’t really talking to him right now, but he attentively listened to his rambling nonetheless. After all, Dabi had listened to his own anxious ramble so many times be now, it was the least Tomura could do to return the favor. Eventually, Dabi went silent once more, leaning his long lanky body against the wall.

“So …” he said with a low tired voice, but with a small smile, “I assume that you guessed who this girl was huh?”

Tomura actually snorted at that. He got a little closer to Dabi; feeling like closeness was exactly what Dabi needed right now.

“Excuse my potty mouth,” Tomura said, “But that’s one fake bitch out there.”

It was Dabi’s turn to snort, the sound slowly turning into a more relaxed laugh. He rubbed his
temples for a few seconds as if he had just been hit by a huge headache, before agreeing: “yeah that’s a good word for it.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I … I’m actually okay. I mean I’m more angry than anything, livid even. But I don’t … I don’t feel bad? It might hard to believe for you considering I destroyed this room, but honestly? I’m fine. Like, you have no idea how difficult it was to even think about her for a while … it absolutely destroyed me. But I just saw her … I just fucking saw her … and I know I was still super tensed and awkward, but I didn’t collapse. She didn’t destroy me.”

No, she didn’t. Tomura looked at Dabi as he spoke, pleased to see the colors coming back to his face and to hear his breathing slow down.

“I’m proud of you Dabi,” Tomura suddenly blurted out without his control. Dabi stared at him and Tomura wanted to cover his mouth with his hand out of sheer reflex. But he didn’t. Because he meant what he said. He wasn’t ashamed of it. That was the truth.

“Hey, umm,” Dabi began in a hesitating awkward voice, “thank you for … for you know taking my side and shit. For saying … the things you said.”

Dabi was rubbing the back of his neck, as he always did when he was embarrassed. Tomura really liked that habit for some reason, it was … cute, for the lack of a better word. Tomura’s brain was frantically searching word another word, but it turned out that Dabi was looking at him with a slight blush on his cheeks and soft eyes, and therefore, Tomura’s brain wasn’t working right now.

“I said it because it’s true,” Tomura replied with confidence, “I meant every word. You know that, right?”

“I do now.”

This answer hit Tomura hard. Doesn’t he know? Doesn’t he know how amazing he is? How much I admire him? How much I cherish him? How much I … Tomura’s brain put a stop to this dangerous train of thoughts once more, as it had done in the van. But he made a mental note to compliment Dabi even more than he currently did in the future.
“The truth is …” Dabi continued with some hesitation, as he was still thinking about what he was feeling, “the truth is that I’m more mad at myself right now. For freezing as I did. For years, I kept thinking about everything I would say to her if I ever saw her again. I was so proud, I felt so strong … But suddenly she was here, and I couldn’t say a thing.”

Dabi let out a deep sigh, throwing his head back with closed eyes.

“And now I’m about to go on stage … Knowing she’s in the room. And that she’ll be watching me.”

“And so will I.”

“*We”*!!! Shit “we”!!! *What the fuck am I saying??* Tomura had meant to say “we”, referring to the whole group that was here tonight!!! Giran, Tomura’s parents, the gang … All these people who loved Dabi and who Dabi loved. But instead … Tomura had said I. “*I will be watching you.*”

He felt the anxiety grow in him, but he fought back. He couldn’t collapse on Dabi, not right now when Dabi was the one who needed support. So he stayed strong. For Dabi.

And somehow … this declaration had seemed to have a calming, positive effect on Dabi, for his shoulders relaxed, his eyes got more focused, staring into Tomura’s with the intensity that Tomura knew all too well know. So he kept going and said what he wanted to say.

“Hey,” Tomura practically whispered, walking a little closer to Dabi, “Do you … do you remember what you said to me in the nightclub? The night of your birthday? When I didn’t want to dance?”

Dabi nodded slowly, captivated by how close Tomura suddenly was, how calming his proximity was.

“You said,” Tomura continued, “You said that you’d be the only one looking at me. And it helped me so much Dabi, gosh, you have no idea how much these words helped me that night. So tonight, I tell you the same thing. Now, I know it’s different! I know you’re going to be on a stage with everyone looking at you, and my god you’re so fucking brave … But I’ll be there too. I’ll be looking at you the whole time. And no matter what happens, no matter what this girl feels or thinks or does as she watches you, you’ll know that that there’s someone in this room who looks at you like you’re the best fucking thing that ever happened to him.”
And you are Dabi. God, you fucking are.

Dabi didn’t know what to say or how to react to this. All he could do right now was to look at Tomura’s pretty face as his mind collapsed upon itself. Tomura … Tomura why … Why are doing this? Why are you making it so difficult for me? One minute I think I’m fine, that this whole feeling thing will be over soon, that things will go back to the way they were … And then you say stuff like this … and you look at me like this. And now I no longer know what to do. And now I’m no longer sure of anything.

“Okay,” Dabi eventually said, “Yeah that’s … that’s good. If you keep your eyes on me then … then I think I can do this.”

Eventually, it was show time, and Magne and Giran came to find the two boys. Dabi didn’t tell the whole story to the group, simply that the girl they had seen was his ex. He didn’t go into the more painful details, but that was enough for everyone to get an idea of what had just happened.

“I think you did pretty good,” Toga commented, “As far as meeting with an ex goes, I mean. You’re about to have a big rock show, and you have a super cute boy by your side! The perfect combo!”

The two boys tried to hide the blush under their bangs, but it didn’t fool a single soul in the room. But Dabi’s mood was definitely lifted when they got on stage. It wasn’t on top yet, but Tomura knew that it would only be a matter of seconds once Dabi would begin to play. He loved the stage so much … Tomura just knew that the fire would be as strong as ever.

To support Dabi “against his evil ex” Jin had decided that they should all get as close to the stage as possible, and make as much noise as they could so Dabi would see them first. So everyone got in the pit by the stage, except Tomura who wasn’t doing well in crowded place. So he found a sit of his own a little further in the back by the bar. It was actually an excellent spot, from where he could see the stage extremely well, and the members could look right back at him. And just like that, the show began.

As Tomura had predicted, it didn’t take long for Dabi burn like the brightest of flame. He looked around the room with a renewed confidence, his eyes shining with mischief and insolence. It always made the crowd go wild. But despite the apparent cockiness, as his eyes wandered in the
crows, Dabi’s gaze automatically came to Tomura. Not for very long, but just as he if he wanted to check that he was still there like he needed a little dose of Tomura before continuing.

Tomura immediately tried to send this thought away, feeling ashamed at his own self-indulgence, but little did he know that he wasn’t far from the truth. Not far at all. On stage, Dabi felt like he was drowning in adrenaline, in sensations, and in his own energy. It was the best feeling in the world, but every once in a while, he needed to breathe, to take a breath of pure fresh clean air before going back. And Tomura was that breath.

Sitting on his stool, his back against the bar, Tomura was feeling a warm shiver run through him every time Dabi’s eyes locked with his. His eyes were just so intense … But it no longer made Tomura uncomfortable, quite the contrary, there was something comforting in the way Dabi’s eyes hooked with his, the way they would stare so hard and yet so softly, proving to Tomura that he was here, that he was real and alive, that he was more than just an empty shell with a quirk too destructive for his own good. He was something that Dabi could hold on too if needed.

“And one drink for the pretty boy!” a voice said behind him.

Tomura felt his whole body tense, and for a short second, his mind ran wild. No, no no no. He’s here. The purple douche. God, he found me. He found me and I’m alone and … But eventually, Tomura realized that this voice was extremely familiar and he turned around to see Sako behind the bar, absolutely beaming and handing him a glass of vine. Although Tomura immediately relaxed, he was a little confused.

“Papa? What on earth are you doing behind the bar?”

“I’m helping!”

“But … how … what … you don’t work here!”

“True I don’t. But they were a little short on staff tonight so I’m doing some volunteer work!”

Tomura grabbed the glass but continued to stair at Sako in confusion, although he couldn’t help but smile.

“We literally arrived two hours ago. How?”
“Magic!” Sako said with a dramatic voice, “But really though, I’m just too charming and charismatic for my own good … It’s a blessing, but also a curse you know?”

“God, you’re so extra,” Tomura snorted, “I love you.”

“I love you too kido.”

With his glass in careful hand, Tomura brought his attention back to Dabi on stage, but he could still feel his papa’s look behind his back.

“He’s good,” Sako finally commented.

“He is,” Tomura agreed with a smile, “So fucking good.”

There was another second of silence before spoke again in a relatively toned down voice, which was pretty unusual for him.

“Hey … Are doing okay?”

“What do you mean?” Tomura was genuinely surprised by this question, but there was a part of him that also tensed a little like he actually knew exactly where Sako was going with this.

“Well, first of all, you jolted like I’ve never seen you jolt when I offered you a drink.”

“Oh yeah … Sorry I was … Deep in my thoughts.” Tomura and the gang hadn’t revealed the nightclub incident to his fathers, and he didn’t indent to. Not now at least. Besides, there was still the serious possibility that Sako would go on a hunting trip to track down the guy in question. Fortunately for him, despite Sako extrovert nature, his papa still knew when not to push something.

“Speaking of,” Sako continued with a large smile, changing the subject, “You’ve been dreaming lately. More than usual. It’s not a bad thing don’t get me wrong, but you just seem a lot more absent-minded … Any reasons?”
“N-not really no,” Tomura answered, confused as to why he could feel some blush growling up his neck, “it’s just … I guess so much happened this year.”

“That’s true,” Sako agreed with a soft smile for his son, “A lot of changes for you. But I feel like they’re good right? You’ve gone out of your comfort zone, you’ve been trying new things, trying things again like the selection for exhibition in your school … you’ve been meeting new people. I know that none of these things are easy for you. I’m very proud of you Tomura.”

“Thanks, Papa” Tomura smiled.

There was some noise on the other side of the bar, and Sako remembered that he was technically volunteering right now, and with an elegant twirl, he moved to the other side of the bar to prepare cocktails in the most extra way possible. *What a dork* …

Tomura was about to give all his attention back to Dabi when a shining form appeared in the corner of his eyes, and he heard an overly sweet voice ask for a mojito. Sun sat right next to him and offered what was probably her best smile and Tomura thought he was about to scream.

“Hello! Tomura, right? I’m Sun you must remember me. We just met! But I feel like we’ve had a bad start …”

Tomura was very tempted to flat out ignore her, but he felt like it would only make her insist more so he gave her a vague nod of acknowledgment. But apparently, it wasn’t enough, because, she leaned toward him, way too close for Tomura’s comfort.

“I just love meeting new people! Don’t you?”

Tomura didn’t answer, but she kept going anyway. She wasn’t expecting an answer in the first place.

“I love discovering people! Their stories, their lives … You know what I think, Tomura? I think that there is so much beauty in this world! So many different beautiful people, all shining with their own very unique light …”
She let out a giggle, and leaned even closer, completely oblivious to the way Tomura’s body got tenser and tenser by the second. Just ignore her. She’s not even talking to you right, she’s listening to herself, so you don’t even have to listen to her.

“I see a light in you Tomura!” she continued, “And I think it could be so bright! People always say to me that I have a beautiful, radiating aura, but everyone has it! And because mine is so bright I can often help people. People that are in the darkness in their life, I can bring light to them …”

“Like you brought light to Dabi? Like you helped him?”

Tomura hadn’t meant to say that, hadn’t meant to start anything, hadn’t meant to fight back like this … but he realized that for once, he didn’t give a single fuck. Sun was now looking like a kicked puppy, her big green eyes full of tears and quivering lips letting out little gasps.

“Awww, is that why you were so mean to me earlier? Dabi told you some bad things about me didn’t he?”

“It doesn’t matter, we don’t have to continue this conversation.”

“I think we do!” Sun got even closer and Tomura physically irked away. From the other side of the bar, Sako was looking at the whole thing with attentive eyes. Tomura was still doing okay and seemed pretty calm, but Sato was ready to jump in and go full papa bear if needed.

Meanwhile, on stage, Dabi’s heart skipped a beat. He was about to take in Tomura like a breath of fresh air, but the sight was ruined by a glowing form standing way to close to him. What the … What the fuck is she doing??? What the fuck does she think she’s doing??? Standing so close like this??? He doesn’t like strangers close to him!!! And … and what is she saying to him? She’s talking about me, isn’t she … She’s gonna try to talk to him about the whole light bullshit. She’s gonna do the whole caring soul act … But weirdly enough, Dabi realized that he wasn’t worried. He was pissed that she bothered Tomura like that, but it didn’t cross his mind for one second that Tomura would listen to her. Because he trusted Tomura. Dabi kept an eye on the whole thing but was at least relaxed enough to finish the show.

“I think we do have to talk,” Sun continued, “You only got one side of the story after all! Do you think that Dabi is a poor innocent victim?”

“I don’t care.”
“Listen, you don’t know him like I do,” Sun’s voice was suddenly a little more aggressive, and Tomura knew why. It became more and more obvious by the second what type of person she was. And Tomura knew the type all too well. And because of that, he wasn’t afraid to let her go on as long as she wanted. “We’ve been together for years! I picked him up at his lowest you know. He owes me everything.”

Okay, now Tomura was starting to get mad. Sun was starting to drop the “innocent princess façade”, no longer making much effort to hide the disdain in her words.

“It’s not gonna be charming forever you know,” she continued, “this whole tragic bad boy persona … It may be charming now, but you’re gonna get tired of it.”

“The who- what?!” Tomura couldn’t believe what he just heard, “What the fuck are you talking about? His father abused him and his family for years! The scars on his body, on his face, they’re part of the persona too?

“In a sense … Girls like scars. And boys do too.”

There was a lot of venom in that last sentence.

“We all have our issues you know? What, did Dabi expected me to drag his baggage for him? I suffered too you know … It’s not my job to take care of him.”

And just like that, Tomura completely stopped caring. He cared very little before, but right now, the amount of fuck given was non-existent. Because every word coming out of this girl’s mouth was wrong. Because Dabi was wonderful and beautiful and breath-taking. Because he was on stage right now, living his best life, despite the scars that his father had put on his face and the ones this girl had put on his heart. Because this girl couldn’t reach him, couldn’t reach them anymore. Yeah, them.

Because this girl reminded Tomura of his father.

Suddenly, claps filled the room. The show was over for the band and the crowd was going wild, screaming, acclaiming, celebrating and asking for more. These sounds of joy and happiness were filling the silence, the abyss between Tomura and Sun. It was now Tomura’s turn to give her his most radiant smile, a smile that said See? See what he has become without you?
It seemed to hit a sensitive nerve with Sun because the last remaining part of her façade fell down. Her face tensed, and she suddenly got a firm hand on Tomura’s arm and snarled between her teeth: “You know what? I was wrong. Some people can’t be helped, people like you and Dabi. So don’t be fooled. I’m the love of his life, and he’ll still choose me over anything. You think he’s changed? No. He’ll never be enough and he knows it.”

The rest of the events happened in a very calm and methodical way. Sun was too close, her dress was white, and Tomura had a glass of red wine in his hand. So, naturally, he poured it on her. Didn’t throw it, didn’t splash it. He just casually twisted his hand to pour the red on the white.

There was a moment of silence surrounding them. Neither of them had realized it yet, but a lot of eyes were fixed on them, including the ones of Dabi, the band and the rest of the group who were just joining Tomura. They all stood still and completely silent. Behind the bar, Sako was absolutely beaming with pride.

As she realized what had just happened, Sun’s eyes went wide with shock, and she opened her mouth but no sound came.

“Oh wow oh my god no I’m so sorry …” Tomura said with the flattest, fakest voice he had ever heard in his entire life.

“What the fuck?!” Sun finally yelled, “What is wrong with you?!’’

“A lot of things to be honest, but let’s not get into that. Let’s talk about what wrong with you Sun.”

“Wh-What? What the fuck do you mean what’s wrong with me?” Tomura ignored her exclamation and stood up.

“Look, I don’t know what happened to you. Maybe you’re right. Maybe everyone has their own issues and maybe you legitimately went through some rough times. But it’s hard to give a shit when you act like a manipulative predator. I hate to break it to you Sun, but people are not your things, they’re not experiences for you to play with in order to feel better about yourself, only to throw them away when you get bored. Because guess what, Sun? Actions have consequences. People have feelings. Relationships take work and time. If you’re not ready for that, then maybe should stop to try to “fix” people and spend some time with yourself. Because yes, your relationship with yourself takes work and time as well. And it’s fucking hard, and sometimes you hate yourself and want to die. But if push through, you get to be like Dabi, beaming, beautiful,
happy and alive. He doesn’t need your “light” anymore, there’s already a fire burning inside him. You keep talking about how everyone has their own beauty, their own light … but you don’t care about their light do you? You only care about your own, the one that supposedly shines so bright. But honestly, the only light I see in you right now is the one from your hair. And it doesn’t even look that good.”

“YOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!”

It was Spinner’s scream that finally made Tomura realized that they were not alone anymore, and only now he saw the entire group next to him absolutely losing their mind. Spinner was still screaming, Jin was clapping and yelling “WHAT NOW? UH? WHAT NOW?”, while both Magne and Toga were carrying Mustard up in the air. Only Kurogiri and Giran staid relatively calm, but with a little smile on their face. And Dabi.

Dabi was standing completely still as if had been struck by lightning. Although his face was vaguely neutral, his eyes seemed bluer than they had ever been, burning into Tomura’s red one. The blue-haired boy felt like his entire body was on fire, like the flame in Dabi’s eye had completely light him up, and now they were burning together. A beaming grin slowly grew on Dabi’s face and Tomura smiled as well.

“What are you even talking about?” Sun whined, back to her attempted puppy eyes, “Why are you so mean to me, you … you creep!”

“You don’t call him that ever again, do you hear me?” Dabi suddenly said, walking to stand next to Tomura.

“But … but Dabi! Look what he did to me!”

“What do you mean?” Dabi blinked in fake confusion, “It was an accident! Wasn’t it Tomura?”

“It sure was,” the boy agreed.

“See? He even apologized. We all heard it! Didn’t we guys?”

“We sure did!” everyone answered in an almost perfect synchronization.
Sun stared at them in a confused anger for a long minute, after which she began to angrily pack her things.

“You all need help! Are those the people you’re hanging out with, Dabi? Congratulations! You all deserve each other.”

“They sure are. I hang out with them, I work with them, I sing with them, I eat with them, I talk and laugh with them. I love them. They make me a better person, and I like to think that I make them a little better as well. So you’re right. We fucking deserve each other. I deserve to be with caring, loving people unlike what you made me believe. You made me think that I was worthless, that you were the only one who would have me. But you were wrong. And I was wrong too, wrong to believe you, wrong to listen to your every word. For a long time I thought that you were my first and only love but … but tonight for the first time see … that it wasn’t love. It wasn’t love for you but I knew that. It wasn’t love for me either. It was an obsession. I never loved you Sun. We never loved each other. And I know that I wasn’t easy, that I was sad and tired and hurt … But you know what? I deserved better. I deserve better. I deserve them, not you.”

With this sentence, Dabi grabbed on to Tomura’s shoulder, and an electric feeling ran through the boy.

“And I think … I think that they deserve me too. Because I am enough for them. And they’re enough for me.”

Sun stared at Dabi like he had gone completely insane. But eventually, after quivering her lips and opening her eyes wide for a full minute to no avail, she scoffed and left the place. As soon as she was out of sight, Tomura felt a weird force pull against something solid, soft and warm. Dabi had passed his arm against his shoulder and suddenly pulled him in for a hug. God, it feels so good. God, I’ve missed this. Tomura had honestly thought that their hug on the dock was a one-time incident and that he would never feel Dabi’s warmth like that again. And yet here there were, holding both holding on to each other in the middle of the place with everyone cheering around them. Once again, Dabi had his face buried in Tomura’s hair, only this time he was softly murmuring a litany of “thank you” again and again. Tomura held on tight to Dabi’s side and buried his face deep in his shoulder. For some reason, he felt like he was about to cry.

“So let me get this straight, love,” Kurogiri asked once more as they were all living the place, “you just casually watched our son pour a glass of wine on this young lady without any second thoughts?”
“Hmmm … I don’t recall officer,” Sako pretended to think really hard about this, “All that I can say is that from what I heard of the conversation the bitch had it coming and I’ve never been more proud of our son.”

“Tssk … You’re unbelievable sometimes … And don’t call me officer.”

“The night was slowly falling, and the whole thing looked absolutely gorgeous with its lights, lanterns and decoration, music and laughs coming from everywhere around. Their night in the showroom had been a complete success despite the small event in the end. The band had been paid generously, with the promise to come back soon. And now, after already a few celebratory drinks, everyone wanted to celebrate some more. The fair was huge, with thousands of attractions everywhere, and booths of every type. The first few hours past like seconds, and eventually Kurogiri and Sako decided to go home (“Probably for some sexy time!” Jin had suggested before getting smacked by Tomura), and Giran left as well. Mustard was allowed to stay behind and come home in the van later.

So eventually, it was just the youth left. They tried everything they could, did every roller-coaster and tried every food, before realizing that it wasn’t the best combination. The only one that didn’t seem to be affected by this was Toga who kept eating churros after churros under everyone impressed but slightly terrified eyes. But the one who truly surprised everyone was Tomura who did surprisingly well even in the most terrifying roller-coaster. When everyone was tense and holding on to each other, Tomura was screaming from the top of his lungs, hands up in the air, to the point where Dabi got worried he would fall or some shit and held on to his shirt to keep him still. But once they got out, Dabi decided that he really like this adrenaline junky Tomura, with wide eyes, bright smile, pink cheeks, crazy hair, and heavy breathing … He’d like to see that again sometime …

And just like that, the night almost went without any incident. Until Toga suggested something.
“Hey everyone, look! A haunted house!!! Let’s have a ride!”

The proposition was almost unanimously acclaimed, and the group walked toward the falsely old and creepy building. Tomura told himself that the whole thing looked pretty lame and cheesy, but it could be fun to have a ride. He wanted to share a joke with Dabi about it, when he realized that the black-haired man was walking way behind them, his whole body tense, looking like he was walking directly to the electric chair. And suddenly Tomura remembered that afternoon on their couch, watching the Haunting, and Dabi holding on to him and screaming. Oh … Right. Looking at his face, a cheesy funfair haunted house was enough to get him tensed and judging by his silent resignation, no one was really aware of this little weakness of his. So Tomura took a decision.

“Oh come on, are you all serious?” Tomura snorted to the rest of the group, already in the queue for some tickets, “This is so lame … Can’t we do something else?”

“Come on Tomura, don’t be a buzzkill!” Magne protested with a smile, “It’s cheesy but it’s fun!”

“Yeah, well I’m not doing it!” he continued, “I have standards you see.”

“Aw come on, you’re not going to stay all alone behind.”

“It’s cool I’ll stay with him,” Dabi said with a side smile to Tomura, very aware of the favor the boy was doing to him, “I’ll sacrifice for the team.”

For a reason that Dabi and Tomura didn’t understand, the perspective of leaving Dabi and Tomura alone suddenly changed the mood of the whole group, and they enthusiastically agreed to leave the two of them. And within seconds, they were aboard the ghost train, and the two boys were left behind, surprised by how easy that was.

“Hey … thanks for taking a bullet for the second time tonight” Dabi said to Tomura as they walked around the fair. There was a softness in his voice that made Tomura shiver. But he also wanted to make something clear …

“Dabi, listen, earlier tonight with Sun, I didn’t “take a bullet for you”. I … I’m not sure what I did, but I know that I meant every word I … You know everything is always so stressful to me, especially confrontations as you know by now. I mean, you’ve seen it … I turn into a screaming sobbing mess as soon as someone raises their voice or disagree with me … I know that. But in the bar … I felt something completely different. I wasn’t scared, I wasn’t … well yes, I was angry, but
not emotional angry you know? I just knew that she was wrong about everything and … I don’t know. I just thought to myself well, what a bitch, she’s pretty wrong about this. And I just … started speaking.”

And just like that, Tomura was back to rambling, his previous eloquence all gone. He wasn’t sure if it was the urge to fight for Dabi that had given him this power earlier, or if it was the way that he was looking at him right now that was taking it away. Probably both. Fighting for Dabi, uh?

“So yeah. Earlier I didn’t take a bullet for you … I fought for you. I don’t know what the difference is, but I think it’s important.”

“I think it’s important too.”

They just looked at each other for a while. Eventual, this long eye contact made Tomura a little bashful, but Dabi seemed completely at ease. In fact, it seemed like he never wanted to look at anything else again. And he was about to say something, when for the second time this evening, a distant familiar voice called Dabi’s name.

“Hey, Dabi …”

In front of them, stood a young boy of about fifteen years old. He was kind of odd looking, with bicolor hair, and a burned scar covering his left eye. But these weren’t the things that Tomura saw. He saw the shape of the eyes, he saw the contour of his jaw, he saw his silhouette … he saw a small Dabi.

The tall Dabi, the one next to him go a little pale once again, and Tomura wondered if he was going to be okay, going pale this much in one evening. He was considerably less shaken right now than earlier. He was surprised, sure, but he was also … sad. For a second he just stared at the boy. They were both a little awkward and Tomura was about to take a step back when Dabi stopped him, grabbing his sleeve with the tip of his fingers. It was a very small gesture, but it said a lot. Stay with me. I need you for this. So Tomura stayed.

“Hey, Shouto …” Dabi finally said, “What uh, what are you doing here? Having fun?”

“Uh? Oh yeah, I’m … I’m with my class actually. We’re having a night out.” Shouto gestures toward a group of kids a little further in the distance, with two girls (one kind of looking like a frog) and three other boys. One had thick purple and seemed kind of tired, and the other two, one with
“Oh hey, that’s cool!” Dabi said with enthusiasm, “That’s very cool … Everything good in school? Do you like the teachers?”

“Eh, it’s okay. I like it I mean, I … And you? How are you doing?”

“Who? Me? Oh you know I’m … Well, first of all, this is my friend Tomura! Tomura, this Shouto … My little brother.”

There was something in this last sentence that said: “but you already guessed that, didn’t you?”. Suddenly, Tomura was thrown back a month in the past, in the small dark stare cage of his apartment, with only Dabi’s flame between them, when Dabi had first mentioned his family.

“Oh yes, sorry!” Shouto apologized, presenting his hand that Tomura carefully took, “Nice to meet you Tomura.”

“Hey, Shouto, nice to meet you! Dabi talks a lot about you!”

Tomura cringed a little at his own lie. He hadn’t really meant to say it, it had just seemed like a good thing to say, but the young boy looked pleasantly surprised.

“So what are you up to these days?” Shouto asked, focusing on Dabi again.

“Oh, you know the usual … The bang is still going strong … we’re getting a little recognition actually!”

“That’s cool. I watch your videos, you have a lot of views …”

This seemed to sincerely surprise Dabi, as he didn’t know what to answer for a moment and event briefly looked at Tomura for some sort of support. But unlike with Sun, Tomura really couldn’t do anything right now.
“You watch the videos?”

“Of course I do. Fuyumi and Natsuo watch them with me sometimes …”

“… And, uh … do you … like it?”

“I’d prefer to hear you live.”

This had been said without any sort of venom in the boy’s voice, but the implication was strong enough to make Dabi flinch quite a bit. Tomura really wished that he could somehow help him right now. But he knew that for now, this particular issue was out of his reach.

“I have to go now,” Shouto said, “but … it was good to see you. And … and you know that you can come to visit any times right? We’d love to see you, you know … Mom would love to see you. She misses you. I … I … I have to go.”

“O-okay! See you next time then!”

“… See you soon?”

“Uh … yeah! Sure! Why not?”

And just like that, Shouto walked back to his friends, and the little group disappeared in the crowd. Next to Tomura, Dabi suddenly began to shake.

“Dabi! Dabi are you okay? Wh-”

“Eh! Boys!”

The group was coming out of the haunted house, laughing and smiling completely ignorant of what had just happened. Tomura tried to calm down to greet them normally and listened to their tale about what they saw inside, and about how Mustard had punched a comedian. He was doing his best to seem attentive, but everything broke down with one question from Magne.
“Hey, where’s Dabi?”

The question resonated inside Tomura’s ears for a very long second, and he realized that he suddenly felt very cold. With swift but nervous movements, Tomura looked around for the silhouette he now knew so well. Then he began to panic.

“We-we have to find him!!!! Where did he go? Should we make teams? Should we …? How???”

“Hey! Easy Tomura, calm down!” Jin said, trying to be reassuring, “It’s all good he probably went to take a piss or something …”

“But … but without warning us???”

“Yeah, he does that sometimes. But it’s fine, let’s keep moving! We’ll meet with him later okay?”

“But shouldn’t we call him? I think we should call him!”

“Tomura it’s fine!” Magne intervened, “It’s not a nightclub situation right now. We’re in a fun fair. Besides, Dabi knows how to take of himself! He’ll be fine.”

.............. Yeah, he’ll be fine. That’s what we all think, don’t we? We don’t worry about Dabi. Because Dabi is strong and Dabi is clever. People don’t mess with Dabi so why should be worry? He is the tough guy. The Badass. Dabi is tough and Dabi doesn’t care. So we don’t worry about Dabi. Not over things like this. But Tomura did worry. He could feel the fear crawling up inside him and taking over. But for once, he didn’t try to push it away, he was not going to repress it, he was going to use it. Because he needed the adrenaline that fear gave him right now. Tomura knew Dabi, and he knew that Dabi was not always tough.

“Hey, you know what? You guys go ahead. I’m gonna look for Dabi. We’ll meet up with you later.”

He didn’t even give them the time to react, as he was already walking away, and typing Dabi’s number on his phone. Come on come, pick up, pleaaaaaase, pick up. Tomura half expected to find the voicemail, but he cursed anyway. Okay, calm down, breathe, he’s fine, he’s okay, he’s fine. He
navigated around the crowd, checking every corner and every queue. After fifteen minutes, he tried to think differently. Dabi wouldn’t want to be in a crowd right now … No, he’ll fear to meet his brother again. So he had probably left the fair … but not too far. *Even like this, he wouldn’t want to worry us too much.* There was a fence surrounding the fair, so Tomura got out and walked around it for a few minutes until finally, he could breathe again.

Dabi was sitting on the ground, back against the wall. His knees were up against his chest, and his head was buried in his arm. *He looks so small right now …* Tomura walked toward him very slowly, as if he could run away if he was too abrupt in his approach. He carefully sat right next to him, back against the wall and knees against the chest and he waited for his friend to be ready to talk. Tomura could tell that Dabi knew he was there, but they both stayed silent for what seemed like a very long time. Tomura didn’t open his mouth, but very, very slowly, he leaned his head against Dabi’s shoulder. The young man jolted a little at the contact, but soon, his entire body relaxed.

Eventually, Dabi raised his head from his arms. He didn’t look at Tomura right away, his eyes focused forward, but with a glimpse, Tomura was reassured to see that his friend wasn’t crying. But it was definitely the closest he had ever seen him. After another moment of silence, Dabi said: “My name is Todoroki Dabi.”

Tomura didn’t say anything, just stayed leaned against Dabi’s shoulder, and didn’t move when he felt Dabi leaning his own head against his. “But you already knew that didn’t you?”

“I was waiting for you to tell me. If you wanted to.”

“Such a smart boy”

Without even looking, Tomura could feel Dabi smiling against his hair. A warm shiver ran through him, a knot formed in his stomach, and a blush appeared on his face and even though Dabi couldn’t see it, he felt the need to bury his face in his shoulder a little more. He … he really liked when Dabi was praising him like this. It made him feel good.

“My dad’s name is Todoroki Enji,” Dabi continued, “also known as the former flame hero and number two hero Endeavour. He spent his whole life trying to best the number one hero All Might, but when it became obvious that he wouldn’t be able to do it, he transferred his obsession onto his children, training them, *abusing them*, so they would become stronger than the symbol of peace. I’m the eldest son.”

Than Dabi went quiet. It looked like it was all that Tomura was gonna get for tonight. He didn’t
want to push him, but he still had a question he needed to ask.

“He’s in jail now. He’s jail and he’s gonna be there forever. He can’t hurt you, your family, or anyone ever again. So … why are you afraid to see your family?”

“Because I left them.”

Now that was really it. Dabi’s answer was soft but definitive. For tonight at least. Tomura hoped that one day, he’ll be comfortable enough to share more of his story with him. But what he had just said already felt huge. It was very obvious that no one else knew about his true lineage, not even in the group. Dabi had never revealed his family name to anyone; it was something that he was keeping very close. When they had first met, Tomura had assumed that it was some sort of stage name, which it was in a way. And he knew by Jin that he used a fake family name when necessary. He still wanted to understand why Dabi was apparently so afraid to meet up with his family again when they were all finally happy and safe. Does he think … that he doesn’t deserve it? But why? He deserves happiness more than anyone I know! Certainly more than me! But that was a story for another time.

Dabi had already given him so much this year, hell, tonight, every night, every single minute of their lives! Dabi’s name was a big secret that he had held for a really long time. He felt the young man move against him, shifting so he could press his lips against Tomura’s hair.

“Thank you for coming for me. I’m sorry I worried you. I’m sorry I ran.”

Somehow, sorry I ran seemed to have a double meaning now. It suddenly felt like Dabi was apologizing for so much more than necessary right now.

“And I’m sorry I lied to you. That I didn’t tell you that my name was Todoroki Dabi. Todoroki Dabi. Todoroki Dabi. Eh. I haven’t said it out loud in years … It kind of feels nice. God, I wish I had told you the first day we met.”

“My name was Shimura Tenko.”

Dabi moved his head away from Tomura, not out of anger or shock, but simply because he wanted to look at him. Tomura himself wasn’t sure why he had just revealed his former name to him, it just kind of felt right to do so right now.
“My grandmother was a hero named Shimura Nana. She had a lot of enemies, so she never had much contact with my father, or with me. She wanted to protect us, many villains hoped to target her family to get to her. So my father and I were given different names. She’s dead now.”

Tomura felt his throat getting a little tight. He wasn’t expecting to get so emotional about this. Similarly to Dabi, he hadn’t pronounced this name out loud in years. Her name. But also his name.

“When Kurogiri adopted me, I asked to keep the name Shigaraki Tomura. All Might and everyone in the social services agreed because they thought that it was good for me to keep a fake name, even now that Nana had died. But that wasn’t my reason. Shigaraki Tomura was the name I had when Kurogiri first met me, and it was the name he knew for many years before even adopting me, the name he used for me. Shimura Tenko … Was my father’s name. Chosen and given by him, and that’s the name he used for me at home when it was just the two of us. Well, not that he used it much. My father got tired of me very quickly.”

For a second, Tomura’s mind went back to Sun. A woman who thought that she could just drop people behind her when she didn’t feel like helping them anymore.

“So my name is Shigaraki Tomura. It’s the name my parents use, the name my friends use … It’s the name you use. And no one will ever use the name Shimura Tenko ever again.”

Dabi wondered if would be inappropriate to run his hand in Tomura’s hair right now, to hold him close, and to never ever let go.

“Hey, Tomura … When All Might save you when you were a child … He wasn’t able to save your father, was he?”

“That’s one way to put it …” Tomura said, actually smiling. And just like that, Dabi knew that Tomura wasn’t going to say anything more about this. Not today. That was okay. Tomura had always respected his boundaries, and Dabi was always going to respect his. They’ll both talk more when they’d be ready.

“Thank you for telling m-” they both said at the same time, before giggling like two teenage girls who still think that saying the same thing at the same time is funny. Well, it was still kind of funny.

“Well would you look at us …,” Dabi commented, spreading his legs ahead of him, “To nameless boys walking away from there shitty dads, and finding each other behind a funfair next to a trash
“can probably full of raccoons…”

“We’re not exactly nameless though …”

“Shhh,” Dabi whispered putting his index against Tomura’s giggling lips, “I’m being poetic right now … I might write a song about this.”

“You mean … about us?”

“ … Yeah. Why not?”

* 

They found the other a few moments later. Their arms were full of prizes that had won at every booth in the fair, and Jin was currently holding a cat plush twice his size that he had won for Mustard. Their friends seemed surprisingly interested in what that had done when they were alone, but the answer they gave (that they just drank a beer while Dabi smoked a cigarette outside) seemed to really disappoint them for some reason.

For Tomura and Dabi, nothing and everything had changed. They could both feel a form of pride and excitation, in knowing such an important and deep secret about the other, but it wasn’t anything apparent. It was like an invisible link connected them now.

They all had a few more hours of fun together until Mustard began to yawn and eventually fell asleep on his huge cat plush. It was a signal for everyone, as they were all getting pretty tired as well. All but two.

“Come on, everybody goes back to the van!” Magne commended like a true team leader, as the group tried to make their way out in the crowd.

Tomura and Dabi were dragging their feet behind everyone, the blue-haired boy dramatically holding on to Dabi’s sleeve as he whined: “Come ooooooon … I don’t want to go home yet. We’re having such a good time … I don’t want to leave …”
Dabi suddenly stopped in his tracks, has an idea struck him, almost causing Tomura to fall.

“We don’t have too,” he simply said.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t want to go home either,” Dabi continued getting more and more excited by his own idea, “we don’t have to. Everyone goes home but you and I can stay behind all night!”

“All night? But what about the van?”

“Without the material to carry, we’re not that far from home. We could walk, or just take the first bus in the morning.”

“You say we spend the night outside?”

“Yeah! You never did that before?”

“Not really. I had my lot of sleepless night, but they mostly involved me alone in my room with a panic attack …”

“Well then … wanna try something new?”

The smile that Dabi gave Tomura was so bright and so full of confidence, that Tomura didn’t hesitate more than a second. Yes, he wanted to try something new. More than anything, he wanted to try something new with Dabi. He felt some of the same adrenaline he had on the roller-coaster, and that he had during the fight in the nightclub months ago, running hot in his veins. Yes!!! Let’s do this!!! Let’s stay outside all night!!! Just the two of us!!! Maybe we’ll even commit some crimes!!! Wow!! He was now just as excited as Dabi, and they both grin like idiots as they nod in agreement.

It took them barely two seconds to explain their plan to the rest of the gang, and Magne barely had the time to make them promise to call if something happened, before they both literally ran down the street, arms in the air.
They first return to the funfair to do every single ride they had already done. It was still just as fun the third time, and Tomura still looked just as good with pink cheeks. They also spent almost all of their money in a shooting booth, because Tomura had casually mentioned that he kind of liked one of the prizes, and Dabi was determined to win it for him.

“Dabi, please it’s fine!” Tomura laughed after his friend’s fifth failure, “I don’t like it that much!”

“But you said it was cute!!!!” Dabi retorted, preparing to fire for the sixth time.

After the seventh failure, Tomura insisted for him to stop, because they needed to keep some cash.

“Aw come on don’t be so pouty … I’ll tell you, it’s good to know that there’s one thing that you’re not immediately amazing at.”

“That’s because their guns were rigged. The guy was a scoundrel, I could tell.”

“Dabi, don’t take offense in what I’m about to say, but I saw you squinting like crazy. I think that you might need glasses”

The ride and booth closed one after another, and soon, Dabi and Tomura were simply sitting on the steps on the closed Ferris wheel, under some pastel lanterns. Dabi asked Tomura if he had any news about the contest for the exhibition in his school, and how he felt about it. The results were mid-September, in a few weeks from now … Tomura tried to not think about too much, but he was already proud of himself for trying. Dabi told him he was gonna win this, and because Dabi’s eyes look particularly soft under this light, Tomura believed him.

But eventually, the lights were turned off and they were asked to leave. So for while, they just wandered in the streets, bantering with each other, talking only about the things they loved. Music and paintings, but also books, movies, food, TV shows, cartoons even … Their steps were as light as their hearts, so they walked quite the distance, feeling like they were discovering some new corners of the city. At this time of the night and with their current states of mind, it felt like looking at everything from a completely different angle.
Tomura laughed a lot that night, and every time he did, Dabi’s heart grew a little bigger. It was a weird feeling, pleasant and painful at the same time. It was a dumb goofy laugh, the one that often had Tomura covering his mouth with his hand. Sometimes, when he was thinking about what he was about to say, or considering a point that Dabi made, he was biting lips for a few minutes and Dabi just couldn’t look away. When he was getting animated about something, Tomura talked with his hands a lot, and it felt good to see so open and unafraid about something that he was usually so self-conscious about.

At some point, they stopped in a small fast food to eat something, and Tomura absolutely devoured his plate, as if all of the talking and walking had got him starving. But Dabi liked seeing him eat like that, no matter how gross it looked sometimes. He wondered if one day, Tomura would tell him where his eating disorders came from. But that wasn’t a story, for tonight because right now, Tomura was hungry. And happy. God, he looked so fucking happy tonight. And Dabi was happy too. In fact, he might consider this night as one of the happiest moment of his life if it wasn’t for these god damn thoughts crawling in the back of his mind, the ones about Tomura’s exposed neck, about his little scar in the corner of his lips, and about that lock of hair falling in front of a bright red eyes.

At this point, Dabi wasn’t even upset anymore he was just plain confused. *Why doesn’t it go away? It’s been so long now … and I care about him so fucking much. What is … what is this?*

Later, when they were back in the streets, they came across an unpleasant discovery. It was a huge wall painting on the side of an abandoned building, representing Endeavour in his hero suit with the message “FREE ENDEAVOUR” written. The paint was still fresh. Tomura immediately turned toward Dabi with worried eyes, but Dabi just let out a deep sight. When his father had been arrested years ago, a lot of his fans and supporter had protested, asking for his liberation. With time, the number of supporters had reduced as the number of evidence had augmented. But even today, not far from ten years later, you could find some dumbasses claiming that “Endeavour did nothing wrong”.

“Are you okay?” Tomura asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine … Let’s just move on.”

“Hey, wait! Hold on!” Tomura said, grabbing him by the arm and pointing at something down the wall, “they left their material!”

“Yeah? So what?”
“Come with me,” Tomura dragged Dabi to the wall and grabbed one of the big brushes that he soaked in black paint. “Carry me.”

“Tomura what the fuck?”

“If you carry me I can reach his face.”

This was by far one of the dumbest ideas Tomura ever had, and Dabi adored it. But when it came to carrying Tomura, he hesitated. *Uh ... should I just ... wrap my harms against his hips? Yeah okay! It would be just like hugging ... Well not really, because my face would be right against his ...*

“Dabi are you ready? Hold me!”

And he did. Once he was in the air, Tomura realized that he hadn’t thought the whole thing through. Because suddenly he was floating, with only Dabi’s strong warm arms to keep him grounded. Tomura was distracted by the realization that Dabi’s face was right next to his …

“Come on Tomura, get on with it!”

Eventually, Dabi put Tomura to the ground as delicately as he could. And they both took a look at their masterpiece. Tomura had literally just drawn a mustache and a missing tooth. It was the most beautiful thing Dabi had ever seen.

“HEY, MOTHERFUCKERS!!!”

From the distance, the boys could see a group of young men charging toward them. The painters probably. So they ran away, and Dabi was pretty sure that the guys wouldn’t have actually chased them if Tomura had not scream: “ENDEAVOUR HAS A SMALL DICK AND SO DO HIS SUPPORTERS.” But he did, he Dabi couldn’t help but laugh.

* * *

When they finally lost their assailants, they had reached a large lawn surrounded by trees, with a
They were both terribly out of breath, both from the running and the laughing that had happened during, and they panted with their hands on their knees for a few minutes. Eventually, Tomura collapsed onto the grass in such a dramatic fashion that Dabi felt he was looking at his papa for a second. He was completely spread across on the ground, arms in a cross with his chest going up and down, with a blissful smile on his face.  

“You didn’t have to scream that, you know,” Dabi commented once he was able to talk.

“I know,” Tomura giggled, “but I did it anyway.”

Dabi rolled his eyes and moved Tomura spread arms so he could lie right next to him. Progressively, Tomura’s giggles calm down, and their breathings were no longer loud enough to fill the silence of the night. There were a lot of visible stars tonight, just as much as during their night on the docks.

“Do you see the golden whale?” Tomura asked, his voice suddenly quite low now that he adrenaline was running off.

“Yeaaaaah … About that …”

“Oh my god Dabi, don’t worry. I know it’s not real.”

“What?! Really?!” Dabi turned toward his friend in complete surprise, and Tomura let out a snort.

“Points for trying though. I’m sure that trick worked in high school.”

“But … I don’t understand. If you knew it wasn’t real, why didn’t you stopped me?”

Tomura seemed to truly consider the question, biting his lips and fidgeting with the hem of his shirt for a bit, before giving his answer: “I liked the story. Besides, it feels good to believe in things that don’t exist sometimes.”

Dabi felt like he was missing something in Tomura’s answer, but he didn’t have the time to think about it, because the boy turned his head toward him, with a mischievous grin on his face.
“Besides, all the constellations are fake anyway. We can say whatever we want.”

“Wow, look at you about to start some stars’ discourse.”

“You know what I mean.”

“I do not. Please enlighten me.”

Tomura shifted a little on his back to face the stars properly. Under the natural light of the night sky, moonlight seemed to reflect in his locks making them look almost silver like. My god … he looks like a fucking fairy right now. Dabi felt like a character of a tale who had wandered too far in a forbidden land and caught a glimpse of an otherworldly beautiful creature. Tomura raised his right hand high above his hand and spread his palm. For a moment, it looked like he was trying to catch the stars, but it also felt like he was comparing the two. His hand that he thought so ugly against the sky that he thought so beautiful.

“You know,” Tomura finally said, “constellations might be the most human thing there is. I mean, the stars, they don't care. They don't really have names; they're not actually connected to each other or anything... They're just gas balls floating in space... It's us, looking at them from below and... We connect them together. So they're not alone. Or maybe just to create a shape, an image... And we look at the nothingness of space and project a lot of stuff on it... Pictures we know and stories we can tell... We connect the dots... We fill the void. We look for patterns. Because we just cannot accept that there is nothing... Because we are afraid of emptiness, of the nothing, the silence, the...

Tomura was losing his train of thought. His words got quieter and quieter, until he went completely silent, and covered his face with both of his hands.

“Gosh … I’m sorry … I’m not making any sense …”

“You do!” Dabi interrupted a bit too quickly to his own taste, “You, do I … I think I get it. The universe doesn’t care. People do.”

Tomura peaked from behind his hands, and for a long moment, he seemed to look for something
behind Dabi’s eyes. Dabi couldn’t tell if he had found it or not when Tomura shifted to his side to face his friend completely. Without much a second thought, Dabi imitated him so they look in each other’s eyes as they spoke.

“Hey, do you remember the night of your birthday on your balcony? You said something … you said … you said that you couldn’t connect with people properly …”

“Yeah, that’s true. I used to think it was because of what happened with Sun, but I’m not so sure anymore. Maybe it was always like this. But … but you know what I’m talking, don’t you? I remember that night you said something … You said it felt like not getting a joke. You feel that way too …”

“I do. I’ve always felt like this. For years, I blamed it on my father … on the way he raised me, but it might be something else. It’s like … it’s like I’m on a different plane than everyone else, you know? Like I was gonna forever live parallel to people without crossing their path.”

“Yeah … And you still love your friends and family, and you still have fun and his happy with them. But you feel like something is missing like you’re screwing up something. And you feel so lonely … even surrounded by loving people, you still feel so lonely …”

“But see Dabi, that’s the thing …” Tomura suddenly said. The look in his eyes was both terribly intense and incredibly breakable; as he hesitated about whether he should say what he wanted to say or not. Finally, he took a deep breath.

“I don’t feel lonely when I’m with you.”

It was probably the softest Tomura had ever looked and sounded. Everything about him was just so open and vulnerable right now, and it probably took everything in him to utter those words at loud. He closed his eyes, almost as if he was expecting a blow from Dabi, or some disappointment maybe. But what he didn’t expect was the answer Dabi offered him.

“I feel the same way.”

Tomura opened his eyes in shock, scrutinizing Dabi’s face the way he always did when he was looking for jokes or sarcasm behind his words.
“When I’m with you, I don’t feel lonely Tomura. Somehow, I feel … I feel like I’m doing things right.”

Dabi scooted a little closer to Tomura, absolutely hating the space between them right now, that made Tomura look so small. Tomura hummed in satisfaction as he felt Dabi’s warmth hovering over his own thing body. Above them, the sky progressively became clearer and clearer, coloring their environment in a whole new light. They were both getting a little sleepy, the lack of sleep slowly catching up with them.

“And who knows?” Dabi said, “Maybe it means that you and I actually live on the same plane. And maybe we’re the only one there.” That would be nice …

“Maybe,” Tomura agreed with a small smile, “and if we’re not on the same one, I’ll come looking for yours.”

“And then we’ll fly away on a space whale?”

“We sure will buddy.”

In the distance, a sound became clearer and clearer, and louder and louder. After listening for a while, they both came to the conclusion it was some music, a song even, and by twisting themselves a little, they caught an open window on the building next to the lawn where the song was coming from. It didn’t take long for the two of them to recognize it, and Dabi burst out of laughter.

“Incredible …” he whispered, sitting up on the grass, as Tomura stayed down, laughing as well.

We're talking away
I don't know what
I'm to say I'll say it anyway

“Can you believe that? It’s our song!!!” Dabi smiled genuinely thrilled about this, “It’s Take On Me!!”
“Our song …” Tomura repeated with a smile.

“Take on me,” Dabi sang, swaying his head the rhythm, and smiling to still lying Tomura at his feet, “Take me on … Cause I’ll be gone …In a day or two …”

And right there, at this exact moment, something magical happened. Still lying in the grass, his hair falling beautifully on the ground, with a light blush on his cheeks and the light of the sunrise enlightening him … Tomura began to sing.

“So needless to say, of odds and ends but I'll be stumbling away, slowly learning that life is ok, say after me … It's no better to be safe than sorry”

His voice was low, soft, and little shaky due to the lack of experience and not hitting all the notes perfectly, but it was the most beautiful sound that Dabi had ever heard in entire life, better than anything he could have ever dreamed of. It’s was little raw, but beautiful and honest and irrefutably Tomura.

And that was when Dabi realized.

He couldn’t tell what it was exactly, if it was to finally hear Tomura sing, if it was the simple fact that Tomura was comfortable enough around him to be so vulnerable, if it was the fact that he was clearly a little nervous right now, but he was doing it anyway because his trust in Dabi was that strong. Maybe it was because of all the events of the day, with Tomura fighting for him not once but twice, and Tomura coming for him when he needed him so badly not once but twice. Maybe it was just the accumulation of all these small moments, the little things that just made Tomura himself that were finally too strong to fight against. Maybe it was just how incredibly beautiful he looked right now. Maybe it was the mole that Dabi wanted to kiss. Maybe it was all of these things or none of them. But the fact remained that it was when Dabi finally understood.

Holy shit.

I love him.

He loved him. He was in love with him. Dabi was in love with Tomura. Todoroki Dabi loved Shigaraki Tomura. He was stuck on him, he cherished him, he respected him, he wanted him, he fucking loved him. It actually didn’t feel like some sort of major revelation, it was more of evidence, something that had been growing steadily in him, something that suddenly explained so
much. His attraction to his best friend wasn’t gonna disappear, how could it? He was in love with him! And how could he not be, really? There was no plane of existence where Dabi wasn’t falling in love with Tomura because he was Tomura and he was Dabi.

He loved his mole. He loved the scar on his usually chapped lips. He loved the way his eyebrows frowned when he was drawing something challenging. He loved that he had strong opinions on classic horror movies. He loved that he knew the divergence between royal blue and royal azure. He loved that he was always a sour loser at Mario Kart. He loved that he could talk about Vincent Van Gogh for three hours without boring him. He loved that he was doing his best to stop scratching his neck, even though it was difficult for him. He loved that he couldn’t tell the difference between The Cure and Joy Division. He just loved him.

_I want to kiss him._

God, Dabi wanted to kiss him so badly, so desperately right now. He wanted to climb on top of him and pin to ground, have a good look at his pretty flushed face and feel how his body would shiver under his. He wanted to grab his face and kiss him everywhere, every single bit of skin he could reach. He wanted to taste him, all of him starting with his mouth, licking the small scar so Tomura would whimper and moan under him, opening his mouth for Dabi. He wanted to kiss his mouth and bite his lips, running his hands all over his body and feel him arched onto his touches and caresses. He wanted to kiss him until none of them could breathe, which wouldn’t be a problem because he could then bite at his neck and his beautiful collarbone. He wanted Tomura to feel beautiful, wanted and loved.

But Dabi did none of that.

Because although Dabi was in love with Tomura, Tomura was obviously not in love with Dabi. How could he? How could someone so beautiful, talented, creative and sensitive, love someone saw stupid, blunt and … How could someone love a mess like him? Maybe? One day? Perhaps?

“Dabi are you okay?”

Dabi blinked a few times, as Tomura got up to sit next to him.

“You uh … you kind checked out for a minute here … I’m … I shouldn’t have sung I’m sorry …”

“No! What no are you kidding me? That was great. Sure your voice is not trained, so it sounds a
little raw but … But I could teach you, you know! Or … we could practice or … Look what I’m saying is that I want to hear you sing again. Soon.”

Tomura looked down as his face turned red, and Dabi wondered how would this blush look spread across his bare chest.

“You don’t have to say that, you know …”

“I know. I want too.”

Tomura chuckled and looked up to Dabi again, with some worry in his eyes.

“Are you really okay? You’ve gone through a lot today … it’s okay to be overwhelmed you know.”

_Fuck, he is so kind and sweet and caring … His father didn’t care about him, and he could easily decide not to care as well, but he cares so much!!! About everything!!! About paintings, about his dads, about his friends, about … about …_

“Yeah, no I’m fine I’m just tired I guess.”

“Oh … okay. Well, how about we found some bakery and wait for it to open? And then we’ll call it a night?”

On their way to the closest bakery, Dabi thought about what he had said to Tomura on this iconic night on his balcony.

_Someone is going to fall in love with you._

Well then.

He genuinely wondered if a part of him knew back then if it had been his subconscious mind already warning him. Warning him about how he was going to ruin everything soon. Because
everything was ruined now, wasn’t it? If Tomura was to found out about this, he would forever break the connection, the link between them. Love was risky and complicated, and what it had with Tomura right now was pure, simple and clean. Was it worth it? To risk the best thing in his life for this? Probably not. Besides, Tomura deserved so much better, he deserved everything. And Dabi was … well, definitely not enough.

The sun was rising and Tomura was smiling. Gosh, Dabi needed him so much, he couldn’t lose him, not out of fear like this. He was gonna stay friend with Tomura of course, keep seeing him every day if he could. He’d have to bury his feelings, to keep them locked deep down inside of him, but hey, that was the thing he was the best at. Of course, it would become painful the day Tomura would actually fall in love with someone, and when that someone would love him back. But he decided that he could probably take it. He hoped he could at least. And who knew? Maybe … Just maybe … With time …

*Maybe one day he will fall in love with me. Maybe.*

Chapter End Notes

Holy shit ... Dabi was in love with Shiggy all along ... What a fucking plot twist, am I right?

>:D

What else?
Tomura was partially raised by Sako, so he knows how to roast a bitch. (If you played Mystic Messenger and the character feels familiar, know one thing: you're right.) Shouto is a good boy who misses his big bro very much. Tomura is even more of a dumbass than Dabi apparently.

I choose to keep Dabi’s name as his real one in the story, mostly because I think that it's a big piece of character and I'm personally not super comfortable making up a name when the real one going to be revealed in the near future. Also, in this AU Dabi has no reason to change his first name because he is not a villain, so he would only have a problem with Todoroki. So yeah, I hope that it doesn't ruin the story for you!!!!

Also, the fic has a discord now! You can talk with me and other people about the fic, but also shigadabi and bnha in general. We have good stuff all around and we all shitpost!

If you're interested, let me know so I can give you the link privately in the way you prefer (tumblr, ao3 ...)

I hope that the update was enjoyable!!! I personally feel like it's a been uneven but I
hope you liked it! Next chapter we're having a beach episode >:D
Chapter Summary

In which Dabi becomes a masterpiece and Tomura hears a weird noise.

Chapter Notes

Here we are! One week later after what I had announced! Whohoooo!

Seriously guys, thank you so much for your patience and your support! This chapter is a big one and happened around a very agitated period for me! I don’t want to sound like I’m making excuses, but as some of you know, I was moving out these past few days, and I was just generally moving around a lot! At least you’re getting some sort of international chapter as I began it in Denmark, wrote most of it either in Portugal or flying on a plane, and I finished it in Paris!

Thank you so much for being so patient and putting up with my wacky schedule! Hope that you’ll feel like it was worth the wait! Thank you so much for your love and support and for caring about the story like this!!! Now, let’s enjoy the dumb boys, shall we?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tomura was awoken by a weird nose. It was something quite odd, loud and regular, but as he was still half asleep, he couldn’t really identify its source. He moved around in his bed for a bit, getting tangled in his own sheets that stuck to his pale, still sweaty skin. Eventually, he fell out of his bed with a groan, his head coming very close to hit his nightstand. When he finally sat up in the middle of his dark room, the noise was gone. Uh… Well okay then.

But this strange sound quickly left his mind as he noticed something that was even more strange; the alarm clock showed 16:42 … Tomura just blankly stared at the numbers for a while, as if they were lying to him somehow. He had never slept so late in his entire life. Granted he had gone to bed at 6:30 this morning, but was still ten hours of sleep! He hadn’t got more than six since … actually, he had never gotten more than six, or he couldn’t remember. But for some reason, he remembered feeling extremely relaxed when he came home last night. Yeah … Relaxed, and contented, and … happy. And the best thing was that Tomura didn’t have to think for one second about what made him so happy because of course, it was Dabi.

And it felt so good to acknowledge it. For the first time in his life, he had something, someone, that made everything obvious, pure and clean. There was no doubt, no question concerning Dabi, no second thoughts, not anymore. He’s Dabi and he makes me happy.
He grabbed a t-shirt from his drawer to cover himself, opened his curtains and walked out of his room. The girls were obviously up, chilling in the living room, and playing video games. When she saw him walk him, Toga let out a dramatic gasp: “Oh shit, he’s alive!!!”

“Yeah, he is,” Tomura confirmed with an awkward smile, a little embarrassed to start his day so late, “why did you let me sleep so long?”

“You looked like you needed it,” Magne shrugged, “going out all night like a true punk …”

“Hey, I don’t like the irony in your voice, we did graffiti and shit,” Tomura said, a smile forming on his face to the memory. So many good soft memories of the night were flowing back to him right now. He remembered the fun fair, the trash fast food place, that ugly ass Endeavour painting … He remembered sitting between soft grass and magical sky, looking at entire galaxies and millions of shining stars and still thinking the most beautiful and bright thing in the world was lying right next to him. Wait … wait what, what am I …

“This is just in!” Toga chuckled, fingers against her hear as if she was really getting some live information, “local anxious boy stays out for the thirst time of his life and thinks he’s hot shit!”

As a punishment for their giggling, Tomura came to lazily crash on the two girls sitting on the couch, dramatically spreading himself across their laps. They didn’t struggle for very long, and eventually, Magne began to gently pet the boy’s fluffy hair with a smile on her face. The nickname “big sis” had never suited her better than in this moment, as she looked at this boy who just six months ago refused any kind of embraced whatsoever. She was very proud of him.

“So,” she said still petting his hair, “do you want to tell us about your crazy night? Anything particular happened?"

“Later maybe …” Tomura mumbled, but Magne knew that he wouldn’t. And that was okay. It was his and Dabi’s night after all.

“Hey …” Tomura continued, “Did you, girls, here anything this morning? A loud regular noise …”

“No, I don’t remember …” Magne answered after a short reflexion.
“Me neither,” Toga agreed.

“Oh … Okay then …”

But then … what on earth was that loud beating noise?

Dabi didn’t get as much sleep as Tomura that night, or rather that day. He had the vague memory of crashing onto his bed and passing out for three hours before immediately waking up, the smile Tomura had given him hours ago still engraved in his mind, surely forever. He had stayed laid down for a while, between his sheets and the heat, wondering how he could have missed it.

How did I not realize before? How was it not obvious every time I looked at him?

Dabi has never considered himself to be very smart. Street smart, perhaps, he had to be after all, but not actually smart. No smart like Tomura. But it had never occurred to him that his own stupidity could backfire so hard, hurting him so badly. Because he couldn’t shake the feeling that not only he should have seen this coming, but also that if he had, things might be different now. If I had seen it when we first met … If I hadn’t said so many hurtful things, been so unkind. To Dabi’s desperate and tortured mind, it didn’t matter that all these things had happened long ago and were mostly forgotten. Right now, as he was sitting on the small balcony, his notebook between his hands, the only thing he could remember was that night in their flats months ago when he had made Tomura cry.

He could still remember his own words, even worst, he could remember every intention behind them. He remembered being pissed, being upset about what Tomura thought of Stain, and he remembered that he wanted to hurt him, push him, shake him. And he had. God he fucking had. Tomura had cried and screamed, scratched his neck and ran to the kitchen. Jin had fixed everything because Jin was the best, but Dabi had said nothing. Not even an apology. Today, Dabi was ready to kill anyone who would hurt Tomura, but he had done it himself.

“Hey there, you okay buddy?”

Jin had passed his head through the open window and was now joining Dabi on their balcony. The black-haired man realized that he had probably zoned out for a few minutes and that Jin might have been calling him for a while.
“Hey, Jin!” Dabi answered, doing his best to let sound cheerful, “sorry I … uh, I didn’t hear you I was trying to write something …”

Jin didn’t answer right away, but he clearly knew something was up. He moved to sit next to his roommate for a bit before saying “You came home pretty late last night … Don’t you want to sleep some more?”

“Nah, I’m good,” Dabi trying really hard to look focus on the blank page on his laps, “I just … you know … gotta … yeah.”

I wasn’t a good response, but Dabi had hoped that it would have been enough to reassure his friend. However, the blond young man next to him didn’t seem satisfied and didn’t move an inch. Dabi knew that he wasn’t going to push him, but he also knew he needed more information. But he wasn’t expecting the question that came next.

“Dabi are you okay?”

Jin was looking at him with soft worry eyes, awkwardly rubbing his own arm, visibly unsure of what to do next. Dabi was a little confused as well. He obviously knew that his roommate cared about him the same he did, but this was one of the most obvious signs of affection and cared he had ever given him. And for a moment, Dabi didn’t know what to respond.

“Well, I …” he finally said, “Yeah, I’m fine don’t worry! I’m just a little tired … Gotta think about some stuff … Why are you asking?”

“I don’t know …” Jin answered, “it’s just that you seem very preoccupied these past few days. And it’s also … It’s something Tomura did yesterday.”

*Tomura.* Now, just hearing his name had Dabi shiver. *How pathetic is that?* *Fuck.* But he was also curious about what Jin was about to say. What had Tomura done yesterday?

“Yesterday, you disappeared on us at the funfair. You disappeared and no one was worried, *I* wasn’t worried. Well, no one but Tomura of course, so he went to look for you, but that’s you guys’ thing, right? But still though, he didn’t hesitate for one second, and after he left it got me thinking … I wondered … I wondered why I wasn’t worried. My first answer was, *well it’s Dabi! He’s fine!* But the truth is … I don’t think you were fine that night Dabi. And it’s good that
Tomura knows you so well because none of us left the little finger to look for you. And I didn’t like that.”

Jin was nervously twisting his dumb, but he continued.

“I think you’re so fucking cool Dabi. You’re a badass, a guy who never stops moving, never let anyone step on him and take care not only of himself but of others as well. You’ve helped me so much since we moved in together, you took such good care of me, and I don’t feel like I’ve been taking good care of you in return. I always assume that you don’t need my help, that you’re always okay, but that’s selfish of me. I want to be a good friend, and help you! So there. You officially have the permission to talk to me about your problems if you want to. Because apparently, you need one, you dumbass.”

This declaration left Dabi speechless and genuinely moved. It was true that Dabi always did his best to never bother anyone with his problems, especially not Jin who was struggling with his own issues almost every day. So this “official permission” even followed by “dumbass”, genuinely made Dabi smile.

“Awwww, Jin … Look at you being all soft and shit.”

“Bitch, I’m always soft.”

“True.”

They both chuckled at that, lightly kicking each other in the legs.

“So yeah,” Jin concluded, “like you obviously don’t have to share anything if you don’t want to, but I don’t want you to think that you’re ever bothering me if you need to talk about stuff, okay?”

“Okay.”

Jin gave him bright smile, rubbed his shoulder a little, and moved to get back inside. But before he did, Dabi suddenly thought about something odd his friend had just said and grabbed him by the sleeve.
“Hey Jin, uh … Can you … can you just explain to me that thing you said?”

“What? Which thing?”

“You know … About … You said Tomura came to look for me, and then you said it was our… Our thing.”

Jin’s cheek suddenly turned a little pink, as if he had said something he wasn’t supposed to say because it was meant to stay on a certain secret group chat. But fortunately for him, Dabi was too curious about his answer to notice anything about his behavior. So the blond boy tried to compose himself, before giving an answer that was true … but that didn’t give away too much.

“Well … uh, that’s your thing you know? The two of you know each other so well now that you keep catching each other, finding each other … saving each other. So yeah, you, catching him when he falls … Him, looking for you when you disappear … that’s your thing.”

*Our thing. Finding each other. Catching each other. Saving each other. That’s true. Dabi remembered all the time he had caught Tomura when the boy was stumbling on his own legs, remembered especially that time in the staircase when he had been able to hold him so fucking close. And he remembered Tomura’s word on the grass when Dabi had suggested that they might be struck on the same plain together … “and if we’re not, I’ll come looking for yours.”*

He let go of Jin’s sleeve, so the young man walked back in, sweating, and thanking his other side from the bottom of his heart for not betraying him on this one, by screaming what he really wanted to say.

Dabi stayed out a lot longer, slowly caressing the pages of his notebook between his rough fingers. His notebook. Their notebook. Tomura’s notebook. The gift he had offered him for his birthday, months ago.

*“Here,” Tomura said, slamming a solid package against Dabi’s chest.*

*It was the night before Dabi’s birthday, the 20th of June and the two of them were alone in the flat, because it was Friday night, and apparently Dabi couldn’t process that Friday = girls night. Although looking back on it now, Dabi couldn’t help but wonder … did he really not remember?*
Was it just impossible for him to remember that Tomura was alone on Friday nights, or was it the only thing he could remember? Yeah, that was already what it was, wasn’t it? Even back then. Dabi used to think that it was the night in the club that had started everything, but it had started way before that … Maybe it even had started when they had both lifted that motorcycle in a desert street more than a year ago.

But when Tomura slammed that package against his chest, he hadn’t realized any of that yet, hadn’t realized that he was trying to be alone with Tomura by every possible way. He hadn’t realized that he wanted to make him squirm not with embarrassing jokes but with kisses. Damn. What a dumb bitch he was.

Dabi held the package in his hands, his eyes switching from the object to a very blushing Tomura in front of him. The thing was a solid square, clumsily wrapped with some purple paper, and a little too much tape to keep the mess together. Dabi imagined Tomura maladroitly packing it with lifted fingers and awkward hands, doing his best to not turn the whole thing to dust, and suddenly, his cheeks were on fire. Fortunately, the boy was staring at his own feet, so he had a moment to recompose his detached façade.

“What’s that?” he asked as if it could be anything else than what he thought.

In front of him, Tomura crossed his arms and chewed his lips for while. As the image came back to his mind, Dabi realized that the boy’s habit fascinated so much because he wanted to be the one to bite those lips.

“What does it look like, smartass?” Tomura eventually said, blowing a lock of blue hair away from his eyes, “Happy fucking birthday or whatever …”

“Awwww … Look at this good boy!” Dabi smiled.

Tomura almost choked at this comment, and his face turned so red that he had to walk away from Dabi and sit on the couch covering himself with both of his hands. “Just … I … Uh, you … just open it … okay?”

“You know it’s tomorrow right? I mean we’re having dinner with your dads and everything …”

“Yeah, I … I know,” Tomura said, peeking between his fingers, “But it’s fucking lame, I’m so sorry … It’s just… this way you don’t have to pretend to like it in front of everyone … I don’t want to ruin
your birthday by making everything awkward …”

Dabi walked to sit right next to him on the couch, and Tomura brought his knees against his chest as if he was trying to make himself as small as possible. As he remembered this, Dabi couldn’t help but think he should have kissed him back then. He should have just … just spread him on the couch, pinned his wrist above his head to access his face … Anything to make him understand that Dabi would love everything coming from him, his gift, his smiles, his moans … But no. No, it was a stupid, stupid thought. It would have ruined everything … It would ruin everything.

“Well, it’s still a better gift than what anyone will give me tomorrow …” Dabi said, having another look at the package.

“What do you mean?”

“No one ever offers me anything on my birthday.”

“What?” Tomura exclaimed, his hands falling off his face.

“Yeah. I ask them not to, so they don’t. I don’t care much for birthday presents.”

“But … but why didn’t you tell me, the other day in the shop? You … You knew I wanted to get you something, why didn’t you stopped me?”

“I don’t know,” Dabi answered, completely honest, “I think I … I was just curious, you know? Curious to see what you would get me.”

Tomura brought his legs a little tighter to his chest, his expression midway between interest and nervousness. He twisted a lock of hair between his fingers and said: “Well … I hope you like it. Also, it’s just past midnight, so … Happy Birthday, Dabi.”

With a weird knot deep in his stomach (although it didn’t seem so weird now), Dabi unpacked his gift. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting … A joke of some sort … Something generic and easy and … But he the notebook he was now holding in his hands was nothing of the sort.
It was rather large but not too big, with a rather stretch cover so it wasn’t too heavy to carry around. I was falsely covered with pieces of maps and old partition, giving the whole object a soft and pleasing sepia color. It was incredibly soft, and Dabi couldn’t help but ran his hand on the cover before flipping the pages. The paper was dense and rich, and of a soft white that was pleasing to Dabi’s eyes. For a second, Dabi wondered if it was a sketchbook, before noticing some thin lines on certain pages. It was a notebook … no, a partition book. Dabi didn’t know what to say … that was… that was a beautiful gift. He hadn’t even really process any of this when he suddenly noticed something on the very last pages of the notebook. Written with black ink, contrasting with the bright paper, a message was written:

Thank you for being enough.

Happy Birthday Dabi!

Tomura

Sitting on his balcony, the notebook in his hands, Dabi ran his long fingers against the dry ink, feeling the very light shape left by the point of the pen. After a few more minutes of staring at the beautiful yet clumsy handwriting, Dabi let out a deep sigh and grabbed his head with both of his hands.

Man … I’m so fucked. I’m stuck on him. Completely stuck on him.

*

During the days and weeks that followed, Tomura kept hearing that weird beating noise. It wasn’t exactly bothering him or anything, it wasn’t exactly unpleasant. But it became more and for obvious that no one else but him was hearing that noise. It was … odd. It was a pretty loud noise after all. But the boy also had much more preoccupying thoughts. Summer was coming to an end, and it means that the results for the school exhibition wouldn’t be long to come. For some reason, he didn’t know how he felt about this. Last year, he was on the verge of death by this time of the year, barely leaving his room, barely eating, just staying in bed all day, scratching his neck. But this time even though the stakes were the same (perhaps even bigger, considering this year was his last chance), he was living. Going out, eating and drinking normally, actually getting up and dressed in the morning, even painting a little sometimes … He was seeing his friends almost every day, his dads at least once a week, and he was even seeing Giran and Mustard quite a bit. Of course, it didn’t mean that he didn’t think about it, that he hadn’t some occasional bad thoughts about himself, but he was actually too busy to listen to them much. Well … He wasn’t listening too much at least.

By the end of August he was literally seeing Dabi every single day, and the rare time they couldn’t meet, they spent the whole day texting or even talking over the phone, which wasn’t usually very comfortable for Tomura. But he quickly discovered that with Dabi’s voice on the other end, he could speak and listen for hours. So because of this, a silly, self-indulgent thought began to grow in
Tomura’s mind, and for a surprisingly long time, he didn’t do anything to destroy it.

Dabi is my talisman. My own personal protection spell. Dabi is magic.

How could Dabi not be magic? Tomura should have known from the beginning. Since he had first saw him appear in this dark alley, tall and mysterious, with hair as black as the night, and eyes as blue as the ocean … He had been an apparition, like the ones that mortal travelers encounter in the deepest forest in fairy tales. But his hadn’t disappeared nor vanished in the night, quite the contrary. To Tomura, it felt like Dabi was becoming more present and real every day, and it made him feel real in return. When Dabi talked to him, Tomura was no longer just a frail shivering soul. When Dabi touched him Tomura was no longer just the ghost of his past. When he’s with me I’m something more. Dabi cast his bad thoughts and destructive habits away, shielding him from the cold hands of his past that were still desperately trying to grab him every day of his life. And because of that, Tomura caught himself wishing … Would he dare to admit it? Wishing that Dabi would stay with him forever. Wishing that he would never get bored and tired of him, wishing they would never have to be separated by life.

One night, Tomura was alone in his bed and felt his mind drifting away for a bit. In the silence and darkness, he had nothing particular to focus on, so his brain began to play with him, reviewing every reason why he was a mistake and a failure. And suddenly, he needed to have Dabi with him now. Before he could control it, an image came with the thought; the one of Dabi laying with him in bed, covering him almost entirely with his own body on top of him, like a human shield against the demons of loneliness, his eyes and smile so bright that they enlightened the whole room. And that’s when Tomura had destroyed that silly, self-indulgent thought. Suddenly feeling like his usually cold body was on fire, Tomura threw his sheets away, letting the chilly hair of the room cool down his sweaty and exposed skin. He felt ashamed for some reason, but he couldn’t understand why. The beating noise was particularly loud that night.

★

The next Monday, there was a very sudden turn of event. Giran sent a text to their collective group chat, the one that included every single one of them, including his son and Tomura’s parents. He talked about an emergency that could possibly become a very good news for everyone. As soon as they were all inside the empty bar, he didn’t lose a second to explain what was happening.

“Wait, hold on, slow down!” Magne interrupted, still shocked by what she had heard just like everyone else, “You’re talking … you’re talking about the Coruscant Festival? Like … the Coruscant Festival?!”

“Like the Coruscant Festival!!!” Giran and Mustard repeated together, with the excitement of two five years old.
Everybody stayed silent a little longer, processing the news. The Coruscant Festival was the biggest music festival of their region and one of the two biggest music festivals in Japan. Even Tomura knew it was a huge deal, that’s how big it was. And more importantly for the band, it was the festival that had made Stain an international star, and the one he attended every year since then. Even by staring at him intensely from the other side of the room like he was doing, Tomura couldn’t even begin to imagine what was happening in Dabi’s mind right now. He seemed to be taken by a mix of terror and excitation.

“Oh my God Giran!” Toga squealed, reaching a new record of high pitch, and being the first one to break the silence in the room, “What? How? When? Are you … are you really saying that you can make this happen????”

Tomura got a little closer to Dabi who had begun to breathe quite heavily.

“If we’re fast, professional and efficient, there is a chance that I can, yes,” Giran said, “But we’re on thin fucking ice! As you all know, Coruscant usually only accept relatively confirmed artists who already have at least one album, which is not our case. But I’ve been calling and harassing the director for weeks now. He knows me, so he listened, and agreed that even if you have no album out yet, the results of your live shows are pretty impressive! So he agreed to meet me by the end of the weak, and if can give him one album, one physical album, for him to listen to, he can make happen.”

Another silence filled the room as everyone registered all of these pieces of information. That was quite a lot to take in … Toga and Jin were holding each other tightly, Spinner was beating his thumb with wide eyes, Mustard was gently rubbing Magne’s arm as she nervously made her leg jump. Even the dads, both by the bar, exchanged worried looks. Without even touching him, Tomura could see that the entirety of Dabi’s body was tensed, so without even thinking about it he leaned against his friend’s shoulder, and was pleased to feel some of his muscle relax. This time, it was Kurogiri who broke the silence.

“Hold on Giran, are you saying that you have to produce an album by the end of the week?”

“Just one, yes. A model, a prototype if you want … We’ve been working on it the whole summer, and we’re almost done. We’re gonna have to power through and work extra hard this week, but if you guys are in, I really think we can make it happen.”

He then looked at the members of the band, with a question in his eyes. He didn’t take long for the trio to wake up from their nervous state, and for the excitation to take over them. They jumped all around the room, Dabi lifting Toga up in the hair, as they all screamed in joy and agreed avidly.
With one swift movement, Spinner grabbed both Tomura and Jin under his arm, seemingly on the verge of tears. Once everyone calmed down a little, Giran gave more precise and detailed instructions for everyone, including the ones who weren’t part of the band to be sure that everyone was gonna help somehow. They were going to make it happen. Together. Dabi was completely exalted, a bright smile on his face and fireworks behind his eyes, speaking loudly and running his hands through his black thick hair, and the sight made Tomura smile from ear to ear. But suddenly, Giran turned toward him.

“Also, since it’s a physical copy, we’re gonna need the cover, the aesthetic and the design like … in a few days. So Tomura I’m counting on you!”

Tomura choked a little at the information. He already had a pretty good base, but finishing all of his work on such a short delay, was going to be quite a lot of work. But cast away the anxiety creeping inside him, because he was going to do this. It didn’t matter, the cost, the time, the work, it was happening. He was doing for Dabi. But he couldn’t even begin to agree with Giran because right next to him, Dabi spoke before him.

“Wowowowowow! Slow down Giran, what do you mean?”

“Well, what do you think? We need the album by the end of the week, so we need Tomura’s illustration as soon as we can! A few days at most!”

“Giran that’s not happening.” Dabi said, with a completely calm voice, not caring for a second for the silent he had just created, “Tomura is under a lot of stress right now. He could get his results from his school any day, that’s already a huge pressure and a lot of potential work incoming. So I’m not dropping any more pressure on him. No way.”

Tomura stared at Dabi with wide eyes and a slightly opened mouth. But … what is he saying? What about the festival? How can he say such a thing?

“Dabi, I understand what you’re saying,” Giran agreed, “but we have to try! This is a huge opportunity, we’re all going to work very hard this week…”

“It’s true!” Tomura eagerly agreed, “Dabi, we have to do this! I … already have a lot of work done and a lot of propositions! I’ll be fine… I’ll … I’ll …”

“I know how big this is, trust me!” Dabi answered Giran firmly, ignoring Tomura’s intervention,
“Don’t you think I know that? Don’t you think I’ve dreamed about this festival for years? But … but we can always try next year! Next time. Tomura’s emotional and physical health is the only thing that matters right now!!!”

The last sentence was surprisingly loud and almost seemed to echo in the room. Giran stayed silent, as he couldn’t possibly argue with that. But Tomura could.

“D-Dabi you don’t know what you’re saying!” Tomura complained with a strange panic in this voice, “I can’t screw this up for you, it’s your dream!”

“Tomura we’re talking about your health right now I forbid to say that you’re screwing anything up,” Dabi cut him, without even looking at him. His voice was strangely tensed like he was trying to contain frustration. Maybe even his anger. But Tomura was frustrated too and confused, and there also was a third weird feeling adding itself to the mix. Too tired and confused to analyze any of this, Tomura just yelled. It was cheap and week, but right now, he didn’t know what else to do.

“But you need to do this!!! This is your biggest chance yet! You can’t let me and my stupid failures hold off your…”

When Dabi finally faced Tomura, it was so sudden and he was so livid that the boy almost took a step back.

“Tomura, I swear to god for once in your life let me take care of you!”

Dabi’s face immediately softened with worry, and even a little bit of pain, as he regretted raising his voice like this. But Tomura barely got any of it, the sentence still resonating inside of him, filling him up almost entirely. Dabi’s were heavy, but somehow, Tomura felt like he could fly right now. Around them, no one dared to say a word. Tomura and Dabi weren’t exactly fighting right, quite the contrary in fact, but it was the first time in more than six months any of them raised the voice at the other. Eventually, Tomura’s silence became unbearable to Dabi, and the young man mumbled something about needing a cigarette and quickly walked outside. But of course, it only took Tomura a second to run after him. Because of course, Tomura will always look for Dabi. How could he not?

“………………… Like, I know it’s not really the time but do you think they’re gonna kiss?”

“Spinner, I swear to God …”
Although he did have a cigarette lit between his fingers, Tomura couldn’t help but think that it was just an excuse for him to walk out for a bit. Dabi was leaning against the wall outside, the blue flame still on his index lighting his eyes in an almost supernatural manner. For a moment, Tomura didn’t dare to approach him, not out of fear, anxiety or intimidation, but because Dabi was such a breath-taking magical sight right now, that he didn’t want to ruin it with his own presence. *I wish I could paint him like this … No I wouldn’t do him justice. I never can do him justice …*

He could tell that Dabi knew he was here, but his friend still didn’t look up, he seemed very intensely focused on his own shoes. Eventually, Tomura moved to him slowly, not really sure what to say. He didn’t even know if Dabi was upset, or sad, or tired … for the first time in months, he really couldn’t read his friend’s mood.

“Are you okay?” he asked tentatively.

“Please don’t apologize.”

“I … I didn’t …”

“You were about to. I can hear it in the back of your throat.”

Tomura walked toward Dabi with clumsy, stumbling steps. He tries to look determined, and confident, but the tightness in his chest made it quick difficult. He really didn’t like not knowing what Dabi was thinking, because it opened the possibilities that his friend could be mad at him, fed up, tired of him for all he knew and he really didn’t like that. *I know it’s going to happen eventually, but please not so soon … Not yet … Just a little longer …*

“Dabi, please … I’ll be fine. I’ll do it I want to do it!”

“You always do that don’t you?” Dabi asked finally looking at him and there something so awfully soft in his eyes that it’s almost unbearable. “You put yourself last. You bottle things and smile, and
pretend it doesn’t hurt. You don’t want anyone to worry about you, you don’t want anyone to take care of you, because you think you’re not worth it. Well news flash, you fucking are!"

Suddenly, looking at Tomura seemed a little too difficult for Dabi, because he focused his gaze forward, holding on a cigarette with a hand that’s just as shaky as the entirety if Tomura’s body right now.

“And I don’t even know, I don’t even understand why you think that!” Dabi continued, “I mean, I think … I assume it’s because of your dad but I don’t think you want to talk about him yet, which is fine actually, because when I think about your dad too much I get super fucking angry and I …”

Another break, another smoke. Tomura couldn’t possibly think of any conceivable way to react right now. Dabi was angry … but not at him? He was angry for him? Is that what’s happening?

“Dabi …” he just said with a low whisper, “Dabi you … you don’t have to worry about me so much you know … It’s not important right now …”

“What do you keep saying that?!” Dabi dropped both his cigarette and his stern face, and Tomura thought that he had never seen Dabi like this. So fierce and soft at the same time … “What do you keep saying that you’re not important? Do … do you not know how important you are to me? Don’t you believe me when I say it?”

At this point, Tomura didn’t even know what he felt. He wondered if he was going to cry, but somehow didn’t really care whether he did or not. And he could hear that loud beating noise again. It was so loud now that he practically screamed his answer, trying to talk over a noise he knew Dabi couldn’t hear.

“I do!! Of course, I do!! But don’t you believe when I say it to you? When I tell you that the bad, your dream, is more important to me? That you’re more important to me than myself???”

“Don’t say that … Tomura please don’t say … I can’t …”

“DABI DON’T YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT I’LL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU?”

Tomura had not meant to scream that. Hell, he hadn’t even meant to say that. But that was the truth, it was the most irrevocable, undeniable truth … It had almost come out like a roar,
something very raw, and unpolished, from the deepest parts of himself. Tomura hadn’t met to say it, but he had no intention to take it back. *Why would I? Why would I pretend that I feel any different? I would be like pretending that I don’t need to breathe."

But as Tomura was slowly collecting himself; he remained completely ignorant of the storm that he had just started in Dabi’s heart. The young man tried his best to remain calm, to not just pull Tomura against him right now, because if he did, he might not be able to control himself. He might never be able to let him go. He just hoped that the light in his eyes wasn’t too desperate, and his body wasn’t shaking too hard. *It’s … it’s okay Dabi calm … CALM … calm yourself. Stay fucking calm and chill. It’s doesn’t mean anything. It’s not you, it’s him … It’s just Tomura being his usual wonderful beautiful selfless self … That’s what he says and that’s what he does … You’re not the special one here, he is.*

They stayed silent and still a minute, each one calming himself while being completely oblivious to the other’s turmoil. Eventually, Tomura was the first one to speak again.

“I have a lot already done you know. I have the designs, I just need to talk about it with you guys to pick one so I can finish it I also I have so some prototypes for the covers, I thoughts it could be portraits of the three of you … I already have the girls done, I just need to color them … For the rest I … I just need you.” *SHIT phrasing shit holy shit fuck fuck fuck.*

The phrasing didn’t escape Dabi’s hears either, and he felt like he was going to combust on the spot. But he did his best to stay composed.

“Tomura, if we’re doing this, you have to promise me that you’ll take care of yourself. Like, I don’t care if it only lasts a few days, I’ll have the girls watch over you like hawks to make sure that you eat, sleep and drink. And when they’re not here because we’re recording, I’ll send Jin and Spinner to watch you … Hell, I’ll send your dads if that what it takes.”

“Okay,” Tomura answer without any hesitation and a lot of eagerness, “we’ll make it work Dabi, all of us! And I’ll promise I’ll be careful … I’ll … I’ll be good …”

These last words float between them for a while, as none of them dared to say anything. Tomura mentally kicked himself for yet again another unfortunate phrasing, but he was also confused by a burning sensation in the pit of his stomach, that seemed to spread itself all over him in warm waves. He couldn’t tell if it was due to his poor choice of word, or to the blue flame behind Dabi’s eyes.

As they both came back inside, they were greeted by everyone’s expecting gaze, but weirdly
enough, the curiosity in their friends’ eyes didn’t seem to be satisfied even after they explained their agreement to them. Some of them actually seemed … disappointed? For some reason? But it didn’t matter right now; their present preoccupation was to make everything work before the weekend. When they left the bar everyone was a lot calmer, because everyone knew what they were doing. And they were all determined to make it work.

But there was still some worry lingering in Tomura’s mind … He felt like Dabi was still upset and preoccupied and he didn’t like that. He didn’t like not being able to read, to help and make him feel better. For the first time in months, his neck began to scratch again.

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“Dudes … I don’t think they’ve kissed … Why didn’t they kissed?”

“Spinner please …”

“No I know, I know, sorry.”

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The next two days went by the speed of light. Everyone was hard at work and helping in any way they could. Even Mustard contributed, taking most of the shifts in what had become the “special Tomura duty” created by Dabi. He was basically spending the afternoon with Tomura, not doing anything special and just letting him work, but reminding him to drink, rest and eat every once in a while. Tomura never noticed it, but Mustard was constantly receiving texts from Dabi, asking him for updates on how Tomura was doing. Some of them might or might not have been transmitted to a certain group chat. Even the dads took their parts at heart, providing food and support for everyone, and special calls of support for their son.

By Thursday, Tomura was finishing to color Toga’s and Magne’s portrait, and only to make one for Dabi. Which is why, on this Thursday afternoon at 2 pm, Dabi was on his way to Tomura’s flat when he ran into Toga and Magne.

“So,” Toga asked with a catlike smile, “Are you ready to become a masterpiece?”

“Haha, yeah I guess …” he answered not so smoothly, “but where are you guys going? Shouldn’t
you be at the flat with him? Is he on his own?”

“Relax, he’s fine,” Magne reassured him with a hand up, “we were with him minutes ago, but we knew you were coming so we … well, we thought we would give you a little space you know?”

Toga’s smile was now so bright that Dabi could clearly see her sharp teeth. Or at least, he would have if he hadn’t been so stunned by the somehow knowing tone in Magne’s last sentence. Stay chill Dabi stay fucking chill … She’s just teasing, there’s no way she knows … Does she? She’s Magne after all … and Toga … but then … no! No way, there’s no way …

“Which reminds me,” Magne continued, going through her bag, “he’s basically locked in his room to finish some coloring right now. Don’t worry, he has eaten and everything, but he is on a creative high right now, so he might not hear you ring at the door. You’ll need these.”

She handed her keys to Dabi, and the tall black-haired young man hold it tightly in his fist as he watched the girls walk down the street, and as he made his way to the flat. So it was going to be just Tomura and him, uh?

This is fine.

Dabi felt some heat spread inside him but tried to calm himself. It wasn’t like it was the first time they were alone in that flat, quite the opposite. We’ve spent entire days alone there, just sitting on the couch, practically on top of each other … But this memory didn’t help at all. In fact, he found himself to be … god, this is a new level of pathetic … jealous of his past self. He was mentally slapping himself for this because it was by far the stupidest thing he had ever been guilty of but it was true. He remembered how easy things used to be, how he could just put his legs on Tomura laps when they were both playing video games, how he could just bring Tomura against him in a hug when he was cold or upset … And he genuinely didn’t know if he’d be able to do any of these things ever again. I’m too weak … he makes me so fucking weak and soft … I knew it would ruin everything.

When he eventually got to the flat, he still rang one time just in case, but no answer came. He used Magne’s keys to get in, and found the place apparently empty and almost quiet. He could hear a muffled sound coming from behind Tomura’s closed door. Oh my god, that nerd is listening to George Michael again … Fuck I love him … Dabi carefully walked toward the closed door and knocked one time, then two times, and then finally banged three times on the wooden surface.

But when the door finally opened he was not ready.
Magne was right, Tomura was in full creative and working mood right now, and the inside of the room was covered in more or less finished paintings, drawings and other works in progress. But Dabi registered none of that. Not when Tomura was right in front of him looking like this. In front of him, the boy was wearing a fucking tank top, revealing some surprisingly broad shoulders and toned arms that Dabi was not expecting, and of course, that absolutely wonderful collarbone that seemed even more prominent somehow … As if this wasn’t enough, most of the exposed skin was covered in some colorful paint stains, and his hair was an absolute mess and … oh god … his hair was holding up in a messy ponytail. In front of him, Tomura who obviously expected to find either Toga or Magne behind the door was just as stunned and embarrassed as him. But it didn’t help Dabi in any way, because with such a revealing outfit, Dabi could clearly see the blush from his face spreading down his neck, shoulders, arms, and chest, disappearing slowly behind the hem of his top that a part of Dabi just wanted to rip off him. Also, his eyes were even wider than usual and he was biting his lips a little.

Dabi actually took a step back and turned around, because it was just so much to look at and to take in.

“Oh uh, shit fuck I’m uh fuck I’m sorry I didn’t mean I …” Dabi couldn’t even properly speak anymore, and it was his turn to grow pink and to cover his face with both of his hands like Tomura always did.

Behind him, Tomura was just as bashful, and he reflexively brought both of his arms against his chest, covering himself with even more paint in the process. His voice was just as shaky as Dabi’s, but he still managed to get a full sentence out: “Oh shit fuck I’m sorry I didn’t look at the time I’m so sorry, I ready I just shit, I’m practically done I just fuck I just need to change okay I just uh … go to the living room, take whatever you want in the kitchen, I’ll be there in a minute.” And he slammed the door.

After a moment of just dumbly standing still, Dabi eventually made it’s way to the living room. Shit okay, what do I do? I already made it awkward I can’t believe it … Should I just sit on the couch and wait? Yeah, but isn’t it going to be creepy if I just wait for him without doing anything? Maybe I should read a magazine … What am I talking about, I’m not at the fucking dentist or some shit! I’m at my friend’s place! I’ve been there a thousand times … Or maybe I could just look by the window? Or I …

“Okay I’m ready, I just …” Tomura stopped in his track when he saw Dabi just fucking standing in the middle of the room, looking around like a panicked squirrel. “Uh … are you okay?”

“Yeah, I just … I was … waiting … for you.” As if the situation wasn’t awkward enough, Tomura was now wearing a hoody that was way too big for him, his now free hair was a mess of waves and
curls, and he still some painting on his face, so Dabi lost his sentence halfway through. Okay, that's … that's just not fucking fair.

Tomura seemed a little confused, but he still put down his easel and canvas he was carrying. He looked at Dabi with embarrassed eyes from under his bangs and said: “I’m sorry I … uh, I’m sorry you had to see this mess. I got a little caught up and didn’t look at the time. How did you get in?”

“Oh, uh, I met Magne on the way and she knew you wouldn’t necessarily hear me so she gave me her keys …”

“Oh yeah makes sense … Damn, she really is the best.”

“She really is.”

They both knew they didn’t have that much time, so they immediately looked for a good spot to start their work. Tomura needed Dabi to be in a good light, so the young man sat on the armchair by the window, the one Tomura often use himself, and Tomura positioned himself a few feet away with his material and began his work. The truth was that Tomura had dreaded this moment quite a bit. Drawing people was one of his favorite things, he was always scribbling people around him, strangers, family, friends … He had dozens of drawings of his dads, almost as much of Toga and Magne, and even quite a bit of Jin and Spinner. But none of Dabi. For some reason, Tomura couldn’t draw him, which was extremely odd considering the black-haired man was the person he was spending the most time with these days …

But right now he didn’t have a choice, he had to make it happen because Dabi’s dream was on the line. So for the next few hours, he had to stare at this face he knew so well, and find a way to put everything that this face made him feel on canvas. As he prepared his palette, he thought about how painting Dabi was like painting a city by night. It was something he had actually been thinking about for a while now because almost every time he looked at him he noticed this sort of soft melancholy floating around him. He had the same color scheme, mixing the darkest black with the softest purple, and with these little silver touches that made the whole sight so unique. Just like those city shining in the dark, Dabi could seem somber and imposing at first, but the more you looked at him, the easier it was to see that he was made of thousands of shining lights, and with behind each light there was a life and a story. As Tomura began his first sketch, he remembered their first afternoon at the museum, and *Nighthawks* came back to his mind. A desert city, with some strangers in a bar … They all look so lost and lonely … But still … It’s not a sad painting … Every time I look at it, I have faith that one day, these strangers will find the courage talk to each other and maybe discover something beautiful in the process …

Dabi wasn’t a really good model per say. He was quite agitated, even more than usual for some weird reason, but there was a natural elegance in him that completely made up for it. He was
distracted and restless, changing position constantly and moving around, but every time he did, he somehow ended up in a position even more graceful than the previous one. Yes, graceful that’s the word … Dabi is incredibly graceful … How did he not realized that immediately? Despite his rough appearance, everything about him was grace and beauty, from his almond-shaped eyes with dark long lashes that contrasted with the ice blue iris, to the strong but elegant legs that always made him look like he was dancing. And his hands … God his hands … They looked a little rough and callous, but they were also extremely agile and elegant. Tomura was suddenly reminded of the way they dance on the guitar’s strings every time Dabi was playing and he actually dropped his paintbrush.

“Wow! Hey! You okay there?” Dabi asked immediately, ready to get up and run to him.

“I-I’m fine yes!” Tomura lied, “Don’t worry, it… uh … just slipped between my fingers! Because of the paint, you know?”

Dabi didn’t seem fully convinced, but he still sat back in the armchair. But his eyes were now a little suspicious as if he felt that Tomura was hiding something from him. Although that was technically the truth, Tomura actually had no idea what he was hiding. He had no idea why he had dropped the brush. He had no idea of what he was feeling right now.

They kept going like this for the whole afternoon until the evening, a good six hours. They took breaks of course, during which the two of them could stretch, drink, and chat a little. But Tomura noticed that even during these breaks, Dabi never came close to the canvas, almost as if he was afraid of it. Tomura began to wonder if his friend was just as nervous as him about this whole thing … He dreaded the moment when the painting would be done and he’d have to show it, but it hadn’t crossed his mind before this instant that Dabi could feel the same way.

But eventually, they got closer and closer to the end. Around 8 pm, Tomura knew his work was done, but he kept trying to thing little things to add or to fix, to delay the moment when Dabi would get up, walk next to him and have a lot look at how his portrait. But eventually, he had to force himself to stop because he knew that it wasn’t going to get any better than this and that another touch could actually ruin everything. Still on his armchair, Dabi seemed a little sleepy now, and he was lazily twisting his impossibly long legs and playing with one of his black locks. Although his head was turned toward the window, Tomura noticed that his eyes were constantly shifting toward him. He must be getting impatient … I guess it’s time.

“Ohay, I think … I think I’m done Dabi.”

The young man was out of his armchair so fast that he lost his balance for a few seconds, but tried to play it cool anyway. Tomura couldn’t help but smile. God, he’s such a dork …
“Well then …” Dabi said with a smile that was trying to pass as confident, “Let’s see what you’ve done with me, shall we?”

Tomura took a step back from the easel to leave some room for the other. The young men coyly walked to stand in and front of the canvas. And his suddenly his eyes went wide. For a long moment, Tomura was unable to tell if it was a good or a bad reaction. Once again, he couldn’t read Dabi’s mood or expressions at all, and just for that his neck threatened to scratch at any minute, he could already feel the itchy sensation growing in him. Instead, he played with the sleeves how his hoodie to keep his hands busy, but he still couldn’t stop himself from biting his already fucked up lips. In front of him, Dabi was still starring at the painting, but he suddenly began to shake and before Tomura could even see him move, he was slamming both of his hands against his own face, as he was desperately trying to keep himself from falling apart.

“Oh my God, Tomura …” he whispered between his hands, eyes still glued on his portrait.

“I-I can’t make another one!” Tomura practically yelled in panic, “I can try again, I’m so sorry, I know it’s good enough …”

“Don’t you dare,” Dabi cut him, softly but yet firmly. He finally turned toward the boy, and Tomura couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Dabi’s expression was so … so … grateful. He had an incredibly relaxed smile on his face, and his shoulders, which had been tense almost all evening finally seemed let go of all the stress. But as often, just like the night they had first met, it was Dabi’s eyes that shook Tomura to the core. They were … they were teary. No, maybe not teary but bright and … Tomura didn’t know. Tomura didn’t know anything anymore, he had forgotten how to walk and how to breathe, he had forgotten his name and had forgotten his soul. Nothing existed but Dabi. Nothing mattered but Dabi. Dabi … Dabi what … why … how …

Dabi what are you doing to me?

“So you like it?” was all that Tomura could utter at this point, still not breathing very evenly.

“I love it!” Dabi laughed, passing both of his hands through his hair, “I love it! I love the painting! I love your work! I love … I love …”

It actually seemed painful to Dabi to stop himself, but he bit his lips and closed his eyes. In other circumstances, Tomura might have wondered why Dabi had been so afraid to say, what truth he stopped behind his lips at the last second … But Dab just looked really soft and happy right now,
so it was hard to think about anything else.

Dabi internally cursed. Cursed himself for coming this close to ruining such a perfect moment, for wanting to be so selfish. Tomura had just offered him the most valuable gift possible, and he had almost repaid him with the destruction of their friendship. He eyes drifted back to the painting on the easel. It was so odd … Because it was clearly him but … beautiful... bright...and alive. But the real Dabi was none of these things. The real Dabi was nothing more than a corpse, a dead weight dragging himself through life with no desire for resurrection. Or so he thought, until he almost ran into an odd blue haired boy with a borrowed motorcycle on early June, a year ago. A boy that today, had just painted him like a ray of light, like a forest fire, like a city by night, like a sky full of stars, like … like … like a galaxy. Maybe even with a space whale floating in it.

“Tomura, is this true?”

“What do you mean?”

“Is this how you see me?”

“…Yes. This is a little more than that actually it’s … It’s how you make me feel.”

“Thank you.”

After a few phone calls, it was settled that Giran would come to get the painting tomorrow morning, to use his for the album, and return it by the evening.

“Hey, uh not to sound pretentious …” Dabi began hesitantly as he was getting ready to leave, “but, uh … when Giran brings back the painting would you … would you let me keep it?”

Tomura was stopped in his tracks. He wants to keep it?

“I… Yes, of course!” Tomura answered with more enthusiasm then anticipated, “Yes, I … I mean I’d love you to have it. I, uh, I’m not sure … I’m just glad you like you know?”

“Didn’t you hear me earlier? I don’t like it. I love it.” And I love you.
They were both by the door, none of them really wanting the moment to end. But it was getting late, and they had been working hard all week, and they both needed to rest. Still, they stand awkwardly for a few more minutes, talking about the stupidest things, just trying to stay a little longer by each other’s side. Of course, it would have been easier if they both admitted they just wanted to hang out a little longer, but there was an odd sensation floating between them right now, something that stopped them to be fully honest with each other. And also, they were both very stupid boys.

“So … We did it uh?” Tomura said, “It’s Saturday right?”

“Yes, Giran has the meeting Saturday, late afternoon, maybe even evening. He warned us that the negotiation might take a while so, he might not be able to give us the answer before the middle of the night. Maybe even Sunday morning.”

“Damn … It’s going to be a long Saturday.”

They still had to print the album cover and to finish a few things, but they would absolutely be ready by Saturday. But of course, no one could really relax yet. Leaning against the door, Dabi looked at Tomura intensely, coming every inch of his face to his memory, even though he already knew every detail of his face by heart and even though he was going to see him again tomorrow. He suddenly remembered something.

“Aw, shit fuck, I can’t believe I almost forgot to give it to you!”

Before Tomura’s confused eyes, Dabi went through his bag and pulled out a purple Walkman cassette player. It looked quite new and was in a pretty good state. Tomura looked at the thing in the surprise, taking it in his hands.

“What’s that?”

“It’s a Walkman player you doofus …”

“No, I mean … Is that … for me?”
“Yeah … It’s a gift. To thank for everything you’ve done for the band, for us … for me. You changed everything you know? That afternoon in the studio … Everything you said to me, about overcoming my master and finding my own voice. About stopping to try to be the next Stain, because I should be the new Dabi … About being enough. It changed everything. And I’m not just talking about the band here, about my dream … I’m talking about me. You changed me, Tomura. Thanks to you, I’m a better man than I have any right to be. But I’m still not as good a man as you are … So all I can to right now, I offer you this … But the Walkman is not the real present … It’s just a way to listen to it.”

Tomura didn’t have time to protest, didn’t have the time, to grab Dabi’s face and yell that he was the most beautiful, kind and good man he had ever met, to yell that he had not just changed his life, but saved his life in so many different ways and that he kept saving him every time he just looked at him. He didn’t have the time to do any of that, because Dabi opened the Walkman in his hands to show him what was inside.

“A tape?”

“A mixtape. It’s uh … my mixtape.”

Dabi held the small white rectangle between his long graceful fingers.

“All of my favorite songs are on this tape … No, not just my favorites. These songs made me who I am today. I discovered some of them when I was a child, others just last year.” Dabi looked a little embarrassed right now … No, not really embarrassed. Just … very vulnerable. He was holding the tape in front of Tomura’s eyes like it was his own beating heart. “Tomura, this mixtape it’s … it’s a blueprint of my soul. I know, I know it may sound grand but really, it’s all you need to know. All you need to know about me is on this tape. And I offer it to you.”

Tomura carefully took the tape between his slightly shaking hands, suddenly terrified that something so incredibly precious, so priceless, was trusted in his dangerous destructive hands. He had a quick look at the titles written with black ink on the cassette, and his face was immediately enlightened with the goofiest smile.

“Take On Me is the first one!!”

“Of course it is,” Dabi smile in return, “that’s my favorite song of all time after all.” He suddenly looked a little nervous when he added, “Oh, and I should tell you … There’s actually one of Stain’s song on this … It’s just … He still influenced me a lot, so it didn’t feel as honest without having at least this one on it … But it’s the last one so you can always skip it if you want too! I … can’t even
“Don’t you dare,” Tomura sad with a smile, “It doesn’t matter how I feel about Stain. He is still a part of you, and just for that, I’m ready to give him a chance. I would never cut it out from you, so I won’t cut it out from the tape.”

*Tomura why the fuck do you have to make it so hard? Why the fuck do you have to look at me like this and say shit like that?*

“Haha! Okay cool … uh … Well okay then. I better go. Trying to get some sleep and stuff. I uh, I hope that you enjoy some of the songs … Also, I’m sorry I made it a tape rather than a digital playlist that’s what I’m used to. I guess you won’t use this Walkman for anything else …”

“I don’t need it for anything else. This mixtape is more than enough. Besides, this way, every time you see me listening to this Walkman, you’ll know I’ll be listening to your mixtape and thinking about you.”

*Tomura why …*

* That night, alone on his bed in the dark of his room, Tomura listened to the mixtape for the first time, with a dumb smile on his face. He mentally took notes of the songs and bands he really liked to look them up. He also tried to imagine Dabi at every song. How old was he when he discovered this song? Where had he heard it for the first time? What did he look like then? In the back of his head, fitting smoothly with every song, Tomura could hear the mysterious beating noise.

But there was suddenly a very different song. The beginning was just acoustic guitar, but it sounded very raw and unprofessionally recorded. Tomura had a look at the list of titles, but he couldn’t find anything that seemed to fit with this. For a moment Tomura wondered if Dabi had accidentally but something else on the tape, when suddenly a voice started to sing, and Tomura knew this was the opposite of a mistake. It was Dabi’s voice singing, but not *his* Dabi, not really. It was a younger Dabi, Tomura could tell just by the voice and by how he sounded a lot less confident than usual. The song in itself wasn’t anything special, probably just some warm up, but Dabi just sounded so soft and sensitive here … It was hidden in the middle of all of these other songs, like a diamond in the dust. Of course, it was possible that it was possible that it was really a mistake and that Dabi hadn’t meant to put this song on the playlist, but Tomura didn’t believe in that for a second. This was Dabi’s true gift.
Still lying in his bed, sheets thrown away because of the heat, Tomura tried to determine how old was this Dabi … Seventeen? Sixteen? Yes, probably sixteen. It suddenly hit Tomura, that it was very likely that Dabi was still living with his family when he registered this, and it suddenly felt like a heavy weight dropped on his bare chest. He felt like this Dabi sounded very nervous and a little low, as if he feared to be heard. Did Dabi’s father forbid him to see? In a horrifying way, it wouldn’t be surprising. Suddenly, without him even noticing, Tomura began to cry. Soft, salty tears rolling down the sides of his face, as he imagined this young Dabi, sad and scared, locking himself in his room to register something, both happy to found refuge in this and terrified by the thought of being heard. How unfair ... how fucking unfair that he had to fear the one thing that made him happy ... singing is his happy place ... he should never ever ever ever ever be afraid to sing. Never. As the tears kept flowing, Tomura suddenly felt very angry, angry at the garbage of a man that had hurt his most precious friend, but also angry with himself. Angry for not being by his sides back then, angry for not meeting him earlier, angry for not being able to go back in time and rescue him. Tomura tried to imagine what it would have been like to be friend with Dabi back, how different their lives would have been if they had met earlier. Tomura would have been fourteen or fifteen then ... Would their friendship even have been possible? Maybe it would have actually been easier. Maybe they wouldn’t have gone through all this early bullshit. They both so desperately needed friends at this age. Yeah, maybe it would have been nice. But Tomura couldn’t calm down, he kept feeling the tears on his face, as he desperately wanted to jump into this tape somehow, go back in time, and find that young scared Dabi to hold him close, to tell him about all the good things that were to come, that everything was going to be okay, that he was beautiful, breath-taking and spectacular. To tell him that I’ll be waiting for him in the future... to tell him that I am here ... and that I ... that I...

The beating noise was very strong that night.

* 

As Tomura had predicted, Saturday turned out to be a very long day. In a weird way, Saturday began Friday night, as the album was finally finalized and Giran walked into the bar with Mustard on his shoulder, his son holding the copy in his hands. Everyone screamed and laughed, and Sako practically jumped from behind the bar with two bottles of champagne, and almost blinded Dabi as he popped one. Everyone celebrated in relief, but the party didn’t last as long as anyone wanted, because soon, Giran had to go home to prepare for the meeting. It was a reminder for everyone that Coruscant wasn’t guaranteed yet.

Even though everyone was exhausted, no one slept very well that night, and by 8 am, the whole gang was wide awake and at Tomura’s and the girls’ apartment. The only ones missing were Giran of course, but also Mustard, Kurogiri, and Sako. These two were on babysitting duty for their friend’s son, and because the young boy was quite worried about the whole thing (not only for the band but for his dad as well), the couple had decided to take him to the aquarium just outside of town for the day.
Everyone else was hanging out at the flat. They weren’t even doing anything in particular, some were playing video games, others were reading magazines or just plain old lying on the couch. They were all in a weird state right now, after being so active and restless for five days straight, suddenly all they could do was wait. The sudden bad weather didn’t help their mood. After almost a month of warmth and sunshine, the end of the week had decided to be moody, covered, and weirdly cold for an end of August. Everyone had an eye on the clock, wondering what was happening on Giran’s side. Was he ready for the meeting? Was he still rehearsing? They had a microwaved pizza for lunch but no one was really hungry. As the afternoon began, they grew quieter and quieter, thinking that the meeting might have begun by now. Everyone seemed to be in a semi anxious semi-lethargic state. Well, all but one.

Spinner, unlike his friends, seemed to grow more and more restless by the minute. By 4 pm, he suddenly got up from his armchair and took a good look at everyone in the room. They all looked back, quite confused by this sudden movement in this still room, and Spinner suddenly raised his finger up in the air and yelled: “Fuck it!” and straight up walked out the door. The gang exchanged confused looks but didn’t question it, until thirty minutes later, a loud klaxon noise was heard under their window. They all piled up through the opening, to discover Spinner inside his shitty van, looking up at them and honking even harder.

“Spinner what the hell man?” Tomura yelled to be heard, “We’ve got neighbors, you know!”

“Fuck it!” Spinner yelled back.

“Fuck what?”

“Fuck anxiety! Let’s go to the beach!”

Everyone exchanged amused, but still confused look.

“ Spinner, what are you saying?” Dabi laughed, “It’s like … the one bad day of the week. We won’t be able to swim!”

“Besides it’s already 4 pm!” Magne added, “By the time we get there, it will be 5!”

“I hear all of your arguments guys,” Spinner yelled again, “I hear them and I respect them, but I think that you’re not quite hearing my point. Perhaps I should rephrase it … FUCK ANXIETY, LET’S GO TO THE BEACH!”
And so they went to the beach. Their departure was … hasty, to say the least. And as always with Spinner, the trip was … life-threatening. But what had originally seemed like a bad idea, turned out to be exactly what everyone’s needed. Granted, the weather was pretty bad, the air was cold and it was getting late, but by the time they got there, some of the clouds had been sent away by the wind, and the yellow light of the end of the day made the sea shine like a mirror.

They had barely parked the van when Jin and Toga quite literally busted out of the car and ran to the ocean, screaming some feral battle cry. They dropped their shoes and some of their clothing on the way, which involved a lot of tripping and falling head first in the sand before their reach their goal. Unfortunately, their victory was bittersweet …

“Aaaaaah!!! Fuck it’s so cold!!!” Jin screamed as he swiftly caught Toga who had quite literally jumped into his arms.

“Of course it is you idiots”, Magne said with a smile, laying some beach towels on the sand, “The sky was covered and it was windy all day!”

“We can do some sick flips in the dunes though …” Spinner said.

It was an odd thing really going to the beach like this. The water was too cold to swim, the air was too cold for anyone to take off their clothes … And yet, it was the most fun any of them had had on a beach in a long time. Because of the shitty weather, the seaside was completely deserted, and they had miles and miles of space just for the six of them. Just as Spinner had suggested, they did some sick flips in the dunes, a game that Spinner won, surprising everyone with how agile he was. But slowly, the game turned into “who can roll the faster down the dune” or alternatively “who can jump the further off the top of the dune”. Both games were dominated by Toga thanks to her lightweight and fearlessness, and both games ended up with the six friends piled up on top of each other, laughing their asses off with sand in their hair. They also had a quite a few race, and it was discovered that although Tomura was lame on long distances because of his shit stamina, he was quite redoubtable on the short ones. As Tomura ran past him with a dumb grin on his face, Dabi was reminded of their night out, when they had been chased by those douchebags. He was also reminded of how good Tomura looked when his heart was full of adrenaline and Dabi was genuinely tempted to “accidentally” trip, “accidentally” dragging Tomura in his fall, so they would “accidentally” fall on top of each other, and Dabi could have a good look at the boy’s flushed face.

Other games implied: “getting as close to the waves as possible without getting wet”, “drawing giant dicks in the sand for the planes to see” and some plain old sand castles. To no one surprised,
Tomura’s were the prettiest. As the sky was getting darker and the sun closer to the see, they had almost forgotten about the meeting. Almost.

It turned out that before coming to get them, Spinner had bought some beers and some material to make a small barbecue. Everyone was installing the whole thing when Dabi realized that Tomura was missing. He found the boy a few feet away from their little camp, sitting alone facing the ocean. He didn’t seem to do anything, just watching the sea and running his hands through the sand, so Dabi joined him with very little hesitation.

“Hey, are you okay?”

Tomura jumped a little to the sound of Dabi’s voice. His taller friend came to sit right next to him, and Tomura noted that not only his hair was still a little messy because of the wind, but also it still had some grain of sand that popped out quite nicely in the dark mess. It’s a good look for him. Then again, what isn’t? He is just … just always so beautiful.

“Yeah, I’m fine …” he answered with a reassuring smile, “I just needed to catch my breath a little you know?”

“Yeah, I got you … Do you want me to …?”

“No! I mean … No, you can stay, I don’t mind.”

He kept running his hands through the sand. With Dabi by his side, the sunset was even more beautiful … The air also felt warmer. They didn’t have to say anything, so they just kept quiet for a while, enjoying each other’s company.

“I’ve got to admit,” Dabi finally said, “Spinner had a pretty great idea … Too bad we couldn’t swim …”

“He really had. But the sun wouldn’t change much for me anyway …”

“What do you mean?”
“Oh, nothing it’s …” Tomura hesitated, biting his lips, “it’s just … I never swim at the beach.”

“Don’t you like water?”

“On the contrary, I love it! It’s just …”

Tomura began to play with a lock of his hair, avoiding Dabi’s eyes for a few seconds. Eventually, some wonderful, delightful blush appeared on his face, and he confessed, “I just … I don’t like taking off my shirt in front of people.”

It was Dabi’s turn to grow pink. God, what the fuck? Why do I …? He just had to mention taking off his shirt for me to …? Fuck. But he tried to stay composed and natural when he asked, “What? Why?”

“It’s just …” Tomura was really struggling with this one as well. On one hand, he couldn’t believe he had even managed to address this with Dabi, but now he felt weirdly hot all over. “It’s just that I’m so … so weird looking you now? I’m all pale and skinny … and I’ve .. I’ve got moles and scars all over me …”

He almost subconsciously pulled his hoodie over his head to hide his face. Dabi was registering the information. Scars? He got scars? I mean, he has a few on his face, but I didn’t know he had more … I didn’t know he had some under his clothes … There were two sides fighting in Dabi’s guts right now. One who wanted to ask Tomura who gave him these cars that made him suffer, that made him self-conscientious and uncomfortable, so he could burn them alive one by one. The other wanted to slowly lift Tomura’s shirt, to gently strip him naked, so he could gently and sensually kiss every single one of these scars. He’d be soft … he’d take his time… he’d whisper compliments and praising against his skin that would blush and shiver… God, he wanted that so bad. But he also hated himself for being so selfish when Tomura was so open with him.

“It’s okay to insecure about something you know,” he said, “and I know you can’t always help it … but honestly who cares about scars? I mean have you seen what I look like?”

“But yours are so beautiful …”

Tomura had said that very nonchalantly as if it was a universal truth that could never be questioned. And yet, for a moment, Dabi thought he had misheard him. The young man had never hidden his scars, quite the contrary. But although he wasn’t really ashamed of them, he wasn’t
really fond of them either. They were stuck to his skin has a constant reminder of how weak he used to be... And they were still a bit painful sometimes. They made part of his body almost completely insensitive, and with time they had made part of his mind the same way. His scars weren’t beautiful … but apparently to Tomura, they were?

They both turned silent again after that. Eventually, Dabi’s attention drifted to Tomura’s hands that were still playing mindlessly with the sand. Wait ... “mindlessly”... He realized that Tomura was fully grabbing the sand with all of his fingers.

“I really love sand,” Tomura said, having caught his eyes and his thought, “It’s one of the few things I can actually touch … I need to grab something with five fingers to decay it. But it’s impossible to grab a grain of sand.”

“That’s so cool!”

“It really is … I love it … It’s so relaxing …”

“Okay but wait …” Dabi said, an idea growing in his brain, “There must be other stuff like this that you can touch … Like … Like hair!”

“Hair?”

“Yes! Like … if you grab a fistful of hair, it’s very unlikely that the five of your fingers will touch one same hair right?”

“I … guess.” For some reason, Tomura began to feel extremely nervous. “I guess it might theoretically work but that would be …”

“Welp, one way to find out!”

Dabi stood, grabbing Tomura to drag him up with him. Tomura let him, not really understanding what was happening until Dabi took hold of both of his wrists and very slowly moved them toward the mass of black hair. As the penny dropped, Tomura’s heart skipped a beat and he panicked.
“Dabi no no no no no no!!” he yelled trying to back off and to escape Dabi’s strong grip, “No what are you doing stop!!! What are you doing???”

“I’m testing our theory,” Dabi said with a surprisingly soft and calm voice as if he was in perfect control of the situation. And maybe he was. The thought made Tomura shiver for some reason. The blue-haired boy still struggled for a bit, but Dabi was taller and stronger, and apparently determined to try this out.

“Hey! Hey Tomura! Look at me! It’s fine! It’s okay … Tomura please …”

Tomura was still thrashing around, but not with his full strength and Dabi noticed that. The young man’s grip on the thin wrists was firm, but not that vigorous, so although Tomura was clearly reluctant, he could have broken out of Dabi’s grip long ago if he truly wanted to. Now, Tomura was barely fighting, just resisting a little and looking down to avoid Dabi’s eyes.

“Tomura … Look at me … Look into my eyes …”

Dabi’s voice was so soothing right now that it was hard not to trust him. Tomura slowly raised his head, part of his face still hidden by the blue curls, to meet Dabi’s eyes. There were so much trust and care in those eyes, it made Tomura’s knees weak.

“Tomura I trust you. I trust your quirk and I trust your hands. And I … I want to show you that you’re not the destruction you think to be … I want you to touch me … Because I trust you …”

Tomura let out a choked sound, fighting the tears in his eyes, and completely stopped resisting. Dabi felt the small body relax, and slowly raised the boy’s hands to his hair. The first contact against his palm made Tomura shiver, and as he slowly went deeper into the dark mane, Dabi’s hold got weaker. Eventually, after another long moment of hesitation, Tomura gently grabbed a fistful of Dabi’s hair. And just this, just this contact, the feelings of fully touching Dabi even if it was only like this, was enough for Tomura’s body to give a pulse that almost knocked him off his feet. But Dabi caught that, and immediately let go of Tomura’s hands to wrap both of his arms around the slender waist, pulling him close against his chest to keep him up.

“Shhhh … It’s okay … Yeah, that’s it … That’s it … I’ve got you …”

You do, Tomura thought. You got me. You caught me. You always catch me.
Tomura’s hands were still carefully wandering through Dabi’s hair carefully avoiding the scalp. He began to let out soft little sounds of satisfaction, and Dabi’s hold on his waist got a little tighter. They stayed like this for a while, faces inches apart, and dumb grins on their faces. Eventually, all these emotions got the best of Tomura. Hands still in friend’s hair, he gently went to rest his forehead against Dabi’s, eyes closed. The young man felt all sort of hot, warm and electrifying feelings running through him within seconds, just because of this contact, and because Tomura’s face had never been so close to his. Eventually, he got overwhelmed by his own feelings and closed his eyes as well, listening to Tomura’s breathing.

“Dabi …” the boy eventually whispered, after a long minute of silence “Thank you. For this … For the rest … For everything …”

“Tomura I …”

Dabi couldn’t finish his sentence or his thought, because he suddenly felt his phone vibrating in his back pocket. As if the loud buzz had startled him, Tomura suddenly opened his eyes, and immediately let go of Dabi’s hair and took a step, his face turned crimson.

“Shit,” Dabi whispered, “Tomura I’m sorry I just gotta …”

The young man went very quiet and still when he saw the name of Giran on his screen.

“Holy shit …”

“What? What is it?” Tomura got a little closer to have a look at the phone and his crimson face turned white when he saw the name.

“Dabi holy shit …”

“What do I do???”

“What do you mean what you do??? Pick it up!”

“But wait, hold on the others …?”
“Yeah, shit you’re right …”

Then both immediately ran back to their little camp, the phone still buzzing in Dabi’s hands. By the van, the gang was already drinking some beers and they were already grilling some meat. As the duo ran to them, their first reflex was to pretend that they were all very busy, and totally weren’t previously looking at them to the distance. But it only took Dabi’s stuttering Giran’s name while waving the phone in front of them for the mood to shift, ad everyone realized what was happening.

“PICK IT UUUUUP!!!” Toga practically roared with a surprisingly deep voice that startled Jin next to her.

As Dabi brought the phone to his ear everyone went very quiet.

“Giran? Giran can you hear me? Hey? Shit! I got no signal here!”

“It’s because we’re on a coast, go back inside of the land for a bit!” Tomura urged him.

Dabi, Toga, and Magne ran back to road past the dunes. Leaving three nervous young men by the van. Minutes passed, Spinner and Jin were holding on to each other by the fire, and Tomura paced around on the beach. Please to whoever the fuck is listening right now, please make it happen … He worked so hard and he deserves so much please make it happen … But his nervous thoughts were interrupted by a loud collective scream inside the land. And suddenly, they could see the trio run back to them with the stupidest, most beautiful smiles anyone had ever seen on any humans being ever. Magne was carrying Toga on her back and the two were screaming in high pitched voices, tripping on the sand, only to get back up in a second and keep running. And Dabi … Dabi was a comet. A shooting star, a body made of light and fire running toward them at full speed, laughing and screaming and howling at the same time. But Tomura didn’t get the chance to wax more poetry about Dabi’s irradiating beauty, because suddenly he felt himself flying in the air, lifted from the ground.

Tomura didn’t immediately understand what was happening, but suddenly he was above the ground, spinning on himself like a tornado. It was only when he felt the warmth against his chest, the arms around his waist and the smile against his neck that he realized.

“We did it! We fucking did it!” Dabi laughed against his skin, “And it’s all thanks to you!”

Dabi had picked him up so easily and so gently that as they were both spinning on the sand, it
really felt like flying. They were going so fast and holding each other so tight that the world seemed to disappear around them, and they couldn’t even hear the rest of their friends screaming anymore. Eventually, Dabi lost his balance but didn’t let go of Tomura, and fell on top of him as they both crumbled to the ground.

Tomura felt his back hit the cold sand and felt Dabi’s warm body hit his chest. He had a sudden memory of that night in the staircase. He liked that. He loved that. The feeling of being trapped under Dabi’s warm embrace. Above him, Dabi had never been more beautiful, irradiating light, joy, and happiness, shining like the brightest star in the universe, burning like the hottest fire on earth … But the truth was, he didn’t need to be any of those things in the first place. He just had to be Dabi. He just had to be Dab, in all his perfections and imperfections, just had to be himself, for Tomura to finally understand.

“You wonderful, utterly, beautiful you …” Dabi whispered, still on top of Tomura with no apparent intention to move, smiling to him as if he had waited for Tomura his whole life, and gently running his callous hands and Tomura’s thick hair like he was the most beautiful and precious thing that had ever existed. As Dabi did all these things to him, the mysterious beating noise in Tomura’s ears had never been louder, almost turning him deaf. Except that the noise … the noise wasn’t mysterious anymore.

Boom boom.

Boom boom.

Boom boom.

Boom boom.

*My heart.*

There are many different ways to realize that you’re in love. For some people, it happens gradually, as something that becomes more and more obvious with time. You first notice an attraction, watch it grow, only to realize that the attraction and friendship that you feel for a certain person are, in fact, love. For some other people, it’s more like a sudden realization that hit you in the face, as the one you love is literally lying on top of you, smiling and playing with your hair. And it’s not like you never suspected it never felt anything before, it’s more like you’ve blocking and ignoring all of these feelings. But as the realization hit you, all of the denied feelings that you felt during the past suddenly all hit you at once, making you feel like you’re about to explode with love and affection. And perhaps Tomura was about to explode right now.
Dabi … Dabi. Da-bi. Dabi Dabi Dabi Dabi Dabi Dabi. DABI.

I love you.

I love you so much. I love you more than you’ll ever know. I love you like no one ever loved anyone before. I loved you the first night we met. No, I loved you before. I love you when you were a teenager alone in your room recording your first songs. I love so much. And I’ll never stop. I could I? How could I ever stop loving you Dabi, when you’re you? I love you, I adore you, I respect you, I cherish you …And that noise … That mysterious beating noise … Oh, I’ve been so stupid Dabi. It’s so loud, so fucking loud right now. Can you hear it? You have to hear it … My heart is beating so hard for you Dabi. I feel like it’s going to burst out of my chest any seconds now. Good. This way I can give it to you … Take it Dabi … I give you my beating heart … I give it all … I give myself to you … All of me, just for you.

Because I love you. So much.

I am in love with you.

Kiss me.

Tomura had never wanted anything more than he wanted Dabi to kiss him right now. Their faces were so close, and he already had his hands in his hair. All that Dabi needed to do right now was to lean a little, just a little more … He wanted Dabi to put his lips on his, he wanted Dabi to touch him, to envelop him completely …And Tomura would offer everything to him, he would open his mouth for his lips, he would let Dabi strip him completely, he would let Dabi see him bare and open and vulnerable … He would welcome him, let him do whatever he wanted with him. God, he would love him … He would love so much and so hard … If only he … if only they …

Tomura’s mind was a blur right now, and his body was a mess, hot and cold, feeling everything and nothing at the same. This whole thing, this whole realization had only lasted a second, but Tomura felt like they had been lying on the sand like this since the dawns of time. They fitted together so perfectly.

Above him, Dabi’s expression gradually changed, as he apparently got no real reaction from Tomura. From his point of few, Tomura had just stayed extremely quiet the moment they hit the ground, and expect for a delightful blush covering him, his face seemed to be in a complete shock. Shit. Shit shit shit. What am I doing???? I got carried away shit, god he looked so panicked right
“Tomura, I’m sorry I …” Dabi moved to get up, but Tomura suddenly grabbed his arms to keep him still, and Dabi froze.

Tomura had moved without thinking. He just knew that he wanted Dabi to never stop touching him ever. But he also felt how Dabi’s body tensed under his touch. And that’s when it came back.

The fear.

The anxiety.

The self-hatred.

All these negative emotions hit him at once, almost as hard as his love for Dabi had hit him seconds ago. What an idiot … Stupid stupid stupid stupid. What a worthless piece of shit I am, what waste of space … How stupid can I be to think …? To hope …? How dare I? Yes, Tomura how dare you? How fucking dare you even think about him? Ruining him like this? Destroying the thing you cherish the most in this world? But it was only a matter of time and you knew it … You knew you would screw everything up somehow … And you did it in the worst way possible … Father was right … He always said it … You destroy anything you touch… You’re too much … Too much for anyone to handle, too complicated too chaotic too destructive too …

“Tomura are you okay?”

Dabi’s deep voice brought him back, as it always did. For a moment, Tomura thought he had begun to cry and panicked, but it didn’t feel any water on his cheeks. He was just extremely still and quiet, which was enough to worry Dabi. Tomura was never good at lying he was too emotional for that, but there was one exception. He had mastered the art of telling everyone that he was fine when he really really really really wasn’t.

“Yes!” he sake with a forced smile, “yes I’m fine I’m sorry, I’m just … I’m still under the shock … But it’s great!!! It’s so great!!! I’m so happy for you!!!”

And Tomura really was happy about the news, so it made it easier to hide to pain in the back of his throat. But although he thought he had done a pretty good job at smiling through his agony, Dabi
didn’t seem entirely convinced and kept looking at Tomura for a while, scrutinizing his face as he could break out the lock Tomura had just put inside of himself. And perhaps he could … A few hours ago, this thought would have just make Tomura’s heart beat a little faster, but right now, it also terrified him. *How am I going to do this?* He didn’t have the time to think about it too much, because the rest of the gang suddenly jumped on top of them, turning into a giant pile of giggles. Even Tomura laughed a little. But not for very long.

*

The rest of the evening was laughers, songs, grilled meat, and beers. They had called Kurogiri, Sako, and Mustard to share the news, they had celebrated over the phone for a while, and the couple had decided to take Mustard for dinner to celebrate. They drank quite a lot to Spinner’s health for having such good idea, which turned the lizard quite bashful, and oddly pink under his scales. The mood was so light and happy that every once in a while, for a few minutes, Tomura managed to genuinely laugh or to say something witty or to just generally relax. But every time it happened, his eyes instinctively went back to Dabi who looked so gorgeous in the blue light of the fire camp, and waves of adoration and guilt clashed inside of him, making him quiet once more. And Dabi noticed it.

Eventually, it became obvious that everyone was way too drunk to drive home. So they had to plan how they would spend the night.

“I’m not sleeping on the sand it way too cold,” Toga announced immediately.

“Yeah, that’s probably not a good idea …” Magne agreed, “Spinner, do you think we would all fit inside the van?”

“Hmmm … Lying down not sure … We can have someone sleeping on the passager seat, but I can’t move the driver’s seat it’s stuck. And maybe three in the back …”

“That leaves two …”

“What about on the roof?” Dabi asked, “It seems large enough for two …”

“Hmmm …yeah maybe,” Spinner agreed, considering the size of the van, “But it has two be two pretty skinny people … Also, it’s outside so it’s gonna be a little cold …”
“I don’t mind, I have my quirk to keep me warm.”

“Okay, so we need someone skinny up there with you … Hmmm … But not a girl, because we can’t have them sleep outside … So, who’s the skinniest boy? Hmmmmm … HMMMMM?”

“Oh my god real smooth Spinner …” Magne muttered under her breathe.

*

Tomura wondered what kind of bullshit he had pulled in another life to be punished like this. The very same night he realized he was madly in love with his best friend, who happened to be the most beautiful and important person on this planet, he was forced to “share a bed” with him. In that case, the “bed” being the hard and cold roof of a shitty van belonging to his lizard friend.

The thing was large enough for two but not as large as to give them any personal space, and as they both laid awkwardly on their back, Tomura’s left side was glued to Dabi’s right. None of them really dared to move or to say anything for a while. Under them, inside the van, the rest of the group seemed to be fast asleep, and the only sound around them was the waves a few feet away. Well, Tomura was still hearing his own heart loud in his ears. For a second, he fantasizes that it would become so loud, that during the night Dabi would hear it too. And he would understand immediately. And in this fantasy, Dabi would feel the same way and he would immediately climb on top of Tomura to kiss him, and keep him warm, and whisper in his hear that he had felt the same way all along. But that wasn’t real, and never would be … Because why on earth would the shining light that was Dabi, fall for the repulsive chaotic mess that was Tomura? He should already be grateful to be friend with him, already grateful that Dabi would even like him, look at him, talk to him … Tomura should be grateful for what he already had, instead of greedily and selfishly long for more. His neck began to itch, and he desperately clenches his fist, feeling his nails digging dangerously inside his palm.

“Hey Tomura,” Dabi whispered in his ear, making the boy jolt a little, “I think I can see the Golden Whale tonight …”

Tomura couldn’t help but smile as Dabi pointed a random spot in the sky.

“Yeah, I see it too.”

“I can’t believe you knew it wasn’t real all along though,” Dabi pouted, “And I thought I was so
smart … I really thought I was impressing you with my sick fake star knowledge.”

“That was the point though. You just looked so dang happy, I didn’t want to ruin that for you.” Tomura bit his lips, as he thought about the tale of the two lovers, flying away on a space whale, before continuing. “But the truth is … I really wish that whale was real Dabi.”

“It can be real if you want to …” Dabi said, “It’s just like you said, the stars don’t care, we’re the ones naming them like that. The Golden Whale is real if you and I choose to make it real.”

*If only it was that simple, Tomura thought. If only it was all it took … But the whale is not real, and I know it. It will never be real. And I’ll be forever stuck on the ground.*

Beside him, Dabi shifted to his side to face Tomura fully, and he very gently nudged his hoodie for a few seconds to get his attention. The gesture was already incredibly cute, but then Dabi began softly bumped his head against his shoulder, and Tomura thought he might actually die on the spot right now. He shifted as well and turned toward his friend, hoping that the dark of the night would partially mask his blush and the combination love-struck and culpability on his face.

“Tomura, I’m sorry for asking again but … are you really okay?”

*Yes and no. Yes, I am okay because I am looking at your wonderful face right now, which always fills me with glee, joy, and love. And because you’re very close to me right now, and I can smell your sent and it’s driving me absolutely crazy, and also you’re warm and strong and make me feel safe and good. Moreover, you’re looking at me with eyes bluer than the ocean next to us and the sky above us combined, and when you look at me like that, you make feel like everything will be fine. And no, I’m not okay right now, because you make feel things I shouldn’t even dream of feeling, and there’s a desire curling up in the pit of my stomach and I don’t know how long I can ignore it before going insane. I want to touch you so desperately Dabi, I want to kiss you everywhere, to perhaps convince you that you are not only enough, but you’re more than what I could ever dream of. I’m not okay, and I will probably never be okay ever again. Because I’ll always love you and you’ll never love me.*

“Yeah, no don’t worry I’m fine, it’s all good.”

Dabi’s eyes were practically shinning in the dark, as he examined Tomura’s face once more. Eventually, he moved a little closer and Tomura wanted to scream.
“Hey, you know I’ve been thinking …” Dabi said, very close to his face, “Now that we’re ready for Coruscant, I want us to shift all our focus and you and your exhibition!”

“What?”

“Yes! You’ve been doing so much for me and the band, now I want to give it all back to you! You’ve been dealing with this whole thing alone and that’s not fair. So as soon as we get the confirmation that you’re selected, we’re all going to work with you to make it happen in the best way possible! I don’t know much about art, but I’ll do whatever you want me to do. We’ll help you with your presentations, we’ll carry whatever we need to carry, print whatever we need to print … All of us! And we’ll talk about you at every concert! You see the amazing art on the cover people? It’s made by our friend and he is talented and he has an exhibition right now so you all better check it out!”

He was doing it again. Talking about the exhibition like it was already a sure thing like there was no way on earth Tomura could mess that up. Showing Tomura more love, support and care than he’ll ever be worthy of. How am I supposed to fight against this? Dabi what have you done to me?

“Shit, Tomura you’re shaking! I knew it was way too cold for you up here …”

Before Tomura could even protest, Dabi had thrown his arm around his side to bring him close, Tomura’s nose practically in the crook of his neck. Dabi had acted without thinking, out of pure instinct and was about to apologize and let go when he felt Tomura completely stop shivering and relaxed against him, his now regular breathing tickling his neck. So Dabi decided to be selfish and weak, just for tonight at least, and to use the excuse of the cold to hold Tomura’s body close against his. And Tomura hated himself for being so puny and greedy, but he couldn’t bring himself to move. He knew very well that he was using Dabi’s kindness just to enjoy this closeness, and he knew it made him the shittiest friend alive. But just for tonight.

They fell asleep like that. The two dumbest boys in the world, both so full of guilt and love.

The awakening was difficult for everyone, as they had all slept rather uncomfortably. Tomura and Dabi had barely slept at all, the presence of the other being too intoxicating for their mind to rest. But the sunrise on the ocean and the remembrance of last night’s good news was enough to get everyone in a good mood again. Tomura and Dabi even smiled to each other without too much of awkwardness.
Spinner was still too hungover to drive, so it was Dabi who sat behind the wheel, with Tomura on his side on the passenger seat. They were all still a little tired, but Dabi’s driving was much more soothing then Spinner’s, and they drove by the ocean in the morning light, so everyone felt a sort of warm fuzzy feeling inside. Tomura was looking at Dabi, who was brighter than the sun right now, bathing in the morning light, the wind of the road blowing through his hair by the open window. Tomura was so enraptured by him, that he only recognized the song on the radio was when Dabi smiled at him and turned up the volume.

*Take on me.*

*Because of course.*

Dabi winked at him, and Tomura wondered how he was going to survive this. Even though it seemed like the more reasonable option, he couldn't bear even the thought of no longer seeing Dabi. That was something he was too weak to endure. But would he be strong enough to see him every day, seeing him in all of his radiating beauty, and keep his feeling close to his chest? Or would his heart explode before that? What would happen when Dabi would fall in love with someone? Would Tomura survive it? He wasn’t even sure … but that was a question for another time. He cursed at himself. That’s just so typically you Tomura, isn’t it? Managing to turn the most beautiful thing in your pathetic life into the one that’ll make you suffer forever? Well good for you. That’s what you deserve for being so stupid.

Tomura cried himself to sleep that night.

Chapter End Notes

LISTEN

PUT YOUR KNIVES DOWN

I'M SORRY

IT'LL BE WORTH IT I'M PROMISE

YOU'VE TO TRUST ME ON THIS ONE, I PROMISE I WON'T HURT THE SOFT BLUE BOY

also I feel like I tripped everyone with the whole "beach episode" thing like you all thought you were gonna get some naked bois, and I'm sorry, but the beach with cold weather IS MY FUCKING AESTHETIC OKAY???
(I know you all thirsty but you have to wait a few more chapters).

also

DABI: Oh, no! Will I ever dare to touch him again?
DABI: *proceeds to tackle Tomura to the ground and lay on top of him while playing with his hair*

Tomura is dumb, but also very sad so don’t roast him too hard.
Take On Me

Chapter Summary

In which Tomura shies away, but Dabi is coming for him anyway.

Chapter Notes

You fools.

It was never a shigadabi fic.

I was a giant Take On Me propaganda all along.

You all got scammed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Before laying his eyes on Dabi for the first time Tomura had never been in love. But he came very close once.

Most people have high school sweetheart, but Tomura wasn’t exactly like most people per say, so he had something else. A “high school almost”. Actually, no it didn’t work, they hadn’t even been remotely close to being a thing. So a high school … Wish. Yes, a “high school wish” sounded about right.

High school had been a weird period for Tomura because it was the transition between the hell that was middle school and the acceptable, even likable thing that was Art College. But it wasn’t just the schools that were changing, he knew that now, but it was him as well. Middle school Tomura was a mess of anxiety trauma, hormones, panic attacks and food disorder; Art College Tomura was a mess of emotion and panic attacks, that was at least trying to live as a normal human being and move on from his past damages. High school Tomura was somewhere in between. Not very functional yet, but trying. It meant being aware of his lack of social skills but not knowing how to work on them yet. It meant having learned some breathing technic against panic attacks, but still having them once a week. It also meant knowing that you were different and complicated, but still being hurt when no one ever sits next to you in class.

And it’s during these three years of painful learning and contradicting feelings that Tomura had met Chisaki Kai.
Kai wasn’t like Tomura at all, quite the contrary. Kai was handsome, with short brown hair and almond-shaped golden eyes that looked two pieces of amber. He also had a strong jawline and a straight posture that always made him look like he was the most important person in the room. Everything, about Kai was order, discipline and class, light years from the chaotic mess that was Tomura, which is probably why they hated each other during their first year. Tomura had immediately identified Kai as an obnoxious, condescending poser (which he kind of was) and Kai made no secret that he found Tomura to be an embarrassing whiny brat (which he definitely was). Even when it came to classes they were opposites, Tomura shining in arts and literature where Kai struggled, but also failing in science where Kai excelled. Tomura almost never spoke but when he did, he screamed. Kai never shut up, but always talked with a regular calm voice. Tomura repelled people and Kai attracted them. Tomura worried over the simplest things, and Kai was overconfident.

And yet, Kai was lonely.

Tomura didn’t get it right away. During the first six months he knew him in first year, he had convinced himself that Kai was the most popular guy in school, as he often saw him surrounded by other students, and he often heard girls whisper and giggle his name. Of fucking course he is, Tomura had thought, head between his arms, watching him from his own desk, mister perfect with his well-spoken manners and his high posture … and his bright eyes and nice hands … and his cool voice … fucking typical. But as time went by, Tomura began to notice things. He noticed that although the students often started the week surrounding him, they quickly walked away from him and didn’t come back the next week. He also noticed that every girl that talked to him always ended up running away in tears or insulting him. He noticed that like him, Kai spend every break and every lunch at his desk inside the class and most of his weekends at the library. He noticed that just like him, Kai was always sitting alone.

Kai was lonely and cast aside, even if it was in a most insidious way than Tomura was, his aura attracted people to him, but he was unable to keep them close. Somehow, as soon as he realized that, Tomura instantly knew that the boy wasn’t keeping people away on purpose. Sure, the boy was cold, arrogant and distant but … but he didn’t try to be this way. He couldn’t connect with people in a way that was both similar and different to Tomura’s. After this realization, Tomura’s perspective on him shifted a little. He still hated him of course but … but not for the same reason. The truth was that he was extremely jealous of Kai, and when he realized that there was nothing to be jealous about, it left a hole inside him. And he didn’t know what to feel it with.

And it actually seemed that Kai had had his own realization about Tomura because around the same period, the boys’ attitude toward each other changed a little. Distant glances from across the room as they both eat their lunches alone on opposite tables, some very little nods of acknowledgment when they ran into each other at the library. Baby steps really, but for Tomura who hadn’t had a single connexion connection with any kids of his age in his entire life, it already felt like flying. One day during a break by the end of their first year, Tomura was doodling in his sketchbook like he always did, until he felt a presence behind his back. With completely stern eyes and a neutral expression, Kai was standing right next to him and was watching him work. Tomura actually jumped. How ….? What? What is he doing? He never leaves his sit! How did I not hear
“What the fuck do you want?” Tomura asked with a weak cracked voice.

“You’re always drawing, so I got curious,” Kai said with a cold detach voice.

For some reason, the possibility that he was curious about him made Tomura blush and shiver.

“Yeah well …” Tomura hesitated, “You can piss off!!! Like you would care about arts …” Like you would care about me.

But Kait didn’t move right away. He tilted his head to the side, and to this day Tomura still wasn’t sure about this, but it seemed like a smirked passed on his face.

“It’s surprising coming from you …” he said in a low voice, “that’s actually very good. I’m impressed Shigaraki.”

In a panic, Tomura threw a bunch of pencil at him, Kai walked back to his chair and that was it for a month. But in late June, during the beginning of summer, there was another incident. It was a very rainy day, and as Shigaraki left school, he congratulated himself for thinking about bringing his umbrella. But on his way home, his pace slowed down as he distinguished a familiar silhouette under and very small arbor. Kai was back against the wall desperately trying to stay dry and waiting for the rain to stop. Tomura was suddenly of how much of a germophobe the kid was, and although for a second he kind of smiled thinking that he should enjoy this cold shower that would clean him, he knew he wasn’t working that way. At school, the kid was always trying to stay clean not only from the germs but also for anything that could stain him and wet him. And Tomura assumed that that heavy rain falling out of the sky wasn’t fitting his criteria. As he walked past him, Tomura slowed down a little, more by curiosity than any desire to mock him. The golden eyes caught the red ones, and suddenly Kai’s face turned pink and he turned away. What the …? Is he embarrassed? It was the first time that Tomura saw anything else than boredom in those eyes and that he saw colors on those cheeks. It was … it was … cute. Suddenly, before he even decided it, Tomura stopped in his track and with almost the same movement, he aggressively handed his umbrella to Kai, exposing himself to the rain in the process. For a long minute, the other boy didn’t react at all, he eyes just went wide and shifted from the umbrella to Tomura who was getting more and more soaked by the second.

“What the fuck are …”
“JUST FUCKING TAKE IT!!!” Tomura cut, yelling, his hair now completely frizzy.

But Kai still didn’t react. In fact, he looked he was about to ask something else, so Tomura let out a groan and just threw the open umbrella at his feet, before running away, his face on fire. The next day, during the first period, Kai arrived a little after him but immediately walked to his desk to slam the dry, closed umbrella on the table, making Tomura jumped. When he looked up at Kai, there was a weird mix of anger, embarrassment, and gratitude on his face.

“You’re so fucking dumb,” he said with pink cheekbones, “we just could have walked together, no need to be fucking dramatic.” And then he walked away, and the boys didn’t talk again until a few months later, at the beginning of their second year.

This next year, was the year of experimentation. When they found each other again on their first day, they didn’t know how to react, which was weird because nothing had technically changed. But for Tomura, he had become a little harder to ignore Kai, and to pretend like his gaze wasn’t always attracted to him in class. It was so silly really. They had only properly interacted two times and it wasn’t even in really good terms. But it was also the closest Tomura had ever been to any one of his age. So his poor little heart was already reluctantly getting attached, although he was still trying to deny it. He really does have pretty eyes though …

During that year they had been push back together many times, and Tomura who hated every idea or notion of “destiny” was still getting chills and picking up on the pattern. The biggest example was when they had both been convoked by their teacher who suggested that they should tutor each other. It made all the sense in the world after all, as they both excelled where the other failed. So once more, it wasn’t like they wanted to see each other. They were pushed together. They had to. So they met once a week, either in an empty class or at the library, and spent a full hour just yelling at each other, because it was still their only way of communication at this point. It was easier this way because they got so loud that they couldn’t hear what was happening I their own head. That was how Tomura felt anyway. Because no matter how many times he told himself he didn’t care, no matter exasperating Kai was with his condescending tone and annoyed voice, Tomura always fell asleep thinking about his eyes.

But the results were there somehow as if between insults and eye-rolling they both still managed to learn something from the other. So they kept going, and before any of them knew, the once a week meeting had turned into a twice a week, then a three times a week, and by January, they were meeting every day after school, even though they both now had perfect grades by now. And that’s when Tomura began to wonder … Do I want to see him? Do we want to see each other? Surely that couldn’t be the case, considering that they spent their time together complaining. Except they were no longer really complaining about each other. It was how they started sure, but now they mostly complain about… well, anything else besides each other really.

By late spring, Tomura and Kai were walking home together every day. Most of the time they
stayed perfectly silent, but even so, Tomura always felt some heat on his cheeks. On very sunny
after, Tomura mumbled something under his breath and Kai chuckled. It created a sense of wonder
and panic in Tomura’s chest, and before he could stop himself, he screamed at Kai that he was
invented to his parent’s place Sunday afternoon and ran away … And despite Tomura’s
expectation, Kai did show up that Sunday afternoon, he even brought some iced cake. And it was
nice. Both Kurogiri and Sako were very excited about receiving a friend of Tomura for the first
time ever, no matter how many times Tomura had yelled that he didn’t even like this guy. But it
had been a great afternoon; they went outside after lunch to have some drinks in a park nearby. As
it should have been expected Kai was very polite and well spoken and Tomura’s dad like him very
much, and Kai even liked them a little … Maybe he even liked him? Did they like each other? That
one afternoon, as Kai’s eyes were as golden as Kurogiri’s whiskey under the sun, that thought
didn’t seem so crazy after all.

On the first day of their third and last year, something spectacular had happened; Kai went to sit
right next to him. It was their first period and everyone was catching up on summer their friends on
their summer vacation, and Tomura had walked in silently to his usual isolated desk in the back. It
was a ritual that he was used to, just making his way around the hugs, laughs and embraces,
ignoring the burning envy in the pit of his stomach, to found his traditional secluded spot. He sat in
silence for a while, pretending to look at his notes, when he felt some movement next to him.
When he looked, Kai was sitting next to him already pulling some books out of his bag, like it was
the most natural thing in the world. Like they had always been sitting next to each other.

“W-what are you doing?” Tomura stuttered with some heavy blush on his face.

“We both always sit alone,” Kai answered without looking at him, “might as well.”

Might as well. It was far from a love declaration, but Tomura had been starved for any kind of
friendship his entire life, so at this instant, he was ready to die for that boy. It was the year they
sort of became pales. They would work together, not because they were asked to, but because they
wanted to. Kai came to Tomura’s place many more times that year, and Tomura was invited to his
place once or twice. But it wasn’t as fun, so they mainly stuck with Tomura’s. They never really
acknowledged this evolution in their relationship, not at loud at least, so Tomura worried that he
was the only feeling things differently. After all, they just didn’t have a choice, did they? It wasn’t
like they chose each other, they just both too lonely and too insufferable for anyone else to put up
with them. So might as well right?

So no, Tomura wasn’t in love with Kai, not even close. But he did wonder how it would feel if Kai
was in love with him … that would be … nice. Surely. But it’s wasn’t like Tomura had much
ground to base this thought on … It wasn’t like Tomura had ever been loved. But he had read
books, seen movies and even play games; he had dreamt of romance before, no not just dreamt, but
fasitized about it. So although Tomura was a champion is the art of crashing his own hopes,
when Kai looked at him a little too long, or when their skin brushed a little too often, Tomura
couldn’t help but wonder … is it gonna happen? Is it … happening?
But the year, their last year, was passing dangerously fast. They both knew which way to go, one in art school, the other in medical school, and between them, the dangerous probability of never seeing each other again. Tomura had never felt so close to anyone before, and now, he was gonna slip between his fingers before. Such a selfish thought ... such a self-indulgent desire ... But Tomura was seventeen and weak, and just to intoxicated by his own fantasy to try to protect himself from a blow that had to be coming.

“I’m glad you stopped yelling at me,” said Kai as they left the library one evening, “it’s nicer to talk to you now.”

“What do you mean?” Tomura asked, “You’re the one who was always ... well, no you never yell actually ... but ... you know what I mean ...”

Kai had smiled at that. Maybe even blushed a little. Did I do that?

And there was that 6th of June afternoon. The end of the year was so close then, and Tomura grew more and agitated and nervous by the day. But something was going to happen right? Something had to happen ... not necessarily something big and life-changing; just a last small shift in the relationship would be enough. Just a sign from Kai, that not everything was happening in Tomura’s crazy and desperate mind. Please let it be real ... Please, Kai don’t let me be that pathetic. Kurogiri and Sako were on a date, so the two teenagers wear very much alone in the apartment, sitting on Tomura’s bed in the dense heat. Tomura couldn’t even remember what they were doing in the first place, they were chatting, with some homework long forgotten lying on the ground. They were both exhausted by the warmth and their finals, and just couldn’t focus on anything anymore. They had reached this state when they were laughing about the stupidest things for no reason in particular as if they were lacking of oxygen (and maybe they wear considering that hadn’t opened the window all day). Their bodies were so relaxed that Tomura wasn’t bothering hiding his smile with his hands anymore. And Kai noticed.

“I like seeing you smile like that …”

Tomura froze.

“Wh-what … what do you … what do you mean?”

“I don’t know”, Kai shrugged, “For two years you’ve always been so frowny and bitchy ... It’s nice to see you smile. You look weirdly soft.”
Tomura brought his knees against his chest and looked away. *Calm down Tomura, fucking calm down, holy just breath just calm the fuck down.*

“Funny for you to say mister Resting Bitch Face … You never emote anything …”

“And you emote too much.”

Tomura shifted a little to look away and pout some more, but he felt the mattress shift underneath and when he looked up, Kai was a lot closer, with a small smile in the corner of his mouth.

“Besides,” he continued, “I’m emoting right now, am I not?”

Tomura felt excitation, but also panic, rise in him. Had ever Kai ever been this close to him? Had he ever smile to him like that? Had ever complimented him? Why suddenly now? Did he … was he afraid that time would run out? Was he counting the days just like Tomura was doing? Did he tell himself *it’s now or never*? But then what … how … is he …

“Are you okay? Your face got all red …” Kai asked, shooting his hand toward Tomura’s forehead, “gosh it would be just like you to catch a virus so close to the holidays.”

Tomura completely froze, desperately trying to remember if it was the first time in three years that Kai genuinely touched him and reached for him. It almost seemed like a mistake, like he was going to back off any minutes now, but the opposite happens. His hand lingered here for a while, longer than it should have, and it very slowly shifted toward the wild stray hair covering half of Tomura’s face. When Kai’s graceful fingers carefully put the lock behind his hear, reveling the second red eye, Tomura had completely stopped breathing.

“You shouldn’t hide your face so much. It’s not as ugly as everyone say and definitely not as ugly as you think.”

Kai’s hand was still in his hair. Holy shit. Holy shit holy shit. His hand had no reason still be in his hair unless … Tomura couldn’t even formulate the thought properly in his mind. But maybe … Maybe it was … The setting was perfect, they were alone, sitting on his bed … It was almost the end of the year but they’d still have time if they … Tomura closed his eyes.
He’s going to kiss me.

He’s in love with …

“It’s getting late, I guess I should go.”

And just like that, it was over. Tomura’s eyes shot open just in time to see Kai’s hand retracting against his chest. The golden eyes were looking away from him, with some sort of … shame? Embarrassment? God surely that was that … How could Tomura be so stupid really? He had made a fool of himself. But somehow, this wasn’t enough yet, because after a long embarrassing silence, Kai awkwardly moved to get out of bed and Tomura’s hands shot forward to grab his arms. He wasn’t thinking at that time, his mind was a blur, he just knew that he desperately needed Kai to stay with him. But he couldn’t grab him, because as soon as Tomura’s hand was up, the boy immediately dodged.

“Careful!”

It was said without any malice or intention to hurt, and Kai even seemed to regret his word and reaction afterward. But the damage was done. Careful. Careful Tomura! Your hands Tomura! It didn’t matter that Tomura had his pinkie lifted before even touching him, nor did it matter that Tomura showed everyday that he was very aware and very careful about his quirk. Kai saw the hands and he dodged, as he should, what a perfectly normal and reasonable reaction. He had seen Tomura’s hands destroy many things in the past, and now he had seen these hands coming toward him, it was only natural for him to be worried and ask Tomura to be careful. No really, it didn’t matter of soft and desperate that gesture was, it didn’t matter how imploring were Tomura’s eyes right now, because with a quirk like this, you can never be too careful right? So yes Tomura, try to be a little more careful would? Don’t throw your disgusting hands and disgusting feelings toward your friends like this, because they shouldn’t have to deal with so much chaos and ugliness. It’s too much you see? You’re too much Tomura. How many times do you need to break before you finally realise that?

“Sorry,” Tomura said because it really was the only thing to say right now. Sorry for being like this.

Kai kept looking at him for a moment. He was standing up with an uncertain posture, as if he didn’t know what to do next. He looked like he desperately wanted to leave, but also like he desperately wanted to add something else. But eventually, he clumsily picked up his homework on the floor, which was weird because Kai never did anything clumsily ever. Did I really scare him that bad?
“See you tomorrow,” he blurted out before dashing out of the room. Tomura just nodded and a few seconds later, after hearing the flat’s door closing, he let himself fall backward on his mattress and scratched his neck so hard that Kurogiri had to bandage him when he got home.

The worst thing perhaps, was that this afternoon didn’t change anything. The next day, there were no awkward silence or an embarrassed look and Kai didn’t avoid him the slightest. Because apparently, Tomura being a crazy freak was so common that it didn’t even faze Kai anymore. Tomura knew he should be grateful, thank he should appreciate that things were back to normal and that things weren’t ruined. But suddenly realising how truly indifferent Kai was to him really fucking hurt. What happened yesterday … was not special. Tomura objectively knew that. But it was still to this day one the most romantic experience of his life. No kiss, no hug, no handholding, no declaration. Just a boy telling him he looked soft and touching his hair. How fucking pathetic can one person get? ……… well. Actually, no. Not to this day. It was the most romantic experience of his life, until the day Dabi put his coat on his shoulder after the nightclub.

*L*

Lying on his bed in the dark, with just the glow-in-the-dark stars above his head, Tomura wondered why he was thinking about Kai right now. As if he wasn’t in enough pain already, his mind needed to torture him a little more.

The last time he had seen him was on their graduation day, also known as the day his last hope had been ripped from inside of him. It was a beautiful, sunny day and overall, a pretty good day with a lot of laughs, pictures and fun … Of course, it was a little tainted now, but Tomura could still appreciate how beaming and gorgeous Kai had looked that day. He had gotten the medical school he wanted the most, and he was finally going to leave town to begin his adult life. In the days that followed his admission, it was the only thing he talked about, and his usually so cold eyes were beaming with joy and excitement as he was making his plans. And all the time Tomura listened, both genuinely happy for his friend, and genuinely destroyed that he was so excited to leave.

Sako and Kurogiri took them to lunch, and it was great. But by the end of the day, they let the boys be, and the two of them walked around the park where they had had so many picnics in the past. Still wearing their uniform and still holding their diplomas in their hands, they stood by the lake under a cherry tree. It used to be their favourite spot to study together during the sunny days. After a while, their conversation kind of died out and they just stared at the clear water in silence.

“I’m very happy that you got your art school,” Kai eventually said, “you deserve it, you worked so hard …”

“Thank you. I’m glad you got your school too you know?”
“Yeah, I know, I just … I haven’t shut up about my school and my plans and such, so I want you to know that I’m incredibly happy for you.”

“I know.”

“Good.”

New silence, heavier this time. Kai was living tomorrow morning at dawn and his car was already packed. Now or never right? The worst thing was that although Tomura had already accepted the never, in these last minutes together, he desperately wished to hold on to the now. If they were in a movie, a drama or a dating sim, it would be the perfect opportunity. The setting, the weather, the mood … the timing. Tomura wasn’t expecting much, just an acknowledgment, the possibility, the thought that someone, one day could maybe love him. I know I’m being greedy, I know I should be thankful to even talk to him … But maybe…

“Hey Tomura?”

The boy jumped a little. In their three years together, Tomura could count on one hand the number of times Kai had used his first name. His friend was looking at him with some hesitation, biting his lips, and Tomura held his breath. But took another few seconds for Kai to decide what to do because he kind of looked around for a while, rubbing his arm, before focusing on Tomura again.

“You know … I know we didn’t start on very good bases … And I know our … relationship was a little wacky and weird. But … I’m glad I met you. I’m glad you were my friend.”

And that was it.

Thinking back on it years later, Tomura realised that it wasn’t the word friend that had hurt him, not in the slightest, he was delighted that Kai considered them friends. I was the use of the past. Because then he had truly realised that it was over. Over … what am I talking about? It never even begun. It didn’t exist. It was all in my stupid delusional lonely mind. The next day, Kai was gone, and they exchange some awfully banal messages for a few months, some wishes for their birthday, Christmas and New Year. But it their contact slowly died out, of a quiet death without any fight or scandal. Tomura didn’t even mind that much, but it still pained him when two years ago, for the first time, none of them send the other any message for Christmas.
Of course for many people, this relationship and what never came of it wouldn’t have meant as much. It was a high school crush. It wouldn’t have destroyed them from the inside, convincing them that they didn’t deserve happiness and would never find love. But most of people weren’t born secluded from the hero’s society according to their grandma wishes. Most people didn’t spend the first 8 years of their life with a neglectful, abusive father, who brainwashed them into thinking they were too much for anyone to handle, weren’t important to receive care and affection, or even to be fed properly and regularly. These people didn’t purposefully get cuts, bruises and stitches, hoping it would get their father’s attention, only to realize that he didn’t care and that they’d have to try to clean their injuries themselves.

These people weren’t captured with their father by a group of villain when they were eight, only to be saved at the very last second by All Might himself.

Despite Kurogiri and Sako, despite Magne and Toga, despite Jin and Spinner, and even despite Dabi, Tomura had never gotten rid of all these shadows, all of these cold dead heads, grabbing him and choking him in his sleep. So Kai Chisaki had been Tomura’s proof. It had been the closest he ever felt of being romantically loved by someone, which was already pretty sad considering the nature of their relationship, and therefore was the absolute confirmation that Tomura will never be loved ever. No the way he so desperately hoped to be. And for a few years, Tomura thought he had made his peace with that. Some people are just … destined to be alone forever. I’m okay with that … I mean, I still have my dad and my friends, they love me and I love them. All I have to do now is try to never fall in love with anyone ever. This is the only way I can survive this life.

But then there was Dabi, and that was just not fair. Because how could Tomura not fall in love with Dabi? From the moment we met in that desert street, it was over. I never stood a chance.

Tomura was still twisting in his bed when he heard a soft knock on the door, and Toga passed her head. He could tell that her smile was soft bright, but also a little worried.

“Hey Tomu, I'm going out right now okay? Magne already left, but the fridge so there’s plenty of food for you to eat, okay!!”

She was trying to sound joyful and excited. Tomura smiled and nod from behind his pillow but she didn’t move right away. She added: “I know you’re tired from all the work last week, so rest well, okay? Then, we can all go out together and have a huuuuuuuuuge party!!” And then, she disappeared with a “see you tonight!”

Alone again, Tomura whined and rubbed both of his hands against his face. A party. A party where Dabi would show up like the shiniest star, gorgeous and breathtaking, and he would smile at him carelessly maybe even whisper some silly things in his hears. And Tomura would have to smile and endure it. God he’d have to endure his love for Dabi for the rest of his life. With a lazy gesture
he grabbed his phone, and what appeared on pleased and hurt him at the same time.

15 unread text messages and 3 missed calls. All from Dabi.

It had barely been more than a day since their night on the beach, and Tomura hadn’t really look at his phone since then, out of fear, humiliation, embarrassment, and many other things. As he scrolled through the least, he was unable to stop a shameful smile to grow on his face. Dabi kept asking how he was doing, if he was resting well and told again and again how grateful he was for everything he did for him. But the more recent messages were a little concerned and anxious, worried about the lack of answers.

**Bright Star:** Hey is everything alright?

**Bright Star:** I’m sorry I know you’re resting, I just want to make sure you’re fine.

**Bright Star:** Do you need to talk? I can come over.

**Bright Star:** Toga and Magne told me you were fine, but please talk to me as soon as you feel better.

**Bright Star:** I miss you.

The last one was like a stab in Tomura’s poor restless heart. He laid on his back, and began to type his answer.

**You:** Hey, sorry about the super long silence!!! I got super tired and sleepy after the other night, and I basically slept a lot and didn’t look at my phone! But I’m fine don’t worry sorry I worried you!

Tomura didn’t even have the time to put his phone down, because it immediately rang with Dabi’s answer, as if the young man had been waiting feverously next to his phone for the past ten hours.

**Bright Star:** No don’t worry it’s cool!!!! You did so much good work!!! You deserve all the rest! I’m so sorry I bothered you.

**You:** You never bother me.

**SHIT.** Tomura’s finger had typed with a will of their own. *Shit fuck fuck shit please don’t freak out I’m sorry, I’m sorry I’m so desperate and clingy I’m sorry I’m like this.*
But on the other side of town, Dabi was looking at the screen in wide, twisting on his own bed, and his hand came to collapse on his face. *Fuck. Fuuuuuuuck, Tomura why you gotta say shit like this… How do I ever answer to that? How do I even… deal with that?* Dabi shifted on his stomach, trying to find a way to respond that wasn’t a love declaration.

**You:** nice

**You:** Cool bro

*F U C K*

**You:** i mEAn I’m uh I’m glad

**You:** I’m glad you feel that way

**You:** and I’m glad you’re resting

**Moonlight:** thanks

Now it was Tomura’s turn to panic. *What kind of answer is that?? What’s wrong with me??* Gosh, what had happened to them? How come talking, which use to be the easiest for both of them, suddenly seemed so complicated. As if there was something in the air, blurring their thoughts.

**Moonlight:** But ye no sorry I didn’t talk much I’m sorry I worried you

**Bright Star:** no dude its cool I’m sorry I was so clingy

**Bright Star:** I don’t mean “clingy”

**Bright Star:** But you know

**Moonlight:** ahah yeah

**Bright Star:** ahah cool

**Moonlight:** so uh are you okay? How’s stuff?

**Bright Star:** stuff is good

**Moonlight:** good I’m glad

**Moonlight:** you gotta be excited about Coruscant!!!
Bright Star: Oh yes I sure am!!! SO FUCKING EXISTED!!!

Moonlight: yeah me too!!! I’m so happy for you guys!!!

Bright Star: tahnks

Bright Star: I mean thanks

Bright Star: ahaha I can’t fucking read

Moonlight: whaddup I’m Dabi I’m 26 and I never fucking learned how to read

Bright Star: haha nice vine reference

Moonlight: haha thanks

The situation was critical. Eventually, the conversation just kept getting more and more awkward and uncreative and was tuning into an agonizing mess. And of course, not only both of the boys noticed it, but both of them came to their own self-deprecating conclusion. To Tomura, it was the distressing confirmation that his stupid selfish feelings had already destroyed his beautiful relationship with Dabi in less than a few days, and that he had thrown a veil of unease on their interaction. But on the other end, and the similar anxious feeling was spreading in Dabi’s mind. Fuck … He knows … Does he know? He must suspect something. Or maybe not but … It’s all my fault, I made it so awkward … I should never have jumped on him like that but I couldn’t help myself … I was just so happy and I’m just so in love with him. Ultimately, they both hang put their phone down after promising to talk again soon. But as from each side of the city, none of them dropped their phone but instead hold them close to their chest and they curled onto themselves.

Please let it be okay … Please let go back to the way it was … they both prayed.

The door of Dabi’s room cracked and he saw two heads, one with blond hair and one with scale.

“You okay there, good buddy?” Jin asked, “You’ve been locked in your room for a while.”

“Yeah I’m fine, I’m just …” Dabi didn’t finish his sentence. He remembered his conversation with Jin on the balcony, and for a short second, he considered confessing them everything. He eventually decided against it, because no matter how much he loved these two, they weren’t exactly the best at keeping secrets, and he couldn’t risk Tomura finding out about … this. But maybe he could still use their help. Just a little bit.

“Hey … Did Tomura seem weird to you lately? Like … distant.”
Dabi didn’t really understand why, but Spinner grimaced in pain for a second and immediately pulled out his head, while Jin bit his lips. But the black hair wanted an answer so he just blinked and waited as Jin awkwardly rubbed his head.

“Haha … what … uh what makes you think that? Did something happen?”

“Not really … We didn’t fight or anything but … he hasn’t texted since we came back from the beach. I mean we just talked but … I don’t know something felt off.”

Jin exchanged a look with Spinner who had carefully made his way back in the room, before answering: “I don’t know man, maybe he was just tired? We all worked a lot last week, and you know he’s capable of putting a lot of pressure on himself.”

“Yeah I know that’s what I thought but I …” I don’t want to lose him “I just hope he’s okay you know?”

“Well, we’re probably all gonna meet again soon! Give him some time …”

“Yeah, you’re right …”

“Well … Spinner and I were thinking to go play some bowling! Wanna come?”

“No I’ll … I’ll stay here I’m not super in the mood …”

“Okay … But I think we should talk more when we get home.”

After Dabi agreed, Spinner and Jin left the flat. The raven hair boy, shifted on his bed to lie on his back, trying to fall asleep because he knew he would necessarily dream of Tomura.

When Toga and Magne came home, Tomura was dressed but hadn’t left the flat. He gave them a polite reassuring smile, saying he would still go to bed early because he was still tired. When Magne asked about dinner, he answered that he wasn’t hungry and locked himself in his room. The girls didn’t want to force in, or to push him too hard too soon, but they both still felt anxiety growing in the pit of their stomach when they found all of the leftovers in the ridge completely
It was an awfully complicated week for everyone. It was almost tragically ironic that this ecstatic night on the beach, that night during which everything was beautiful and possible, was followed by such heavy and unpleasant days. And the most unpleasant thing out of everything was that Dabi and Tomura didn’t see each other once. They texted sometimes, but it as barely more glorious than their first attempt, and always left them with a bitter pain in the mouth and an acute pain in the chest. Of course, the rest of the group was very sensitive to this shift of mood, grew more and more worried not only for the two’s relationship but simply for the two’s own well being.

The worst thing perhaps was that no one really knew what was happening. There had been no fight, no insults, Dabi and Tomura weren’t even remotely upset at each other, but suddenly, they couldn’t talk, or at least, they wouldn’t. Even the two boys themselves didn’t understand what was happening but they both thought that they did; in each of their minds, it was obvious that they were the ones responsible for this sudden awkwardness. Dabi convinced himself that he had been too reckless with his feelings and affections, which was why Tomura was now so uncomfortable around him, and he kept telling himself that Tomura had now every reason to avoid him and that he should be grateful enough that he didn’t just walk away from him.

As for Tomura he was purely and simply petrified by fear. A fear that was consuming him entirely, eating him from inside and stopping him to form any logical thought. He was completely in love with Dabi. He wanted him, cherished him, adored him, treasured him, respected him admired him … All these things he shouldn’t be allowed to feel. He was trapped in his own anxiety, missing Dabi like a piece of himself, and yet fearing what would happen when he’ll be close to him. Would he be strong enough? He thought back on the promise he made to himself in the van a few days ago, when he told himself that he would still see Dabi no matter what. Looks like I’m even weaker than I thought. Looking back, he thought he was not only weak, but stupid for not catching on more quickly because it would have been impossible for him not to love Dabi. No, when he was … well, Dabi. With his crooked smile, electric blue eyes that were surely made of the same fire as his quirk, his long graceful fingers playing with a pen or on his guitar, his broad chest that was always apparent no matter the shirts, the way he squints a little every time he read something … How could he not love him? Why wasn’t the whole world in love with him? He was so soft, so beautiful, so creative, so passionate, so … so much. No … No that’s selfish of me … speaking like I didn’t have a choice like he was the one to blame … I’m the only one responsible of this mess … it’s all my fault … I messed up … I messed up … I messed up … I messed up...

But despite everything, life still kept going, which meant that the band had to prepare for the Coruscant festival in less than a month now. It was the very first days of September, and the show was at the end of the month. Bring Me The Heroes now rehearsed every day from 10 am to 8 pm, sometimes later considering it wasn’t just band practice anymore but also business talk. And because Tomura’s class didn’t start over before October, he was staying home alone almost every day, waiting for the exhibition’s result and thinking about how much he loved Dabi, both activities
overwhelming him so much that he often forgot to eat.

He wasn’t like he was trying to starve himself or anything … he wasn’t even doing it on purpose … he just … forgot … until the girls came home and reprimand him about it. Then tried to push him to eat dinner, but he couldn’t take more than a few bites, or sometimes, he even completely locked himself in his room when they got home, pretending to be already asleep. He felt guilty about the whole thing, knowing that the girls were only worried about him … but at the same time, it felt wrong and weird to eat the food that one or two of his friends had prepared with so much love when he was such disgusting creep to his own best friend. They shouldn’t bother … They’re so busy with the festival … They should be focusing on him, not on me! …………. I wonder how are the rehearsals going … I wonder if he wrote any new songs … at the fun fair, he said he would write I song about us someday I wonder … No! No I shouldn’t think about things like this! He has more important things to do!

But the fact was that Toga and Magne did worried. They had been confronted with Tomura’s eating disorder before, but never over such a long period. He had been doing fine for a long while now, so they hadn’t been expected a relapse, they weren’t exactly sure of how to deal with it … They couldn’t exactly force feed him, they couldn’t stay home and both Spinner and Jin were back to work. So far Tomura was still eating, but definitely not enough for their liking. The situation wasn’t exactly terrible yet, but they didn’t know how to prevent it from getting worst.

Tomura felt their worry of course. It really bothered him to be such a source of stress for his beloved friends. Which is why one night he thought about something, something that he hadn’t done in years, but that could maybe help him here. On a late afternoon, before anyone got home, Tomura went to grab the plate of food left for him in the fridge. He went to stand by the open trashcan, and he grabbed the food with both of his hands. And his ten fingers. He watched it rot and decay between his palms within a few seconds, until it was nothing more than a pile of dust that slipped through his finger directly through the trash. I had forgotten how easy it was …

That night, Toga and Magne were very pleased to find the plate empty so Tomura did it again. And again. And again. Every time the girls gave him a smile and hug, he hated himself, but did it again anyway. And things really could have spiraled out of control if it wasn’t for one accident.

One evening, Tomura slept a little too long and woke up only a few minutes before the time Toga and Magne usually went home. When his sleepy eyes fell on his clock, he was suddenly overwhelmed with panic, jumping out of his bed to run to the kitchen, and knocking his leg against the table in the process. Still cursing and screaming, he ran toward the fridge to grab the plate, but he felt like he was already hearing the girls’ step behind the door. Tears filled his eyes, blurring his vision and the panic was so strong that he got careless. With one reckless gesture, he fully grabbed the plate, the actual ceramic plate, with all ten of his fingers. His quirk activated on its own, as it always did, and before he even understood his mistake and what was happening, the plate cracked in his tensed hands, falling in thousands of sharp pieces that were now cutting his palms. The pain was acute and instantaneous and the blood immediately began to flow as the food splashed on the ground. With a scream of agony, fear and anger, Tomura fell to his knees on the hard floor,
trembling, and cowered closed fists against his chest. His forehead against the floor, he bit his in an attempt of muffling the cry of humiliation and distress but he wasn’t successful. It wasn’t even the open wound on his hands that hurt the most; it was the sudden and unbearable familiarity of the situation. He had been there before; he had stood in the exact same position with the exact same wounds a few years ago.

Suddenly, he was thirteen years old again, decaying his own food not for the girls, but for Kurogiri. It seemed to be so far away and yet so close. Kurogiri hadn’t even met Sako yet, Tomura hadn’t even met Kai. It was the peek of middle school hell. He was so happy with Kurogiri, happier than he had any right to be, but things were still complicated. It was still complicated to accept the food he prepared for him, to accept that Kurogiri wanted to feed him, make him happy and take care of him, and that Tomura wasn’t the inconvenience he thought himself to be. It was such a weird situation, because he knew that his dad wanted him to nourish himself properly and he saw how worried he got every time Tomura was loosing weight, but he still couldn’t bring himself to eat. Because it’s hard to unlearn things. It takes time to undo a thought process that has been engrained in your mind since you were born. It’s so complicated to be suddenly taken care off.

So that’s when he had started to do it, to just decay his food before Kurogiri got home, so he wouldn’t worry. And it lasted almost a month, before it happened just like it had just happened right now. Tomura forgot, heard Kurogiri’s step behind the door and ran to grab the plate in a panic. Back then it was even worst because, his hands were too small for such a big plate, and he got cut on his arms as well. And Kurogiri had found him on the floor, tears and blood everywhere, and immediately ran to take him in his arms and shower him with soft kisses, whispering that it was okay, that he was here now, that they’ll go talk to some people. That they’ll figure it out.

And they did, and with time things got better. Tomura wasn’t magically cured and kept struggling for a while, but he got better. And things were fine for a very long time. And Tomura wanted things to be fine again. I can’t … I can’t … I can’t do it again … No I … I can’t go back to this … it was so awful … I don’t want to feel like this again … I don’t want it to happen again please no I can’t go through this a second time. What … God what would Dabi say? If he saw me like this … I can’t burden him with this … I can’t let him see me I can’t … Right now, Tomura’s mind was switching between too many things, between past and present, between fear and anger, between love and pain. So he didn’t hear the girls come in, didn’t hear theheir panicked voice, and only realised they were there when he felt two pair of arms wrap around him. They were kneeling on the floor by his side, almost covering him completely with their own warm bodies.

“I’m so sorry …” Tomura whispered after a while, with a broken voice.

“It’s okay,” Toga whispered back, planting a soft kiss on his cheek.

“We’re here now,” Magne added petting his hair.
On the mess on the floor and on Tomura’s hands were cleaned. The three of them cuddled on the
couch and watched a dumb comedy that even made Tomura laugh a little. Eventually they all fell
asleep like this. The two girls were asleep before him, Magne on his left shoulder and Toga on the
right one. Tomura let their warmth overcome him, and after a short reflexion, he pulled out his
phone and dialled his dad’s number.

“Tomura hello!” Kurogiri answered, picking up almost immediately.

“Hey dad …”

“Are you okay? You sound very tired …”

“…”

“Tomura?”

“I … I don’t know.”

“What? My darling where are you right now?!”

“No sorry I’m..! Don’t worry I’m fine right now… I mean I’m at home, on the couch with the girls
…”

“Oh! Oh alright good …”

Tomura hears some noise on the other end, the noise of sheets being shift around and a mattress
creaking. He could tell that it was Sako, moving in the bed to get closer to the phone after hearing
Kurogiri’s panicked voice. Tomura suddenly remembered how much his dad loved him and his
voice was not as choked anymore. Still, but not as much.

“Dad …Papa …”
“Yes we’re both listening my darling.”

“I … don’t know if I’m okay. I don’t think I am. Dad?”

“Yes?”

“Dad, I decayed my food today.”

There was a moment of silence on the other end, but it wasn’t cold not judging. I was the silence of two loving fathers who exchange a worried look. Eventually, Kurogiri spoke again with a very soft voice.

“Just today?”

“… No.”

“Did you tell your friend?”

“Yes, I told Toga and Magne. But I didn’t … I didn’t tell …” The name floats in the air. Tomura doesn’t have to pronounce it. His father knows. “Dad, I’m sorry …”

“Shhhh … It’s okay baby … it’s good that you’re calling us, and that you told the girls. That’s very good.”

“Dad I don’t … I don’t want it to happen again …”

“It won’t. You realized what was happening. You’re stopping it.”

“Dad, can I see you tomorrow? Just the three of us. And not at the bar … I want … I want to see you at home. Can we?”
“Of course. Come for lunch tomorrow, we’ll cook all together the three of us like we use to do. We can spend the whole day together if you want too. We’ll talk about whatever you want.”

“I love you guys …”

“We love you too,” Kurogiri said, Sako’s voice joining his.

*

It’s always funny to go back to the apartment. Tomura spent so many years there, it’s still familiar but everything also seems smaller and cleaner. It still feels like home, but it doesn’t feel like he lives here anymore. His room is still here, bust it’s more of a guess room now, without all of his stuff. The walls in front of the window is still of the same dark purple though, and he see a dark stain on the floor clumsily covered by a carpet. It dates from a failes science project in high school. He did it with Kai. Passing in front of this old teenage room, he looked at the bed where he and the gold-eyed boy sat for that terrible afternoon years ago. He closes the door a little more brutally than necessary.

But walking in the kitchen lightened his hearts just a little. A good smell and a good song were floating in the hair and he walked on the purest thing in the world. In the middle of the kitchen, his two dads were slow dancing and giggling like two magnificent dorks. Tomura smiled. For a second, he saw himself coming back home late and finding Dabi waiting for him. He would smile and kiss him and they would prepare dinner together, and then Take On Me would play on the radio, so Dabi would pass his arm around his hips to bring him close and they would sway to the music and maybe Dabi would kiss his neck a little. But eventually the song was over and Tomura had to snap back to reality.

But the lunch … God the lunch was everything that Tomura needed it to be. Somehow, actually preparing the food with his father made it easier for him to eat, as he felt more deserving and worthy. He and his dad talked about how he should try to cook himself more because he maybe wouldn’t feel as guilty then, but there was also the problem of the times when he simply forgot or didn’t have the energy. But they kept talking and found some options together, as they had done it before. They had dealt with worst crisis than this one, here; the priority was to stopping it before it became huge. When he was a child, Tomura’s favourite book was Le Petit Prince, a story about a young boy living on a very small planet on his own. As he arrives to earth, he explains to the narrator that one of the most dangerous things in the world are the baobabs, because they grow huge and their long big roots suffocate the ground and the planet. So it’s very to uproot them when they’re still small, because once you let them grow it’s too late.

Tomura and his dads spent the entire afternoon uprooting baobabs.
“How about giving a call to doctor Asahina?” Sako suggested.

“I did already, well, I texted him. I’m gonna try to meet him soon he agreed to see me.”

Satoru Asahina was Tomura’s therapist since he was thirteen. He had first met him a few weeks after the decay incident and they had clicked right away. He had followed Tomura until he was 18, they had stopped the sessions because the boy was doing way better, but he had always said that he could call and come back anytimes.

“That’s good news,” Kurogiri said, reaching from across the table to carefully reach his sons hand, “Gosh Tomura look at you I’m so proud …”

“Wh- how?” Tomura blinked in confusion.

“Because you felt something bad happening and you already trying to put a stop to it. A few years ago, you might have let things get worst until it was too late … You would have locked yourself in your and refuse any help of any kind. And now look at you! You’re reaching out and talking to us!”

“And you admitted that you were not doing fine, which I know is difficult for you,” Sako added, reaching out to join his son’s and boyfriend’s hands.

After the dishes, they all they on the couch, listening to some Christmas jazz album, not caring that it was mid September. They all cuddle, like Tomura had cuddled with Toga and Magne the night before. It was funny thing, to see that the three of them fitted together now just as well then did when Tomura just a small boy. Of course, their legs was a little more tangled together now, but it felt just as good to have his dads leaning against each of his sides, Tomura felt just as content and safe as when he was seventeen. It was so uniquely familiar to be surrounded by these two shapes, one a lot… mistier than the other.

They had stop talking now, and Tomura both felt like they had said everything that was needed, and like he wanted to say so much more. Right now, there was still floating in the air, there was … a name. But somehow, Tomura knew that he didn’t have to say it. All he had to do was ask one question.

“Hey dadders? How did you know … how did you know you were in love with each other?”
Tomura was not asking how they met or anything like that (he already knew the story by heart after all), but his parents were like … the one proof in his eyes that true love was possible and real. And even though he already knew that such a love wasn’t for him, he still wanted to know how theirs came to be. The two men exchanged a look above his head. With a dramatic leg movement, Sako was the first to answer almost immediately: “Why, Tomura my boy, I knew right away! The moment I caught your father in my arms, catching him in his fall, I immediately knew! I was immediately, desperately in love with him!”

The men looked at his lover, looking for his approval but Kurogiri stays quiet. He seemed a little hesitant, but finally said: “Well … for me it took a little more time.” Sako stays silent and Tomura wonders if he triggered something. Despite how much they love each other, his dads still have some … let’s say sensitive subject between them. Maybe not sensitive per, but they fundamentally disagree on some things, which is not that surprising considering one is extrovert, dramatic and impulsive, and the other nervous, introvert and calm. Sako is a dreamer and a romantic, while Kurogiri is a realist and a pragmatic.

“It took me longer,” Kurogiri continued, “Because unlike you’re papa, I don’t believe in love at first sight. Lust, yes probably, and I can say that I was immediately attracted to Sako. But love is built on trust and interaction.”

On Tomura’s left, Sako was slightly pouting so Kurogiri grabbed his hand and kissed, which caused the former magician to blush.

“I knew I would be madly in love with Sako for the rest of my life, during the worst date in history. Everything went wrong that day, our car broke, the restaurant was close and then it started raining cats and dogs. I went to found refuge under a porch and Sako to the next store to buy a bottle of champagne. Actually, if I remember correctly he stole it with his quirk … And he ran back to me, drenched in rain, with the messiest hair in the world and the happiest smile on his face. But probably because he had compressed it, the bottle practically exploded in his hands and he was now drenched in both in rain and champagne. But he taste delicious when I kissed him. That afternoon under the porch … that’s when I knew.”

Sako was now a blushing mess, and tried to hide it by burying his face in his son’s hair, which tickled Tomura and made him giggle. But soon, his mind drifted to Dabi. Dabi lying on top of him on that beach, with sand in his hair that was already a mess because of the wind, and with stars in his eyes. He wish he could have followed his dads example and kissed him then. He wondered how Dabi tasted, no not how because he had to taste wonderful, but what he tasted. Cigarette? Smoke? Mint? Music? How he wished he could know.

“It’s been a while you haven’t seen each other right?” Kurogiri asked, probably reading his mind.
Because who else could it be really? His fathers obviously knew way before he did. Maybe they even knew since that first night at the bar, when they had all danced on George Michael. Because Tomura didn’t doubt for a second that he already loved Dabi back then. He was just that dumb.

“We haven’t seen each other since the confirmation for Coruscant. But we’re texting though! And I mean he’s busy you know And I’m … I’m … well.”

“Whatever is happening between the two of you right now,” Kurogiri said petting his hair, “you should confront it. Talk about it …”

Tomura felt a weird shiver run over him. He sunk deep into the couch, and his two fathers shifted to wrap themselves around him always completely.

“I love him so much …” Tomura whispered with a choked voice against both of his dads chest.

“We know son,” they answered together.

*

Dabi almost fell asleep on the counter of the music shop that day. This was an especially slow day and he barely got any sleep last night, as he almost always did these days and he had to shamefully admit that … well it wasn’t just because of the work for Coruscant. Dabi had been going out this past few days, passing by some bar or even some club after the work, before going home around 4 or 5 am. But he wasn’t going out for fun … quite the contrary, in fact he even hated himself for acting like this. Almost every time he got home, he would find Jin sleeping on the couch and about twelve missing calls on his own phone. But the truth was, that getting completely hammered on some dark random dance floor was a lot easier than having a talk with Jin and Spinner like he had promised. So yeah, he was avoiding them, but he was also avoiding himself. His thoughts, fears and desires that all turned around the same person. It was almost as he was unconsciously making sure that he was either too busy, too drunk or too tired. Anything to not think about the fact that he and Tomura were avoiding each other.

He rested his burning forehead on the cold counter. He missed him so much, and yet, he couldn’t contact him for the life of him. He began to fear that this was gonna last forever, he genuinely feared that he would actually never see Tomura ever again. His chest was starting to get tight when he heard the bell of the door, signalling a costumer was coming in. He didn’t lift his head right away, fantasizing for a second that it was Tomura walking pass that door, looking more gorgeous than ever, and he would walk to the counter and smile and maybe kiss Dabi I mean who knows. However when he raised his head, it was obviously not Tomura in front of him but …
… it was Magne.

Dabi’s tired eyes went wide, and he looked at his friend in confusion, his hair still a mess after his improvised nap on the counter. That wasn’t a bad surprise or anything, just weird. Magne didn’t leave in the neighbourhood, and it wasn’t one of their working days. He might be tired, but he still trusted his memory, and he didn’t remember anything about the two of them meeting. The other that was weird was that Magne looked … no pissed exactly but … just very very very done. Yep … \textit{That’s the look she gave me that time I showed up with a bloody nose at our rehearsal. But like … ten times worst.}

“You look like shit,” Magne said without any more salutations. There wasn’t any venom in her voice she was just stating a fact.

“You look gorgeous on the other hand …” Dabi said honestly, barely lifting himself from the counter.

“Yes and the water is wet.”

She gave Dabi a closer look inspecting him from head to toes and she let out a deep sigh.

“Still working here?” she asked.

“Well yeah, the band as been working well, but it’s safer you? At least until Coruscant. Or until or first actual album. Beside, the owner has always been good to me, I don’t want to drop him like that …”

“Hmmm … And this has nothing to do with your violent desire to avoid your best friend Tomura at any cost?”

\textit{Ouch.} Dabi received it like a literal blow in his stomach and he took a step back and straightened his back. Magne didn’t winced one bit, there wasn’t even any pride or gloating in her eyes, she kept staring at Dabi with the same eyes.

“Can I help you with something Magne?” Dabi ask with a slight bitterness.
And suddenly, Dabi knew shit was real, because Magne sighed again, and they *she took off her glasses*. It only lasted a second, she rubbed her eyes for a while and put them back on, but Dabi felt *actual fear* in the pit of his stomach.

“Basically Dabi, I’m done with the bullshit, okay?”

Dabi tried to look still and calmed but this sentence, and the tone, really shook him. He began to feel a little nervous.

“Uuuuh … okay. So, do you want to do this here or …?”

“No. There’s a little café down the street. Once you’re done here, we’ll go talk there. I’ll be waiting outside.”

They both a little table in the back. Magne ordered tea for both of them, without letting Dabi any chance to protest. He realized that she had to be aware of his drunk sleepless night, and this was both a passive aggressive way to let him know that, but also a way to take care of him. They both stayed silent until their drinks were put in front of them.

“So,” Dabi said playing with his spoon, “*done with the bullshit, uh?*”

“You know exactly why I came to see you today Dabi.”

“Jin and Spinner told you about the drinking, and the nights out?”

“Yes they did, but also I’m not fucking dumb Dabi, I see you every fucking day. And like, I won’t even go into detail about how it could fucked up the band, because you’re actually legit careful about that, and you’re still incredibly productive somehow? I don’t know you’re weird.”

She cast the compliment away with the back of her hand, but Dabi couldn’t help but smile a little as he took a sip of tea and he suddenly wonder he Magne had ordered tea only so she could throw some shades by sipping like a boss.
“But yeah … I don’t think I need to tell you that they’re both incredibly worried. And I’m worried too Dabs. Because, that’s … that’s something you use to do a lot. During some of your bad times.”

Dabi knew she was right. He recognized his own behaviour. He could still honestly say that was happening right now wasn’t nearly as bad as it use to be, but he knew he on a dangerous path right now. Playing with fire. He was going back to his old desire of just completely anaesthetize himself, until everything about him was numb in painless. But then … then he had met Magne, Toga, Jin, Spinner… Tomura. And suddenly, feeling things wasn’t so bad. Suddenly pain, grief and remorse weren’t so big next to the joy, laughers and bright perspectives of the future. But now … now he was terrified to be in pain again. But also knew he couldn’t let himself fall back. He just couldn’t go back in hell.

“Actually,” Magne continued, “this is not specifically what I came to talk about.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that this whole thing is just the symptom of a deeper, more important pain.”

She leaned a little forward. Her face was a little softer now but she was still firm and determined. Dabi was already seeing Tomura’s blue hair floating in his mind. He dropped his spoon to play with his tea bag for a bit. He was trying to stop playing with his staples because it always worried Tomura a little when he did.

“Dabi listen to me. I’m talking to you both as yours and Tomura’s friends right now. I don’t what’s happening between the two of you right now. Hell, I don’t even know what has been happening between the two of your this year! And I don’t even need to know, because this is between the two of you, okay? But there’s one thing I do know: you both care about each other so fucking much. So what’s happening here? Why are you both so fucking miserable? You see, usually, I would let the two of you deal with it. But right now, you’re both in absolute pain. So now it becomes my problem.”

“What did you just say?”

Dabi almost dropped his cup to the ground and Magne blinked in confusion before asking: “What? What do you mean?”

“You just said, right now you’re both in absolute pain. Why the fuck did you say both Magne?”
The red-haired girl bite her lips, as if she regretted her sentence. But in front of her Dabi was waiting for an answer, holding on to the table so tightly that his knuckled turned white.

“Okay, before I tell you anything, I need you to know and remember that he is fine right now.”

“Magne …”

“He’s fine. Well he … look he is not in danger” She almost added anymore but stopped herself just in time. In front of her, Dabi suddenly looked like he was on the verge of death.

“Okay he …” she tried to thought about a good way to put it, but she quickly realized there was none, so she decided to rip the bandage quickly; “he had a relapse.”

Magne didn’t have the time to precise that it was about his eating disorder, because of course Dabi knew that, but also because the young men violently punch their table, shaking the cups and attracting everyone’s attention. But Dabi didn’t care about those strangers’ eyes. He buried his face in his two hands, so Magne couldn’t see his expression, she could see his should rise and hear his heavy breathing. He looked both incredibly livid and incredibly vulnerable. By instinct, Magne reached out to him, offering her hand and by instinct, Dabi grabbed it and held it tight.

“Dabi … Dabi listen to me … he’s going to be fine. He is strong. He saw it, he saw what was happening and he is putting a stop to it as we speak. He told Toga and me. He told his dads. He went back to see his therapist. We’re being more careful. Mustard comes spend the day with him whenever he can.”

Dabi let out a deep sound that sounded something between a grunt and I sigh of relieve. But he didn’t let go of Magne’s hand, even when he slowly left his head. He wasn’t crying, but god, Magne had probably never saw him so close. She saw him open his mouth, but she knew what was coming, so she cut him.

“Okay so before you try to pull some fuckery, know this: this is not your fault.”

“It is …” he sounded like he was in physical pain. And maybe he was.
“No. No it’s not. Tomura has his own issues, and they’re rooted deep, from waaaay before he even met you. Beside we were here, we all missed it. You didn’t do anything wrong.”

“I should have been there … I should have been there for him …”

“Dabi please listen I …” Magne took a deep breath. One day, these boys were going to kill her. Also they owed her a life supply of tea. “Dabi, yes it’s true you weren’t there. But it’s done. So now, I need you to let this go and think about what you can do now.”

Dabi let go of her hand to rub his face with both of his hands. He stared at the void for a whole minute and Magne let him be. After a while, Dabi finally spoke with a very small and breakable voice: “I miss him so fucking much … I … I need him.”

“I know you do. And trust me, he needs you too. Gosh, he needs you so fucking bad. So here’s what I’m thinking: how about in two days, we have a dinner a tour flat, just you, Tomura, Toga and me? Just the four of us. This way, the two of you are not immediately left alone we’ll be here for support. But also, we’re not too many and not too loud, so the both of you can still have a private talk. What do you?”

Dabi nodding slowly. Yes, it sounded pretty good. Although right now, maybe he wasn’t really objective, because he just desperately needed to see Tomura. They stayed silent a little longer, but eventually Magne gave a little tap on the top of his head.

“Tssssk … I can’t believe that you’re so worried about him that you didn’t even recognize the place …”

Dabi blinked a few times and had a look around. It suddenly hit him: “Holy fuck … that’s where you and I created the band!”

“It sure is you dumb bitch.”

Dabi was suddenly taken back three years back. He was a young, struggling guitarist, desperately trying to make a name for himself for years, and trying to figure out who he was. And then one day, he went to a jam session downtown, and met this incredibly cool and talented bassist. He had been trying to get her attention the whole night, and had managed to ask her to meet the next day in a little café. They had both talked for hours, about their, their experience, their taste, their music. Dabi explained to her what kind of music he wanted to make and what his influence, which was
just an elaborate way to beg her to create a band with him. When he was done talking, she had just
gave him a knowing smile and said.

“I like you Dabi. You’re crazy. But ... I know a girl even crazier than you. And we’re gonna need a
drummer.”

*

Although Tomura had agreed to the dinner, when the night came, he was absolutely not ready for
it. In a way, it reminded him of that night when he had first met Jin at Dabi’s flat and how nervous
he was back then. But it was so weird to think back on this night because it was when he thought
he hated Dabi, which a completely foreign and inconceivable for him today. He was nervous to see
him, not because he hated him, but because he loved him so god damn much.

And when he saw him, when he opened the door and looked right into his eyes, it was just as
painful has he had expected it to be. He is even more beautiful than I remembered ... fuck it’s
barely been two weeks and it feels like years ... I’m ... I’m addicted. Did he get even more
beautiful? Fuck ... He did it. He smiled at me. It's over for me. It used to be so easy, why did I have
to make it so difficult? He felt his heart beating so fucking loud in his chest, it was miracle no one
else heard it. Boo boom.

Too shaken by Dabi’s entire being, by the light and grace radiating from him, what Tomura missed
was the look of utter love, adoration and worry in the blue eyes. Fuck he’s here. God I missed him
so much. But he ... fuck he looks so skinny ... and tired. God does he even sleep? Magne said he
was fine I need to calm down. But during the whole dinner, Dabi couldn’t help himself. He stared.
God did he stare at Tomura that night. Looking at every bite of food he took, constantly checking
his plate, counting how many times he yawned ... And Dabi’s eyes always drifted back to
Tomura’s neck, but not for the usual reasons. He was looking at the scars, not the ones he knew
and cherished, but the new ones. The fresh ones, still a little red. He took a lot of strength for Dabi
to not throw himself across the table to try to kiss them better.

And across him, Tomura felt that look. He felt Dabi’s gaze run over him, almost quite literally
burning his skin. Tomura knew what he looked like these days, he knew he was even more
disgusting than usual, but he had been able to handle it thanks to his therapy sessions, thanks to his
friends and family. But in a terrible ironic way, Dabi’s gaze was all it took to destroy that growing
confidence. And because Tomura was desperately trying to avoid his eyes, he missed it again: the
love, the concern, the desire ... In Tomura’s mind, it couldn’t be anything else than pity and
disgust, so that’s what he felt on his skin.

To the exterior eyes of Toga and Magne, the dinner went quite well. It truly wasn’t that bad,
considering that Tomura and Dabi managed to talk, have some conversations and even some
laughs and the girls thought that it already was some big progress. But the boys were still feeling that thickness in the air, the one that deformed their words and emotions, and turned all the love they were trying to express into a rambling mess. It was good to see each other, but the realisation that even that wasn’t enough to make things good again, was a terrible and painful blow for the two of them.

After the desert, Tomura was the first to get up and he apologized, saying that he was tired and that he’d rather go to bed right away. Dabi watched him disappear behind his door, and he truly hurt to see him disappear so quickly when he had just found him again. Calm down Dabi it’s not necessarily you. He is just fucking tired, he is not avoiding you. You’re fucking unbelievable, you worried about his sleep the whole night, and when he goes to bed early you freak out. Dabi stayed a little late to help the girls clean and do the dishes. Eventually, he decided to be a gentleman, and told the girl to go to sleep as he finished the cleaning. He was rewarded with a kiss on each cheek.

Once it was done around 1 am, Dabi let out a deep grunt leaning against the sink. He had naively hoped that somehow, seeing Tomura again, looking his bright ruby eyes, was going to fix everything. As if Tomura was magical. Well, Tomura probably was, the problem was Dabi, as usual. He cursed his wishful thinking and made his way to the door, his coat under his arm, when suddenly, he eyes caught something. A ray of light under Tomura’s door.

Fuck. He’s not sleeping.

Dabi wasn’t that surprised when his legs led him to the door against his will, because if he already knew he had a very poor impulse control, he had learn this year that this was even more accurate when Tomura was involved in the equation. He gave the door a lick knock, but didn’t wait for an answer before opening it and walking in.

Tomura was sitting at his desk still fully clothed, doodling something in his notebook, with only his lamp desk as source of light. But what really shook Dabi to his core, was the headphones on the boys ears, connected to a purple Walkman. Fuck. He is listening to the playlist. I might not be able to not kiss him right now. Dabi closed the door behind him, and walked a few stepped inside, and that’s only when Tomura turned around and jumped. He seemed to be taken by a form of panic, because he hastily and clumsily closed his sketchbook, tangled himself in the cable of his Walkman as he took it off, and got up so fast that his chair fell backward.

“D-Dabi!!!” he sounded both extremely happy and very distresses, and he twisted his in the hair as he didn’t know what to do with them. Dabi understood that he was fighting the urge to scratch his neck.

“Yes sorry I … I was just leaving and I …” Dabi actually slowed down his sentence for a second when he thought seeing some disappointment in Tomura’s eyes. But he kept going. “I saw the light
… and like because you said you were going to sleep … I got curious.”

“Oh … yeah I …” Both off Tomura’s hands went through his hair, still trying to avoid his neck. He looked around his room as if he was looking for an excuse or an explanation in his surrounding. “I just … I was just doodling for a bit y’know?”

“But you were gonna sleep soon right?”

Blush immediately formed on Tomura’s face, which Dabi found really unfair. But Tomura … Tomura was feeling all kind of conflicting feelings right now. Even after all this time, he was incapable to lie directly to Dabi’s face, he was crushed by guilt, as he his friend had caught him betraying him. But there was something else happening inside of him, something that spread some warmth in the pit of his stomach. I’m alone with him. In my room. Dabi had never really been in Tomura’s room, or not for long, and certainly not alone with him and the door close behind him. Despite his best attempt to control himself, a dozen of inappropriate images and scenarios began to impose themselves in Tomura’s mind. But there was another image that kept coming back … not a fantasy, but a memory. A painful one, the casted a dark shadow on the rest of him. Because the last Tomura was alone in his room with the boy he liked … things had not gone well. Even though he was doing his best to fight it, the painful acute pain he had felt that day was slowly making his way to his chest once more.

“Tomura, answer me …” Dabi asks again, “you were going to sleep right? I mean you look completely exhausted.” His voice was a little … hot right now. And deeper than usual, like when he was trying very hard to control a wild feeling inside of him. He wasn’t there when Tomura needed him the most these past weeks. He was not leaving this room until Tomura was tucked in his bed.

In front of him, Tomura had to harden himself, because he was literally about to break in thousand pieces to the ground, and he couldn’t let Dabi see him like this. It had been humiliating enough to feel his gaze during diner; he just couldn’t let him see him break down like this. And not over something as stupid as a teenage memory. And not over something as painful as the day he had realized that no one would ever love him.

“Dabi I think you should leave right now. See you tomorrow.”

After that, he turned around to go back to his deck, but he couldn’t reach it. Because with just two steps, Dabi was practically on him grabbing both his wrist firmly and dragging him toward the bed. None of them really understood what was happening for a second, Dabi had moved before his own brain could catch up. But he didn’t let go, even when Tomura began to resist.
“What the fuck?? Dabi you dumb bitch what do you think you’re doing?? Let me go!”

“I’m done watching you destroy your health. Not when I can stop you! Go to sleep!”

Objectively, the scene was a little ridiculous; two grown men fighting in a room because one wanted the other to go to sleep. But to them, at this exact moment, it was like the most important fight of their entire life. Dabi was reminded that Tomura was a lot stronger than he looked, because the boy put up quite a fight, trashing around and practically hissing like a cat. But he didn’t have Dabi’s technic; a lot of his movement were both big and useless so he got tired really fast, so Dabi was able to bring him to the edge of the bed. At this point they were both yelling at each other things that they didn’t understand themselves, just trying to be loudest one, as if it mattered somehow. They didn’t think about the girls sleeping next door for one second, because right now, each one was the only thing the other could think about. And because at this point, all of their surroundings were one big blur, none of them saw the edge of the bed behind Tomura’s knees, and they both lost their balance when they hit it. Suddenly silent, Tomura felt himself though backward and because Dabi was still firmly holding the boy’s wrist, he felt himself being dragged with him.

Tomura’s back hit the soft mattress almost without a sound, and he was completely spread on the bed, his hands pinned above his head by Dabi’s strong grip. The young man had fell above him, knees on each sides of his thighs, and his hands now holding him down firmly. And at this moment, they both forgot how to breathe. Under Dabi, Tomura had never looked more desirable, his hair spread on the mattress, surrounding his face like a light blue halo, making the pink on his face, neck and collarbone even more appealing. Because they were both yelling a second ago, Tomura chest was rising and falling quickly, and his pupil were still blown by the excitation, at the centre of his bright red eyes. Dabi’s eyes hungrily travelled across Tomura’s face and body and he almost choked when he noticed that the hem of Tomura’s shirt was slightly lifted and that he could catch a glimpse of a wonderful smooth and pale stomach. No … no not that pale … it was pink. Fuck, it was pink. The blush was spreading all over him; it didn’t stop at his collarbone. Dabi felt an almost primal and burning desire grow in him, because he had to see it, he had to just fucking Tomura shirt’s off him to have a clear good look. He needed him he wanted him. He needed to have him right here and right now on this bed or he might not survive the night.

Under him, Tomura couldn’t even think in such defined terms and sentences. How could he, when Dabi was looking down at him like this, dark locks falling in front of his clear blue eyes, holding him in place with hot burning hands. In this position, Tomura could see under Dabi’s shirt through his very large and wide neckline, and his entire body almost gave one big pulse when his eyes fell on the broad and sculpted chest, and as he intensely watched the separation between pink and purple flesh. He wanted to touch it so bad, to feel the two different textures under one hand. He wanted to feel both the heat of skin and the cold of the staples against his own body. He wanted to feel Dabi so bad, all of his from head to toes, to feel Dabi with him, on him, inside him... They were so close right now Dabi was already holding, spreading him, exposing him completely to his blue gaze. He needed Dabi to do something right now. Him preferably. Yes … yes he needed Dabi to do everything to him, everything he wanted, everything he needed … Tomura would take anything, because the only thing he truly needed was Dabi himself.
But soon, the initial shock wore off and they both caught their breath allowing the oxygen to go back to their brain and they began to think normally again. In that case, normally meaning in the most stupid way possible. They both react at the same time, Dabi jumping off Tomura and the boy rolling to his side and looking at the wall, and both spoke over each other with nervous pained voices.

“YOU KNOW WHAT I ACTUALLY THINK I’M GONNA SLEEP NOW.” “WELL ACTUALLY YOU’RE RIGHT I’D BETTER GO.”

In one big swift movement, Dabi grabbed his coat he had previously dropped to the floor and practically jumped out of the room, and soon, Tomura heard the door of the apartment slamming behind him. Tomura was left alone, thinking that Dabi had left even faster than Kai had done years ago.

As he replayed all the event of the night in his head he was overcome with shame, guilt and humiliation. Everything could have been fixed tonight he had not been his disastrous, usual self, but he just had to ruin everything by acting all weird and weak. But, in the dark of his room, he wasn’t quite over the ecstasy that he had just felt. Because of the previous argument, his body felt hot and bothered everywhere, or so he thought. But twisting himself in his sheets, he soon realized that it wasn’t the argument that had got him in such a state. The image of Dabi’s eyes still printed in his brain, he could feel all the blood in his body rush south and there wasn’t a damn thing he could do stop it. He tried to focus on something else, to move around, but the smallest shift of his body was creating some horrifyingly delicious friction against his now throbbing dick still trapped in his skinny jeans. He tried to bite his hand, but it only made the situation worst for some reason. He just couldn’t control the arousal that kept growing in him, not when he could still feel the heat of Dabi’s body hovering over him.

“Fuck …” he whispered eyes closed. He was running out of solutions or ideas to put a stop to this, even walking out of his room to take a cold shower didn’t even cross his mind. But he just couldn’t wait for his arousal to wear off; he just wouldn’t survive the night like this. So he took a decision.

He shifted slightly to lie on his back and took off his shirt, grunting at the sensation of the fabric of his clothes shifting against his sensitive skin. Not even the cool hair of his room against his sweaty skin was enough to calm him down, but he just couldn’t breathe with this suffocating shirt on. Beside, even though his quirk didn’t work on his own skin, he didn’t want to decay any of his clothes by accident. Slowly, trying to keep his breathing even, he let his hand creep down his pale naked chest, down his stomach, and he let out a loud gasp when he finally reached his erection through his pants. But in the state he was right now, it wasn’t so hard to imagine that it wasn’t his, but Dabi’s hand grabbing him like this. Behind his closed eyes, Tomura could see the young man still hovering over him, except that in this fantasy he didn’t look embarrassed and didn’t run away, he smiled and leaned down to kiss Tomura’s lips and neck.
“Dabi ...” Tomura whispered almost like a prayer. With his free hand, he let his fingertips travel down his lips, neck and collarbone, imagining that the tickling sensation he felt was due to Dabi’s tongue. His other hand was still massaging his erection, trying to tease himself like he thought Dabi would. But Tomura had never been very patient, so soon, he fumbled to open his pants with one hand, while the other was now caressing his stomach. As soon as he wrapped his hand around his member he was overwhelmed with pleasure, but also felt very acute guilt in his chest. Fucking … I shouldn’t … Fuck there’s no going back after this, he’ll … But he couldn’t finish his thought because the Dabi in his mind looked at him with hungry eyes, and it was enough for Tomura to start jerking himself. He was done with the teasing, he wasn’t trying to seduce himself the way he wished Dabi would seduce him. Now he just wanted to be done with this. He was painfully hard and liking by now, and his jerks were rushed and messy, but now that the culpability had thrown itself into to storm of contradicting feelings in him, he just needed some release. But he still couldn’t bring himself to let go of Dabi’s image.

“Fuck, oh fuck .. Dabi .. D-Dabi ..” he practically sobbed, throwing his head back and arching his body into his own touch.

Soon, Tomura’s vision went completely blank and he let out one finale chocked moan as his orgasm hit him and as he came all over his chest and stomach. He kept jerking for a few seconds, trying to enjoy it until the last second, because he knew that as soon as the pleasure would wear off, the imaginary Dabi would disappear, and he would be left alone with his shame. Eventually, pleasure turned into pain and overstimulation and he had to let go of everything. He laid for a while like this, in the dark and still covered in his mess. He was trying to relax and calm down his breathing. But it was to late. The self-loathing part of his brain was wide-awake.

It’s ruined … It’s over … Are you proud of yourself? Look what you’ve done… You dirty little fuck, you just couldn’t resist couldn’t you? These thoughts were like a knife stabbing and twisting in his guts but he just couldn’t stop them. He never could. Not without Dabi.

*

Dabi didn’t come home right away, but this time, it practically wasn’t his fault. Or so he told himself. But he really was in a second state when he left Tomura’s flat, confusion, shame, panic and pure desire still running hot in his veins. He felt so hot everywhere that he vaguely wondered if he wasn’t accidentally activating his quirk but he honestly didn’t care. 

Tomura, Tomura, Tomura, Tomura, Tomura, Tomura, Tomura, Tomura ... that was the only thing happening in his mind right now. The picture of the boy completely spread under him, so open and vulnerable, soft, beautiful and alive, was not only engraved in his brain but also stuck under his skin. He was completely intoxicated. Fuck, I should have stayed, I shouldn’t have moved, no I should have, I should have leaned down and kiss those perfect lips fuck I’m such a coward fuck fuck fuck fuck. Without his control, his legs led him to the closest club he could found. He walked directly to the bar and took several shots in a row, because walking to the middle of the dance floor. But he couldn’t do it. He couldn’t numb himself like he used to do, not like this, because now, the only thing he thought about on the crowded dance floor was how happy he would be if he saw Tomura dancing in front
of him right now. He wanted to go back in time, to go back to that night at club on his birthday when everything between Tomura and him was easy and beautiful. And because he was going back in time, wouldn’t even have to worry about the creepy purple guy because he would know, and he would never let Tomura out of his sight. Not that night and not ever. He would know all the problems before they had the chance to happen to him, so he would protect him from the world and from himself. He wanted to go back … He wanted to go back to the balcony, with Tomura wearing his coat. He wanted to go back to that night so he could say:

But there’s one thing I know Tomura Shigaraki; you are smart, talented, interesting, sensitive and pretty. And I’m in love with you.

He left the club at around 4 am. On his way home, he passed by a bunch of young men who all looked at him with hungry eyes. One of them was a little skinny with bushy hair blond hair, so for a second, Dabi genuinely considered walking to this guy, bring him home and fuck him with his eyes close so he could imagine that the hair, so he could imagine that his hair was blue and that it would be Tomura in his arm when he would wake up in the morning. Somehow. But he kept walking.

When he arrived home, he walked directly to his room, and crashed onto his bed without any look at any of his surroundings. He just made the effort to take off his coat but after that, he just let out a deep frustrated grunt, buried his face in his pillow and fell asleep.

*

Dabi isn’t exactly sure of how Tomura ended up in his bed but he is not about to complain. He has a vague knowledge that maybe Tomura got to his flat while he was at the club and was actually waiting for him in his bed, or wait actually they might not even be in Dabi’s bed right now. Is it Tomura’s? Are they still at Tomura’s flat? Yes, maybe Dabi never left after all. To be completely honest, Dabi doesn’t even recognize where they are right now. But who the fuck cares, they’re both naked in the same bed and Tomura’s blush is spreading all the way down to his stomach like Dabi had hoped.

“Dabi come on …” Tomura whines, squirming underneath him, “Don’t just look at me like that, just … just fucking touch me already!”

The complete despair in Tomura’s voice is enough to make Dabi painfully hard, so he doesn’t need to be told twice and dives in to nibble at this beautiful neck. Tomura lets out a wonderfully needy sound and arches his chest and neck to give Dabi more access, and Dabi can’t stop the low hungry grunts coming out of his mouth between each bite.
“Oh fuck Tomura …” he growls, “Fuck you taste so good …Hmm … yes that’s right squirms for me baby …”

“D-dabi! Don’t speak so loudly! They’re going to hear us …”

Dabi lift his head to give Tomura his most beautiful shit-eating grin, and before the boy can understand what’s coming for him, Dabi goes down on him, covering his chest and tummy with wet kissing along the way, before biting Tomura’s soft white inner thighs. The boy just fucking screams, because slapping both of his hands against his mouth, and between his legs, Dabi smiles against Tomura’s hot skin.

“F-fuck Dabi … Fuck what did I just say … I uuuuun …” the rest of the sentence is drowned in a moan as Dabi licks the bite mark he left behind.

“Aw, baby you’re not being fair … I mean, I’m not making a sound right now …”

“Oh yeah right I’m the one who not being far …”

Dabi tortures his boy for a little longer, difficult to keep track of time in this context, before Tomura can’t take it anymore. He grabs the dark hair, but not push him down on his cock like Dabi expected. No, instead, he brings him back up a few inches away from his face, and purrs:

“Kiss me”

But Dabi didn’t feel Tomura’s lips on his own; he didn’t feel his tongue or his teeth. He felt his pillow and his own saliva. His eyes snapped open, the last sensation of his dream fading away, leaving him with nothing more than the uncomfortable wetness spreading over his crotch. Oh my god … I fucking … shit. SHIT. God how can I ever look at him ever again? I fucking … It’s done … I ruined it …

Dabi thought he couldn’t feel any worst than this, but he was proven very wrong when he got up to found something to clean himself with. As he sat up on his bed, he suddenly realised that there was a mattress on his floor. And on this mattress on his floor, there was a lizard. Spinner was lying on his side; eyes wide open, staring at a point being Dabi, his headphone blasting loudly on his hear.

And suddenly, Dabi was violently reminded of a text he had received from him this morning. A
text warning him that Spinner was going to crash their place tonight, and that Dabi shouldn’t be too loud when he would come back from the dinner.

Oh my god.

“Spinner if you say a fucking word …”

“OH MY GOD I WON’T, oh my fucking lord Jesus Christ, I swear to God I won’t be saying another fucking word in my life ever again, I fucking never want to hear the sound of your voice ever again.”

As Dabi practically ran to the bathroom, Spinner grabbed his phone, opened the Fucking Shoujo Bullshit group chat and typed: THESE FUCKING GAY BITCHES ARE GOING TO FUCKING MURDER ME.

*

If Toga and Magne heard the yelling last night, they didn’t mention any of it by the morning. They both still seemed genuinely pleases about the night, so Tomura didn’t have the strength to tell them that he had ruined all of their efforts in one god damn fucking second. Coruscant was very close now, next week actually, but the band didn’t have any rehearsals today, so the girls had decided to go shopping for some cute stage outfits. And they had just left when Tomura’s phone rang. He panicked a little has he always did when it happened, but he recognized the number, he went very still. It was the university comity. The one that decided about the contest. It was his results. And … he was weirdly calm. His hand stopped shaking and he picked up.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Mr Shigaraki Tomura?”

“Yes that’s me.”

“My name is Akizuki Maria, I’m the head of the Comity Of Insertion Of Young Talents. We spoke by email during your inscription to the contest.”
“Yes, I remember you. So this is about the contest right?”

“Indeed yes. And I have some wonderful news for you! I’m please to inform you that you’ve been selected, you and nine other student out of three thousands, for the second round!”

“…”

“Sir? Are you okay?”

“Yes! Yes, I’m sorry, I’m very happy! I’m just taking it in, you know?”

“Yes, I understand no worries! You can be very proud of yourself! You’re part of ten out of three hundreds! No, I assume you know what comes next! The second round is in December. You don’t have much to do compare to first round, just fill some more administrative papers I’m going to send to you by email. You can also come get your work back at the office whenever it’s easier for you, we gave you some notes and feedback so you work on it, but it usually isn’t much. Oh, yeah the one thing that you need to prepare for is the interview. As you know for the second round, you will be judge by professionals. They will mostly look at your work, but you will have ten to twenty minutes discussion with some of them to explain your project. Any questions?”

“Nope, I don’t think so. It was all quite clear, thank you very much!”

“Okay! You can email me if you have any question. Have a nice day!”

And she hanged up. Tomura put down his phone on the table. He got up from his chair. And he let out the loudest, happiest, scream of his entire life. He was suddenly smiling so hard that his face was hurting him, and he just walked around the flat, hands in his hair. He twirled on himself like he was some goddamn Disney princess, giggling and loving to himself. Basically, his mind was just going !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! right now. He suddenly began to sing and yell at the same time. Because he had done it!!! It had moved, foreword, he had evolved, he had succeed where he had failed last year. That was what really mattered, so right now he wasn’t even worried about the second round or the interview, not yet anyway. Because had succeed, despite what those voices inside his head had been telling him the whole time, he was good enough for this and could do this. Suddenly he ran to the big window in the living room opened it, and screamed:

“I FUCKING DID IT BITCHES!!!!”
And then he walks back in, grabs his phone and without even thinking about it, he types Dabi’s number that he knows by heart and presses the green button. And it’s only when, he heard Dabi’s voice, who answered not even after half a right that he suddenly realise what he has done. But he doesn’t regret it.

“Tomura?” Dabi asks immediately as if he wanted to be sure that he wasn’t dreaming, because how on earth could Tomura want to talk to him after last night’s disaster.

“I got to the second round Dabi,” Tomura said without wasting any time, because he knew that if he stopped to think about what he was doing for more than a second, all the adrenaline in his blood would wear off.

“Wait, say that again?”

“The contest the exhibition. It’s not done yet, but I was selected. Ten out of three hundreds.”

There was a silence on the other, and Tomura would have began to panic, if it wasn’t for Dabi suddenly screaming like Tomura had scream earlier, so loudly that Tomura had to back his head away from the phone for a second. But eventually, he became to scream as well. And for a full minute, there were just nerds happily screaming at each other over the phone. Then, Dabi bombarded him with questions, he asked what was next, if he had any feedback, how long it would take for the final result … Tomura answered to all of them one by one, a dumb smile on his face, and after that just … just fucking praised for him for five whole minute, saying that he always knew it, that he always believed in him, and that now he was convinced that he was going to win this thing no problem. And as he talked, Tomura’s heart went boom boom boom boom boom boom faster and faster.

“Tomura that’s so fucking great!” Dabi continued, “You’re so fucking great! I … I … And what about the girls? What did they say? Did they spoil you this morning?”

“Oh … Oh they don’t know yet! I literally just got the call!”

“Oh, okay … Okay but what about your dads?”

“Dabi I told you, I just got the call.”
“So you didn’t call them yet?”

“No.”

“But you called me?”

“……… Yes. Yes I did. I called you first. Because you were the one I wanted to tell first.”

Tomura was realising this as he said it. His hand had called Dabi without any hesitation. He didn’t even think about calling anyone else for a second. Even after last night. On the other end, Dabi was going through the same thought process. And suddenly, there was hope. Last the two of had went to far, or so they thought. They both thought that they had ruin their friendship for good and that there was no going back, and yet this morning, Tomura had not question for a second not only that Dabi was the first person that he needed and wanted to call, but also that Dabi obviously answer him as if nothing had happen. Could this be so easy to fix? Could it be that their bond was so strong, so powerful, that whatever happened to them, whatever the dangers, they would always found their way back to each other?

_Maybe._

“Well,” Dabi finally said after a long silence between them, “I’m just … I’m just so happy Tomura … I think I’m gonna have to scream about this on stage at the festival in a few days.”

“Please don’t” Tomura chuckled, “but thank you. For everything.”

“Yeah I … Well, I guess I better go. Don’t forget to call every one else or I’ll …”

“DABI WAIT!” Tomura suddenly yelled, realising that he couldn’t let Dabi hang up. Not like this. He was pleased that they had been able to suddenly talk again, that everything was not ruined like he thought it was, but he could still feel that veil tenting all of there interaction. And although he knew he couldn’t fix, he still had something to say. And on the other end, Dabi was listening.

“Dabi I … I know … I know that I’m difficult sometimes. Most of the time really. I’m not good at friendship or even relationships in general. I wish I was better at it, I wish I could take of people like you do, but the truth is that I can barely take care of myself. I’m messy and nervous and I do weird things sometimes. So I just … I know how complicated and demanding it is to be friend with
me. I know I don’t give much in return, I know I’m more trouble than I’m worth. But I don’t want to mess it up you know? I’m trying so hard all the time … Especially with you. I’m trying to be good for you, and I know I might never be but I’ll probably die trying. Because I need you Dabi. I need you so much and I don’t know what to do.”

“Tomura where are you right now?”

“What?” Tomura didn’t even expect Dabi to respond to that, “uh … I’m at home why?”

“I’m coming over right now.”

“Wh-what? Wait where are you? Calm down …”

“I miss you Tomura. I miss you so much and I hate that we’re not seeing each other anymore. Also I’m at work.”

_Shit Tomura calm down … Fucking calm down he’s your friends shit, he is worried because he is your friend, please don’t do or say anything stupid, stay fucking calm. Okay it’s chill._

“Ohkay, well how about I meet you there? I can just sit with you at the counter that would be enough really. And maybe when you’re done, we can go watch a movie or something?”

“Yeah. Yeah I’d like that. Please come.”

So Tomura came. And yes, things were still a little awkward, but also when Dabi saw him walk in, his face enlightened by the most beautiful in world. So Tomura knew he had to make it work. Right now, this was his second chance, he didn’t deserve it, but he had it somehow. So he was gonna keep going and watch Dabi smile, and listen to his laughs and weird stories without being a coward anymore. Or he was going to try.

When Dabi was done with work, they went to see a movie some old black and white classic that was being shown again for it 50th anniversary. And they both sat in the dark trying and failing at stay focus on the film, while keeping their eyes glued forward. They both held on their armrest very tightly, doing their absolute best not to grab the other’s hand.
And suddenly it was that night.

The first night of the Coruscant festival, when *Bring Me The Heroes* was finally going to produce. The whole festival lasted a little more than a week, the band was scheduled for the first night, and might get some more if they had success. Everyone’s excitation was at their maximum, it was finally here, the result of so much work, the night that was going to change everything. The band of course had to be there early for the preparation, but the rest of the group joined them as soon as they could. Everyone was going, Spinner, Jin, Gira, Mustard, Kurogiri, Sako and, of course, Tomura. They both spend hours getting ready before they could all finally go (a good chunk of those hours were just Sako trying to choose which hat was more appropriate for the occasion). The weather was still good for a late September so they all walked to get to the big park where the festival was taking place. It was calm and relaxing for Tomura who had been preparing himself for the moment he’d to watch Dabi sing on stage with his incredibly sexy voice, looking incredibly stunning under the spot lights. The past few days had been better, they were finally talking and seeing each other again, and Tomura was incredibly grateful for that. But he just … he just couldn’t forget that night, lying on his bed, hand between his legs and moaning Dabi’s name. Every time he looked at Dabi, he thought about the imaginary Dabi biting his chest and caressing his thighs. So he really was on the edge tonight, and the closer they got to the park, the louder his heart was beating. And this situation was not helped by the fact that, for some reason, Spinner kept awkwardly staring at him the whole, avoiding his eyes and blushing when Tomura looked back at him.

The place was beautiful, a stage surrounded by trees and green, with a lake nearby. The trees were decorated with lanterns and banners, which gave an almost magical, fairy like atmosphere to the place. Tomura had trouble imagining Stain launching his career in such a setting, but he also didn’t know much about the guy. There was also a bunch of booths, stalls and sheds surrounding the area, where people could buy drinks, food and even merch.

“One of these booths is yours Tomura,” Gira said following his look.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s the band’s! The merch with the designs you created for them. Which reminds me …” Gira awkwardly rubbed the back of his neck, “Look I’m sorry I was so … forceful, about this whole business. I just … I was so invested in this …”

“No, it’s okay you did good! I’m glad you all gave me this little push! I’m glad that they can be here tonight! But … but thank you for apologizing.”
They were allowed to go backstage to meet the band, as they all had special guest pass. But Tomura felt a little bad for the lady of the staff who looked at this loud crew walked toward her, all waving their pass with the happiest smile on the world on their faces. Surely people usually only had one or two guest, not a mist man and his boyfriend, his anxious looking son with his two best friends one of whom happened to be a lizard, and a gangster looking men with his angry looking son.

The festival had already began and some bands were already on stage, so the backstage (even though they were technically outside) were very busy, but they were led to their friend’s waiting room nonetheless. Everyone hugged and cheered and screamed, which got them some looks. Tomura was pleased to see that Dabi looked more excited than nervous. But they didn’t have much time, and there was … there was something Tomura wanted to give. So he coyly grabbed his sleeve to led him in a corner, and Dabi, although a little surprised, followed.

“Is everything okay?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s just … I have something for you. A congratulation gift, sort of?”

Before Dabi could answer, Tomura began to fumble in his bag and pulled out an a very big book. At least that’s what Dabi thought it was until he got a closer look, and realized that it was a big sketchbook, but not a new shinning one like the one Tomura had offered him for his birthday. This one was old and full, not only with drawing but with photos, articles, pieces od tissue even … Suddenly Dabi understood.

“Tomura is that …”

“I don’t have any mixtape for you Dabi … All I can give you is this. It’s sketchbook. Not the current one of course, but the one I had from age thirteen to eighteen. It’s the one I used the most, he’s full with sketches that I adore and others that I hate. And it’s not just drawing it’s … I don’t even know what it is really. But there’s also a bunch of notes inside, about stuff that inspires me, from movies, comics, from other painters … It’s just … It’s me.”

Tomura wish he had the words. He was he was a poet like Dabi to express exactly just how important this object was to him, and how much he wanted Dabi to have it. But Tomura was never good with words. He only knew that it was the closest that he would ever be to offer his beating heart to Dabi. But yet somehow he felt … he felt like Dabi knew, like he understood exactly what was happening in his head right now. Because was holding Tomura’s sketchbook like it was … like it was the most precious, important, beautiful thing in the world. And the blue eyes ran over it with nothing but adoration in them. Tomura felt his knees getting weak. Would he look at my heart
“Tomura …” Dabi practically whispered looking right back at him, “there’s … there’s something I need to tell you …”

“BRING ME THE HEROES ON STAGE IN FIVE MINUTES, GET READY PLEASE THANK YOU VERY MUCH!” yelled the staff lady that had brought everyone here.

“Dabi we have to go!!!” Toga yelled, trembling with excitation.

“Yeah yeah I know …” Dabi said, clearly annoyed by the interruption, before focusing again on Tomura, “I’ve to go but … but we’ll all join you after the show okay? And then … and then we’ll talk.”

And just like that Dabi left Tomura all confused behind him. *Wait what? What does he want to talk about … shit. Shit was the gift too much? FUCK it was too much …* Tomura couldn’t think more about this, because Jin grabbed him by the arm and they were led back to the crowd. They all took place, Sako, Kurogiri a little on the side with some drinks, Spinner right at the front with Mustard on his back, and Tomura and Jin a little more in the back, as the two of them weren’t always good in crowded spaces.

And the show began.

It was, somehow, even more spectacular and breathtaking than what Tomura had imagined, it was clearly their best performance, and this since their first song, the best show the band had ever done. By now, had produced enough to have some fans, people who had come specifically for them in the audience, and the audience was going wild, singing their song with them, demanding some in particular, and the trio was enjoying every single second of it. It was that day that Tomura truly, fully realised that Dabi was made to be on stage. He was made for the show, to be admired and acclaimed by thousands of people … He was so beautiful and alive like this shining like the brightest fire in the universe. His smile, his looks, his eyes, his voice … it was hitting Tomura all at once and quite a few times, he came to close to holding on to Jin for support because Dabi’s presence was physically affecting him. *Stay strong Tomura … stay fucking strong you promised … you promised him you were going to be there for him …*

But then …
“Thank you! Thank you everyone!” Dabi said into the mic. They had just finished their last song, which already three more song then what was originally planned, but the crowd wouldn’t let them go. “Wow, it’s really been a crazy night thanks to all of you,” he continued, “and I think the girls and I … well we really don’t want to leave that stage. So how about one last song?” The crowd went fucking wild at that, and even Jin cheered loudly, and it was pretty hard to tell because they were far away, but Tomura was pretty sure that he saw Spinner just fucking throwing Mustard up in the air.

“Okay, okay!” Dabi laughed, “but if we’re doing this, we’re doing this my way okay guys? Because there is only one song that I want to sing right now. Some of you might know it, it’s pretty old by our standards, but it’s pretty damn good. You may think it’s cheesy and weird at first but the more you listen about, the more to get attached to it. And then, like me, you’ll realise that it’s the most beautiful love song of all time …”

Tomura felt a weird shiver run over him. Because suddenly, from the center of the stage, Dabi was looking right into his eyes when he added: “And also it’s my favourite person’s favourite song. So it makes it the most beautiful song of all time.”

And to Dabi’s cue, the girls smiled and began to play the intro of Take On Me. The crowd went wild and Tomura went still. And Tomura was never more in love with Dabi than he began to sway to the music, and than looked at him like they were alone, just the two of them, and like he was singing for him and him only. Dabi was maybe hundreds of feet away from him, and yet, Tomura felt like he was holding his face and singing directly into his ear.

“Talking away, I don't know what I'm to say, I'll say it anyway, Today's another day to find you… Shying away, I'll be coming for your love, okay …”

Dabi why are you doing this to me? Don’t you know? Don’t you know by know how I feel I about you? It’s true that it took me so long myself but … but surely you’re smarter than me. And I see you … I see you smiling at me right now and being your wonderful self …

“Take on me (take on me), Take me on (take on me), I'll be gone … In a day or two…”

It’s true. Maybe not in a day or two, but one day you’ll be gone. You’ll be in love with someone, or you’ll be on your way to fame, or you’ll be traveling the world … Or one day, you’ll just realise that I’m not worth your time. I know that Dabi, I’m not taking for granted I promise.

“So needless to say, Of odds and ends, But I'll be stumbling away, Slowly learning that life is ok…” And here, for some reason, Tomura really felt like Dabi was actually talking to him when he
sang, “Say after me, It's no better to be safe than sorry…”

I can’t loose you Dabi … I just can’t. But now … Now Dabi I... I’m beginning to think that I must. That I must loose you. Because it’s bound to happen … I’d want nothing want to enjoy it as long as it last, but it’s killing me Dabi. It’s torture … I don’t know if I’m strong enough for when that day will come.

“Take on me (take on me), Take me on (take on me), I'll be gone … In a day or two…”

I know Dabi I know ... Trust me I know and I’m so scared Dabi ... I’m so fucking scared ... I'm used to pain ... I'm used to be hurt. I'm used to be left behind. But ... but you're so special Dabi ... Dabi please I don't know what to do ... I'm so fucking scared all the time Dabi.

Tomura had not realised it yet, but he was shaking and crying right now. It was too dark for Dabi, or anyone else to see, but fat tears were rolling down his cheeks.

“Woah, things that you say, Is it a life or just to play my worries away, You're all the things, I've got to remember…”

And right here right there, was the turning point. Because if Dabi had been focused on Tomura the whole time, right now, they were they were the only two beings in the universe. The only two people that had ever existed. Right now, it felt like Dabi was walking of stage and flying across the audience to hold Tomura’s face and promise him, not sing to him, but promise him with a confident smile:

“You're shying away, but I'll be coming for you anyway.”

And that was it. That was too much. That was when Tomura knew.

He could never see Dabi ever again.

He thought he’d be strong, he thought he could survive and endure like he had done his whole life, that he could repress, bury, contain, internalize, hide and conceal his love for Dabi. But it was too much. Too much pain to feel and too much love to hide … He was right. He was right all along. I’m too much. I’ll always be too much. I love him too much. He had never hated himself more than he did this instant, because he had finally done it, ruined the most beautiful and important thing in
his. But living with Dabi, seeing everyday, and having the hope … the tiniest smallest hope that he could love him back … he couldn’t handle that much pain. Goodbye Dabi.

“Tomura! Tomura hey look at me!”

Tomura blinked a few times and suddenly realised that the song was over and that the band had left the stage. In front of him was Jin, holding his shoulders, with an incredibly worried look in his eyes.

“Jin?”

“Tomura oh my god, I was so scared, you … you weren’t answering me! You were just crying and shaking and looking at the void …”

It was only now that Tomura realised in what physical state he was. Jin was right he was a complete mess right now. He felt some bigger tears rolling down his cheeks and he suddenly felt like it was very hard to breathe.

“Hey … Hey it’s okay Tomura calm down… I’m here, we’re all here, we’re going to meet with everyone else okay? Their show is done, Dabi is probably waiting for you backstage.

“I can’t …” he just said with a broken voice.

“What? What do you mean?”

“I’m not strong enough Jin … I’m so sorry … I tried, I really tried.”

“Tomura I think you might be doing a panic attack right now … We’re gonna meet with the others okay?”

“No! No … I’m okay I’m just tired … I’m gonna go home okay? Tell everyone not to worry. But also tell them that I don’t want to see anyone right now, especially not Dabi!” And just like that Tomura ran away, too fast for Jin to run after him, and the poor boy was left distressed in the middle of the crowd, until he felt Toga jumping on his back.
“WE’RE FUCKING ROCK STARS BABY!!” she yelled, but she was also immediately alerted by the lack of reaction from Jin, “Hey something’s wrong?"

“Where’s Tomura?” Dabi immediately asked, arriving with the rest of the group. He didn’t like how still Tomura looked when he had left the stage, and felt like something was off with him during the whole time of the song. So he had practically run off stage as soon as possible closely followed by the girls and the rest of the group. And now Jin’s distress expression kicked some adrenaline inside of him.

“I don’t know what happened to him!” Jin said, “I was looking at you on stage guys and suddenly, next thing I knew, he was crying and shaking and …”

“HE WHAT?”

For a second, the group genuinely thought that Dabi was about to burst into flame.

“Dabi calm down!” Kurogiri intervened, not without some panic in his voice, “Jin where did he go?”

“Home. He said that he was just tired and that he was going home … But he also … he also said that he didn’t want to see anyone – especially not Dabi!! – shit fuck haaa … I’m sorry …”

Jin was holding his head and Toga immediately went to hug him and reassure him until he felt better. Meanwhile, the rest of the group were exchanging worried looks, except for Dabi who seemed to fix an invisible point forward.

“Dear, what do we do?” Sako enquired, holding his boyfriend’s arm.

“I don’t know! I don’t know, he hasn’t gotten like this in a very long time … I want to go to him, but usually, when he acts like this he is impossible to talk to, only pushing people away!”

“So what, do we leave him some time to calm down?” Giran asked.
“Maybe?” Kurogiri hesitated, “I’m not saying we wait until tomorrow, but at least an hour to leave him the time to relax a bit?”

“Nah fuck that.”

Everyone turned toward Dabi. He seemed strangely calm and living at the same time, body perfectly still, but eyes burning of a rare intensity. *Is this my fault? Is it … is it because of the song? Is it because I poured all of my love to him in that one performance? Is because this was … my declaration?* But the truth was, Dabi didn’t really have time to dwell on this too much. Because right now, Tomura was alone and crying and Dabi was not let that happen for one more second. *I’m coming to find you Tomura.*

“Magne give the keys of the flat. You should all stay behind I don’t want to overwhelm him.”

“Dabi are you sure? He said … he said he … gosh he said he didn’t want to see you specifically.”

“I know that’s why I’m asking for the keys.”

* 

Dabi really was a fast runner when he wanted to be, which wasn’t often because he was a lazy piece of shit, but god could these long legs sprint. And right now, he had probably never run that fast his entire life. As he advanced, he kept replaying the events of the night and of these past few days in his mind, trying to find what he had missed. Sure, things were still weird, but at least they were talking now … He thought they had made progress. But … well, he also couldn’t help having vivid images of *that* dream every time he looked at him. Did he felt that? Was he ashamed? Disgusted? Shit, had Spinner told him? No … no way. Spinner would never.

So what was it? Was it about the sketchbook? Had he not reacted appropriately? *Wait … is it about the talk? Is it because I said we should talk? Did that … scare him? Hurt him? Tomura why don’t you let me help you …* But soon, none of these questions mattered, because he was climbing the stairs and opening the door with Magne’s key.

When he walked in, the place completely silent and in almost total darkness. The only lights were the ones from the street outside, and what looked like a bunch of little candles in the living room.
No answer. But he had to be here because he knew for a fact Tomura wouldn’t have left the flat with candles lit, he was way too anxious for that. So Dabi slowly and silently walked to the living room and that’s where he found him. Tomura was on the couch lying on his back and shaking with tears and sobs, both of his hands covering his face. And the reason that he hadn’t heard Dabi walked in was because … oh fuck. He was listening to Dabi’s mixtape.

Dabi took one more step, and another, until he was practically next to the couch and that’s when Tomura saw him. His red eyes went wide in panic and he practically jumped off the couch, getting rid of the Walkman in one swift gesture.

“What the fuck are you doing here you ugly piece of garbage?” Tomura tried to hiss through the tears.

Dabi just looked at him in stupefaction and confusion. What? What is he doing? Tomura’s face frowned, and he clearly tried to put a lot of venom in his words but this was obviously not working. Not when he eyes were so desperate and hurt and his body still shaken by sobs.

“I came to see if you were okay,” Dabi answered, “You ran off crying we were all pretty scared.”

“Well I’m fine so you can kindly fuck off now …” Tomura tried to add a snarl to his sentence but it was pretty bad. It just got Dabi more confused. What on earth is he doing? Why is talking to me like this? Did he hit his head?

“No Tomura I won’t kindly fuck off,” Dabi answered, slightly annoyed, “You’re clearly not okay right now, I want to help you.”

“Well I don’t want your help!” Tomura tried to yell, but his voice cracked, “I never wanted it! Can’t you just leave me alone for once? Maybe I was just fucking tired, you dense motherfucker!”

And that’s when Dabi realised what was happening. And it fucking hurt. Not what Tomura was saying, but how obviously fake it was. It actually looked painful for him to say the things he was saying. He’s trying … he’s trying to make me hate him. He’s trying to bring us back to the start … He was trying to turn back their relationship to what it used to be. Insults, hurtful words and sarcasm. But why? In a weird way, if any of it had sounded true and honest, Dabi would have accepted it. He would have accepted Tomura getting tired of him and pushing him away, because
why wouldn’t he? But here … Here Tomura was going out of his way for something he didn’t even want. And it confused Dabi and therefore pissed him off.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Dabi asked with suddenly a lot of heat in his voice, “What are you trying to accomplish right now? Am I suppose to believe any of that fake anger crap?”

Tomura visibly flinched at that, and tried to walk away from him most likely to lock himself in his room, but Dabi didn’t let him, and stood in his way to block him and corner him. He didn’t like that, it felt predatory, but … but he couldn’t just let Tomura walk away from this. They just couldn’t keep running away from each other.

“What game are you playing right now?” he asked, walking forward and having Tomura back off until the boy’s back hit the wall, “Why are you saying these things to me?”

God Dabi sounded so fucking hurt right now, Tomura almost wanted to throw up not out of disgust, but out of panic and fear. He had no idea what he was doing anymore. He just wanted to run away, but Dabi wouldn’t let him, he was trapped between him and the wall.

“I don’t know!” Tomura yelled, bursting in tears, dropping every pretends, “I don’t know what I’m doing, I don’t know what to do!!!”

“Then let me help you!” Dabi implored.

“I can’t! I can’t let you help me! I can’t keep ruining you and hurting you like this!”

“But Tomura wasn’t listening, both his hands had jumped to his own throat, and he was now scratching himself so furiously that he was already bleeding. And suddenly, something in Dabi snapped as he realised he wasn’t gonna let Tomura hurt himself ever again no matter the coast. So he grabbed Tomura’s wrist, pinned them above his head against the wall, and press his lips to his neck. And time stopped. And Tomura’s heart with it.

They both stood perfectly still for a while in complete silence. The only things moving in the room were the dancing flames of the candles, and Dabi’s lips against Tomura’s neck, gently kissing and sucking at the soft flesh, against the fresh wounds. He wasn’t even moving his head he just
focused on a specific spot, slowly caressing it with his mouth. Dabi’s eyes were, closed but Tomura’s were wide open and still full of tears, completely stuck, fixing nothing in particular. His mind was utterly and completely blank.

It would be difficult to tell how long this lasted, but at some point, Dabi took off his lips, less than an inch away just to breath a little, but it was enough to break the spell, because as soon he moved Tomura’s body twitched and they were both brought back to present day and Dabi realized what he had done.

*Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.*

“F-fuck, shit I … I … Tomura I’m .. I’m sorry I shouldn’t have …”

But Dabi didn’t have the time to finish his apology, because Tomura suddenly began to thrash furiously, and he had to pin back the wrist he had previously let go off, back above the boy’s head to keep him in place. But it didn’t discourage him, and Tomura kept fighting Dabi’s hold like a mad man. But similarly to that night on the beg, Tomura was being restless and wasting all of his strength in unnecessary gestures, so it wasn’t hard for Dabi to keep him pinned against the wall, despite all of his twisting around.

“Let go!!!!” Tomura was now screaming, with a mix of anger, panic and pain in his voice, all real this time, “Let go of me! Fucking let me go …”

“Tomura I’m so sorry, but please calm down!” Dabi implored, “Let me … let me explain …”

“There’s nothing to explain!” Tomura cried, tears falling more abundantly than ever, “I don’t want to know! I don’t want to know why you would to that! Why you would mock me and torture me like that!!!”


Tomura was getting exhausted, but he kept twisting himself in Dabi’s hold, probably more by pride now than by actual conviction. But Dabi was just staring at him. God he was a mess right now, face and neck all pink, and wild hair falling in front of his face. But right now, Dabi was actually more focused on his words than his appearance.
“Tomura … Tomura what do you mean? Please look at me, listen to me! Why would you think that? Why would you ever think I would want to hurt you? To torture you?”

“I don’t know …” Tomura whined, breathing heavily, “I don’t even know why you would do that to me … I don’t even know how you would know!!! Who told you? I didn’t tell anyone … Why would you even do that … Making me dream of things that don’t exist … Torturing me with things I can never have …”

Dabi was listening. And staring. And thinking. And staring again. Just trying to make sense of all of this mess. When suddenly … wait. Wait a second … hold on … is he …is he talking about me kissing his neck? But then … “mocking”… “torturing”… “making me dream of things that …” “… with things I can never have …”

Oh.

OH.

Dabi waited a bit. He waited for Tomura to calm down, or at least for him to get tired enough so that he would listen to him, focus on his for one second. And then he asked: “Tomura is it … is so hard to believe that I would want to be with you?”

“Of course it is!” Tomura cried with one last thrash, before leaning back against the wall, his chest rising and falling rapidly, probably only held up by Dabi’s grip on his wrist. “Of course it is! I’m me! I’m Shigaraki Tomura! A mess of unresolved issues and self-destructive impulses, all trapped in a crusty, fragile, skinny body … I destroy everything I touch, I can’t control my quirk like I can’t control my emotions! I scream and yell and cry, and I push people who love me away … I never learn from my mistakes, and then I freak out and lock myself in my room for weeks without eating or showering, and everyone is worried sick! And I take, and I’m unable to give back … I can’t do anything right … I can’t even eat right! I can’t eat because I feel like I don’t deserve the care, but it worries everyone and I feel even more guilty! And I wake up in the night screaming because of nightmares that shouldn’t scare a supposedly grown ass man, and sometimes, I have panic attacks I don’t even really know what triggers them after all this time, so I live in constant fear, because it could happen at any moment, and … and … and I’m so fucking scared all the time, and I lash out at others and I’m just … I’m always so scared. But you … You … you fucking utterly wonderful beautiful you … You’re the opposite. You’re so brave and strong. You’ve been hurt so much
you’re entire life and now you stand on a stage making thousands of people sing with you, and of course they’re gonna sing with you … You’re both an artist and a leader. You inspire so many people, you shine, literally actually shine like a star, a fire a galaxy … And you help everyone around you and you heal them and make them beautiful … And I don’t deserve you I know that … I’ll never will. But I’m so scared to ruin you. I’m so scared to destroy you Dabi, I’ve destroyed so many things in my life … I can’t destroy the most beautiful thing in it …”

Tomura had said all of this in almost one breath, and now he twisted his neck to avoid Dabi’s eyes that had been staring intensely the entire time. And something incredible happened. For once in his life, Dabi understood something. No, actually he didn’t understood, because he couldn’t understand why would Tomura feel this way about him, but he followed. He followed Tomura’s thought, followed his reasoning, because it was the same as his. It was like following a wire from the night they first met, all the way up to this moment. All these things that Tomura had just said, he felt them too but in the opposite way … but … then if Tomura felt that way … if Tomura felt about Dabi, the way Dabi felt about Tomura … it meant … it had to mean … A smile grew on his face, and his eyes begin to shine. And suddenly, he was breathing for the first time in 26 years.

Oh Tomura, my darling … We’ve been awfully dumb haven’t we?

“What … what the fuck is happening to you?” Tomura asked still crying and looking at Dabi from under his blue bangs, “Is it that funny to you? Then go on … Laugh … I don’t care anymore …”

“You’re such a bad liar Tomura,” Dabi smiled, looking at the most beautiful boy in the world, even though he was a little grumpy right now, “You care. You always do. You care so much about everything and everyone … That’s one of the thousands of reasons I adore you so much.”

Now, it was Tomura’s turn to be confused, looking at Dabi like he had gone insane. But it was okay he could take his time. It had taken Dabi quite a long time to figure it out after all… But the thoughts process was going to be even harder for Tomura, considering how bad he could think of himself. He had to figure it out on his own, but Dabi decided, to help him, to guide him a little.

“First of all,” he said with a small laugh, “I must say I’m really flattered that you think so many beautiful things about me … If you see them, then they must exist. But I think you’re not very objective here, so let me introduce myself … Hi! I’m Todoroki Dabi nice to meet you pretty boy! I’m basically a human wreck dragging myself through life, and doing my best to not let anything or anyone affect me ever. Because I’m actually a pretty big coward who is terrified by the mere idea of feelings, and I hide away from things I should confront. I say that I don’t care, but it always comes back to bite me in the ass … I push people away because I think that showing attachment and emotions is weak. Basically I’m a dumb bitch. I’m also completely self destructive, and for the longest time in my life, my idea of having fun was to found ways to get completely numb with drugs, sex, or alcohol, just so I never have to be alone with myself and my guilt and my regrets. But this was before I met you … it was before you heal me … I know I’m not perfect yet, but I promise
I’m trying. I’m trying for you Tomura. Because you’re beautiful and brave … you’re not afraid to feel things their fullest and to express yourself … And all this pain … all the bad things that happened to you, and these bad emotions you feel … you turn them into something beautiful and alive. That’s your real quirk. And that’s what you’re doing with me … You took me in your arms, me, a walking corpse that only knew how to curse and pretend, and you made something beautiful out of me … Something I am proud to be … Something good. Because that’s what you do, you shine on people, not like the sun who burn and blinds you … but like the moon …the moon who guides me in the darkness and makes everything less scary at night. But sometimes I’m scared too you know? Scared that I will tarnish your light with all my mess … That’s why I acted weird sometimes … But I don’t want to be scared anymore Tomura. Or if I must be, I want to be scared with you.”

Tomura was still crying, but not sobbing anymore. The tears were still coming out is eyes, but he had gone completely still, eyes wide and mouth slightly open … Which was pretty god damn adorable. But Dabi was still impatient to see the light coming back to his eyes. He felt that it was gonna take a while, he thought he would help a little more. First, he let got of Tomura’s wrist, because he knew that he wasn’t going to run. Not anymore. They were done running away from each other. And with his now free hands Dabi began, very slowly as to not startle him, to caress his cheeks. Soon, Dabi carefully holding Tomura’s face, whipping the tears away with his thumbs, only letting go of his face to push a lock out of his face every once in a while. He thought it’d help Tomura to relax and to put the pieces together. Also he just wanted to that.

Tomura’s mind was a blur right now, both working five thousand miles per hour and not at all. He ... no... do I? ...but then... wait what...no...yes...but does it mean ... but what about ... Just like Dabi, he followed the wire all the way up, from the night they first met, to this exact moment. And even though it was more complicated, he was very slowly putting the pieces together. His mind was a battlefield right now, as two forces opposed each other. One was the voice in the back of his bringing him down; the other was a look of utter affection, adoration and love in Dabi’s eyes right now. He gathered all of his strength in one sentence, the one that was going to determine everything. And Dabi’s answer was immediate.

“You’re here …”

“I was always here.”

And he knew. He knew. He knew it wasn’t a game, he knew Dabi wasn’t mocking him; he knew that he wasn’t delusional. He knew he had been the most stupid boy in the world, and for so long. It was almost crazy to see that years self-brainwashing, years of this stupid voice repeating to himself “you will never be loved” could be destroyed just by a look, a voice and smile, and the reassurance in all of them. How one person, if it was the right person, could change everything.

Because he loved Dabi more than he hated himself.
Because he trusted Dabi’s voice more than the one in his head.

Because Dabi loved him.

“Oh fuck”, Tomura gasped, finally taking his first breath after 24 years of existence.

“Pretty much …” Dabi laughed.

“Oh fuck …” Tomura repeated suddenly really realizing what was happening, that Dabi was in love with him, and was leaning against him, smiling and caressing his cheek with one hand and running the other through his curls. With careful fingers, Tomura grabbed on to Dabi’s shirt for support. Dabi immediately press himself against Tomura, to help him stand, and mostly because he never wanted any space between him and Tomura ever again. Suddenly, tears flowed again out of Tomura’s eyes, and Dabi was about to panic until Tomura began to laugh. Dabi laughed too, pressing his forehead against Tomura’s like they had done on the beach weeks ago.

“Shhhhh …” Dabi whispered, trying to calm Tomura who, despite his laughers, was still breathing quite heavily and quickly, “It’s okay baby, I’m right here … I’m right here baby it’s all good take your time …”

“D-dabi … I … I’m so sorry I took me … I was just so fucking scared I never …”

“It’s okay … it’s okay I was scared too … scared to lose you. We’ve both been dumb. But we’re here now … we caught each other … we found each other.”

“We did …” Tomura agreed with a smile. They did. They really did. Fuck he was in Dabi’s arms right now, looking into his eyes and Dabi was calling him baby … He felt so happy, and safe and in love. In front of him, Dabi backed his head off just a little to take a good look at Tomura’s face. He looked like he was thinking about something, but also … holding back. When he finally spoke, his voice was deep with desire and need.

“Hey Tomura? Uh, okay so hum … I know this like a lot of things to take in, and that we’re both recovering and figuring it out but uh … Oh, fuck I want to kiss you so fucking bad right now … So … can I?”
“Oh fuck yes please …”

With a smile, Dabi dived in and captured Tomura’s lips with his own, making him gasp.

Objectively, it wasn’t a very good kiss. It was clumsy, urgent, desperate, too wet and with too much teeth. They weren’t coordinate at all, budded their noses quite a few times, clashed their teeth, and they practically just licked each other’s face quite a few times.

But how could any of them be objective really?

How could Dabi be objective, when he was finally feverishly kissing Tomura? Just the contact, just finally feeling his lips and their so specific texture against his, had been enough to drive him close to the edge, but they had barely touched lips that Tomura had fucking whimpered and it was all over. Still holding on to the boy’s face, Dabi pressed himself completely against him and Tomura responded by pulling even more on his shirt, as if there was any way for them to get closer. So really, how could Dabi be objective when Tomura was so fucking responsive and sensitive to the barest of his touch? They had only been sucking and nibbling at each other’s lips so far, and he was already a moaning mess, and it took all of Dabi’s willpower to not immediately dive his tongue inside that wonderful whining mouth. He didn’t want to rush him, for what he knew to be his first kiss. *His first … I’m his first kiss …* How could Dabi be objective when he was Tomura’s first kiss?

Tomura was overwhelmed in the best way possible. He had never been touched like this before, so completely and passionately, and Dabi was relentless with his attention, his hands going from Tomura’s hair to his face to his nape … Soon, Dabi was licking at the small scar at the corner of Tomura’s mouth and the boy took the hint, slowly opening his mouth to welcome Dabi who hungrily deepened the kiss. For a split second, Tomura felt light anxiety spreading in his chest, as he had no idea what to do with his tongue but Dabi eagerness didn’t stop him from being attentive so he whispered against his lips: “Fuck baby you’re so good … so fucking good oh my god, you drive me insaaaane … such a pretty boy such a god boy …” With these last word, Tomura let the neediest, most pitiful and beautiful moan Dabi had ever heard and he eagerly took notes. *Ooof …* *Praise kink, uh? Fuck yes, oh my god … I’ll praise you … I’ll praise you so fucking much …*

Eventually, they had to slightly part so that the two of them (but mostly Tomura) could catch their breath for a bit. But Dabi quickly got frustrated by the loss of content, so as Tomura was trying to slow down his breathing, he began to shower his face with light soft kisses, making him giggle in the process. But as Dabi went down, first to Tomura’s jaw and then to his neck, he got more eager. Soon the light kisses were wet kisses, and before any of them realised it, Dabi was actively busy covering Tomura’s pale throat with as many hickeys as he could. Tomura’s hands left his shirt to dive into the dark mane of hair, grabbing them like he had learned to do on the beach. The light tugs Tomura was giving him were riling up Dabi in the best way possible, and he decided to experiment something and dug his teeth in Tomura’s flesh, at the jointure of his neck and
collarbone. And the result was better than what he could have ever hope for, as Tomura let out a borderline pornographic moan, and instinctively arc himself onto Dabi’s mouth. They were both very surprised. Tomura grew crimson, and slammed a hand against his mouth, while Dabi temporarily let go of his neck to look at him in the eyes.

“I’m… I’m sorry!” Tomura apologized more by reflex than anything else, “I had no … I didn’t know … that it was a …”

“Hey,” Dabi shushed him, “Not to be eager or anything, but from now on I’m gonna need to hear this sound every single day of my life.”

Tomura smiled with that goofy grin that Dabi adored so much, and added after a little moment of hesitation: “I mean … whether you hear it or not is entirely up to you … so I guess you know what to do …”

“Hmmmmm … Look at you being all flirty and shit …” Dabi smiled as he dived in yet again, nibbling and sucking at his collarbone this time. It was becoming harder and harder to stay in control, with every sounds that came out of Tomura’s mouth going straight to Dabi’s dick. Tomura himself was feeling like his entire being was on fire, at this point he could barely stand up, so Dabi brought both of his hands to his hips, but they didn’t stay still very long. Suddenly, as Tomura was arching himself to expose more of his collarbone to Dabi’s tongue, he felt Dabi’s burning and callous palms sliding under his shirt and exploring his stomach. Tomura choked on his own breathing. It was ridiculous how touch starved, and oversensitive he was … but he couldn’t help it. It was maybe stupid, but no one had ever touched his stomach before, so Dabi’s traveling hands felt ecstatic on his skin.

“So warm … So soft …” Dabi purred again his collarbone, before beating one more time.

Tomura had never felt this good in his entire life, but he began to feel like he was about to pass out or something. He was becoming more and more aware of the tightening in his pants, and judging by the way Dabi’s knee kept brushing it, his partner was aware of it too. Suddenly, Tomura couldn’t really control his breathing anymore … The passage from fantasy to reality had been so fast, in a way, he felt like he was still processing everything that had happened since he left the festival. He suddenly showered with touches, kisses and affection after being deprived for it for too long … He just … He just didn’t want things to go too fast, he just didn’t want to mess up …

“D-dabi, wait! Hold on!”

Tomura was almost surprised to see how quickly Dabi had stopped himself to Tomura words,
suddenly facing him again, and the mix of worry and adoration he saw in his eyes made him shiver.

“What’s wrong?” Dabi asked, hands suddenly gently cupping Tomura’s face “Are you okay? Did I hurt you?”

“No! God no … No Dabi oh my god … You’re so fucking incredible … Fuck you’re so good, you make me feel so fucking good … I just … I got … I never … before now I never … I don’t want to … I got a little overwhelmed.”

Dabi’s face relaxed, and smiled, playing with one of Tomura’s blue lock. Fuck he had wanted to do that for so long.

“It’s okay baby I know … I’m sorry, I didn’t want to rush things. But fuck, I wanted to do these things to you for so long … I got a little too eager. We’ll go slower next time …”

Suddenly, Tomura went to bury his face in the crook of Dabi’s neck, throwing his arms around his shoulders. Dabi didn’t complain but was a little surprised: “Are you okay?”

“You said next time.”

It was Dabi’s turn to throw his arms around Tomura’s body, bringing him close and tight. He buried his face in the blue curls, kissing the top of his head again and again.

“So many times Tomura …” he murmured between each kissing, “Fuck we’re never gonna stop, we have to catch up for all this time wasted being dumb.”

“I’m not sure I can stand anymore.”

“Oof, we can’t have that …”

And just like that, Dabi picked Tomura off the ground bridal style. The boy kept his face buried in the other’s neck, his giggles tickling Dabi’s jaw, as they moved toward the couch. Dabi dropped himself on it, with Tomura still in his arms and now on his laps.
“God you’re so fucking extra …” Tomura laughed.

“Bold words from a guy who threw his glass of wine at my evil ex girlfriend …”

“It was already me being petty, protective and jealous by the way.”

“I know. I was super hot.”

It felt so good to lie against Dabi’s broad and warm chest, Tomura wondered how he had lived without it all this time. Both of Dabi’s hands were now in Tomura’s hair, massaging his scalp and he felt thousands of little shivers run through him and he made a sound that kind of sounded like a purr. Actual shigakitty … Dabi thought. As the rush and adrenaline was slowly wearing off, they had the time to properly digest everything, to shut shit back relax, and appreciate that they were, well … dating, in love, in a relationship, going to kiss again … they didn’t really put a word on it yet. They were too busy cuddling. Of course, everything was not settled and done. They both knew that they still had to figure out a lot of things and issues but … but not tonight. Tonight was their victory.

They stayed like that for a while, lying against each other. They talked quite a bit as well, as they trying to go back on every instance of them being “dumb bitches who should have kissed long ago” as they called it.

“Okay but there’s one thing I need to know,” Tomura said, shifting to properly straddle Dabi, sitting on his laps, legs on each side of his thighs.

“Hmmmm …. Yes?” Dabi whispered with a low voice, greatly appreciating this new position, even though he knew Tomura had only moved to look at him in the eyes, with no ulterior motive.

“Okay so …” Tomura continued passing both of his arms around Dabi’s neck, “Did you try to seduce me with ramen? Like, was it a smooth move in your book?”

“……….. Maybe.”

“Urgh! Are you serious?” Tomura laughed, throwing his head back, “I can’t believe I ever thought
that you were some smooth bad boy, when you were a fucking dork all along …”

“Hmm, I don’t know …” Dabi purred. He ran both of his hands up Tomura’s thighs, grabbing his ass and pulling him close against him with one swift pull. “Considering where you’re sitting right now, I’d say that the ramens worked pretty well, don’t you think pretty boy?”

Tomura was now blushing furiously, and Dabi couldn’t wait for the day when he’d finally be able to see it spread all over him. But Tomura tried to hide it with his hands as he always did, so Dabi very gently grabbed his wrist to pull them away.

“Gosh, please don’t … I love it …”

“You do?” Tomura asked genuinely surprised.

“Fuck yes, it’s insanely cute and sexy at the same time …”

Tomura smiled and he grew even pinker. It was still a little weird and complicated to hear these words out of Dabi’s mouth, and he knew that he’d have to work on that, on accepting that this whole thing was real and happening.

“Hey so,” Dabi smiled, his hands on Tomura’s waist, “It just occurred to me that we haven’t kissed for at least six minutes, so what’s up with that?”

Tomura bit his lips with a smile, still feeling his heart beating like crazy against his chest, just to the thought that Dabi wanted to kiss him, and he wanted to kiss him often. His boyfriend brought his hand to his nape to bring him close and crash their lips together. Not that the first feeling emergency had passed, they were taking their time. Dabi could show off and use all his kissing skills, seducing Tomura over and over again, which wasn’t that hard considering that boy was madly in love with him, but it was still fun to do. Tomura brought back his arms around Dabi’s neck to press himself against him as hard as he possibly could. Dabi’s fingers were slowly venturing under Tomura’s shirt again, but he wasn’t as eager as last time. Well, he was really, but he was moor in control, so he didn’t go too far as too not overwhelm Tomura once more. Just the tips of his ten fingers, playing wit the waistband of Tomura’s underwear. Not too much, but just enough to have him twitch against his body and gasp against his mouth. It was slow, sensual, addicting, and consuming them completely.

In fact, they were so into each other right now, that they didn’t hear the key turning in the lock of
the door, and they didn’t hear the chatter and the eight pairs of feet walking, and they didn’t hear them going utterly and completely silent for a whole full minute of sixty seconds. What they did hear, was Spinner brutally falling on his knees, and screaming from the top of his lunge:

“ALL HAIL THE MOTHERFUCKING LORD JESUS FUCKING CHRIST ALELUHIA OH MY FUCKING GOD THANK YOU SO MUCH OUR BLESSED FATHER WHO’S IN HEAVEN!!!”

Tomura almost fell backward but Dabi caught him at the last second and they both blushed furiously as Spinner was still on the ground, crying actual tears. As if this had been a signal, the rest of the group began to loudly cheer as well.

“Don’t look darling!” Sako said with his most dramatic voice, covering Kurogiri’s misty eyes with his gloved hands, “Our baby is doing naughty things with a rock star!!!”

“Dear, we’ve inside for five minutes I saw,” Kurogiri sigh but now without a smile.

“OKAY everyone, they’re busy!” Magne yelled, making some grand gestures to push everyone out, before quickly turning toward the blushing couple “So congratulation boys, we’re all very proud, and also we’re going to the bar for a celebratory drink right so like you’re welcome to join whenever you’re ready but you can also stay home together if you want to okay bye!” And she slammed the door.

Tomura and Dabi looked at each other in silence, cheeks still a little pink, until Tomura said: “I don’t want to alarm you but I think they all might have suspected something.”

“Damn, we really are the dumbest bitches on the block.”

After a little more kissing, they decided to join the rest of the group at the bar. It was still the band’s big night after all, and they wanted to celebrate it with their family. When they walked in holding each other by the waist, the whole group tried to stay calmed and collected but it didn’t last because as they sat down, Dabi passed his arm around Tomura’s shoulder and they both exchanged a quick kiss and Spinner quite literally busted in tears. He reacted pretty much the same way every time they did something remotely cute, such as Tomura kissing Dabi’s neck after he had told a joke he was very proud of, or Dabi constantly feeding feeding Tomura to make sure that he was eating properly. By the end of the night, he and Toga were holding on to each other, sharing all of their emotions.
“Toga … Toga they’re so fucking cute I can’t … I can’t deal with it. Look at our beautiful boys finally being happy …”

“I knooooooow!! Our dumb boys … Look at them they’re so in love, we’re so fucking blessed …”

By the end of the night, they all got up to go home. As he was walking out of the booth, Dabi suddenly felt a misty hand fall heavily on his shoulder.

“Dabi, my boy, a moment before you go?” he asked with a voice that was so polite that Dabi actually found it threatening.

“Uh, yeah sure!” SHIT SHIT SHIT.

“Alright, so first of all, I just want you to know: Sako and I are very happy for you and Tomura, we truly are. And we’re … how should I put it? We’re very happy that’s it’s you, if this makes any sense …”

“It actually does … uh thank you …”

“But if that’s okay with you, we thought that it would be nice to have a big chat just the three of us. You know, just to discuss some things? A good talk just you, Sako and me. What do you say?”

I’m gonna fucking die. “Haha, yeah sure no problem, let’s text okay?”

Once they were outside, Dabi immediately went to hug Tomura whispering in his ear “Your dads are pretty cute, but I also I’m pretty sure they both know how to make a body disappear.”

“I mean one of them can compress anything into a tiny ball and the other is literally a warp gate so I’m pretty sure that’s accurate.”

“Babe.”

“Sorry.”
The rest of the group, minus the dads, Giran and his son, all walked home together and when they reached their apartment, Tomura’s tipsy mind was suddenly hit with the horrifying realisation that he had to leave Dabi for at least six or seven hours. He whined and buried his face in Dabi’s chest.

“Awww … baby it’s okay, I’ll be at your door at the first hour.”

Tomura would never admit it out loud, but he had an irrational fear that this whole thing would disappear as soon as Dabi left his side, that he was going to wake tomorrow and realize that the whole evening had been an elaborate dream. Dabi delicately grabbed his face, and as he had been reading his mind, whispered against his lips:

“8 am tomorrow I’m at your door. Promise and sealed with a kiss.”

Dabi delicately put his lips against his boyfriend’s, but it was Tomura’s turn to be eager and he desperately grabbed onto Dabi’s face with careful fingers to deepen the kiss as much as he could. Dabi was surprised but please and quick to catch on the rhythm. The whole thing lasted for a while, and they kept coming back for “one last kiss” as soon as they parted.

“One more…”

“Just this one …”

“Okay this is the last I promise …”

Eventually the whistles and the cheers of their friends turned into annoyed groans and the two boys had to be forcefully separated from each other.

The good thing was that Tomura didn’t get the chance to get anxious in his bed, fearing that Dabi would somehow disappear during the night, because as soon as he crashed on his bed, he suddenly felt tow more weight crashed on top of him.

“Did you really think you were going to sleep without sharing some stuff with us?” Toga asked with a grin.
“You see,” explained Magne, “We’ve actually all been sort of invested in this whole business for a while, so we would like at least some tiny little details if you don’t mind…”

“Do I dare to ask how long?” Tomura asked with a smile, as the two girls, already in their pyjamas, cuddle with him.

“No you don’t.”

“Valid.”

The last thing that Tomura remembered before falling asleep with his two best friends by his side, was Toga asking him if he had already touched the Dabooty.

Chapter End Notes

*Every book about writing romance I ever read, and every fucking teacher and class about writing in general I ever had in my entire life*: when you write a romance, you must always have a fallout between the characters, that keeps them away from each other for a while. You must make this conflict last quite a bit, and if you write in a serial format, you should never ever ever have the chapter/episode of the fallout and we the two of them getting together because it's just too easy. And as a general rule, you should never ever ever ever ever get your character together before the end of your story.

*Me*: YEEEEEEEEEET

Okay get ready for a big ass note because I have things to say:

WE DID IT FAM. WE FUCKING DID IT. DABI AND TOMURA ARE LEGIT OUT THERE SMOOCHING AND SHIT. But now, some of you may wonder: is the fic over? My answer is simple.

Absolutely not. We're only halfway through fam.

I always knew, since chapter 2 or 3, that Tomura and Dabi would get together at the midpoint in the story, simply because I want to write them as a couple, living together or how their relationship can help them to grow and heal. Like, listen, there's still so much plot going on! What about Tomura's exhibition? What about Dabi's family? What really happened to Tomura and his father when he was a child? Will Magic Dad and Mist Dad ever get married? And also guys, please ... we didn't even get to sexy
times yet and I know some of you hoes are waiting for it (I won't give names but you guys know who you are). So yeah like I said, even though the couple got together, the story is only halfway done!

However, I just want to say that it's completely okay if you want to drop the story now! I know some people are only into slow burn for the will they won't they feels, and get bored once the ship happens, and to all of these people, you are all valid!!!!! It was a pleasure to have you on this journey, like might as well talk about it now, the amount of love and support this fic has received is just so overwhelming! Art, headcanons, comments, messages ... Thank you so much!!!!! I'm really proud of this work, and everything that been happening around me thanks to it!!!

So yeah, if that's enough for you, no worries! Thank you for being part for the ride!!!

But!!! For those of you plan to stay until the end ... Let's discover the rest Tomura and Dabi's story together, shall we?

DISCLAIMER: I'M POSTING THIS VERY LATE I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO EDIT PROPERLY SO I WILL CORRECT ALL MY AWFUL MISSPELLING TOMORROW I PROMISE

(Next chapter, practice makes perfect!!! Local nerd boys learn how relationships work and that communication is the good shit!!!!)
Babysteps

Chapter Summary

In which the boys learn that practice makes perfect.

Chapter Notes

I'M SORRY

Yes I know it's been months now, and I'm sorry I really didn't mean to take so long to continue the fic. I didn't mean for it to be a hiatus or anything. But it took so long because:

1) I moved to another country. Like yes literally.
2) I went back to school, and I'm currently in my dream school to take writing classes which exactly what I wanted. But it does come with quite a lot of work. Hopefully, I will soon get a good rhythm that will allow me to write more for the fic with what I already have to write for my class.
3) I was fucking scared yall ... Chapter 10 was a big piece and turning point for the story and I'm incredibly proud of it! But it was actually kind of hard and stressful to get back to the story after the positive responses and feedback I got. I was overwhelmed in the best possible way but overwhelmed nonetheless and I have A LOT of comments to answer to and I will get back to that I promise

So yeah, don't see this as me trying to excuse myself, but as an explanation for such a long delay. You guys deserve better I'm so sorry!

So the story of these nerds continues! I hope it will be worth the wait, and that you will still find it compelling even though the big kiss already happened! I apologize in advance if the chapters feels a bit messy, but we're entering the second part of the story, with a lot of new elements and plot points to introduce!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dabi woke up with the taste of Tomura on his lips. Still lying in his bed, he licked his lips and tried to elaborate on what that taste was, before deciding that it was at least 40% bubble-gum and the rest was just ... well, Tomura. A painfully wide grin grew on his face without him being able to do anything to stop it. Not that he wanted to anyway. He could still feel everything: Tomura's cracked lips under his, Tomura’s hands tangled in his hair, Tomura’s shaky breath against his own mouth, Tomura’s beating heart pressed between Dabi and the wall … And he couldn’t wait to feel all of it again, to actually feel it. I love him so much and I can’t wait to kiss him again. Feeling some blush spreading across his cheeks, Dabi giggled and covered his face with his hands like he was a 15-year-old schoolgirl or something … It vaguely crossed his mind that the old Dabi, the one from last year, would have laughed at himself for reacting like this. He would have try to stay cool and
detached, and he would have told himself that he was naïve and stupid because things like this don’t last. But old Dabi can go fuck himself really … He is bitter, sad and lonely. Me, I’m happy and in love and I have a boyfriend.

Outside his window, the sun was barely up and the clock next to his bed indicated 7:04 pm. Usually, Dabi would have slept at least three more hours, but right now he was already jumping out of his bed. He grabbed the nicest shirt in his wardrobe, one that smelled nice, and struggled to put his boots on as fast as he could. Why stay in bed when the most beautiful boy in the world was waiting to be kissed? Last night, he had promised to meet him at the first hour of the day, so he was already six or seven hours late. I could have kissed him so many times in seven hours … But at least right now, the bakeries and coffee shops will be open, and I can bring some breakfast! He passed by the bathroom to fix himself. Dabi had never been one to put that much care in his appearance (not so early at least) but right now, he was preparing himself with the diligence of a teenage boy about to go on his first date.

He was in a hurry, but before leaving, he still took the time to pass by Jin’s room. Spinner was there too, sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Dabi bit the inside of his cheeks as not to laugh, remembering how Spinner had insisted to sleep on Jin’s floor rather than Dabi’s. His lizard friend probably wouldn’t be sleeping in his room before a while… The young man crouched next to Jin’s bed and gently rubbed the blond head.

“Hmmm …wh…”

“Shhhh … It’s okay you can sleep. I just want you to know that I’m going to see my boyfriend Tomura right now, just so you don’t worry okay?”

“Mmm … yeah, kay … have a nice smooching …”

“I sure will.”

Dabi looked at Jin fall back to sleep and told himself that he needed to apologize properly at some point. He had been so reckless these past few weeks, and he knew that Jin and Spinner had been worried sick. Yeah, he would make it up to them. But right now, he had other things in mind. He ran out of the flat and down the street, his goofy grin still stuck to his face

*
On the other side of town, Dabi’s other half did not have such a dynamic morning. Because unlike his boyfriend who had managed to fall asleep as soon as he got home, Tomura had been interrogated by Magne and Toga for at least two or three hours before they all fall asleep giggling on top of each other. When the doorbell rang loudly, the two inquisitors were still deeply asleep in his bed with him and showed no signs of waking up when the bell rang for the third time.

Eventually, Tomura let out a loud groan and struggled to climb over the two girls as delicately as he could. Still more than half asleep he grabbed a shitty t-shirt hanging on his chair to cover himself and sleepwalked out of his room and to the door. On his way there he lazily traced his lips with his fingers … He had a weird memory of being kissed by Dabi the night before and it still felt good, as if Dabi had not stopped kissing him since then. *Uh … Dabi …* And Tomura was still slowly putting the pieces back together when the solution imposed itself right behind the door.

The red drowsy eyes went wide, taking in Dabi who was standing right there with a brown paper bag in his hands, looking more handsome, more beautiful, more breath-taking and sexier than he had ever looked before. Tomura’s breath hitched, and Dabi’s eyes filled themselves with desire. He dropped the package, and before it could even touch the ground, Dabi had grabbed a hold of Tomura’s face and smashed his lips against his, immediately opening his mouth. Tomura kissed back even before realizing what was happening as if his lips had a memory of their own that worked a lot faster than his brain. As if kissing Dabi was a second nature, something natural. *My lips were made for his …*

Dabi’s tongue was already pushing in and Tomura opened his mouth before even closing his eyes. He first felt Dabi smile against his lips, and then he felt Dabi pushing him back inside. Still without thinking, Tomura followed Dabi’s lead and walked backward, until his lower back hit the little cabinet against the wall at the end of the hallway. But he had barely registered the obstacle before Dabi grabbed his thighs and sat him on the small piece of furniture, without getting his lips off him even for a second. When he felt Dabi lifting him, Tomura threw his arms around his neck, and still kept him close once sat on the wooden surface. At this point, the boys and the kiss itself were complete messes. Even though Tomura was much more awake, he was still too sleepy to be coordinate but mostly way too *eager* and Dabi wasn’t doing much better. He was just trying to go deeper and deeper inside Tomura’s mouth, occasionally licking or biting the boy’s lips for good measure. It made Tomura gasp louder and louder, giving Dabi better access each time. His hands were still on the smooth white thighs, alternatively squeezing and caressing the warm skin. His touches progressively crept higher and higher, until he eventually reached the hem of the black boxers. Still kissing Tomura, now with a smug smile, he played with fabric, making him it snap against the sensitive skin. He avidly drank the gasps coming out of Tomura’s mouth. And to his surprise, the boy’s reaction was not to pull away but, on the contrary, to hook his legs around Dabi’s waist to bring him even closer.

“Oh fuck babe …” Dabi whispered against the kiss. Well, if it could still be called a kiss … At this point, they were practically just rubbing their face against one another, smiling and giggling against the other’s mouth, sucking and licking whatever they could get.
Eventually, after another few minutes, Dabi was just showering Tomura’s jawline with butterfly kisses, going lower and lower, waiting for his boyfriend to catch his breath. Tomura was fully awake now, every part of his body oversensitive to Dabi’s touch. He closed his eyes and let his entire body rest against the wall behind him, still panting. He came back … He is here, he is real … This … We are real … and he is kissing me again.

When his breathing calmed down, Tomura slowly ran his fingers through Dabi’s hair, tugging lightly. Humming against his collarbone, Dabi took the hint and slowly raised his head to look at his hot mess of a boyfriend. He had to restrain himself as to not immediately dive back in. Instead, he pressed his forehead against Tomura’s, to look deep into the dilated red eyes. Still panting quite a bit himself, he traced Tomura’s lower lips with his thumb and whispered.

“Good morning moonlight …”

“Good morning bright star …” Tomura answered with a satisfied giggle.

Well, it certainly is a great morning now … they both thought. Tomura wondered if Dabi could hear or feel how loud his heart was beating right now. It felt like he was never going to catch his breath as if Dabi had forever taken it away from him. Good. I want him to keep it. Dabi began to play with Tomura’s hair and there was something so soft, so casual and domestic about this gesture that Tomura almost wanted to cry. Because … because that was his life now. For now.

“Are you okay?” Dabi asked, suddenly concerned and bringing one of his hand to Tomura’s lower back. Maybe he wanted to check if he hurt himself on the cabinet, or maybe he just wanted to touch him there. Probably both. But once again, the warm fingers slid under his shirt so Tomura bit his lips and closed his eyes.

“I’m fine …” he gasped against Dabi’s lips.

“I’m sorry for uh … being a little too eager …” Dabi smiled, his forehead still against Tomura’s “I didn’t want to rush you, I actually wanted to take it slow this morning but … but then you opened the door looking like this … with your bed hair, sleepy eyes, and baggy shirt … and I just …Fuck I couldn’t control myself …”

“No!” Tomura answered immediately opening his eyes, “No I’m glad you did … I … because to be honest, before you … before you kissed me as you did … I wasn’t completely sure that last night wasn’t just a very vivid, beautiful dream …”
Dabi gave him signature crooked smile, the one Tomura had been dreaming about for months, and carefully grabbed his boyfriend’s waist to put him back on the ground. The black-haired man was oddly pleased to see his boyfriend back at his usual head level. They both loved the height difference between them. Not so long ago, Tomura thought of it as the perfect head-butt distance, but he now he realised that he was an idiot because it was, in fact, the perfect kiss distance. Dabi just loved how the difference allowed him to tower over Tomura, and to wrap himself completely around him. That’s what he wanted to do right now. He put one hand on each side of the cabinet, playfully trapping Tomura between his own warm body and the piece of furniture.

“It’s all real my darling,” he breathed against Tomura’s lips, “I can’t wait to show you how fucking real this is …”

Tomura decided that Dabi’s lips were too beautiful and too close not to be kissed. He got hon his tiptoe to press his own lips against Dabi’s, grabbing the collar of his coat for balance. His boyfriend’s mouth immediately opened and for a short second, Tomura got self-conscious about his own morning breath, even though had already hungrily kissed only a few seconds prior. I … I didn’t brush my teeth yet … should I … is he gonna … Dabi could feel the boy’s hesitation, so he pressed himself entirely against the skinny body. And as he had hoped, the full contact made Tomura forget about whatever was troubling him, and the boy threw his arms around Dabi’s neck so they could stay glued to each other as long as they pleased. They had to catch up for the seven hours they had to spend sleeping instead of kissing.

“Oh MY GOD!”

The couple recognized Toga’s screech and instinctively turned to the direction of her voice. The young girl was standing a few feet away from them, still in her pink pyjamas and with her blond hair down, and her golden eyes were wide open in shock. Still pressed against each other, Tomura and Dabi stood still for a moment before realising that their friend wasn’t actually looking at them, but at the brown paper bag on the floor next to the still open entry door. After another few seconds of silent distress, she ran toward the bag to pick it up.

“Jesus Christ Dabi,” she mumbled with a pout, “I know you’re only gonna eat Tomura’s face for the rest of your life, but some of us still need food to survive you know …”

The comment turned the two boys crimson. Eventually, Dabi burst out of laughing, while Tomura buried his face against Dabi’s chest, whining, “Oh my God Toga shut the fuck up! You …! I… We … Uuurgh!!!”

“Awww that’s cute …” said Magne as she walked out of Tomura’s room with her bright red hair in a messy bun. She walked up to the cabinet, but completely ignored the two boys and only grabbed her sunglasses. Dabi smiled and kissed the top of Tomura’s head.
“Hey girls, look how fucking cute my boyfriend is …”

“Dabi stooooop …”

Eventually, they all sat together in the kitchen for breakfast. Fortunately for Dabi, neither the food nor the drinks were too damaged by the fall. Tomura was pretty happy about that, mostly because he knew that Toga could have actually stabbed Dabi if he had ruined her breakfast. And I don’t want her to stab my hot boyfriend … I just got him!

Just like last night at the bar, Dabi decided to feed-feed Tomura, and just like last night, Tomura pretended to protest for a few seconds before letting him do it. Every once in a while, Dabi was playfully pulling the food away at the last second and offering his lips instead, which Tomura hungrily accepted every time. They both tasted like coffee and sugar, and Tomura told himself that he’d much rather only eat his food directly from Dabi’s lips for the rest of his life.

“I wonder how long it’s gonna take for me to stop thinking that’s their cute and to begin to think that they’re gross …” Toga pondered across the table, sipping her overly sweet coffee.

“Considering how much bullshit they put us through I’d say that it’s gonna take a while before any of us gets tired of it …” Magne smile, sipping her tea.

“Don’t underestimate how gross we’re gonna get …”

But the two boys eventually pull away from each other, at least enough to be invested in the conversation. They get to talk about last night’s success, which was almost overshadowed by a certain making out session. But thinking back on last night, Tomura was a little bit ashamed. Even if it had led to something absolutely breath-taking, life-changing and wonderful, his little breakdown had eclipsed the band’s success and happiness. Just because he couldn’t keep it together as always … and also because he was too blind to see what he really meant to Dabi. What I mean to him … Yes, that’s right, I might be a mess but … but he still kissed me. That’s got to count for something, right? Tomura felt a shiver run down his spine. He was experiencing a strange new feeling because, for the first time in years, his usual self-hatred was blocked. It usually spread quickly in his mind like a poison his body, but suddenly, something inside of him was fighting back and protecting him.

Dabi.
Looks like I was right all along. He really is magical. My talisman. My medicine.

On his right, a warm hand touched his face to put a lock of hair behind his ear.

“You okay there, love?” Dabi asked, “You went really quiet for a moment…”

“Yes, I’m okay …” Tomura smiled, leaning into the touch and pressing his cheek onto Dabi’s hand, “Thank you for asking.”

Dabi would have kissed the boy if Toga’s phone had not suddenly loudly ringed and vibrated on the table. And when she saw the name on it, the young girl’s screech was even louder somehow. “Magne it’s our little bro face timing!!” The older girl was equally exciting and the two of them were so bouncy that they seemed to have some trouble pressing the right button to answer. But eventually, a sleepy Mustard appeared on their screen.

“Hey there little dude!” they both waved together.

“Hey girls, how is it going?” the young boy yawned.

“Not too bad,” Toga answered with a quick glance to the two boys in front of her, “What about you? Already up? What about your dad?”

“Yeah, I actually didn’t fall asleep that late. But my dad is still sleeping … on the couch actually.”


Mustard looked both amused and embarrassed and bite his lips before answering: “Well … Because Kurogiri and Sako are sleeping in his bed …”

“They what now???” Tomura’s eyes went wide, and Dabi was pretty sure to see his hair poof like the fur of an angry cat. He thought it was the cutest shit ever, but the two girls simply burst out of laughing at his reaction. On the screen, Mustard took a sip of his hot cacao with a twisted straw.
“Good morning to you too Mr. Smooch …” he smiled. Even though Tomura wasn’t on his screen, he had definitely heard his screech. “Glad to see that Dabi hasn’t swallowed your tongue yet …”

“OH SHIT!” Toga almost dropped the phone, while Tomura’s face turned crimson, “OUR LIL BRO IS TAKING NO PRISONER!”

“But to answer your question,” Mustard continued, “They spent the night here. After you guys left last night, my dad invited them home for “one last drink” and let me tell you, things got out of hand. I mean I was sleeping like a log but … well, the kitchen was pretty trashed when I woke up …”

The group let out loud whistles, except for Tomura who had sunk on his chair and was burying his face between his hands. Dabi, still laughing, put a comforting arm around his shoulder. “Come on darling, I know it might be tough, but we always knew that your dads were secretly party animals …”

“Speaking of!” Toga said, practically throwing herself across the table, showing the screen in front of the two boys faces, “Mustard, get a load of the mushy boys!!! Kiss for the camera!!!”

“Toga, stop that!” Tomura was feeling his face getting hotter and hotter. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to kiss Dabi, but it was … weird, to do it on command for the camera like this. He suddenly felt very exposed and awkward and tried to look away, but suddenly, Dabi was grabbing his face …

“Come here baby don’t be shy …”

Dabi’s voice was hot and sulky, and his face wonderfully kissable … And yet, Tomura couldn’t bring himself to kiss him right now, although he wasn’t exactly sure why. He felt that if he was kissing him right now, he’d do everything wrong … he also felt a weird itchiness that he didn’t like that.

“Dabi, stop, not like this!”

He quite forcefully got away from Dabi’s hold, and the young men immediately retracted his hand with a surprised look on his face. Tomura was immediately assaulted with guilt and remorse, but at least Dabi didn’t look mad or sad. Not too much at least. Just surprised. But in front of them,
Magne, Toga, and Mustard had already moved on to something else.

“Oh! I think my dad is waking up! I’ll try to make some coffee … See you soon guys!”

“See you Mustard!” Magne said, “And take care of Tomura’s dads for us!”

After they hang up, the two girls immediately hang up to get ready and clean the kitchen. They moved around swiftly and excitedly, talking about their plans for the days and where they should eat for lunch. Well, Toga wondered, because Magne couldn’t understand how Toga was already thinking about lunch after such a copious breakfast. Their joyous and contagious mood dissipated the silence between the two boys, and they both began to laugh with them and with each other as they all cleaned the kitchen. Soon, they were all over each other all over again, as if nothing had happened. But something had happened.

Within the next five minutes, Toga and Magne were dressed and ready to go out and Tomura was still t-shirt and boxers. They had decided to go get Mustard and take him out for the day, assuming that his dad and his funky uncles would be to hangover to do anything with him. They promised Tomura to say make sure that his dads weren’t too damaged by their crazy night, and they were off, leaving Tomura and Dabi alone.

As soon as the door was closed, Dabi grabbed Tomura by the waist to pull him close and buried his face in his neck, making him gasp softly. The boy delicately grabbed his the hem of his shirt for balance and nuzzled his face against Dabi’s cheek in return.

“It’s so good …” Tomura panted against his ear, “Finally being able to touch you like this …”

“I know …” Dabi agreed in a whisper, “So damn good … I could do this all day …”

“R-really?” The thought was making Tomura’s mind dizzy. To think that Dabi would be contempt only by touching him … to think that himself only was enough for Dabi’s happiness… it was completely intoxicating.

“Yes really …” Dabi continued, “But it’s not the only I want to do with you …”

What are you going to do with me Dabi? The question was burning him; it was on the tip of his tongue. But stayed quiet, because, in truth, he was also scared. He was scared to hear Dabi’s
answer because he was afraid of where it would lead them … So he changed the subject. “So … what do you want to do today?”

Dabi didn’t seem to notice the subtle shift. He pulled a from Tomura’s neck to look up in the air, biting his lips, as he was intensely thinking about his answer. Tomura smiled, smitten by his adorable boyfriend. After a few more seconds of silence, Dabi looked down to Tomura and took his face in his hands.

“Hey, Tomura …” He gave him his most dashing smile. “Will you go on a date with me?”

The question was obviously rhetoric, and even playful. Considering that had already been kissing all morning, of course, Tomura would go on a date with Dabi. And yet, Tomura’s breathes hitched, his face turned pink, and he felt butterflies in his stomach. But because he was too busy smiling to answer right away, so Dabi got a little nervous.

“Yes? No? I mean we don’t have to …”

“No one ever asked me on a date before …”

Tomura didn’t intend to sound so fucking soft, he didn’t even intend to say this out loud, but just because of the look Dabi gave, he was glad that he did. He vaguely remembered a time when he thought that Dabi’s eyes were cold, detached and bored when he thought that Dabi was empty and incapable of feeling a thing. Past Tomura was really a dumb bitch … Because Dabi … Dabi feels everything … I see it now …

“I’m glad to be the first,” Dabi said, rubbing his thumbs against Tomura’s cheeks.

Tomura went to get dressed and had all the troubles in the world stopping Dabi from following him in his room ad he did.

“I just want to help …” Dabi promised with the most charming, yet stupidest smile Tomura had ever seen. Although he had to be firm, Tomura couldn’t help but giggle when he closed the door on Dabi’s disappointed face. But it actually took the boy a while to get dressed, because he had a slight panic about what he should wear for his first date ever, with the guy of his dreams. The question eventually resolved itself as he only had a few properly ironed shirts left. I literally got a boyfriend overnight!!!! I wasn’t ready!!! IF I HAD KNOWN I WOULD HAVE BOUGHT NICER CLOTHES AND CLEANED UP THE PLACE AND MAYBE WASHED MY HAIR!!! He began to
wonder how stressful this whole thing was going to be … And yet, his fears were almost completely washed away by the look in Dabi’s eyes when he walked out of the room.

*

“So where do you want to go?” Tomura asked once outside.

They had left the flat without really deciding what they were going to do, but Dabi actually had a very clear idea in mind. “Hey, if you’re okay with that, I’d like to go back to the museum. The one with Monet and Hopper.”

“Really? I mean … that’s great! That’s one of my favourite places on earth! But is that really the thing that you want to do?”

“Yeah, it’s a very cool place! And also … well, I’ve been thinking uh … It was kind of our first date already?”

Dabi looked very embarrassed, a blush came to his cheeks and he rubbed the back of his head like he always did when he got self-conscious about anything. He proceeded to explain how the more he thought about, the more he felt like the two have them had actually been going on dates for a while without realising it: the museum, their night outside, the cinema … “I mean … I mean for me at least it felt like it. I’m pretty sure I was already … I already wanted to kiss you back then so uh … I don’t know that’s stupid …”

“You’re so cute Dabi.”

Dabi’s eyes went wide and he blushed again. He blushing wasn’t nearly as strong and red as Tomura’s, it was actually kind of hard to notice with the scars under his eyes and on his jaw. But to Tomura, it was the prettiest thing in the world, the light pink mixing perfectly with the purple of the burned skin. *It looks like a sunset* … Besides, Dabi was always so flirty and confident, so Tomura enjoyed these little moments when Dabi revealed the dork he truly was.

“Ah! Uuuuh …” Dabi awkwardly laugh, “I haven’t … I haven’t been called cute in a long time … Are you sure you don’t mean “hot” or “devilishly handsome”?”

“I mean yes obviously … but also cute.”
“Okay … Okay, I can work with that …” Dabi smiled awkwardly looking to the side.

They made their way to the museum. It was funny to be back here after everything that had happened since their last visit. Nothing there had changed, and yet everything looked different. Dabi remembered how awkward they both were back then, tiptoeing around their own feelings and attractions … He remembered how fucking dumb he was himself, with his whole theory of friendship and attraction. *Why did I have to make everything so painfully complicated? When it was the simplest thing in the world …*

“Still no need to take an audio guide I assume?” Tomura asked, taking Dabi out of his thoughts.

“No need … I didn’t get to tell you last time for many stupid yet obvious reasons but …*fuck you’re so hot when you talk art to me baby …*” Saying so, he took a step closer to his boyfriend, but Tomura actually jumped and backed off. It kind of looked like the way he had pulled away from Dabi in the kitchen earlier this morning.

“D-Dabi don’t say that in public!!!” Tomura stuttered, looking left and right as to make sure that no one was watching them.

The black-haired man was completely confused. *What’s up with him suddenly?* Nevertheless, they made their way to the gallery, and soon enough, Tomura was cheerful again. Dabi still wondered what had gotten into him, but his boyfriend was already rambling about some French guy from the 19th century, and he looked so incredibly cute that Dabi eventually forgot about it. He actually remembered everything Tomura had explained to him last time they were here, but he wasn’t about to stop that adorable rambling. And slowly but surely, they got closer and closer to the Monet room. Dabi noticed that Tomura’s speech was more and more hesitant, and he began to stutter a little. Finally, when they both stood in front of *Impressions, Soleil*, Tomura was all pink and smiling.

“And, well, you know that one …”

“I do. But let me tell you, it doesn’t look as impressive now that I have my own version of it …”

“Oh?”
“Yes … One that I can touch … And kiss …” Swiftly, Dabi passed his arm around Tomura’s waist to bring him closer to him, but before he could properly press their bodies and lips together, Tomura pressed his own two closed fists against his chest to stop his momentum.

“No, wait!”

Again?

Tomura was paler than usual. His eyes were wide and Dabi could read thousands of emotions in them: need, fear, desire, nervousness, panic … But it didn’t help him to understand what was happening. It was now the third time that Tomura was denying him since this morning. Of course, he has also kissed him dozens of time but … But still. What am I missing here?

“What’s wrong?” he asked. He wanted to run his hand through his hair but he was afraid to be denied again. “I just wanted to pin my masterpiece against the wall …”

Colours went back to Tomura’s face and he stared at Dabi’s lips for a long moment, biting his own, before eventually forcing a laugh. “S-sorry … I don’t know I’m … I’m just tired. But come on let’s move on … We have to see you too, right? Nighthawks!” Dabi felt like he should have said something here, but he still followed Tomura to the Hopper room. And he once again forgot the issue when he saw Tomura looking at the painting, his painting, with complete love and admiration.

“It’s even more beautiful than the last time I saw it …” he whispered, his eyes going from the painting to Dabi, with still the same love in them. He leaned slightly against his shoulder and Dabi felt a shiver run down his spine at the soft contact. “Hey,” Dabi said, “do you remember what you said last time … about how these elegant people look lonely, but you feel like one day they’ll talk to each other and feel better?” Tomura looked up to him, “Yes, what about it?”

“Well, I feel like they don’t look so lonely anymore …”

* 

They spend another three hours in the museum, two in the galleries, one in the shop, before making their way outside. “You know,” Tomura, said, “I’m really happy that our first date was in a museum! Well like you said it wasn’t technically the first but … But I guess our real first one was also in this museum so … Anyway, I, uh, I always wanted to go to a museum date … and I never
thought I’d … Uh … with you. Yes.”

Tomura began to play with hair, and Dabi looked at him in awe. *I LOVE HIM SO FUCKING MUCH HOLY SHIT.* “Baby, you’re so fucking pretty when you blush like this.” Instinctively, Tomura went to cover his face with both of his hands but Dabi gently caught his wrist before he could. “Now, what did I tell you about hiding your blush like this? Do you remember what I said?”

“You said … you said, …” Tomura remembered perfectly what Dabi had said, but he was struggling to say it out loud. “You said that it was both *insanely cute and sexy at the same time* …”

“And it is …” Dabi smiled, “because that’s what you are …”

“Did you just tricked me into complementing myself?”

“I sure did … get used to it pretty boy.”

On their way home, they discuss how fun it had been to go back to the museum. It was a funny thing really because everything and nothing had changed. On the surface, it hadn’t been that different than the last time they were there they hadn’t discovered any incredible secret about the works or about themselves. And yet, they were in love. And suddenly everything was easy. Or … easier at least.

“Where do you want to go for lunch?” Dabi asked.

“It’s a bit late for lunch isn’t it?” Tomura chuckled, “What time is it? 3 pm? Might as well wait until dinner …”

Tomura was already going to change the subject, but he steps were suddenly stopped and his body slightly pulled backward by Dabi, grabbing his sleeves. He didn’t immediately understand what that was about, even when he saw the worry in Dabi’s eyes.

“Baby, you need to eat …”

*Oh.* So that it was about. Even though they hadn’t properly discussed it, it was obvious that Dabi...
knew about Tomura’s relapse last month. And it was a good thing. Tomura knew that. But it still felt some shame growing in the pit of his stomach. “It’s not like that …” he tried to explain, “I’m not … I’m not trying to …”

“No, I know! I know you’re not … I know you’re doing better. But I guess I’m just a little worried and overprotective … I’m not trying to make it about me, I can’t even imagine how hard it was for you. But I got so fucking scared you know. I thought I was going to lose my mind …”

Dabi was still holding on to his sleeve tightly, and they were both still standing in the middle of the sidewalk. Tomura didn’t know what to say. He wished they had talked about this before, he wished he wouldn’t have scared and hurt Dabi so much … Deep down, he understood they’d have to talk about this at some point. But he really didn’t want to. Especially not right now. Especially not during their first date.

“Hey I have an idea …” suggested Dabi, understanding that he wouldn’t get anything out of Tomura right now, “How about … how about we make a cake? Just a big ass cake that we will eat as lunch, snack, and dinner? Hell, maybe two cakes!”

Dabi just looked so proud and happy right now, Tomura couldn’t help but laugh. Seeing his boyfriend pout to the mockery, he tried to calm his breathing. He suddenly a very similar situation almost a year ago, in which Dabi had decided to take their frying pan to defend himself in the dark empty stairs of their building. It made Tomura realise that he might have been in love with Dabi even back then.

“No babe don’t be upset!” Tomura said, still chuckling, and he noticed how the affectionate nickname relaxed Dabi’s features, “It’s just … you and I cooking without supervision is a recipe for disaster …”

“Ha! Recipe! Nice one …”

But in truth, Tomura liked that idea. It had always been easier for him to eat something he had prepared, bought, or cooked himself. Besides, cooking with Dabi, however dangerous, sounded kind of fun! He liked the idea of cooking with his boyfriend … it felt so domestic it genuinely sent shivers down his spine. So it wasn’t hard for Dabi to drag him to the nearest grocery store. Tomura merely pretended to roll his eyes, but he was actually smiling from ear to ear.

“Do you have a recipe in mind?” he asked as they stroll through the alleys.
“Nah, I don’t like being told what to do … but you like chocolate and I like coffee, so let’s just mix the two together … We’ll improvise.”

“Holy shit, we might actually die …”

*

It was an actual miracle that all of their ingredients were intact when they made it back home considering how carelessly they had carried them. Once they got to Tomura’s flat, they immediately invested the kitchen, throwing all of their things on the counter and taking out as many kitchen tools as they could find. None of them actually knew how to cook. Tomura had assisted Magne a few times, but he was usually too nervous to actually touch anything. Dabi just overcooked everything. So none of them knew what they were doing, but they were excited to do it together.

“Okay so … where do we start?”

“Don’t look at me! Do I look like I know what I’m doing?”

“But you’re an artist!!! Isn’t painting a little like baking?”

“How is painting like baking???”

“I don’t know!!! You mix some gooey stuff and create something nice out of it??”

The first hour was a complete disaster they trashed the counter and wasted half of their ingredient.

“Dabi, I am begging you to let me look up a recipe …”

“But …”

“Dabi, you are incredibly smart and talented at so many things, you are the shiniest star in the sky, and you are literally the most wonderful being on this planet. But we’re gonna poison ourselves …
Please let me look a recipe.”

But even after Tomura looked up the instruction for a nice coffee and chocolate cake, things didn’t get any better. The phone’s screen was too small for the two of them to read properly and do their thing at the same time, and Dabi still wanted to “improve” the recipe with his own changes and touches and Tomura couldn’t do anything to stop him.

“What if I put some alcohol instead of water in it? Wouldn’t it be testier?”

“You know what? Just fucking do it … I think we both already ate half of the dough anyway …”

Two hours later, they still weren’t done, and they had dough all over their forearms. At first, they had both tried to save their black clothes, but by now they had fully accepted that there was no escape from the flour. Things weren’t going so bad; the cake would surely be edible but also surely too big and too rich. At least, the coffee and chocolate seemed to balance each other perfectly. Tomura was looking at Dabi who was so focused on stirring their mixture that his tongue was sticking out of his mouth. He had flour all over his dark hair, and for a moment, it reminded Tomura of that night on the beach months ago, when he had come to sit next to him with sand all over his hair. The simple memory of that night had Tomura’s heart skip a beat. *It was the night I knew …* He remembered Dabi grabbing his wrist and pushing his hands through his hair, and he remembered how terrified he was back then. He was so scared to hurt him, to wound the person he loved the most … but everything went fine. Because Dabi trusted him and wanted him close. It was so odd to think back on that night, realising that during that moment when they had rested their foreheads together, they both so desperately wanted to kiss each other … Tomura smiled to himself. *How foolish can two boys be?*

“Hey, gorgeous …”

Tomura was pulled out of his thoughts by an odd sensation as if something warm was spread across his cheek. He blinked a few times and pulled away, only to realise that Dabi had dived two of his fingers in what rested of melted chocolate to draw a dark heart on his cheek.

“Dabi what the hell?” Tomura tried to sound mad and failed.

“I’ve been asking you if you want to lick the bowl for a full minute now … But you’re not listening so I need to get your attention …”
“Well I tap on the shoulder would have been enough …”

“Aww, are you made because you’re dirty now?” Suddenly, Dabi was against him, holding his face up gently with both of his hands. Tomura’s breathing hitched and his boyfriend smiled. “Don’t worry … I’ll clean you off …”

Tomura wasn’t prepared for the hot wet tongue that ran across his cheek, from his jaw all the way up to his eyes, and he had to lean back against the counter for support. But he also felt Dabi’s fingers, still covered in chocolate, trying to mess with the other side of his face, and by reflex more than anything else, he grabbed an egg behind him and smashed it on the top of Dabi’s head. The young man pulled back, just as surprised as Tomura himself who genuinely hadn’t planned to do that. They both stayed silent for a few seconds, but soon, the sight of Dabi’s beautiful serious straight face with egg yolk soaking his hair and running down his features was too much, and Tomura busted out of laughing. A mischievous smile grew on his boyfriends face.

“I see … so the little kitten wants to play, uh?”

In a swift movement, Dabi grabbed an egg as well but Tomura dodged quickly and it was smashed on the floor. Within seconds, each of them grabbed a fistful of flour to throw at each other, trashing the kitchen even more. Giggling like idiots, they ran around the table, trying to catch each other, dodging, running and throwing whatever their hands could grab on: sugar, coffee powder, more eggs … soon even things that had nothing to do with the cake. Tomura grabbed the bottle of rum that Dabi had opened earlier and sprayed Dabi with it, and laughed when his boyfriend tried to get some in his mouth.

The kitchen floor was completely soaked and dirty so it was more and more difficult to run properly, and soon, Dabi’s long legs caught up with Tomura and he pinned him against the kitchen wall, hands above his hands to make sure he wasn’t hiding any more ammunition. It suddenly reminded him of last night, right before their very first kiss, when they were in the exact them position. Just like yesterday, Tomura was messy, blushing and breathless, but out of laughing and smiling this time, not out of tears. *Never again out of tears.* Tomura was already squirming and twisting himself, so Dabi pressed his entire body against him to keep him still and relished in the way Tomura’s eyes widened with desire.

“Do you surrender?” Dabi playfully asked.

“What do you mean surrender?” Tomura gave him a lazy smile “I won.”

“How on earth did you won? I’m pinning you against the wall right now …”
“Precisely.”

Oh fuck ... Dabi would probably never survive this flirty, more confident Tomura. Looks like he did win after all. He pressed his forehead against his and was delighted to see that despite his little bravado, Tomura still blushed and gasped at the sudden closeness. He completely stopped fighting and resisting, and it looked he would melt against the wall if Dabi ever let go of him.

“Well then …” Dabi whispered as their noses bumped against each other, “Will you let me give you a reward?”

Tomura bit his lips and nodded eagerly. Dabi started softly, teasingly almost, lightly sucking at Tomura’s lips before even opening his mouth. But his boyfriend was eagerly waiting for him, deepening the kiss as soon as he had the chance and for once, it was Dabi who gasped. Tomura was still clumsy, but his progress and instinct were both impressive and promising. Dabi let go of his wrist and they both held on to each other faces with greed and desperation. Tomura being press harder and harder against the wall. Slowly, Dabi’s tongue left Tomura’s mouth to wander across his jaw, licking the mess of condiment he still had all over his face. He was rewarded with plenty of whimpers and other moans, as he continued his teasing down his neck.

“How …” Dabi whispered breathlessly against his skin, “how is it that … that even what covered with so much mess you still taste like bubble-gum?”

“Is … is that good or bad?” Tomura asked with some anxiousness, but still twisting his head to expose more skin.

“Good. So good. Fuck, everything that comes from you is so fucking good … I can’t wait to taste more of you …”

He punctuated his declaration by dragging his tongue across Tomura’s neck, from his collarbone all the way up to his jaw. The sensation was so good that Tomura moaned loudly, arching his entire body against Dabi’s. But then the back haired man began to alternate nips and butterfly kisses against his throat and it was almost more than he could take.

“D-dabi … aaaah … w-wait that tickles!”

However, his attempt to calm his boyfriend backfired spectacularly, because when Dabi pulled
away to look at him, there was a mixture of lust and mischief in his eyes that sent a jolt of pleasure, fear, and anticipation down Tomura’s body.

“Does it now?”

And before Tomura could have the chance to react, Dabi dug his diligent fingers into his sides and buried his face in the crook of his neck once more. The boy tried really hard to muffle his giggle for a few seconds, whimpering instead but it looked like Dabi had already memorised every sensitive spot of his body, and he couldn’t resist the sweet torture anymore. All hope was lost when Dabi slide his hands under his sweater, directly teasing the soft sensitive skin of his ribs and stomach. Tomura was laughing, thrashing his head left and right, but Dabi still managed to plant a few kisses on his lips. But as minutes passed by, Dabi’s touches got less mischievous and more sensual, and soon, Tomura’s giggles turned into soft moans. Dabi’s hands were so warm, Tomura wondered if he was using his quirk or if it was just his own body completely overheating.

“Does it feel good?” Dabi asked with an odd mix of eagerness and anxiousness in his voice. Even though he technically was the one doing the teasing, the whole situation was just as torturous for him as it was for his boyfriend. They were so close now, and Tomura was so responsive, so hot, and so beautiful … he could already feel his own blood rushing down south.

“Yes … yes so good … so fucking good … I never thought I’d …” Tomura couldn’t even finish his sentence. His eyes were closed as well, and he just felt so … safe. And good, and relaxed … Of course, he was aware of how tight his pants were getting, and that they’d had to stop soon before … well, before they just couldn’t stop anymore. But he just wanted to enjoy Dabi’s caresses a little more.

Hands still under his shirt, Dabi pressed his lips against Tomura’s with a soft eagerness, and Tomura gently grabbed Dabi’s face, enjoying the odd sensation of soft and burned skin under his palms.

“MY KITCHEN!!!”

No matter how far gone they were right now, survival instinct still kicked in when they recognized Magne’s angry voice. They pulled away from each other just enough to see their group of friends looking at them from the door frame, with a wide spectrum of emotions on their faces: Magne’s distress, Toga’s beaming, Jin’s smiling and Spinner’s crying.

“Awwww come on don’t stop!” Toga whined, “It was just getting dirty!”
Tomura and Dabi got off each other, still giggling, with messy hair and pink lips, to get scolded by Magne who didn’t care how cute they were, because “the kitchen is a sacred place and they better clean their mess.” Of course, everybody ended up cleaning up with them, and of course, everyone gave a worried look to the brown mixture resting in the cake mould. It was put in the oven nonetheless.

But as they were almost done cleaning something happened. Tomura was kneeling on the floor still gathering the mix of flour and sugar spread everywhere, and pondered how pretty it was, all that white powder … he knew that Dabi would have probably made a joke about how it looked like cocaine, and although he wasn’t wrong Tomura preferred to think it looked like snow. White, simple and clean. But suddenly, in the middle of all of this, something caught his eyes, something clashing with such beautiful purity. There was another powder. But this one wasn’t clean and white like the other two … It was darker, almost grey … and maybe everyone else in the room would have missed it, mixed it with the rest, thinking it looked the same. But Tomura had seen this powder many times to miss it. It was dust.

*It’s decay.*

For a moment, time seemed to slow down as Tomura stayed kneeled on the floor, staring at the result of his quirk. He felt his pulse speeding up, and his breathing was getting louder. *Fuck no not now ... not now, keep it together Tomura! But ... but how? When? What did I ...?* Tomura realised that it had to be during their food fight, even before maybe while they were still baking. He had no idea what it even was, it could have been anything: some flour, an egg, a kitchen tool …But he was always so careful and self-conscious about his quirk and his hands.

*How did it happen? How did I let that happen? I think about this every second of my life! Where did I do wrong? Where was my mistake? What was thinking? Why was a distracted?*

The answer to this question crouched next to him and ran his hair through his hair.

“Baby are you okay?” Dabi asked with a soft voice.

“Uh? Ah! Yes!” Tomura quickly gathered the mixture on the floor with his sponge, mixing it all together. “Everything is fine I’m sorry, I drifted off for a second …”

The rest of the evening was nice. So nice that Tomura almost completely forgot about the dark dust for a few hours. They ate the cake all together, and it was a lot tastier than what everyone,
including the couple, had expected. Dabi fed him again, and Tomura wondered if he was going to do this for every meal they would share together from now on. The idea wasn’t so bad. Once they were done, Tomura even had a bit of revenge on his boyfriend, because it was his turn to clean him off. The moment Tomura’s tongue touched his jaw, Dabi’s breathe hitched and the soft skin on his face turned pink, which provoked a loud whistling sounds from their friends all around the table. And then it was time to say goodbye again …

“Ooooof, my goodness …” Jin had some trouble getting off his chair, head spinning a little, “why do I feel so tipsy? We only had some wine …”

“It’s because Dabi poured half of a bottle of rum in the cake,” Tomura explained, “And some beers too I think …”

“Beet is yeast it doesn’t count …” Dabi protested, grabbing Tomura by his belt loop and silencing his snarky answer in the best possible way.

“I’m so fucking happy right …” Spinner whispered, leaning against Toga and looking at the two boys kissing, “like … it feels so surreal in the best way possible … like we leave in an alternate universe where they’re no longer dumb bitches …”

“Considering the way they destroyed the kitchen today, I can confirm that these are still very much dumb bitches …” Magne grumbled under her breath. “First they still your frying pan and next thing you know they trash the place …”

Dabi lifted his middle finger in the general direction of the group without stopping to kiss Tomura.

“They might actually be dumber now, …” Toga whispered with real fascination, tilting her head to the side. Jin nodded in agreement with all of the seriousness in the world, rubbing his chin as he was studying a captivating medical case. “Hhmnmnm … Could it really be though? They were quite dumb before? We need to discuss this …”

“Yeah well, you’ll discuss by texts,” Magne decided, yawning, “It’s late, everyone out …”

“Noooooo, tomorrow is so far away…” Tomura whined against Dabi’s lips, throwing his arms around his neck, “I want to stay with you all night …”
Even though Tomura was obviously a little tipsy and speaking without thinking right now, Dabi felt a shiver run through his body. The simple thought of spending the night with Tomura was making weak in the knees, and a thousand of images each one dirtier than the next assaulted his inebriated mind all at once.

“You know …” he said with a sulky voice, “if that’s what you want there’s a very simple solution to that …”

“NO NO NO!” Magne protested while Spinner and Jin were dragging Dabi away from Tomura, “Our precious perfect boy here is going back to school tomorrow, and we have a meeting with Giran! So you two better get your nasty minds out of the gutter, because you ain’t doing Satan’s Tango in this good Christian household! No tonight bitch!”

Tomura and Dabi still managed to exchange one last kiss before the taller man was dragged outside and the door was closed between them.

But only a few moments later, Tomura was alone in his bed, and the grey dust on the kitchen floor came back to haunt him. *It’s so ugly … So god damn ugly …* He was still trying to remember when it had happened exactly and what it was but he couldn’t, he couldn’t even remember what it was that he had destroyed with his own hands in the kitchen today. *How did I not felt it? How the fuck did I not feel something decaying between my fingers? The feeling is so familiar, how did I miss it?* But real question was, how did he let that happen … well, it wasn’t actually a question, he knew why.

His entire life, Tomura had been anxious, nervous, careful about every single of his movement. He was always thinking about his fingers in the back of his mind no matter what he did, that was just how he lived. And yet, that afternoon, he got careless. He relaxed, and let go of his fear and worry. *Because he is my medicine … because he makes me feel so safe and happy that … that I can let go.* Never once in his life, Tomura had considered his anxiety to be a good thing, but right now, he couldn’t help but imagine what would have happened if instead of some cake ingredient, he had grabbed Dabi. What if, when his boyfriend pinned him against the wall and kissed, Tomura had completely let go of everything and grabbed his face fully? *No! No that wouldn’t happen! That will never happen …*

*Never?*

*Never? Are you sure Tomura?*

*Not even when, for the first time, he will strip you off your clothes and really touch you? Not even*
when he will kiss parts of you that you yourself barely touched before? When he will, without a
doubt, make you feel things that you never dared to dream of? Will you be strong enough then? Or
will you let go and put him in danger?

Tomura didn’t have any answers to that. Not yet anyway. All that he knew was that he wanted this
relationship to work because he wanted and needed Dabi so bad. But despite these anxious
thoughts crossing his mind, despite all the worries and doubts that were already assaulting him,
Tomura actually slept well that night. The image of the grey dust lasted for quite a while, but as he
was falling asleep, it gradually faded away, and Dabi’s smiling face appeared himself. It was my
first day with my boyfriend. I can’t wait to have more.

*

It was almost surprising to see how quickly and easily Tomura and Dabi’s relationship
immediately fitted in the group dynamic, almost as if they had always been together. Which, they
had, in a way. It almost exactly was like it had been for the past year, with the two of them seeing
each other every single day, laughing, working, eating and speaking together, except that now they
also got to kiss each other. A lot.

Tomura was back to school, ready to work for the second round of his contest, and Dabi and the
band were back in the studio, the success of the festival finally allowing them to produce their very
first album. Jin was also back to school, ready to start an internship in a mental health clinic, and
although Spinner was still developing his game he was finally seeing the end of the tunnel.
Everyone was moving forward and it felt good. They still made sure to meet all together at least
twice a week, and every time they did, there was a buzzing excitement flowing through them.

Whenever he could, Dabi would meet Tomura after his class, waiting for him outside under a tree
like he had done so long ago. Sometimes, they would even go back to that little café next to the
gymnasium, a place that had become incredibly special for them, because it was where they
actually saw each other and spoke to each other for the first time. It was when the possibility of
something different between them was born. Other times, Tomura would come to meet Dabi, the
girls, and Giran at the studio while they worked on their album. It was no longer the free public
studio where Tomura had yelled his confused feelings to Dabi, but a real proper one with all the
quality material they needed. When he was there, Tomura would just sit in a corner with his big
sketchbook and doodle for a while, inspired by Dabi’s words and notes, almost as if he was trying
to make images out of the sounds. Sometimes it resulted in something he could use for the band’s
aesthetic and other times in something he could use for his own personal work. There were quite a
few times when Giran complained that his presence was distracting Dabi which was kind of true.
Some days, Dabi couldn’t sing two lines correctly because Tomura would just look up for his
sketchbook and smile at him. Other times, Tomura would walk up to him between two songs to
give him a quick kiss and say something like “this one was really good, you’re so incredible” and
then Dabi would need a full twenty minutes to recover. But, there were other times when just
looking at Tomura while he sang, allowed Dabi some of the best vocal performances he had ever
given. So Tomura was allowed to stay. And even if he weren’t, Dabi wouldn’t let him leave
Anyway.

Other times, Dabi would just cuddle his boyfriend as he played video games, holding him from behind and either just snuggling his face in his neck so they could both relax, or giving him light kisses on the nape to distract him if he wanted to be a little shit. He knew he could get away with anyway, because would whine about it for a bit but would go really quiet if Dabi kept kissing long enough. Sometimes, they did this while Tomura was playing in co-op with Spinner, and the lizard would eventually disconnect because this was way too much to take for his poor soul. But Spinner was overall very brave and strong because when it was just the two of them and the group, the couple had no shame whatsoever. It often led to hilarious situations, such as this one movie night during which Tomura fell asleep on boyfriend’s shoulder, and they all got to witness Dabi’s gay panic. The young man was completely overwhelmed by the sight and the sensation but didn’t dare to move from an inch or say a word, afraid to wake him up. So instead, he would just text distressed messages to their group chat, while the rest of the group was just quietly wheezing and enjoying the show.

\[
\text{Dabriel: dicbuefzcd guys what do I do I don’t wanna disturb him}
\]

\[
\text{Dabriel: HE IS SO FUCKING CUTE WTF THE FUCKING FUCK}
\]

\[
\text{Dabriel: he smells so fucking nice stOP laughing and HALP ME}
\]

\[
\text{Dabriel: HE IS SNUGGLING ME he looks like a fucking kitten omg}
\]

Their group of friends was a perfect little pocket where the two of them could be gross, ridiculous and stupidly in love, a bubble where they could constantly and always be all over each other. But as soon they left that bubble, things were … different.

Dabi hadn’t forgotten Tomura’s weird reaction when he had tried to kiss him at the museum, and it happened again. Every time they were in a crowded place, Tomura was always much more distant. He still looked at him with completely enamored eyes, and smile at him every ten seconds, but physically, it was miles away from the way he acted when they were alone. When Dabi tried to kiss him or ran a hand over his thighs he would jump and immediately pull away, only to jump on him a few minutes later as soon as they were alone. But in truth, even then, when it was just the two of us, things weren’t always smooth either.

Dabi wanted Tomura. He wanted him badly. Of course, he knew that Tomura had no real experience, that he was probably anxious and so he hadn’t expected to undress him right away. But even though he knew all of that, it was becoming harder and harder to resist and control himself, and he couldn’t stop the worry and frustration blossoming in his mind and body. Sometimes when they kissed for a long time when he let his hands wander for a while, he couldn’t help but grab him, he couldn’t help but touch him in some places he hoped would make Tomura want him just as much as Dabi wanted him. But when that happened, he could feel Tomura going stiff underneath him and he the boy’s hands that previously in his hair or against his chest would immediately
retract themselves fist closed. And he would then pull away. He would tell himself that it was okay, that Tomura just needed time. But he didn’t dare to say or ask anything, because he didn’t want to push him or for him to think that it was the only thing that Dabi wanted from him. So he would just smile and stay quiet, hoping, praying, pleading internally that it was nothing. He just hoped that Tomura wanted and loved him as much as Dabi wanted and loved him.

But there was one thing Dabi didn’t know about: the grey dust on the kitchen floor. Because no matter how in love he was, no matter how good and free Dabi made him feel, Tomura couldn’t forget about this. He couldn’t let go of the potential danger that he represented for Dabi if he lost control for just one second. But he didn’t want to say anything, because surely if Dabi knew if Dabi realised the risks … well, surely things would end. *I just needed to buy some times … I just need to avoid the question until I can figure out a solution …* Actually, there was a potential solution, waiting covered in dust in one of Tomura’s drawer. But he hated it.

One night, all these bottled up issues almost exploded to their faces. They both alone in Dabi’s flat for the night while Spinner and Jin were working, and Dabi was helping Tomura to prepare himself for his oral presentation. Now that the festival had passed, Tomura’s contest was the next big thing that everyone was focused on. It wasn’t actually that much work in itself, he just had to rework some of his paintings and sketches to present them to a professional jury this time. But for this second round, the notes sent with the works weren’t enough, and each candidate would to personally expose his ideas to the jury. Of course, Tomura knew that all along, but he had never had to seriously confront the idea before because he had never truly expected to go this far. Even when Akizuki Maria has mentioned again over the phone after announcing him his selection, he had been too overwhelmed to really process what it meant: standing alone in front of seven professional artists for thirty minutes to explain to them the most intimate things about his work. So now, everyone in the group was working with him, helping him practice what he was going to say and asking him some questions …

That was what he was doing that night with Dabi. They were both sitting on the couch, crossed-legs and in front of each other, and Dabi was asking him some questions about his work while Tomura was nervously holding his helping cards, doing his best to breath regularly and to not look at them.

“So what would you say your inspiration was for the piece number 6?” Dabi asked, looking at a small paper copy of all of Tomura’s works.

“Uuuuhm …” Tomura bit his lips, “It was … I … I wanted to … it was because of … you can see the …”

“Babe it’s all good, breathe … you answered this perfectly an hour ago …”
“I know, I know! I just … I don’t know, looking back on it, my explanation is so stupid.”

“It’s really not! You clearly talk about what influenced you while still keeping your original idea in the focus! Actually, you did great all day! I think you’re just a little too tired right now … maybe we should stop.”

“No! No, we have to keep going! I have to be as ready as I can be!”

“Tomura we still have a month ahead of us …” Dabi sighed, “And we’ve been at it all afternoon! I just … I really think we can stop for tonight …”

“But … no!” Tomura shook his head like a child, still holding his cards tightly, “I have to do better! I have to be good!”

“But you’re already such a good boy …”

Dabi smiled when he saw the effect that this one sentence had on Tomura. He shyly looked up from under his messy curls, right into Dabi’s eyes, with a mix of surprise, confusion, curiosity, and excitement. The pink was already spreading from his cheeks all the way down to his collarbone. *He is so fucking hot …* Eventually, Tomura let out a loud awkward cough and tried to focus back on his cards, but it only made Dabi raise an eyebrow and smile wider. *Still resisting? I guess words are not enough …*

Tomura was intensely looking at the words on his cards without understanding any of them when he felt the couch shift under him. He tried to ignore it, just like he tried to ignore the warm presence getting closer and closer, but when he finally looked up, his breathing got a little louder. Dabi was gradually moving closer to him, and Tomura felt himself unconsciously sinking into the couch until the back of his head hit armrest. He was now lying on his back and still holding his cards tightly as Dabi slowly crawled on top of him.

“You did so good today …” Dabi spoke with a low husky voice, “Even good hardworking boys like you need to relax sometimes …”

“But I … I need …”

Dabi shushed him with a finger, and the red eyes almost fluttered shut.
“What you need right now,” Dabi continued, now tracing Tomura’s lips with his finger, “is to drop these cards … Can you do that for me?”

“No.”

Tomura had spoken almost without thinking, not really out of stubbornness but more out of curiosity. He wanted to see how Dabi would react, and when he saw the look in the blue eyes, first surprised, and then excited and eager, he congratulated himself for having such good instinct.

“No?” Dabi repeated with a smile, “Now, why on earth would you resist me like that hmm? You don’t want bad things happening to you kitten, do you?”

“What if I did? What would you do about that?”

Tomura could barely recognize his own voice right now; he was on autopilot, speaking without thinking, with no filter. He knew he should be at least a little worried about where this kind of talk and attitude was going to lead him, but Dabi was biting his lips right now so it was hard to think about anything else.

Above him, Dabi was doing his best to keep it together, but having Tomura lying all blushing and dishevelled underneath him and yet still talking back to him and looking at him with such insolent eyes … this was doing things to him. He dived in, close enough to Tomura’s face so their noses would bump together but not close enough to kiss, and Tomura just smiled.

“Drop. The. Cards.” Dabi whispered against his lips.

“Make me.”

Dabi kissed this insolent boy and it almost felt like a bite; it was hard, full of teeth and took both of their breaths away. Tomura was still holding these cards, but fortunately, Dabi knew how to really torment him and moved his lips down his neck where he sucked and licked at the sensitive flesh. He was harsh on the smooth skin and agonizingly soft and tender on the scars, and each whimper coming out of Tomura’s mouth only made him want to be even crueler.
“Drop the cards baby …”

“W-why? Is … is that … hmmm … is that all you got?”

Tomura knew that he had no right to be so cocky considering the state he was right in now, and he also knew that he really shouldn’t be encouraging Dabi any more. But he was still holding the cards in his left hand, arm dangling off the couch, and he had always been a sour loser.

“Oh my darling I haven’t even started yet,” Dabi whispered with a shaky voice, completely aroused by Tomura’s provocations. He was now breathing just as hard as his boyfriend if not harder and attacked his collarbone. Tomura gasped loudly and grabbed the back of Dabi’s head with his free hand and one finger lifted to keep him as close to the skin as possible, and holding his cards even tighter with the other hand. Dabi grabbed the collar of his shirt to expose as much skin as possible and yanked it down so hard and so low that he exposed one of Tomura’s nipples. Dabi occupied himself with the collarbone long enough to make his boyfriend moan, but progressively kissed lower and lower, until he could caress the pink erect bud with the tip of his tongue. The response was immediate; Tomura wailed, arching his chest almost completely under Dabi’s warm mouth, and head tossing from side to side. He had never felt anything like this before and it made him eager, impatient to feel all the things he knew Dabi wanted to do to him. He squirmed but Dabi’s free hand pinned his hips down to the couch to keep him in place.

“Hold still …” Dabi whispered, now using his teeth to tease Tomura’s nipple, “it’s about to get a lot worst …”

“D-Dabi!”

“Begging won’t do you any good right now pretty boy … I won’t stop until you drop these cards and you know it.”

And that’s when Tomura realised. *The cards …?*

He wasn’t holding the cards anymore. But he hadn’t dropped them he was sure of that. Quite the contrary in fact he remembered holding them tighter than ever. But now he was feeling something else in his hand, something cold and soft and … dusty. His heart skipped a beat, and he looked at his left hand hanging off the couch, holding nothing but some dark dust that was slowly falling onto the wooden floor. And the next second he looked back up, seeing his right hand still strongly holding Dabi’s head against his own chest.
This could have been him … Fuck this could have been him fuck fuck fuck fuck … it could have been my right hand!!! He made me feel so good I forgot and hold tight, and because of that, he could have been dead right now!!! Fuck fuck fuck I could have killed him right here right now!

The next second, he jumped off the couch in a panic, almost kicking Dabi’s chin in the process. He stumbled to stay up on his feet; quickly pushing the dust under the couch with his left foot while Dabi was still too surprised and confused to properly see him do it.

“T-Tomura what …?”

“Aaaaah … I’m so sorry I … I just … I need to go right now! I’ll call you tomorrow I promise!”

He was about to go get his shoes when he caught the look on Dabi’s face and his heart sank. He just looked so confused, panicked and heartbroken …

“Tomura what … What did I do wrong? I’m sorry I didn’t want to be … I didn’t …”

Tomura practically jumped in front of him. He desperately wanted to grab his face, but he didn’t trust his hands right now and wanted them as far away from this precious face as possible. Instead, he pressed his forehead against Dabi’s, gave him a kiss first on the lips, then all over his face, burying his face against his cheek.

“You did nothing wrong … you’re so wonderful, so beautiful, so great … it’s all me. I’m sorry it’s my fault. I … I can’t explain right now, but I promise I will call you tomorrow okay?”

Dabi didn’t react right away, but Tomura wasn’t leaving him like this without an answer. So he waited until the young man gently nuzzled his face against his neck, and Tomura got shivers, just remembering how Dabi was feverishly kissing that same spot not even a minute ago. *Fuck my hands … and fuck this quirk…*

“Okay …” Dabi whispered, with such a small broken voice, that Tomura wanted to hold him forever. “Okay, but we have to see each other tomorrow … Promise?”

“I promise. I want to see you every single day of my life okay?”
It did make Dabi feel a little better. Once Tomura was gone, he lied back on the couch and realised that he was not as panicked as he thought he would be. *It’s because I trust him* … He knew that Tomura cared and would never try to hurt him, so he trusted that they would talk tomorrow. But yet, he still couldn’t really stop or control the pain spreading across his chest. He was still intoxicated with the feeling of Tomura, by the taste of his skin and the sounds he made, so much that he could still feel his body shaking and running hot. *He said that it wasn’t my fault … he said that I did nothing wrong but … but … but isn’t he just trying to be soft and kind? He isn’t the type to express his feelings clearly, and he always wants to take the blame, especially if he thinks he can spare me …* Had he gone too far? He knew he always had trouble keeping it together when he had Tomura underneath him, but this time it had felt a little different because Tomura seemed into it. He was playful, provocative even, but still. Dabi ran his hands through his hair with a deep sigh. *Please let it be okay … Please don’t let me ruin this … Not this … Anything but this …*

On the other side of town, Tomura was finally home. Magne and Toga were already sleeping, so the flat was dark, quiet and cold, and Tomura painfully missed the warmth of Dabi’s body on top of him. A few minutes later lying in his bed, he was still feeling Dabi’s tongue on his chest and it gave him shiver. *I want it back … I want him back … I want him with me in my bed right now.* Was that even an option? Sleeping alone had never really been an issue, but what if he accidentally grabbed Dabi in his sleep? *How are we going to make this work?* Of course, there was still that option, the one waiting patiently in the back of his drawer but he hated it. He wouldn’t get it until he was sure it was the last options.

He didn’t want to wear his gloves again if he could avoid it.

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The next day, Dabi was woken early by his phone buzzing on his nightstand. Even half asleep, he thought immediately went to Tomura, but with just one look at the clock, he knew it couldn’t be him because it was way to early. He squeezed his eyes at his screen for a few seconds, and when they got used to the darkness he almost dropped the phone onto his face. It was a text from Kurogiri.

*Misty McMist:* Good Morning Dabi! It’s me Kurogiri! I’m deeply sorry for messaging you so early, but hopefully, you will see this message as soon as you wake up. I will go straight to the point if you don’t mind; my dear Sako and I were wondering if you’d like to join us for lunch today. Like I said to you, we would love to have a little chat with you, just the three of us. It’s been a little more than two weeks now, and we still didn’t hear anything from you, so I hope you don’t mind us taking the lead! Let us know if 2 pm would work for you!

With love,

-Kurogiri.
In any other circumstance, this overly formal message with signature would have made Dabi chuckle, but right now he was positively terrified. *SHIT, I had forgotten about that … Well, more like, I had hoped that they had forgotten about that.* He re-read the message a few times to convince himself that it was just Kurogiri’s normal polite tone and not some passive-aggressive threat.

*Wake up, bitch! Remember how you promised that you were gonna talk to us and didn’t like a coward? Now my boyfriend and I are gonna corner you alone during lunch to kill you and make your body disappear because we heard that you tried to have sex with our son last night.*

Dabi shook his head to wake himself properly. He knew he was just stupid and overdramatic right now. It was still Sako and Kurogiri after all! He knew them well, they were like a newfound family for him, and this even before he ever realised that he was madly in love with their son. *We played in their bar, surely that has to count for something right? Right?* But Dabi hadn’t really seen them alone since the night of the festival when they … well, when they had caught him with his tongue down their son’s throat. But he had to do it, by respect for them but also by respect for Tomura. *Come on Dabi! Let night you went on and on about how you didn’t want to ruin this! So don’t back off now! Do it for him at least.* But by the time he responded a quick “1 pm is fine for me, see you then!” Dabi had convinced himself that he was going to get murdered and that no one would ever find his body.

In his own room, Tomura actually woke up quite early as well. He was sitting crossed legs on his bed, looking at the pair of gloves on his bed, completely black and each one actually only covering one finger. Tomura didn’t have to try them on to know that they still fitted him. *Fuck they’re ugly … So fucking ugly …* Deep down, Tomura knew he was being dramatic, these gloves weren’t especially ugly nor beautiful, but they were bringing back so many bad memories and so many nasty thoughts that he couldn’t but grimace while looking at them. He had practiced so hard and so long to make sure that he wouldn’t have to wear them anymore; his fingers were agile and dexterous and his muscle memory almost perfect. He could sleep, eat, paint and draw without them because he knew that his finger would automatically lift themselves correctly. But as always, just like in every situation he had ever been confronted to, Dabi being part of the equation threw everything he knew out of the window.

Dabi touching him was already wonderful, and a part of Tomura was considering the possibility that maybe they could make it work like this? Tomura’s hands restrained, and Dabi’s hands all over him … the simple thought set fire to his body and he could already feel his arousal running through him. *That would be nice … really nice … but not enough.* He knew that. He wanted to be touched and taken care off sure, but he also wanted to touch Dabi. *I need it, I need to touch him so fucking bad …* He wanted to run his hand all over his strong sculpted chest and down his abs, he wanted to hold his face close as he kissed him, and wanted to feel him shiver and sweat under his own touch. He wants to touch both the soft skin and the burnt skin, to see how he would react to both. *I want to make him feel as good as he makes me feel.* With all these wonderful images in mind, Tomura looked back at the gloves and suddenly, even though he still hated them, wearing them seemed like a small price to pay. But he still loathed the fact that he had to wear some sort of “support” if he truly wanted to be with the one he loved.
Dabi’s singing voice suddenly resonated in his room, and Tomura was so deep in his thought that he almost didn’t recognize his own ringtone. He smiled seeing the name Bright Star appearing on his screen, along with that ridiculous drunk selfie Dabi and him had taken three days ago. Although happiness, love, and joy were the first things he felt, he couldn’t help but be a little nervous as well considering the way he had left him last night. *I promised I would explain to him what happened but ... but this is so fucking scary. It’s already so miraculous that he wants to be with me. He already has dozens of reasons to leave me I don’t want to give him another one.* He still smiled when he answered the call because that was the effect Dabi had on him:

“Morning Bright Star …”

“Morning Moonlight” Tomura could practically hear him smile, and that was enough to make him blush and fall back on his bed. “Sorry to wake you up, pretty boy …”

“No it’s fine I was already awake. Besides, I like hearing your voice first thing in the morning …”

“I … Baby, you can’t say shit like that so early, I’m gonna have a heart attack you’re too powerful …”

Tomura chuckled, covering his mouth with his hand before remembering how much Dabi loved his laugh. He also wondered if he should bring up what happened last night. Dabi seemed to be in a good mood, which simultaneously made it the best and worst time to do so. But before he could decide, Dabi brought up something else.

“I actually really needed to hear your voice right now, to give me some strength and courage.”


“Awww look at you being all worried … But don’t worry I’m fine for now. I just … I’m lunching with your dads today.”

“What?” Tomura got up on his elbow, surprised by the news, “Today? Since when?”

“Since this morning really … Kurogiri send me a text at dawn, reminding me that I promised them
a talk just the three of us. I’m going to be honest, I genuinely think they’re going to kill me, which
is valid because honestly, they must have seen me undressing you with my eyes before we even
kiss.”

“Come on don’t say that!” Tomura laughed, a little flustered by Dabi’s comment, “You know they
love you! They care about you so much! You’re family to them.”

“Yeah but that was before I began to leave daily hickeys on their son’s neck …”

As Dabi spoke these words, Tomura distractingly ran his fingers across his neck and over the
hickeys he has left on him last night. Before Dabi, Tomura used to hate the marks on his necks
before it was only scars and wounds he inflicted himself out of self-hatred. But now, even though
the scars were still here, they wear covered by purple and red marks that Dabi gave him out of
love. And even the scars themselves weren’t so bad after all when Dabi ran his hot tongue over
them.

“Hey, why don’t I just come with you?” Tomura suggested, “We would have a lunch the four of
us! Would that make you feel better?”

“God it would … but they want it to be just the three of us, so I don’t think you’re allowed to join.”

Tomura knows that Dabi doesn’t mean it like that, but the sentence “you’re not allowed to join”
still hurts a little. It feels weird to imagine Dabi having a private talk with his dads … he knows
that Dabi is going to be fine of course, but he began to wonder what they will talk about.

“You’re sure?” he asks, and the questions both means are you sure that you don’t want me to come
and are you sure I’m not allowed to join.

“Pretty sure … So yeah, I’ve got to get ready for this, so I won’t see you this morning but let’s
meet tonight okay?”

“Oh … yes okay sure. I hope you have a good time.”

“Yeah, I hope so too.”
“And Dabi I … look, about last night …”

“Oh uh yes … yes. Well, how about we talk about this tonight? Okay?”

Once they hang up, Tomura felt all itchy and weird. Why am I not allowed to come? What are they going to talk about? Are they going to talk about me? I mean … yes, of course, I’d assume so but … but why can’t I be there? It’s fine, I can always ask Dabi tonight. Yes, but tonight we’re also going to talk about yesterday and my bullshit. Oh fuck … Is this what they’re going to talk about? No of course not, Dabi wouldn’t bring up … he wouldn’t mention … uh, what we were doing before I freak out. What about Dad and Papa though? Are they going to tell him to be careful? Because I’m a breakable anxious mess? Are they going to talk about the gloves? Are going to talk about All Might? About Father??? Shit shit shit no, stop that shit Tomura, stop that shit right now!

But it was easier said then done. He looked at the pair of gloves still on his bed, and suddenly had very vivid images of the hospital, the foster centre, and all the sleepless nights that came with it.

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Dabi literally spent the entire morning getting ready for the lunch. He changed his clothes a dozen of times only to wear the exact same shit he wore every day and looked himself in the bathroom to try to look a little less like a dead racoon than usual. When he was ready, he just paced around the living room, while Jinn looked at him from the couch eating a bowl of cereal.

“I just want to let you know that you look very proper and non-threatening today,” his said with his mouth full, “like I would 100% let you fuck my son.”

“Jin buddy, I know you’re trying to help right now, but that’s … really not helping …”

“Oh no I’m not trying to help, I’m just trying to make you sweat some more. You make funny faces when you’re nervous.”

“Is this revenge for me going home drunk at 4 am for a whole month? Because I said I was sorry and I got you a cool hoodie…”

“It’s pretty sweet I’ll admit, but yes it’s also revenge.”
Dabi rested his forehead against the wall and let out a painful whine. Jin might have felt a little bad for the guy if the situation wasn’t so fucking hilarious.

“Really dude, you need to chill … I mean, It’s Sako and Kurogiri! We love them and they love us! They’re the sweetest dudes on earth!”

“Yes but today they won’t be Sako and Kurogiri … they will be Tomura’s dads. And I won’t be Dabi anymore … I will be the guy desperately trying to fuck their son.” Jin knew that Dabi was dead serious right now, but he still laughed so hard that he almost spit his cereals all over the couch. Which, again, didn’t help at all.

When Dabi finally arrived in front of the bar, his legs were still shaking a little. He was 10 minutes early and genuinely didn’t know whether to wait outside or walk in. Eventually, the question resolved itself before Sako saw him through French window.

“Ah Dabi you’re early! But, what on earth are you doing just waiting outside come on in!”

“AH AH AH, okay thanks!”

Shit … Well, that’s a great start …

It was already a little late in the afternoon so the place was almost empty, half of the clients having already finished their meal. No witness for the execution. Even though he knew the place so well, everything felt unrecognisable when he made his way to the table. Kurogiri was already waiting there, and Dabi has never found it so hard to read the misty expressions. He really wished Tomura would hold his hand right now.

“Don’t look so grim Dabi!” Sako laughed, “We’re not going to hurt you!”

“Exactly what someone who would hurt me would say …” Dabi mumbled. Kurogiri actually chuckled at that, and it made the rest a lot easier. And it turned out that the first hour actually went pretty smoothly, and even kind of nice. They ate delicious food and mostly talked about Dabi himself and the band, about how he was doing, what the next plan, if Giran wasn’t too harsh on them, or had Toga destroyed another pair of sticks since last time. Sako even collapsed on the table, whining about how they had not played in the bar for two months and would probably never play for them ever again because they were too famous and had no time for old people like them. Dabi assured him that the girls and him had decided that they would make sure that they would come back here at least once a month, even if they became world famous. Even though Sako’s sobs were very obviously fake, Kurogiri got all worried and kissed his face quite a bit, and Sako looked up at
Dabi with eyes that said, “Yes, I know exactly what I’m doing right now.”

But between main course and dessert, there was a little bit of silence. After all, they all knew what they really wanted to talk about. But Dabi still appreciated that they didn’t attack that big piece right away and that the two men had made him relax first. The truth was, Dabi genuinely loved Sako and Kurogiri. During these last few months, they had both become incredibly important to him, and he would be destroyed if his love for Tomura ended up ruining his relationship with them somehow.

“You make Tomura very happy you know...” Kurogiri abruptly said.

Dabi looked up in surprised. They had all been silent for a full minute now, and Tomura hadn’t been mentioned once since Dabi walked in, so it felt very sudden. Sako himself looked a little caught on guard by his companion’s intervention, but he didn’t add anything. Both of their expressions were relatively soft so Dabi didn’t quite panic, but he still felt his cheek turn pink.

“And you did even before the two of you began your relationship,” Kurogiri continued, “From what I understand your bond started a little, how should I say, shaky. But to be perfectly honest, I knew you were special to him from the very beginning, maybe even before he knew it himself. I still remember that day when he first talked to us about the band. I fact, I think we were sitting at this very same table.”

Dabi smiled. He also remembered the day Tomura had first suggested to him to play at his parent’s place, and he remembered how blushy and cute he was, stuttering and fidgeting his hair. *How did I not kiss him back then?* In front of him, Kurogiri continued.

“I was so surprised! He had never mentioned his friends to us before! Well, there was this nice young man in high school that visited us a few times … but no one after or before him. And it certainly was the first time that he was actively doing something to help someone! Hell, it might have been the first times in years that he was actively asking us something! And that wasn’t even for himself.” Kurogiri marked a little pause here and leaned a little forward against the table. “So yes, I think even back then I knew. No matter how much he argued that he hated you and that you were just a jerk … I knew you that you would end up being very special to him.”

“He is special to me too …” Dabi said with a soft quiet voice, “And he makes me happy … just, so incredibly happy.”

“We don’t doubt it,” Sako said with a smile, “I mean, we’ve all seen the way you look at him, even when he can’t see you.”
“Listen I …” Dabi suddenly found himself struggling to form a proper sentence. Hearing Kurogiri talked about how important he was to Tomura had made him quite emotional, but he continued. “I need you to know how serious and dedicated I am about him … how strong my feelings are. I … I know that the group always jokes about … about how much of a flirt I am, about how many people I’ve been with … and I’ve also talked to you about how use to go from people to people with no attachment. But this is real. What I feel for him is the realest thing I ever felt in my entire life.”

“We know,” Kurogiri said, lifting a calming hand, “I know that you would never do anything to purposely hurt him. But still … I just want to make sure that you realise how new all of this is to him, and that he might need time to properly process all of it properly.”

“Tomura has been … very shut in for most of his life,” Sako continued, “Because of his quirk and many many many other things. These past two years, things have changed, he made a lot of progress and right now he seems to be happier than he has been. But some of his scars are deep and won’t be healed in one month …”

“And we want to make sure that you’re ready for this,” Kurogiri took over, “We want to be sure that you’re ready for all of him, and that if he falls apart, you will not only be ready to catch him, but also that you won’t let it hurt you. Because like I said, you make him happy. And the truth is … I mean I don’t know anything for sure but … but I think you didn’t have an easy life either Dabi.”

Dabi’s eyes went wide for a second, and he looked down almost in shame. He had never talked about his family with anyone besides Tomura, but with the scars he was carrying all over his body it probably wasn’t hard to guess that … something happened to him at some point. But what truly surprised him, is that there was no pity in Kurogiri’s tone and Sako’s eyes right now, just … care. And worry. A warm feeling spread inside of him, and when he looked up again, he wasn’t feeling any shame anymore. Because if Tomura had taught him something, is that there was no shame in having the people you love worrying about you.

“And because I know Tomura, I know that he will be here to catch you if you fall apart,” Kurogiri said, “And I trust that he is currently becoming strong enough to not be hurt if it happens.”

“I’ll be ready,” Dabi said, announcing what was the most undeniable truth, “Besides haven’t you heard? He finds me and I catch him. That’s our thing.”

Kurogiri and Sako shared a surprised look, then a smile. “Is that so?” Kurogiri chuckled, “Well yes, that seems right.”
“You both get lost and fall quite a lot,” Sako agreed with a smile.

“Can I just that you two are a lot more chill than what I had feared?” Dabi said, “I mean, don’t get me wrong, everything you told me is important. But I’ll be honest I thought you were going to threaten my life or something.”

“Oh please do not be confused!” Kurogiri said, taking a sip of wine, “We already love you like family and we know that you two are perfect for each other, but we will indeed murder you and hide the body if you hurt him.”

“Oh yes obviously!” Sako agreed with a shrug.

“Please don’t I’m very in love with your son.”

* 

Tomura didn’t have a very good day. He couldn’t stop thinking about Dabi’s lunch with his dads, constantly looking at his phone and waiting for a call or just checking the time. Why didn’t he call me yet? It’s getting late are they still together? Are they still talking? About me? He spent the day at home practicing his oral presentation with Toga but they didn’t make much progress … He was irritable, jumpy and distracted so eventually, let out a groan and dramatically dropped her notes on the coffee table.

“Uuuuuurgh, Tomu you’re not focused!”

“I know I’m sorry!”

“What’s wrong with you? Did Dabi forgot to give you a kiss this morning?”

“Shut up!”

Tomura immediately regretted his harsh tone, none of his problems was Toga’s fault after all. But
the young girl didn’t seem upset in the slightest, if anything, she seemed to be curious and worried.

“Did something happened?” she asked jumping on the couch next to him.

“No … well, yes … I don’t know it’s just that my dads are giving him the talk right now, and it was supposed to be just lunch and it’s already 4.30 pm.”

“Well, it just means that they’re having a good time! Or that they already murdered him!”

“Toga please don’t …”

“Sorry … but really, there’s nothing to worry about! Dabi should be freaking out not you, but even then, they love him!”

“Yeah, yeah … I know, I just kind of wish I could have come too …”

“Why?” Toga asked, tilting her head to the side, “What would it change?”

“I don’t know! But … but I was not allowed to come. Do you think they’re talking about me?”

“Well of course! They’re giving him the good old dad talk!”

“No, but I mean … I … I don’t know …”

She’s right, of course, she’s right. But why do I feel so nervous? It’s literally the three people I love the most on earth having lunch together, why is it putting me in such a state? Tomura had no answer to his own questions; he just rested his head on Toga’s shoulder for a bit, letting her pat his hair. He had never been so happy in his entire life, so why was his brain still trying to hurt him and forcing him to find something wrong? Why did he always try to sabotage himself like this? He cuddled with Toga for maybe an hour, until she gently poked his cheek.

“Tomu, I think you got a text …”
She was right; Dabi had finally sent him a message. He straightened his back to read with a weird apprehension in his stomach.

“So?” Toga asked, “Everything good?”

“Yeah … yeah, basically he is saying that everything went fine and they talked for hours and didn’t see time pass by. And because it’s already late they’re basically suggesting that everyone joins them here for drink and dinner.”

“Yaaaaay!! You see? All good! I’m going to text Magne and the boys right away!!!”

She practically bounced off the couch to grab her phone in her purse and began to frantically text, her manicured nails tapping the screen in rhythm. But without looking up from her screen, she suddenly asked, “By the way Tomu, what happened to the helping cards Magne and I made for you?”

Tomura visualized the pile of dust under Dabi’s couch and he almost wanted to cry.

*  

By the time Tomura, Toga, Magne, Jin, and Spinner all got to the bar, it pretty full and loud already. And although a busy night like this was good for his parents business, it was pretty bad for Tomura’s anxiety, even when he was surrounded by his friends like tonight. They all knew this of course, and without even mentioning it out loud they created a little circle around Tomura to move across the crowd to make he wouldn’t bump into anyone. But even though the boy was grateful and even a little flustered by the attention, it, unfortunately, didn’t help that much, not tonight at least. Since Toga had mentioned it a little earlier, he couldn’t unsee the little pile of dust under Dabi’s couch. He hated that it was surely still there, that he had been a coward who hid his fault under the furniture like a child who hides his wet sheets. He hated that it was his only solution to every issue, to just hide the problem under the carpet like it was going to make it disappear forever. *I should have told him … I should have uprooted the baobab tree.*

Dabi, Kurogiri, and Sako were still sitting at their table in the back, and the black-haired young man practically stood up from his seat to make a large gesture toward the group. The welcomes and hugging that ensued were a little too loud for the state that Tomura was in right now, but it still felt good when Dabi briefly kissed his lips and whispered: “I missed you.” They all squeezed around that table that was way too small for them, and Tomura stayed silent as everyone caught up
with each other and discussed whether they should already order food or just start with drinks. But of course, predictably, someone asked how the “dad talk” went and the whole table laughed loudly.

“If you must know,” Dabi said with an overdramatic tone, “It went very smoothly because my in-laws are wonderful and love me very much…”

“Are they forcing you to say this?” Jin asked, “Dabi blink twice if you need help…”

“How dare you Jin,” Sako scoffed, “Give us more credit, if we had threatened Dabi in any way, you wouldn’t know it…”

They were some more laughs, even louder this time, and their drinks arrived on the table, making everyone even louder in a matter of seconds. Tomura tried to laugh as well, but it was difficult for some reason. It seemed like Dabi’s meeting with his dads went completely fine, so why on earth was he still so anxious? In fact, why was he anxious about this meeting in the first place? Why was anxious at all? Why am I like this? Why can’t I let good things happen for once? It was always like it was too good to be true, all this love and happiness surrounding him. It was almost … almost …

Too much.

It’s always too much.

Dabi suddenly ran his fingers across his cheek, and Tomura practically jumped, clenching his fist under the table to neutralize his own hands. His boyfriend looked at him, surprised by this reaction: “Babe are you okay? What’s wrong?” Tomura wanted to hold Dabi’s face really badly right now, but the image of the pile of dust under the couch imposed itself to him and so he clenched his fist harder under the table.

“I’m fine …” he just said, but he couldn’t even convince himself.

“No you’re not,” Dabi contradicted, frowning lightly, “You’re all tensed and quiet. Are you cold? Want me to hold you a little closer?”

Yes, please hold me. “No, I’m fine don’t worry …’
Dabi wasn’t convinced. He could tell something was off and for some reason, Tomura didn’t want to tell him what happened. Eventually, he decided that his boyfriend just needed a little cheering up. There was some catchy jazz music playing in the bar right now, and some couple had got up to dance and swing to the rhythm in the middle of the room. *Perfect.*

“I know what will cheer you up! Come dance with me!”

Tomura’s eyes went wide in panic. “What? Dabi no that’s …”

But Dabi was already up, and without even thinking about it, in one switch movement, he firmly grabbed Tomura’s hand to drag him up to the dance floor. The rest happened in less than a second. The moment Dabi’s hand closed on his, Tomura was assaulted with thousands of images at once; *the dust under the couch, the decayed food in the trash can, the broken plate that cut my hands, the crumbling arm of the creepy purple hair guy in the nightclub, the rests of that drawing I made for Kurogiri’s birthday when I was 10, the face of that villain in that dark cold hideout more than a decade ago, and my … my … my …* Tomura screamed “Dabi no!”, pulling away so violently that he fell backward against their table, knocking all of their drink to the ground. And after the sound of glasses shattering to the ground, the entire place went very very very quiet. You could only hear the soft jazz music playing.

The other people’s staring didn’t last very long, soon everyone was back to their own conversation and dancing, but Tomura’s group kept staring at him with wide eyes a little longer. Nobody knew what to say, so they just kept watching at Tomura in confusion, while the boy himself could nothing else but breathe heavily and look at Dabi right now. And the young man was looking right back at him with worry, panic, and confusion, just like last night. And it hurt Tomura so fucking much, he wanted to cry, scream and apologise all at once.

“Y-you … you can’t just do that Dabi …” he eventually said, fighting the sob in the back of his throat, “You can’t just grab my hand like that … as if I was … as if it was *safe.*”

“Tomura …”

“We can’t do that! I can’t do that! I can’t be spontaneous and careless about this … about you! I can’t hurt you”

“But you didn’t! You didn’t hurt me!”
“But what if I had?” It was getting harder and harder to keep it together, “What if I had reflexively grabbed your hand? Fully grabbed your hand? What if one day, despite all how much I think about this all the time, what if one day my mind slip and I hurt you?”

“You won’t! You’ll never hurt me!”

“You don’t know that!! You can’t know that!! You’re not the one living with this!”

Tomura’s voice was getting a little too broken and high pitched right now, and some people began to look at them again. He closed his eyes to calm his breathing and stop the tears. *Stop Tomura just fucking stop! Calm down! It’s fine ... it’s going to be fine ... just take a moment to calm yourself it’s all good.*

“I’m sorry …” he whispered biting his lips, “I’m sorry, I’m just tired. I’m going to the bathroom I’ll be right back I promise …”

Without another look at the table, he made his way across the crowd all the way to the bathroom, clenching his fists to make sure he didn’t touch anyone or anything. The place had two mix bathroom, and Tomura went for the smaller and dirtier one to make sure that no one would walk in. He had a good look at his face in the mirror, at his dry skin and lips, at his huge frog eyes, and at his skinny frame. He was all pink because of the screaming and he could already feel his eyes get all watery. *Why am I like this?*

“Tomura …”

He turned his head so fast that he almost snapped his neck, and saw Dabi walk into the bathroom closing the door behind him. He had probably run after Tomura the very next second he had left, and although his eyes were still worried they were also a little softer. He immediately walked toward Tomura.

“I’m okay!” the boy immediately said, “I’m sorry I yelled! I need a minute!”

But Dabi didn’t stop for a second until he was right in front of him, only a few inches apart. Tomura could see in his eyes that he wanted to touch him but didn’t dare. When he spoke again, his tone was imploring, begging almost.
“Tomura, you need to tell me what’s wrong … please …”

“You just have to know that it’s not your fault …”

“Isn’t though?” Dabi bit his lips and looked away for a second, running his hand through his hair, “I just … I feel like I keep screwing up! I feel like I keep making you uncomfortable like I keep hurting you … What am I doing wrong? Tell me!”

“Dabi no, please! Didn’t you listen to what I just said? To what I said last night? I’m the problem! I’m the one hurting you right now! I’m the one with destructive hands who keep freaking out and making everyone uncomfortable! That’s what I do! That’s what I always did!”

“Stop that!” Dabi yelled, suddenly grabbing his face, “Don’t you dare okay? Why do you keep doing this? Why do you keep insisting that you’re bad when I keep telling you the opposite? Don’t you believe me? Don’t you trust me when I say these things? Is this … is this why you pull away sometimes?”

“I don’t know! I … I trust you! And I think I believe you. Or at least, I believe that you believe what you’re saying! But sometimes I just … think that you’re wrong … and then I get scared that you will realise that you’re wrong and you will leave me …”

Tomura began to cry, for real this time. It wasn’t as bad as the night Dabi kissed him, but he could still feel the hot tears rolling down his cheeks. Dabi brushed them away with his thumbs.

“And now I ruined it …” he continued looking down in shame, “Now I ruined everything … I know I should have shared this with you but I didn’t and I destroyed everything like I always do.”

“Tomura what on earth are you talking about?”

Tomura looked up to see the complete and utter bewilderment in Dabi’s eyes.

“I ruined it … I fucked it up, and now you’re mad at me and we’re going to break up because …”

“Tomura we are not breaking up,” Dabi cut him.
“We’re … not?”

“Tomura no … this … this is normal. We’re having an argument and we’re working it through because that’s what couples do. We’ve been together for only two weeks, and we’re complete disasters who never had any proper romantic relationships in their lives! Of course, we’re going to mess up! Of course, we’re still finding our marks! All that matters right now is that we learn from these mistakes to be better!”

Tomura was listening with wide eyes, mouth slightly open and taking everything in, when suddenly there was a shift in Dabi’s gaze. He slowly pulled his hands away from his face.

“Unless …” he said with completely broken voice, “Unless you want to break up? Is this … is this why?”

“What???” Tomura felt his heart skip a beat, “No!!! Never!!! This isn’t what I want no no no! I don’t want to loose you … that’s what it’s all about, but I’m just scared that I will no matter what I do! I’m just scared because I’ve never been so happy in my entire life! Because … because … BECAUSE I LOVE YOU!”

This time, it was Dabi’s heart that skipped a beat. His mind didn’t process that sentence right away, but his body did, and a bunch of butterflies began to tickle him from the inside, all so light and agitated, that they threatened to make him fly off the ground or to simply burst out of his chest. Because no one I had ever said these words to him before. They hadn’t said it to each other yet, and Tomura obviously realized that because the tears came back almost choking him when he spoke again.

“I love you Dabi … I love you, I love you so much. And I know it’s too soon to say it, I know I’m not supposed to, because what kind of desperate mess says I love you after two weeks right? That’s not how you're supposed to do it but I can’t stop myself. And that’s how it’s going to be Dabi. It’s never going to be a normal relationship because I’m not normal … because I panic and I cry and I scream … and I know I said all of this before, but I can’t just stop it, just like I can’t stop to destroy everything I touch, just like I can’t stop my quirk. And I’m trying to change, I’m trying to move forward and be better, but it’s hard and confusing and it takes time … So this … us … it’s often going to be messy and chaotic because that’s just … that’s just me. So yeah, I know it’s too soon and I know I’m doing it wrong, but that’s how I’m gonna be the whole time. Happy, messy, scared and in love.”

“Okay.”
Tomura stared at Dabi for a moment. He didn’t seem to want to add anything else, he just stood there, smiling with a smile so happy that it almost looked stupid.

“O-okay?” Tomura repeated, confused.

“I’m okay with that.”

“You’re okay with …? But, how? Why? Why on earth would you be okay with a relationship like this one?”

“Because I love you.”

Tomura’s legs almost gave up. He gasped loudly as if Dabi’s word had had a physical impact on him, hitting him in the chest and spreading inside of him like a soft medicine that progressively relaxed every muscle in his body. For a short second, it felt like these beautiful wonderful words enveloped him to keep him from falling backward, but it wasn’t Dabi’s words. Only his arms.

“I love you Tomura Shigaraki. I love you so much, more than you can ever imagine. And I don’t love you despite your flaws, I love your flaws. I’m not looking past them I’m embracing them the way you keep embracing mines again and again. And I know some of them make you suffer so I will be with all the way to help you to get rid of them, but in the meantime, I will love them because they’re parts of you. And if I could, I would kiss them like I’m going to kiss your scars right now.”

And he did. He pressed his lips softly against Tomura’s neck, letting the butterfly in his stomach escape against Tomura’s skin. The boy cried some more, and very slowly, he raised his hands that he had kept so close to his body until now, and very carefully he grabbed the back of Dabi’s shirt and hold tight, pressing his body against his. He suddenly felt very foolish but it only made him smile.

“Gosh, that smile will the death of me …” Dabi whispered, pulling away from Tomura’s neck to have a good look at his face.

“You will be the death of me,” Tomura playfully protested, “With your gorgeous eyes, your messy hair, your bright smile, your warm hands, your deep soothing voice, your words, your broad chest …”
“What about my ass though?”

“God yes! That wonderful ass of yours …”

Tomura stretched himself a little to capture Dabi’s lips with his own, and it felt like the softest kiss in the world.

“Hey …” Tomura said, pulling away for a second and smiling when Dabi’s lips tried to follow his, “I think … I want to talk some more … about us, and the things that scare me and the things that scare you. Is it okay if we go back to my place? Not … not for that. Just to talk about stuff.”

“I think that’s a very good idea kitten … God, you’re so smart.”

They made a quick detour by the table to explain that Tomura was feeling better but that they were still going to go home to discuss some things properly, and they were off. On their way home, Dabi insisted that they stop by to get pizza because he wanted to make that Tomura would have dinner.

* 

Less than an hour later, they were both sitting on Tomura’s bed feeding greasy pizza to each other. There was so much cheese that they couldn’t take a bite without getting oily string all over their faces that they were more than happy to clean off each other. Once they were done, they sat in front of each other, legs wrapped around each other, so close that their nose would occasionally bump into each other if one of them leaned a little. Tomura told Dabi everything, he told him about the black dust on the kitchen floor, and the one under his couch, and of scared he was to accidentally hurt him.

“You know the way your hands get burning hot when you touch me for too long?”

“Yes? Is that okay?”

“Oh, it’s more than okay … I love it so much. I love it because it feels so incredible, but also because I know it means that you’re letting go of everything. That, for some reason, touching me like this is relaxing you and making you forget everything else.”
“That’s exactly how it is …” Saying so, Dabi gently ran the tip of his fingers under the hem of Tomura’s shirt, warming them up slightly to tease the sensitive skin. The result was exactly what he had hoped, Tomura bit his lips and rest his forehead against his.

“Y-yes … yes exactly like that …” He composed himself a little to look back at Dabi, “But I … I can’t do that. And it’s so frustrating, because everything about you, about us, is relaxing me and making me forget the rest of the world. I mean you saw it, you saw how easily I come undone under your touches. But with me … it won’t be good and warm if I forget myself too much. I could … I could …”

Dabi ran his thumb across his bottom lips to shush him.

“I understand why you’re scared like this … I’m sorry I didn’t catch it before, and I’m sorry I didn’t think about this and put you in uncomfortable situations. But you know, I think … I think you’re underestimating yourself. Again, I understand how decaying the cart, when you were also holding me, was scary. But you talk about it like it was a happy coincidence like you got lucky and I don’t think that’s what it was. I think your body knew exactly what it was doing. You have more control than you think Tomura. You don’t always realise it, but your body knows what it’s doing.”

Tomura pondered over this for a moment. He never would have thought about this on his own, and even though a part of him was screaming that it was just dumb luck, another part thought this explanation … actually plausible.

“Maybe … I don’t know … But there’s also something else.” He moved away from Dabi for just a second and opened the drawer on of his nightstand, pulling out the pair of black gloves and presenting them to Dabi. “All that’s been happening lately … it made me think about these.”

“Are those meant to cancel your quirk?” Dabi asked, examining them.

“Yes but … but I don’t like them very much. Because it’s what they made me wear at the hospital.”

“The hospital? You mean … after what happened to you and your father? After All Might rescued you?”

Tomura nodded slowly. It felt weird to talk about this again after so many years, but it wasn’t as
painful as he thought it would be. Actually, he wanted to tell Dabi about this, he wanted to share that part of him with him. So he kept going.

“I had to wear them at the hospital and in the foster centre. That’s where I lived for two months, while Kurogiri was handling the adoption process. There was a lot of paperwork and procedures and I just couldn’t go leave with him right away. It wasn’t … I don’t have very good memories from this period. I was sleeping in a small dark room with some other kids who were all very loud … and it was always cold. God yeah, it was so fucking cold all the time there, night and days …”

He shivered just to the memory, and before he could protest, Dabi grabbed him and pulled him close against his chest. “Th-thank you … so yeah. And that’s when they gave me these gloves. I was an 8 year old kid with a destructive quirk that I couldn’t control so it made sense to take precautions. I wasn’t allowed to play, eat, or even talk to the other kids if I wasn’t wearing them. But it didn’t stop people from being freaked out. Because it’s the first thing you notice you know? I would meet some kids and their first question, even before asking my name was “What’s up with the gloves? What’s your quirk?” and as soon as I told them … well, they wouldn’t speak to me again. So as soon as I got out, I did my best to never have to wear them again. I practiced a lot and for a long time, to make sure that my hand wouldn’t need them anymore.”

Dabi slowly lied back on the bed, still holding Tomura and dragging him along, so he would lie on top of his chest. In this position, Tomura could hear Dabi’s beating heart and that beautiful sound soothed him. Dabi ran his warm hands across his back.

“But now I’m not sure … now I’m thinking I might have to wear them again. At the beginning at least, the first few times, just to be safe you know? When we … uh, when we … you know …”

“When we have sex?”

“Y-yeah …”

“Baby, I will never say this enough: we won’t do anything before you feel comfortable and safe about it.”

“I really want to, you know? I want … I want you. I love the way you touche me, the way you make me feel and I want more. But I’m also scared. Scared because of my hands, but also because I just don’t know … I’ve never done anything like this before. And all of this still feels so new and a little confusing at times, I don’t want to mess up.”

“I will wait. I want our first time to be worthy of how much I love you. You know my … my own first time … well, it was with Sun. And not a day goes by that I don’t wish I could take it back. Not
only because of what she did to me but because I was just … messy and desperate, completely throwing myself at her. So I will wait as long as you need me to.”

“Thank you. Thank you for saying it. Because sometimes, I fear that you will be tired of waiting, or that once we do it I will disappoint you and that you will leave.”

“That’s funny … you keep saying that you’re afraid that I’ll leave you, but I’m actually afraid that you will leave me.”

Tomura lifted his head to look at Dabi in the eyes, frowning in confusion, “What? How can you fear that? I’m so … inexperienced!”

“Precisely. You don’t have any comparison for these things. But what if one day, you realise that you can do so much better than me? It’s like … right now, I’m all you know. But maybe one day, you will realise what a mess I am compared to other guys. And maybe you will leave me.”

Tomura shifted on top of Dabi, crawling until he was right above his face. He gently traced the features of his face with careful fingers, memorising them and mapping them completely. Underneath him, Dabi breathing got a little louder and his cheeks were coloured with pink. Tomura smiled and planted a soft kiss on his lips then another, and then another, “I’m sorry” he whispered against his mouth between each kiss, “I was so wrapped up in my own fears that I never imagined that you would be as scared as I am. I sorry, and I promised that I feel be careful now. I want to be here for you because I love you and I want you to feel happy love and safe. And if I learned something from you, it’s that it’s okay to be scared sometimes.”

“Maybe we can be scared together?” Dabi asked softly, gently grabbing Tomura’s face to keep him close to him, “You’re my first too you know? I’ve never been in love before.”

Tomura kissed him some more, suddenly thrilled and excited to figure out the big mess that was life with Dabi by his side.

“Hey Dabi?” Tomura asked between to kisses, “Can you sleep here tonight? J-just sleep I mean, nothing else … not yet. I just want to fall asleep in your arms. And I want to see you when I wake up.”

“YES, I mean yes …” Dabi corrected trying not to sound too eager. “Fuck yes absolutely, I’m so glad you asked …”
Tomura found Dabi some pyjamas, refusing to let him sleep shirtless because he just wasn’t strong enough for that. Tomura went to change in the bathroom, and when he came back, Dabi had already changed himself, waiting for him under the cover.

“I hope you’re ready pretty boy because I’m gonna cuddle the shit out of you.”

“Is that a challenge?”

But before joining his boyfriend, Tomura picked up the black gloves on the ground. He looked at them and looked at Dabi, and suddenly it was the easiest decision in the world. He put them on.

“Baby you don’t have to …” Dabi whispered against his neck when Tomura joined him.

“I want to. Like I said just to be safe at the beginning. Because I love you more than I hate them.”

In the dark of the room, under the covers, Tomura fell asleep in Dabi’ warm embrace, feeling the vibrations in his chest as he softly sang a lullaby to him. Dabi fell asleep shortly after, and the last thing he saw before drifting away was that Tomura was smiling even in his sleep. That smile will be the death of me.

Chapter End Notes

So turns out that kissing the love of your life doesn't immediately fix all of your traumas and personal issues and mental health ... who knew?

I hope you enjoyed the update! As always posting late, so probably some mistakes that I will fix later. Speaking of, a lot of people proposed me to do the beta for me, and although I will probably need one for some fics in the future, and even though I still make a lot of mistakes I probably won't have anyone beta this specific fic more me, for a lot of weird personal reasons that would be a little long to explain now.

But!!! I plan to write a lot more shigadabi in the future and I will surely need help then! I plan to write some stuff for kinktober, i also want to write a chapter 2 to my one shot shigadabi fic Soothing Waters, and I already have two other shigadabi slow burns in WIP right now for when I'm done with Something Good!!! So yeah!
Next time ... *gasp* could it be???? that Stain makes an apparition??? who knows???
(I know)
New Horizons

Chapter Summary

In which Tomura gets confident, Dabi gets flustered, and All Might gets old.

Chapter Notes

Well hello there ... Fancy seeing you here, it's been a while ...

Okay I'm gonna drop the act right away because I feel terrible about this long long long hiatus and I'm 90% anxiety right now. I have no real excuse except that life gets in the way and that I have been trying to focus a lot more on my original writing this year, which is really important to me.

But! I'm not forgetting these boys! If you follow my account and my Tumblr and Twitter and so one, you know that I've actually been pretty active in the fandom this year! I wrote a lot of one-shots, organised a shigaraki week and just rambled a lot of the boys! But, it's no excuse I know. I will try to do better next time and to be more organised. If there is one thing that I can GUARANTEE is that I will not drop this story. It is very important to me, and I have it planned out until the end, it's just a matter of getting there! (You may notice that we have an official number of chapters now ... it change as I tend to play pretty long chapters ...)

But yeah, enough rambling, and back to the story! The boys are back:D and holy shit, did I miss writing for this fic ... I missed it so so so so much ... I love this world and these characters and hopefully, you still love them too!

(CAREFUL!!!! AS YOU CAN SEE THE RATING HAS CHANGED!!! THERE IS NOW SOME EXPLICIT CONTENT!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The coffee shop was lit by the soft late-afternoon light, and the air filled with the smell of hot drinks and freshly baked pastries. With the quiet murmur of the few clients and the sound of brewing coffee coming from behind the counter, it was the perfect atmosphere for Tomura and Dabi to quietly work on the oral presentation. The date was getting closer and closer, making Tomura a little more nervous each day. But fortunately, Dabi was always making things better.

Oddly enough, Tomura’s breakdown from two weeks ago had seemed to make things easier between them. Of course, it had been painful for both of them as it had happened, but it had forced them to actually talk and be open with each other. Tomura was slowly getting used to the idea that Dabi was now his strongest ally and that he wouldn’t stop loving him if Tomura needed help to deal with his issues, quite the contrary. Dabi was learning not to take anything for granted and to be more open about his own fear because he knew that Tomura loved him and wouldn’t find him
weak for that. They were communicating. In a way, the bitter screaming and tears had made the following kisses even sweeter. Love takes works and love takes time.

“Did you get to think about the tagline of your exposition?” Dabi asked, taking a sip from his coffee.

“Sort of?” Tomura shrugged and brought both his hands to hands to his own warm cup. Although the air of Bill’s Coffee was warm and cozy, it was starting to get really cold these days, and Tomura was beginning to wear his big jumpers again. Dabi wasn’t as affected by the cold, but he just loved how cute and sexy Tomura looked in these.

“It’s going to be their main question you know,” he said, “I’ve seen enough expositions with you to know that they all need to have a theme and a guiding line. So what’s yours? What is your work talking about?”

Tomura shrugged again, looking at the white traces of milk mixing like paint with the dark coffee. *What is my work talking about?* It really was the heart of the presentation, and the only thing he still struggled with. It was the most frustrating thing because he felt like he knew what his work was about, but he couldn’t express it properly without feeling stupid.

“It’s about … people, …” he eventually said. He immediately cringed. It was probably the most cliché thing he could have said.

On the table, he saw Dabi’s hand slowly moving closer to his before stopping, almost hesitating. Even though they had talked about it since then, Dabi hadn’t forgotten about how badly Tomura had reacted to his previous attempts at public affection. Right now, a part of Tomura couldn’t help but imagine everyone in the coffee turning around and looking at them as soon as they’d touch hands. Wouldn’t they think that Dabi was way too good for him? For a few seconds, he even saw the grey dust on the kitchen floor and under Dabi’s couch. But … these images were pale and fade compared to how beautiful and vibrant Dabi’s hand looked right now. He already knew exactly how warm and comforting it would feel, his skin had already memorised every sensation. Tomura’s hand timidly crawled forward, first only hooking his pinkie with Dabi’s, then progressively leaning into the touch of his eager boyfriend, moving and grabbing until their fingers were completely intertwined with each other’s. The sight and the feeling made Tomura blushed, and when he looked up, Dabi’s cheekbones were also coloured with a very light pink. They both looked at their hands locked together and on the table, then at each other and both giggled like middle school kids.

“Oh my gooood,” Tomura whimpered, hiding his face inside the large collar of his jumper.
“Look at us go … ” Dabi chuckled.

Tomura was getting better and better at this, and Dabi had learned not to push him. It was a work in progress, but it gave them beautiful moments like this one.

“My work...” Tomura continued as Dabi gently stroked his hand with his thumb, “It’s mostly portraits and landscapes. I guess that on the surface, it’s nothing special. It’s just the way I see things, the way they make me feel …”

“And what do they make you feel?”

“They make me feel good. Even when I paint difficult things, even when it gets frustrating because I can’t get it quite right … or even when I paint something ugly and painful. It always makes me happy because I think at the end of the day … creating makes me happy. It’s like … putting all my feelings on a blank slate. Do you ever feel like this when you write songs?”

“Always yes …” Dabi nodded with a smile, “No matter how hard it gets, there’s nothing more satisfying than to look a the final product. It’s almost … therapeutic I guess?”

“Exactly! It’s almost like capturing a moment of your life, how you felt at that time.”

They were both getting excited, talking about creation, writing, paintings and things they loved. Tomura squeezed his boyfriend’s hand, and Dabi’s heart skipped a beat. Eventually, their coffees turned cold and the sky got dark.

“Hey, can I drop some hot take?” Dabi asked as they both got their coat on to leave.

“Be my guest …” Tomura chuckled, wrapping his incredibly long scarf around his neck.

“I think you actually love people.”

“What?” Tomura almost laughed at that. It wasn’t insulting or anything, it just felt really off and he wasn’t sure what Dabi meant by that. “I mean I love some people. I love you, I love my dads and I love our friends. But for the rest … I’m having a hard time.”
“Yeah, that’s what I thought when I first met you,” Dabi said when they walked out. “And I guess it’s true to some extent, I know it’s difficult for you to really connect with someone and you easily get overwhelmed.”

Because of his quirk, Tomura couldn’t really wear gloves and his hands got cold easily. He timidly reached for Dabi’s hand as they walk down the streets and his boyfriend grabbed it and held it tight.

“But now that I really know you,” Dabi continued, “I see that it can be both. You say you don’t like anyone, and yet, you constantly go out of your way to help people. I mean, even when we were stupid and thought we hated each other, you helped me so much with the band and really guide me on the right path. Remember when my computer fucked up and you saved all my songs with your genius hacking skills?”

“It’s because I was already thirsty for you, even though I was too dumb to see it …”

“Okay maybe so,” Dabi laughed, squeezing his hand, “But what I’m saying is that you’re not only a positive light in my life but in most of people’s life. You’re a beautiful moonbeam. And that’s also why you draw so many portraits. That’s your way to connect with them. You think you don’t get them, but the way you paint them … you might connect with them even more deeply than they connect with themselves.”

Tomura stopped in his tracks and Dabi with him. He turned toward his confused boyfriend and looked at him with focus, nervousness and determination. The sight was quite cute but Dabi wasn’t sure of where this was going until Tomura got on the tip of his toes and leaned forward.

Oh.

Tomura had never initiated a public kiss before, so Dabi felt a shiver and some butterflies in his stomach when the chapped lips captured his. Tomura grabbed the collar of his coat for balance and Dabi gently held his face to help him. It didn’t last very long, but when they pulled away they were both quite flustered.

“Are you okay?” Dabi asked.

“Y-yeah! I just really wanted to kiss you … even if we’re outside. Is that okay?”
“It’s more than okay.”

“It’s new I know …” Tomura smiled sheepishly, “But I’m working on it.”

It would have been quite romantic if it had begun to snow right now, but it was too early for that. Dabi grabbed both Tomura’s hands to warm them up, both with his palms and lips. The tip of Tomura’s nose was pink, just like his cheeks, and he was offering soft satisfied noises with each kiss Dabi gave his hands. But, the magic was broken by a loud honking sound coming from the other side of the road and some familiar howling.

“Get a rooooooooooom!” Jin screamed from the window of the van, while Spinner was still furiously honking and parking at the same time.

Tomura laughed and Dabi wrapped himself around him, as a shield to their friends’ comments and mockery.

“Back off you evil bastards!” he screamed in response, “We were being very soft right now!”

“Heathens! Wantons!” Spinner hissed, pushing Jin around to fit in the same open window, “Debauchery! Kissing each other’s hands softly in the streets! Have you no shame? Think of the children!”

Tomura was now cackling loudly, while Dabi wrapped himself even more to the point where he almost picked up the skinnier body of the ground. “YOU WILL NOT GET IN THE WAY OF OUR LOVE!” he shouted dramatically. Tomura loved that he was comfortable enough with his friends to not be bothered by the attention they were getting right now. When it was just him and Dabi it was more difficult because they were being soft, vulnerable and intimate with each other so it was weird to have strangers around them. But with his friends … it was a different story. They were a chaotic bunch, so when they were together like this, it really didn’t matter what the fuck people were thinking. He was also getting stronger. Last year a scenario like this might have sent him into a panic attack, but today, he was laughing. Because these people were his friends, and they loved him and supported him. It gave him hope that he would soon reach this stage with Dabi, where he would just hungrily make out with him in the middle of a crowded place. He kind of really wanted that. He wanted to shamelessly show the world how much he loved and wanted Dabi every second of the day. He was working toward it.

“Okay so unless you dirty boys want to do some other gross stuff like forehead kisses or some
shits, you better get in. We’re going to be late.” With these words, Spinner crawled back to open the door of the van for them and they climbed in.

Tonight was a special night; it was the launching of Spinner’s video game on Steam. He had been working on it practically alone for three years now; it was something midway between a platform game and an RPG where the player could turn hero, vigilante or villain depending on his choices. For a guy as loud and emotional as him, Spinner was a surprisingly quiet worker. He was more comfortable handling his thing on his own without really mentioning anything to anyone else; expect if he was asked about it. So the group actually didn’t know that much about the project, expect Tomura who had drawn some concept art for the game to Spinner’s request. Dabi and the band had composed the music, but Spinner had only given them the bare minimum of information.

“I can’t believe it’s finally done!” Tomura said, “I’m so happy for you Spinner!"

“I can’t believe either …” Spinner confessed, driving down the street a little more calmly than usual. “This project has been part of my life for a while now, it’s like letting my baby go, I’m not sure I’m ready.”

“It’s going to be fine, man,” Jin reassured him, rubbing his shoulder, “You were ready to launch weeks ago.”

“I know, I know …”

When they arrived at Tomura’s flat Magne was already in full decoration swing, arranging the place so he would look a little festive. She was bossing around Toga and Mustard who were doing their best to obey her, and she was yelling at Giran who wasn’t helping but drinking in the kitchen.

“Ah! Good, you’re here!” Magne practically jumped on them, her fire red hair slightly more dishevelled than usual as if she had been running around all day, “I need some help, these two are too small to get the lamp. Tomura go get your uncle in the kitchen!”

“He … is not my uncle?” Tomura hadn’t even taken off his coat yet. Magne was already grabbing Dabi and Jin to drag them to the living room, barely turning around to answer.

“Honey, he is kind of your uncle and you know it … Spinner!!! Go get your material ready! And freshen up a little!”
“Y-yes, mam’!” Spinner almost gave a military salute, and ran to the living room with the others, his backpack already falling off his shoulders. As he walked to the kitchen, Tomura heard a loud crashing noise behind him, as if someone had tripped on his own feet, quickly followed by Magne’s exasperated sigh and Dabi’s mocking snicker. He thought it was wiser to keep going without turning around.

“Magne doesn’t mess around,” Giran said with a fox-like smile when Tomura joined him. The old man was getting the beers out of the fridge and visibly preparing something else hitting up in a pot.

“She’s mad you for not helping,” Tomura warned, crossing his arms and leaning against the counter. He was going to add another comment about the already open bottles when he smelled something sweet and almost fruity. It was coming from the pot on the fire, so Tomura got closer. “Whatcha got there?”

“I’m making some mulled wine,” Giran explained proudly, “it’s the perfect weather for it don’t you think? A good red wine, some oranges, some anises … it’s a recipe I created with your dad!”

“Speaking of … weren’t they supposed to arrive with you?”

“Yeah … would you mind stirring it a little?” Tomura obliged, enjoying the smell, and Giran continued, “Yeah they were supposed to but Sako texted me to say they would be late and that we should go without them. But I’m sure they’re on their way!”

Despite his enthusiastic tone, Giran kind of slowed down for a second, eyes drifting away to the window.

“Is … everything okay?” Tomura asked with a frown. He wasn’t worried per se, but something in the man’s attitude wasn’t quite clear. “Giran, you would tell me if something had happened right?”

“Yes of course don’t worry!” Giran lowered the fire under the pot and rubbed the back of his neck for a few seconds. “It’s nothing really. It’s just that Sako’s text … I don’t know. It was a little snappy. For him, I mean. Simpler than usual.”

Both of Tomura’s parents were famous for their awfully long text messages. Every time, it felt like reading a letter, either overly polite and formal or extravagant and detailed. During his teenage years, Tomura had learned to fear the occasional short messages, because it meant they were in a bad mood. Even now, the simple mention gave him a shiver.
“I’m sure they’re fine,” Giran reassured him with a hand on his shoulder, “they’re gonna be here, they wouldn’t miss Spinner’s launch for the world. They had a hold-up and Sako was pissed, hence the snappy message.”

“Yeah, I’m not really worried,” Tomura said, and it was true. No worried yet anyway.

Almost on cue, the doorbell rang and the next minute they heard Kurogiri’s and Sako’s voice as they walked in the apartment.

“Sorry, sorry!” Sako sang as Magne welcomed them in, “We got a little inconvenience, but we’re here now!”

Tomura stepped out of the kitchen and Sako ran to him to kiss his cheek, and then immediately sprinted to the living room, asking how he could help. Although he might have seemed fine on the surface, Tomura recognized this overly sweet behaviour. It could be hard to tell the difference because Sako already was a naturally overdramatic and oversweet guy, but right now there was a specific urgency in his voice and gesture that meant one thing: he was upset and trying to keep it together.

A look toward Kurogiri, still standing by the door, was the only confirmation Tomura needed. His dad was smiling and talking gently with Giran who also came out of the kitchen to welcome him, but there was a certain stiffness to his body and tone that Tomura recognized. His parents didn’t fight often, but when they did, Tomura could tell right away. It usually didn’t last long so he wasn’t anxious about it, but he hoped that they would be patched up before the end of the night.

Thirty minutes later, everything was ready. They had connected Spinner’s computer to a projector to watch the launch on the big screen, just like a real premiere. Giran was already pouring mulled wine to everyone and Mustard already attacking the snacks on the table under Magne’s vigilant eye.

“So are we good?” Dabi asked, looking at all the guest in the room. “Computer connected? Wi-Fi operational? Nachos on the table? What are we missing?”

“Well … we’re missing Spinner, actually” Tomura noted, looking around the room as well. The lizard was nowhere to be seen.
“He is locked in the bathroom,” Jin said, “I’ve been talking to him through the doors for the past ten minutes, I think he is freaking out …”

The whole group migrated to the bathroom door, glasses in their hands and chips in their mouths, and Dabi gently knocked on the door.

“You okay buddy?” he asked. Everyone behind him was trying to press their ears against the door and he had to push them back as best as he could. They were all so heavy they could actually break the door and which wasn’t necessary, not yet anyway. On the other side, they heard a whimper.

“I’m fine, I’m fine …” Spinner said, “I just … I think I’m gonna stay here. You guys can launch it for me, okay?”

“Dude no!” Jin protested, escaping the barrier Dabi had created with his impossibly long arms. “It’s your game, you’ve been working on it for years! You need to be the one! It’s your baby, you said it yourself!”

“I know, I know!” Spinner responded. “But like … now my baby is all grown up and maybe I shouldn’t be the one to take them to the altar, you know?”

There was a confused silence on their side of the door as everyone tried to fully understand the metaphor. Giran blinked a few times, Toga shrugged at Mustard who was looking at her for an explanation, and Kurogiri and Sako shared a cold, almost bitter glance.

“Okay yeah well uh …” Jin hesitated, “whether you like it or not, your baby is ready to uh … get married? So like, even though you could try to prepare and perfect it even longer, or ignore the ceremony all together … you should be there you know?”

He cringed at his own words and gave an inquiring look at the crowd behind him with a hesitant thumb up, but they all just shrugged at him. For a couple of minutes, there was only silence, no one could tell how well Jin’s words had work. Finally, there was a light *tumb* on the other side, as if Spinner was leaning against the door.

“I’m just so fucking scared,” he said. “What if it fucks up? What if it not good enough? What if Steam refuses it? What if the players don’t want it? You’re all out there having blooming careers and getting success after success … what if I’m the one fuck up of the group?”
No one said a word, but Dabi and Tomura exchanged a look. No one had ever considered that Spinner could feel like this, he was always so loud, so expressive, they all felt like they could read him like an open book. But this project was important to him, just like the band was important to Dabi and painting was important to Tomura. They shouldn’t have underestimated how strongly he felt about his work, and how terrifying this night would be for him.

“Hey Spinner,” Tomura said softly, walking a little closer to the door, “for what it’s worth, I have some experience with crippling fears of failure and locking myself alone in the bathroom during parties …” Tomura carefully laid his hand on the door with his pinkie lifted. “We’re all here with you tonight, man. Ready to catch you if you fall, and ready to carry around the flat like a hero when you succeed! Like you were here for me, for Dabi and everyone else … letting go of your fear isn’t easy I know but … it’s worth it.”

As he finished his sentence, Tomura felt a callous hand reaching for his and tangling their fingers together. Dabi was looking at him with tender eyes, a smile on his face. Yeah … truly, truly, truly worth it.

There was a click, and the bathroom door slowly opened. Spinner slid his snout through the crack and saw the group smiling at him, all here for him tonight and ready to support him. He opened the door a little wider, to step outside. He still looked quite pale, or at least as pale as a lizard could look.

“I just hope it was all worth it, you know?” he said.

“It will be,” Magne assured him, walking to him to pull him into a hug. “Whatever happens, whatever the reviews, you’ll learn something and get better. Besides, it’s a huge victory to just do it, you know? A lot of people spend their lives talking about what they want to do without ever making it happen.”

“Yeah, dude!” Mustard agreed, “I mean, you made a fucking videogame! That’s like …”

“Language!” Giran, Sako and Kurogiri all said together. The couple exchanged a brief glance, a little warmer this time.

“Yeah, yeah …” Mustard pouted. “But anyway yeah, that’s like … the coolest thing ever! Much cooler than music or painting if you ask me …”
“Go rot you pipsqueak …” Tomura grumbled, still ruffling the boy’s hair.

Spinner couldn’t help but laugh, and although there was still some nervousness in his voice, it was genuine. They made their way back to the living room where the computer, the screen and the food were still waiting for them. Everything was set and ready. Spinner looked at his computer screen with squinty eyes as if he was about to challenge him to a dual.

“You want to have something to eat first?” Jin asked, a hand on Spinner’s shoulder.

“No … no, it’s okay I think …” Spinner straightened his back and clenched his fists to stop himself from trembling. “Today is the launch date, the game is ready, and it’s been ready for months now. I can’t keep it close to my chest forever. It was made to be shared.”

“Wait!” Giran called out, “We need more wine! No, champagne!”

Soon they were all ready with their flutes full, even Mustard who had the right to try some before switching to apple cider, surrounding Spinner at his computer. The curser of his mouse was hovering over the “upload” button.

“Bro, are you ready?” Dabi asked.

“Yeah …” Spinner nodded slowly. “All right … all bet’s are off … let’s go!”

And he clicked the “upload” button. Everyone in the room was about to cheer loudly, but was a little disconcerted by the charging bar on the screen indicating, “processing and rendering.” They just stood mouth open and glass in the hair, their exclamation turning into confused noises.

“Well yeah,” Spinner turned toward them, frowning, but with an amused smile. “Did you think it was like … instantly? YouTube vids take hours my dudes, and this is a whole fucking game. And then it will take days for Steam to run and it and check before they post it.”

“Oooooh …” they all nodded.

“But uuuuh … I mean, you pressed the button, yaaaaaay!!” Toga cheered, throwing her glass up in
They all joined her in celebration, screaming, laughing and hugging Spinner, and the lizard almost collapsed under the weight of all of his friends adding on top of him. He seemed kind of confused by the whole thing himself, which Tomura could understand. He would probably feel the same after the interview, after dropping his longtime project to a bunch of strangers and waiting for results … but this wasn’t about him. Not tonight.

“He pressed the button!” Everyone began to chant “The button! The button! The button!”

The game kept loading on the screen, and they all kept drinking. Now the party was truly beginning. The computer and material were put aside in a safe corner to allow everything to go smoothly without any risk of alcohol being splashed on the software. Music was on, the gentle flow mixing up nicely with everyone’s excited chat. They were all still focused on Spinner who was finally telling everyone about his game, how he got the idea, how it had all developed, and what the challenges had been. He truly relaxed a few hours later when the rendering of the game was complete. Well, relax might not have been the right word considering he stood up smashed his glass on the ground screaming fuck yeah bitch! and immediately began to clean his mess while apologising profusely.

Now that the game was properly sent to Steam, the second part of the evening could begin. The computer was put away and the music turned louder, and they began to serve Giran’s mulled wine. Tomura took the mental note that Gran Torino was probably away tonight considering he would have knocked on their door hours ago otherwise, either to complain about the noise or join the party. Probably both. I was pretty sure he was in town this week though? Tomura remembered clearly running into him four days ago in the hall. But he didn’t dwell on this, his mind was too happy and intoxicated right now to create a disaster scenario as it would usually do.

Speaking of disaster … he gave a look around the room to check where were his parents at right now. They definitely looked more relaxed than when they had arrived but were sitting on opposite sides of the room, both deeply engrossed in separated conversation. The first time Kurogiri and Sako ever fought, Tomura had been terrified. Their arguments were never loud or violent, quite the contrary, they were cold silences and distant glances. Even thought Tomura was already in his late teens when he witnessed it for the first time, he had suddenly felt very small and helpless. But from all the anguishes and anxieties in his teens, this one was surprisingly the one that he had outgrown the quickest. Because if there was one thing in this world he had always believed in, it was his parents’ unconditional love for each other. And that belief was stronger than any stupid scary picture his brain could ever try to paint for him. Tonight was no different. Seeing them so cold toward each other still affected him, but he had no doubt that they would find their way back to each other soon enough. They had trusted him so many times over so many things, the least he could do was to trust them in return.
He was brought back to the present when Spinner threw himself on the couch between him and Mustard, making them both bounce. There was a tipsy bliss on his face that contrasted beautifully with the tense expression he had been showing all day.

“Duuuuuuude …” he said to Tomura, “I can’t believe it’s done … I mean it’s not really done yet, people won’t be able to play it before maybe a month? And then the review and feedback will come in I’ll …”

“Spinner, relax!” Tomura grabbed one of the cold bottles of beer on the coffee table in front of them and handed it to him. “There’s nothing you can do for now so don’t torture yourself. I get that it’s hard though, you’ve been working on this non-stop for years and suddenly you have nothing else to do but wait … it’s gonna be stressful, but you’re gonna come through buddy.” He handed him the bottle-opener.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah … you’re right I know you’re right.” There was a loud psh! and some of the cold beer dripped on the scally fingers. “And I guess you would know about that right? Must be the same when you submit like a drawing, online or for your school.”

“Yeah, and I’m sure it’s the same for Dabi and the girls whenever they post a video online.” Tomura grabbed a beer for himself and Spinner handed the bottle-opener back to him. The beer also dripped on his own careful fingers. “I think … I think it’s just part of the creative process in general? At some point, you just gotta throw it out there, and accept that it doesn’t really belong to you anymore.”

“Yeah, that’s scary,” Spinner agreed with a shiver. “But I guess that’s what the difference, you know? Almost everyone wants to create something. There are so many people out there talking about writing a book, drawing a comic, making some music … how many of them actually do it? And even then, how many of them do something with it?”

“Cheers, I’ll drink to that my dude …”

They both hit the necks of their bottles together with a knowing smile. Spinner’s words had sent some warmth through Tomura’s body. He knew that he wasn’t exactly his best self yet; he wanted to improve himself on a lot of things. He was lacking many things, social skills, composure, balance, a healthier live style … but he was still something that many other people would never do. He was creating something and putting it out there. It had to count for something.

“Dude, by the way!” Spinner said, quickly swallowing the beer, “I feel like I never properly thanked you for the word you did on the game. Like … I don’t know much about art, close to
nothing actually, but I know I really like the way you draw stuff. So thank you for helping me, I
couldn’t have done that without you, and I’m glad there is, uh … a part of you in the game.”

“Oh no worries, it was my pleasure! It was a great exercise actually, I wouldn’t mind doing again …”

“With your art and Dabi’s music in the game, maybe I stand a chance …” he said, suddenly nerve
s and gloomy again.

“I wouldn’t be too worried about that if I were you …” Mustard suddenly said. He had been quiet and
on his phone the entire time, to the point where the other two had completely forgotten he was sitting next to them. “I’m on Steam right now, and you’re game already got like … thousands of pre-ordering.”

Spinner practically jumped forward trying to grab the phone out of Mustard hands, and Tomura
practically climbed over the couch to get a look at the screen. The sudden agitation got everyone else’s attention, and a little crowd formed around them.

“Dude …” Spinner gasped. “No fucking way …”

“I mean you had a pretty big following when the game was still in development, no?” Magne
oted. “People are excited about your game! They’ve been following the development, and they finally can get their hands on it.”

“I’m pre-ordering it right now,” Mustard announced clicking on the link. “I can’t wait to play it.”

“I’m excited too you know?” Tomura said. “I think I’ll pre-order it as well to play it as soon as it’s out.”

“Dude no!” Spinner suddenly jumped around, almost spilling all of his drink all over the couch, and grabbed Tomura’s wrists with his free hand. Tomura’s face turned completely red in a matter of second and almost dropped his own drink. “Tomura dude please no you can’t do this to me … this is too much …”

“Uuuuh … I …” Tomura was still frozen, taken back by the sudden contact. Spinner wasn’t hur
ving him or anything, but he wasn’t usually so tactile with him. Magne walked around the couch
to grab both of their beers of their hands and away from her beautiful couch, and behind them, Dabi was trying really hard not to laugh.

“Tomura please, my brosky …” Spinner whispered, now carefully holding both of Tomura’s hands in his, sounding weirdly emotional. “Like I appreciate and I know you mean well, but this is too much pressure for me, I can’t let you do this.”

“O-oh?” Tomura still had no idea of what the fuck was going on. He gave little confused glances toward his friends, asking for help, but they were all busy snickering to help him.

“Because like listen,” Spinner continued, “you wouldn’t be just giving me your opinion as one of my dearest friends, but also as one of my most respected fellow gamers. You have mad skills and a lot of gaming knowledge, so what if you play my game and you don’t like it? What if you feel like your art was wasted on a shameful product? What if you hate me? What if our beautiful friendship doesn’t survive this? What if I lose you? What if …”

Spinner was speaking faster and faster, holding Tomura’s hands tightly but carefully. It was a lovely drunken rambling that slowly turned into Spinner listing all the things he loved and appreciated about Tomura. The later just didn’t know how to respond to any of it, and so was just nodding politely while the rest of the group, including his dads, were losing their mind in the background. But Spinner’s speech was interrupted when Dabi walked around the couch to face him.

“Spinner I’m asking you this as a friend,” he said softly. The lizard just blinked at him and Dabi put a firm hand on his shoulder. “Spinner. Are you trying to steal my man right now?”

The red on Tomura’s cheeks got even deeper. Spinner just blinked a few more time, slowly putting the pieces together in his head, and suddenly it was his cheeks that coloured pink. He immediately let go of Tomura’s hands with a high pitched gasp, and everyone in the room burst out of laughing, except for Tomura who was covering his face with his hands, and Mustard was deeply absorbed in whatever he was reading on his phone, frowning.

“Oh my God, no no no no!” Spinner rambled, “God no I would never, I mean not that he isn’t great but like still I wouldn’t I don’t see him like that and like besides I wouldn’t do this to you please don’t kill me.”

“Good,” Dabi approved sharp, almost arrogant smile. He on the couch next to Tomura, and before his boyfriend could react, grabbed him by the waist to pull him on his laps. Tomura squealed in surprised but didn’t protest for very long. It was a little embarrassing, but he didn’t really want to
get away from Dabi’s warmth right now. The young man wrapped his long arms around the slender body and buried his face in the crook of his scarred neck. He whispered against the skin, more for Tomura than anyone else in the room: “Good because this boy is mine.”

Each of these words sent a thousand of shiver deep inside Tomura’s body, lighting a fire in the pit of his stomach. It was happening more and more often lately. The idea of … doing adult things with Dabi, of completely exposing himself to him, was still a scary one. But each day, the fear grew colder and the desire grew hotter. With each touch, each word, each look, the need to let Dabi take him apart was harder to control. It wouldn’t be long until the balance was switched.

His mind would have probably kept drifting to dark dangerous thoughts if Mustard had not jumped off the couch, eyes still glued to his phone.

“Do you guys have a TV here?” he asked. “Or a radio? Or can I use the computer?” There was a panic in his voice that no one but his father had ever heard before. For a moment, everyone in the room stayed frozen, still taken back by the sudden mood shift.

“So?” he asked again slightly irritated.

“Mustard, calm down,” Giran said walking toward his son. “What’s the matter? What’s happening?”

“It’s All Might!”

The name ringed in Tomura’s hears like an ultrasound, numbing his brain and tensing his body. He wanted to jump off Dabi’s laps but couldn’t move, wanted to grab Mustard and ask a thousand question but no sound came out when he opened his mouth.

“All Might?” Spinner asked, sounding quite distressed himself. “What’s happening? What are you saying?”

“He is fighting against a group of villains, downtown, right now as we speak!” Mustard squealed, pointing at the window. His voice was somewhere between panic and excitement. “Apparently it’s a big mess! A bunch of heroes showed up to help him, but right now he is the last one standing!”

Almost as if on cue to young boy’s words, they all heard loud police sirens coming from outside,
passing through their street. Jin and Toga both ran to the window to have a look, and it seemed like everyone in the buildings across and next to them followed their examples. There were some loud whispers going around the room but Tomura barely registered any of them, he didn’t even notice the worried look that both Kurogir and Sako gave him. The only things he was aware of right now was his own loud breathing, his intrusive thoughts, and Dabi’s warm hands suddenly squeezing his.

“Tomura … baby … stay with me okay? It’s okay.”

Spinner had already gotten, he turned on the radio in the kitchen and brought it to the living room while Magne turned on the TV. Tomura wanted to scream, to tell them to stop and leave it be, but stayed quiet. He didn’t know if he wanted to see or not, didn’t know if he was ready for whatever would appear on the screen. Mustard and Giran was sitting close to each other on the couch next to them, and the young boy kept reading the news until they managed to get a clear image on the screen. It was all a confusing mess, the radio’s voice, Mustard’s voice, the whispers in the room all mixing up together to create this awful buzzing drilling Tomura’s head. The only words he could still make sense of were Dabi’s, as his boyfriend spoke directly into his hear. But even then, he only caught one out of three. He’s fine … it’s All Might … it’s okay … he’s strong … you know what he can do … It wasn’t the words themselves as much as the warmth of Dabi’s breath against his skin that kept him stable.

Finally, an image appeared on the screen and everyone went quiet. It almost looked like a bad horror movie, with a shaky cam moving through the mess of the streets, with the sounds of citizen screaming and heroes and policemen giving orders in the background. The journalist in the corner of the screen was speaking really fast with her hand and her ear, saying the same thing as the radio about how All Might was currently fighting the six leaders of a new rising mafia who had been doing some weapon traffic or something like that … but she was interrupted by a loud explosive sound, and the camera caught two shapes dashing through the air in the background. One of them was All Might.

Seeing him on the screen had everyone in the room gasping loudly, even Tomura and Dabi. It seemed like All Might had punched a man so strongly that they were both flying across the street and went to crash through a water tank on a rooftop. The city didn’t seem too smashed yet which was good, because it meant that All Might was still strong enough to control the collateral damages. He wasn’t desperate yet. The cameras followed the rest of the fight as best as they could, either from the ground or by helicopter. As it kept going, everyone in the living room progressively spirits up. The fight was long, and All Might was alone, but he was still his loud, beaming, powerful self. Or so it seemed … but Tomura saw.

_He is slower._

It was almost imperceptible because he was still stronger and faster than anyone else out there, but
it was real. He didn’t get back up as fast after a blow and seemed to breathe a little faster. At some point, the camera got a close up on his face, and the hero made a point to smile and wink before going back in the fray. This simple smile got Spinner to jump off the couch, throwing his fist in the air and screaming, “Fuck yeah!” Toga was the second one to get up, shaking her fists and squealing with surprisingly choked voice “Get them All Might!” Everyone joined in, cheering and grabbing each other, even Kurogiri, Sako and Giran. It was loud, proud, still a little anxious, but growing more and more confident by the minute. Tomura was the only one who stayed silent. He was still thinking about that close up on All Might face. It was the first time in years he had gotten to properly see his face, and he even if everyone else in the room had been blinded by the brightness of his smile, to Tomura, he had just looked very very very old. *When did you get so old?*

Soon, the images on the screen no longer made sense. It was just a bunch of shapes and colours mixing up together, a bunch of lights turn in off and on in a random order. The words coming out of the TV and his friends’ mouths were just sounds. So he just sat there, taking it all in, enduring, incapable of moving. He barely realised when it was over. It took Dabi kissing his neck for him to blink slowly and to see his friends chanting and jumping up in the air and hugging each other. On the screen, All Might was laughing, standing tall and proud over the unconscious bodies of his opponents. But his legs were shaking. And the corner of his mouth was bleeding. And he coughed.

Tomura jumped of Dabi’s laps and ran out of the room toward the bathroom, pulling his phone out of his jeans. Every one of his movements was hectic and clumsy, he tripped and slide on the wooden floor and almost dropped his phone twice before reaching the bathroom door. He slammed it behind him, turned the lock, and leaned against the wooden surface as not to collapse. The silence and cool air of the bathroom barely relaxed him. His fingers were still shaking when he desperately scrolled through his phone to find Gran Torino’s number. *God, I’m so fucking stupid ... so fucking foolish ... how did I not put the pieces together? How did I not realise that something was wrong when we saw he wasn’t here tonight.* Each tone on the other was like another weight on his chest. He called one, two, three times, and the old hero answered the fourth time.

“Tomura, it’s fine, it’s all good, please calm down.” Gran Torino spoke right away, without letting him the time to say a word. He must have seen all the missed called with barely a second of interval.

“How is he?” he asked. It was the first time he spoke up since Mustard had shared the news, and he wasn’t expecting to sound so tired and broken. It was as if his emotions were hitting him with a delay, living him cold and empty during the fight and exploding inside of him right now.

“He is fine,” Gran Torino promised, “he is worn out and tired, but fine and alive. He is resting right now.”

Tomura recognised that voice. It was the one he used with him years ago, after the incident and before Kurogiri officially took him in. Something calm, confident, a little firm, but mostly soft.
And it actually helped him to relax a little even now. Hold habits die hard.

“And what about …” Tomura spoke softly but his voice was still breaking. “What about One for All?”

On the other end, Gran Torino let out a long, deep, tired sigh.

“It’s fine too. For now. But he definitely reduced his time limit with this one … these guys were tough.”

“How much do you think he has?”

“It’s too soon to tell, but I’d say … an hour. Hopefully more, but maybe even less.”

One hour … it felt like nothing. What can one do in an hour? Tomura couldn’t even pain something good in one hour.

“So what happens now?” he asked timidly.

“What do you think?” Gran Torino was almost chuckling, but even that sounded flat and tired. “You know him. He is going to fight until the very last spark. I just gotta make sure he doesn’t fight until his very last breath …”

Tomura tried to remember Toshinori’s face. Not All Might’s. But Toshinori’s. The face of the man who wore weird mustard suits and American jeans, the man who often laughed a little too loud but always sincerely even when young Tomura was making a stupid joke. The face of the man who took him out to see a movie with ice cream, and carried him on his shoulders every single time they were going out. Well … until they just stopped going out.

“Hey uh …” Tomura said, slowly sliding against the door to sit on the floor. “You know I … I understand why it’s not safe for me to have his number and for him to have mine but … but can you please tell him I called?” He held the phone with both of his hands, pressing it against his ear. “Tell him I called and tell him I worry. Tell that I understand why we can’t see each other right now, but I’d like to speak when it’s safe for both of us. Tell him … tell I’d like to meet his successor … the kid from UA you told me about. Tell him I’d like to talk about my grandma and …” Tomura choked on his breath, fighting the tears in his eyes. “You know what? Just tell him I
miss him. That should be enough."

Gran Torino chuckled. For real this time. And when he spoke again, Tomura could hear the smile in his voice. "Yeah, that would be enough. I’m still going to tell him all of these things though."

Tomura laughed too, and the tears rolled down his cheeks at the same time.

“He asks about you, you know?” Gran Torino said. “And I tell him everything I can … your art, your projects, and even that boyfriend of yours … he is very proud of you. And I know for a fact that he wants to see you. But you know he can be a little … complicated, sometimes. It’s hard for him to deal with his own feelings and to think about himself. But give him time.”

“All the time he needs … but yeah, thank you for answering. Sorry to bother you I just … you know how I get sometimes. I’ll let you rest now.”

“I’m glad you called Tomura. And I’ll come down to see you as soon as I get back to the flat, we will be able to talk as much as you want.”

They both hang up at the same time. Tomura stayed on the floor for a while, whipping his tears away with his sleeves. He didn’t want to back out looking like this; he would ruin everyone’s mood. He could still hear his friends celebrating through the door. Once again, he was out of synch with the rest of the world, existing on a completely different plane than everyone else, crying in the bathroom when the entire city was celebrating All Might’s victory. After a few more minutes he got up, checked his face in the mirror, and opened the door.

Dabi was on the other side. He was leaning against the wall in front of him, obviously waiting here since Tomura had locked himself inside. There was no fear, no annoyance or impatience on his face, just concern and love, and Tomura didn’t even know why he expected anything else than that.

“Hey,” he just said.

“Hey …”

“How are you feeling?”
“Hum … better. I think. I just called Gran Torino.”

“Yeah, that’s what I figured.”

Dabi reached, grabbing his forearm to bring him close to him against the wall, in such a way that their friends wouldn’t be able to see them from the living room. Tomura let him, following the gesture and carefully placing his hands against Dabi’s broad chest.

“Did you cry?” the taller man asked, gently putting Tomura’s hair out of the way to have a good look at his face.

“No … I mean yes, but it wasn’t like real tears. Just … stress.”

“It’s okay to cry, you know? I know … I know that he is important to you.”

Tomura realised that he had never told Dabi the full story of what had happened to him as a child, never told him about who All Might actually was to him and why he worried so much. Of course, the secret of One For All wasn’t for him to tell. But looking at Dabi right now, he promised himself that he would tell him the rest soon. One day, anyway. If he asked. He would tell him about what had happened to him, to his father, and what part All Might had played in all of this. He had never told anyone about this, only Kurogiri, All Might, Gran Torino and he knew the full story. But he wanted Dabi to know eventually. He’d had to wait to be ready though because speaking of this with him would be even more intimate than sex. And who knew? Maybe Dabi would one day tell him how he got his scars, or why he didn’t want to see his family even now that his father was in jail.

Tomura suddenly felt a little lighter thinking that they had plenty of time ahead of them to share these things. It’s always all about time, isn’t it?

“I love you,” Tomura said just because that was true.

Dabi’s eyes shifted from concern to surprise, then from surprise to endearment. His cheekbones coloured themselves with light pink, and he passed both of his arms around Tomura’s neck, cradling the back of his head with one hand.
“I love you too baby,” he smiled. “I’m sorry you had to see this. But hey, I mean, it’s fucking All Might after all! You shouldn’t worry about him too much.”

For a split second, Tomura thought about the blood on the corner of his mouth, but he chose the cast the image away to focus on the blue of Dabi’s eyes instead, and how well it matched with the black of his hair. *He is beautiful* Tomura realised for the thousandth time.

“What about you though?” he asked. “Are you okay? You seem a little preoccupied.”

“I was worried about you that’s all …” Dabi kissed his cheek as to demonstrate, but Tomura wasn’t fooled. His boyfriend’s gaze was loving and focused on him, but also a little clouded. He could usually see a thousand stars in his eyes, but that just wasn’t the case right now.

“My love, please tell me what’s wrong,” Tomura asked, carefully holding his face and rubbing his staples with his thumb. That was his secret weapon. Pet names were usually Dabi’s things, baby, pretty boy, kitten, darling … Most of the time, Tomura didn’t feel confident enough to use any. But there were special occasions where he felt that they were absolutely necessary. And Dabi melted every time.

“It’s just …” the young man stuttered, suddenly trying to avoid Tomura’s eyes, “it’s just that I always feel a little weird watching heroes fight on TV. It … it reminds me of when my father used to do it.”

“Oh …”

Yeah, it made complete sense. Tomura suddenly felt very foolish for forgetting that he wasn’t alone on his plane of existence anymore. He had Dabi with him. Just the two of them on their personal little plane. The two of them on their flying whale …

“I usually tried not to watch him,” Dabi continued, “but most of the time I just … couldn’t help myself for some reason. And it made me feel so weird. Because it was like I …” He seemed to struggle to continue, so Tomura brought his hands to his hair like they had done long ago on that beach. And just like that, Dabi’s features relaxed, and he continued. “It made me feel so complicated … because sometimes … sometimes I was watching, and I wanted him to die but … other times I didn’t. I still don’t know which one was worse.”

Tomura listened attentively, but it seemed like it was all that Dabi was gonna say for now. It would
be one of these deeply buried, intimate scars that they would explore one day. There was no rush. For now, Tomura just gently guided Dabi’s head down so he could bury his face in his neck if he wanted to. Dabi obliged, pressing his scarred cheek against Tomura’s scarred neck, and they simply held each other for a while.

When they walked back to the living room, everyone was tactful enough to pretend that they had never left. They were still talking about All Might, Spinner especially, rambling about how awesome it was that he had such a good fight on the day he posted his game and ignoring Jin when he brought up that technically, it no longer was the same day. Magne and Toga were cuddling on the couch, Mustard had fallen asleep on his father laps. On the armchair, Sako was sitting on Kurogiri’s laps, the two of them holding hands. Tomura smiled.

“Hey,” he whispered in Dabi’s ear as they sat together, “do you mind uuuh … can you sleep here tonight? Only if you want to.”

“I want to,” Dabi smiled.

*

They held each other particularly tight that night. They didn’t want to fall asleep with the image of beat up heroes in their heads, and so they made a point of being all over each other, more so than usual. They didn’t ask for anything, just accepted what the other was willing to give. It was plenty enough and not too much.

Dabi now slept there whenever he could. They still weren’t doing anything together, just holding each other tight and cuddling, but it was a good way for Tomura to progressively get used to intimacy, one step at the time. He was still wearing his gloves, and he still wasn’t that happy about it, but he had to admit that they weren’t so dull and ugly when intertwined with Dabi’s fingers. It felt good to touch him like this, but he still hoped that one day soon he’d be comfortable enough to let go of them while he slept with Dabi. It was the best feeling in the world to wake up surrounded by his warmth and smell, feeling him against his skin, trapped under his lanky body… even though sometimes things got a little… complicated.

Tomura first opened his eyes around 10 am, but immediately fell back asleep and woke up an hour later. The light of the winter sun was shining through the curtains, slowly making the room more discernible. Everything around them was quiet, Magne and Toga were still sleeping, and Dabi was too right next to him. The only sound reaching Tomura was his boyfriend’s breathing directly into his left ear. Dabi was lying next to him, his arm thrown across Tomura’s chest, consequently pinning him down, he was so close that the point of his hair was tickling the side of Tomura’s face and that his breath was warming up his sensitive neck. It sent shivers down his body. The boy shifted slightly to get a better position, but Dabi grunted and tightened his grip, rolling around so
that he was almost lying on top of the smaller body. Tomura’s first reflex was to laugh at his cute clingy boyfriend, but his second was to let out a quiet choked moan.

Shit… Not again…

Sleeping together like this was a great way for Tomura to get used to some sort of intimacy with Dabi. But even though his mind and emotions still weren’t ready to do anything serious yet, his body clearly was. Tomura was feeling every inch of his skin on fire, hypertensive everywhere Dabi was touching him, and most noticeably, feeling a throbbing tightness in his boxers.

It wasn’t actually the first time it happened, but usually wasn’t that… much. The times before, he had either been able to sneak out of bed to take care of it, or to conceal it until Dabi got out of bed for a shower. But right now, the situation was infinitely more delicate. Tomura was stuck under the weight of his boyfriend, and every move he made, every struggle to get Dabi off him only made the situation worse. It was heaven and hell all at once. Dabi breathing directly in the crook of his neck, his chest pressed against his, and his knee gently brushing against his erection every ten seconds. He pressed his gloved hand against his mouth to stop the sound that was about to come out when Dabi shifted his leg one inch to the right.

Tomura felt guilty. He was used to not being able to control his body, his quirk, even his thoughts and emotions, but this felt worse because it wasn’t just about him but about Dabi as well. He kind of wished there could have been one thing … one single thing for him to have control on. But no. A few hours ago he was having a breakdown in the bathroom, and now he was as horny as a teenager just because his boyfriend and he were lying a little too close. How much more pathetic and desperate could I get?

Tomura bit his lips and froze in shock when the warm breath against his neck was replaced by a pair of equally warm lips. His breathing slowed down as the kisses got more and more diligent, going from sleepy butterfly pecks to deliberate open-mouthed licks.

“I know you’re awake …” Dabi whispered with a deep morning voice. “I can feel your breathing against my chest.”

Tomura wanted to answer, but he was afraid of what sound would come out if he opened his mouth, so he stayed quiet and stared at the ceiling above him. Dabi’s eyes were still closed, but he smiled against Tomura’s skin.

“Morning, moonlight. You’re really gonna play hard to get so early in the morning?”
“It’s like fucking noon,” Tomura said. He had spoken low enough for the needy trembling of his voice to stay low, or so he hoped.

“Fair point,” Dabi laughed.

He moved around and Tomura tensed his entire body to fight his urge to gasp. It seemed like Dabi hadn’t picked up on the situation yet, and Tomura hoped to keep it that way until either one of them got out of bed. But unfortunately for him, Dabi didn’t seem to want to move or to let him move. He lifted himself on one elbow, his other arm still across Tomura’s chest, hovering over him. Tomura’s view of the ceiling was suddenly blocked by the face of the most beautiful man in the entire fucking world, with messy bed hair and loving sleepy eyes, and that was just not fair.

“How are you feeling this morning, baby?” Dabi asked. He looked a little worried, and Tomura panicked for a full three seconds before realising that he was referring to last night.

“I’m okay,” he said because it was true. Even without the burning desire between his legs, his thoughts were clear of all the worry and anxiety from the night before. “And how are you?”

“Better.” Dabi smiled, pushing Tomura’s hair out of his face. “So, so, so, so, so much better.”

He slowly leaned down for a kiss, and a loud siren rang in Tomura’s brain.

“W-wait!” he stopped him, pressing his free hand against his broad shoulder. He couldn’t risk Dabi lying on top of him. “What … uh, what about morning breath?”

“It never really stopped us before, did it?” Dabi taunted, pressing against Tomura’s hold, getting closer. “You always look so hot in the morning baby, it’s fucking killing me when I wake up and you’re not there. Let me enjoy this …”

Tomura was weak to both Dabi’s strength and words. He could never resist the praises, and so against his better judgement, he let Dabi lean down. He stopped inches away from his lips as if to tease and enjoy the moment but also shift his knee closer for balance and so before he could deliver the kiss, Tomura let out a loud, shameless, lewd moan. He immediately pressed his hand against his mouth, and Dabi’s eyes went wide. That sound still hung in the air between them for a few more seconds, still loud in the silence. All the noises that Tomura had tried to keep in since the beginning had been released all at once. It only took one second for Tomura’s face to turn red and
two seconds for Dabi’s eyes to turn black.

“Oh …” he simply said.

Before Tomura could try to justify himself, Dabi tentatively pressed his knee a little harder to confirm he had just felt what he thought he had felt. The moan wasn’t as loud this time, as Tomura did his best to control it, but it still sounded needy, desperate and delicious.

“Is that …” Dabi hesitated, “are you …?”

Tomura simply nodded, looking to the side to avoid his boyfriend’s gaze both because he was incredibly embarrassed but also still insanely turned on by Dabi’s electric blue eyes.

“Ah … I see …” Dabi chuckled. “I guess that explains how tensed you looked.”

“Fuck, Dabi I’m so sorry,” Tomura whined. “I didn’t want to make things so fucking awkward I …”

He was interrupted when Dabi gently but firmly grabbed his jaw to force him to look at him. He was looking down at him with a genuinely amused smile and Tomura’s heart started to beat even faster than before.

“Hey …” Dabi chuckled lowly, “don’t apologise for getting hard when I touch you, you dork.”

His grip on Tomura’s jaw got lighter, and he began to rub his thumb against his cheek.

“Literally everything I do is to make you feel good,” he continued. “Whether it’s to help you relax, to make you smile, laugh, blush, and sometimes … well, to make you feel like this. But it’s not a contract you know? It doesn’t imply anything unless you want it to.”

“It … doesn’t?” Tomura felt like his brain was a fog right now, both because of his throbbing erection and because of the way Dabi was looking at him and caressing his jawline. But he still understood what Dabi was trying to explain to him.
“Of course it doesn’t.” Dabi laughed again, but it wasn’t mocking in any way. Just tender and loving. “We’ve been over this, babe. We’re not doing anything until you’re comfortable and ready, and I mean like, in your head. What you’re feeling right now, it’s great and I hope I get to make you feel like this thousands of times in the future. But it’s meaningless without your consent. It’s a physical, biological reaction … nothing more.”

“I see …” Tomura whispered.

“Hey, you didn’t think I was going to force to do anything, did you?”

“Not really, no. But I just kind of felt like … I don’t know … like we had to? Like you would expect me to do it if you knew about it. Like you’d want it and I’d be letting you down and hurting you if I said no.”

“The only thing I want from you is to be honest with me and with yourself. I’m not touching you until you want me too.”

“I want you to, though …” Tomura bit his lips. He didn’t exactly mean to say that but that was true. “It’s so weird … it’s like, god, I really want to do so many things with you right now. But also still fucking terrified. It’s like, the mere idea of … having sex with you … is making me so weak, but as soon as I try to actually think it through I’m paralysed with fear. What if I fuck up? What if I think I’m ready but I’m actually not and I freak out? That’s why I usually wait for you to be in the shower to deal with it.”

Dabi smirked and raised an eyebrow. “Usually?”

If it had been physically possible for Tomura to blush even more he would have. “Well … let’s just say it’s maybe not the first time it happens? It’s usually not as much though … I guess we were especially handy last night.” Tomura actually laughed at the memory. “But yeah … I guess I’m just … pretty fucking needy, uh?”

Dabi contemplated him for a moment with a quiet benevolence. The smile on his face grew and he leaned a little closer to Tomura’s face. “Baby, needy is my middle name … you said you were always waiting for me to take a shower before touching yourself, right?”

Tomura shivered. Somehow, hearing the words “touching yourself” directly from Dabi’s mouth,
with his low husky morning voice, speaking quietly in the silence over the room, was enough to make him gasp as much as if he had touched his hard dick.

“Yes …” Tomura agreed weakly. “And?”

“And …” Dabi leaned ever closer, and their lips were as close as they were a few minutes earlier. “Why the hell do you think I have been taking cold showers every single morning I woke up next to you in bed?”

“Oh …” Tomura just said, because his brain had just exploded and he couldn’t formulate any clear thoughts anymore.

“Tsssk … and I thought you were so smart …” Dabi brought his hand up to Tomura’s hair to tangle his fingers in his curls, knowing it would relax him just a little bit. There was something about Tomura’s inexperience that was incredibly sexy to him. He knew that he would find him even sexier once he would be comfortable and confident, but for now, he relished in the way his skin turned pink or even bright red and in how expressive and candid his face got as soon as he was even a little turned on. Everything was new to him and it was just delightful to watch him bloom and experience so many things for the first time. It brought up something greedy and possessive from deep inside Dabi’s chest, something he knew he had to keep in check.

“Anyway!” he said, slightly pulling away from Tomura’s face. “So, uh yeah. Don’t be ashamed by anything you’re feeling, okay?”

“Y-yeah …” Tomura blinked a few times as if snapped out of a trance. “Thank you. But uh … okay, so I’m … I’m about to go mad with lust right now, so just … wait for me here, I’ll go in the bathroom just for a sec, for … you know.”

“Or I could …”

Dabi pinched his eyes closed and bit his lips. He couldn’t believe he had almost just said that when they just had a talk about not forcing Tomura to do anything. Well, technically he wasn’t forcing, just asking. But still … it had just slept out of his mouth, as he was too busy trying to calm down his own growing desire. He was about to apologize, but when he opened his eyes, he saw Tomura looking at him with bright, needy, curious eyes, and breathing heavily. Even more than before somehow.
“Yes?” Tomura asked, with a breathy gasp. “You could …?”

“I could … I could …” Dabi couldn’t believe he was about to say it, but there was something in Tomura’s gaze right now that told him that it was okay to do so. “I could take care of it for you.”

Tomura whimpered without Dabi even touching him as if the thought was enough to make his dick twitch in his boxer. His chest was falling and rising at a fast but regular pace. “Wh-what do you mean? You mean … you would …”

“We really don’t have too!” Dabi urgently added. “But … you know, you keep saying you’re not ready for the uh, full thing, and it’s fine but … we don’t have to go all the way you know? Sure, the act of sex is one specific thing, but there many other beautiful little things we can do before that. Things that don’t require you touching me, and that we can easily stop as soon as you feel uncomfortable. We don’t even have to take our clothes off.”

Unless you want to, of course, Dabi almost added, but he really didn’t want to keep pushing. That was visibly a lot of information for Tomura to assimilate already. Dabi could practically see the little wheels running in his head, and he didn’t know if it was because he was too horny to think clearly at this point, or if it was because he had genuinely never thought about sex as anything else than two guys fucking each other.

“Look, nevermind,” Dabi eventually said, “this wasn’t a good idea, I’ll let you take that shower and …”

“No!” Tomura interrupted him loudly, before lowering his voice. “No, I … let’s do it.”

The words started a burning fire in the pit of Dabi’s stomach, quickly spreading inside of him, so fast that he had to mentally check that he wasn’t actually burning right now. For a second he thought he had misheard it, but Tomura’s expression left no room for doubt right now. His eyes were needy and his mouth half open because of how hard he was breathing.

“Are you serious?” Dabi asked trying not to get his hopes up. “You’re sure? you’re not saying that to …”

“I’m sure,” Tomura cut him. “I … I think it’s a good idea. A good way to experiment … and to get me more comfortable with, uh, you touching me, you know? So I don’t freak out later. And besides … I mean, if you’re the one doing it, it’s probably not gonna take long.”
Dabi felt himself blushing. It was probably the most awkward sexy talk he had ever heard, but it somehow worked on him and his cheekbones turned pink. He still wanted to ask again and again if Tomura was really sure about this, but he already knew. He could tell that Tomura actually wanted this just as much as he did, which was enough to have his heart beat faster. So he just nodded and leaned down for a soft quick kiss on his boyfriend’s lips.

“Okay … okay, baby. Promise that you’ll tell me to stop if it ever gets too much or if you feel bad.”

“I promise, Dabi, but right now I think I might die if you don’t touch me.”

“Okay, okay, okay … but uh … we don’t want to wake up the girls. You think you’re gonna be able to keep quiet?”

Tomura’s eyes went wide as the realisation hit him, he chewed his lips for a second but gave his answer surprisingly fast. “I guess I’ll just have to. And if I can’t keep it together I guess you’ll just have to … gag me.”

“Jesus fucking Christ …” Dabi gasped, trying very hard to keep it together despite the mental image Tomura had just sent him. “Okay, okay, okay … I guess I’ll just … okay. Okay.”

Not wasting any more seconds, Dabi positioned himself properly above Tomura, throwing the sheets back to have a good view of the slender body lying underneath him. His eyes were immediately attracted to the bulge in the black boxers, and his first move was to slowly run his hands up Tomura’s thighs to spread his legs open. The boy resisted for a few seconds, trying to keep his legs closed and pressed together, but eventually obeyed Dabi’s silent command.

“Oh my God,” Tomura whimpered, equally eager and embarrassed.

Dabi massaged his thighs as best as he could until they stopped trembling. Tomura kept moving his hands, visibly looking for something to grab on, and eventually settled for the headboard above him. Dabi continued his exploration, and his second move was to grab the hem of Tomura’s t-shirt to slowly lift it up.

“Oh god, what are you doing?” he whined.
“Shhhh … it’s okay baby. I just don’t want you to make a mess on your shirt.”

The pale skin contrasted beautifully with the black shirt. Dabi had been so eager to get a better look at his boyfriend that it was hard not just rip the fabric off him. For a boy so skinny, who seemed to be made only out of bones and angles, Tomura had a surprisingly soft looking stomach. He was exposed from his hip bones all the way up to his rib cage, and Dabi could tell it was already a lot for him. It was a beautiful sight really, he was so thin but also a little squishy, and there definitely was some lean muscles under the porcelain skin. It wasn’t perfect though … it was cracked, covered with beauty spots, freckles, and scars of all size and shapes. Dabi didn’t really know how he felt about them. On one hand, he hated what they meant, that Tomura had been hurt again and again in a not so distant past, but on the other, he just found them breathtakingly beautiful.

“You look so nice …” he purred, a satisfied yet still eager smile growing on his lips. He traced one of the scars, a long one going from the bottom of his ribs all the way down his navel, and Tomura’s entire body heaved in response.

Dabi’s fingers kept exploring the skin, connecting the beauty spots together like constellations, and tracing the lines of his stomach. Tomura was doing his best to stay still and quiet but that wasn’t enough. He squirmed under Dabi’s touch, seemingly torn between trying to escape his fingers and leaning into them.

“Dabi … please …” he begged softly, “don’t be an asshole.” And yet there was a smile on his lips and a look in his eyes that suggested that maybe he actually wanted Dabi to be an asshole after all.

Suddenly, the excuse of Dabi touching Tomura only to quickly get rid of that erection was thrown out the window. Neither of them wanted any of this to be quick. It probably would be considering how far gone Tomura was right now with his boxers still on, but god, Dabi was gonna do his best to make it last. He crawled up to press a kiss against Tomura’s neck.

“You’re so fucking sexy,” he breathed against the skin, “so fucking cute and pretty.”

He could tell that Tomura was trying to return the compliment, but anything he had to say dissolved in his mouth to come out as a choked moan. He kept kissing up and down his throat while his hand was playing with the band of his boxer, snapping it against the sensitive skin.

“I was right,” Dabi said pressing a kiss on Tomura’s mole in the corner of his mouth, “when you blush, it goes all the way down … I’m so glad …”
Tomura still managed to smile despite all the heavy breathing. Dabi had always been very vocal and curious about the way his blush would spread under his clothes. It was hard for him to keep his eyes open right now as Dabi kept kissing his face and caressing the v line going down his boxers. A part of this was weirdly familiar. He had had many wet dreams about this exact same scenario of Dabi lying on top of him and playing with him until he fell apart.

He suddenly remembered that one night weeks after they had gone to the beach, when he was at his lowest, refusing to eat and convinced that Dabi hated him. Dabi had come for dinner, and then they had a fight, and Dabi had fallen on top of him in this very same bedroom and on this very same bed. Tomura remembered his shameful erection and an imaginary Dabi touching him when he truly was alone in his room.

And now, months later, it was all real.

“Baby,” Dabi called kissing his lips, “stay with me, okay?”

Tomura focused back on the present and on the very real Dabi above him. God, he is so gorgeous … so fucking breathtakingly beautiful …

“Tomura darling,” he continued, “are you ready? I want … I need you to look at me, okay?”

“Yes,” Tomura gasped before he could ever think about it. “Yes, go ahead …”

Dabi obliged. Tomura jerked as soon as his boyfriend pulled down his boxer to expose his hard leaking cock, but he kept his promise and his eyes on Dabi. The cool air of the room already felt like an electric shock against his skin and he held onto the headboard tightly.

“Oh fuck …” Dabi moaned, eyes fixed on his boyfriend’s cock. “That’s … that’s really, really, really nice …”

Tomura felt like he was about to pass out. The blood kept rushing everywhere in his body, making his blush and keeping his dick hard, and his heart was beating so loud that he was pretty sure that Dabi was able to hear it as well. It all felt incredibly surreal and yet still meant to be.
Dabi ran one of his fingers from the base all the way to head, and Tomura would have screamed if a paired of scarred lips had not come to meet his and keep him quiet. The kiss was messy, needy and all over the place. Dabi was hoping that it would help to keep Tomura grounded as he was caressing his length, but it only seemed to rile him up some more. But they still kept going, as it was quite literally impossible for Dabi to pull away from Tomura’s mouth right now. He tried to reach for one of his hands that was still holding the headboard so tightly that he was worried for his lover’s hands. He wanted Tomura to put his arms around his neck, maybe to play his with hair a little bit, like he always did when they kissed. But he could tell that it wasn’t going to happen. He wouldn’t let go of the headboard, and Dabi just knew that there was still a part of Tomura that was absolutely terrified about touching right now, even with the gloves on. He didn’t insist and let him be, bringing his free hand to hold the skinny waist instead. They were already doing so, so, so much right now … the rest would come in time.

Tomura had never looked more beautiful. His head was thrown back, blue curls either sticking to his damp forehead or falling on the pillow like a halo. The nickname of moonlight had never been so fitting; he looked like he was beaming with a soft pastel glow and every time he opened his eyes, even for a second, it was like two pieces of ember setting Dabi’s heart on fire. A fire much, much, much hotter than his own.

“Dabi …”

“I got you …”

Dabi had wrapped his hand completely around Tomura’s cock and couldn’t resist hitting it up a little, just enough for Tomura to feel it. He was impressed to him lasting so long; he would have expected him to come a lot sooner than that, but he could tell that he was trying his best to keep it together as long as he could. Although Dabi appreciated the effort, it wasn’t what he wanted. Tomura looked tense right now, biting his lips bloody to keep quiet, burying his face in his biceps to smother his moans, and Dabi could tell what was going on in his head right now. That won’t do.

“You’re doing so well …” he whispered against his boyfriend’s sealed lips. “What a good boy I’m so impressed … you can let go now …”

The reaction was almost immediate. Tomura’s eyes snapped open and Dabi got a hold of his face to keep his focus on him.

“You don’t have to prove me anything baby … I love you so fucking much … come for me …”

And he did. The warm liquid spread over Dabi’s hand and he kept jerking until the last drop.
Tomura’s body was shaking. Dabi kissed him senselessly, both to quiet down the final moan that was too loud for Tomura to hold in and because he wanted to. Slowly, Dabi felt the thin body relaxing underneath him, Tomura’s chest falling and rising softly against his. It was only as Tomura relaxed that Dabi realised how tense and shaky he was himself and so he let himself fall on top of his boyfriend.

“Oof …” Tomura groaned. “You’re heavy …”

“It’s because I’m full of love.”

As he laughed, Tomura slowly let go of the headboard. His arms rested by each side of his head and for a few minutes, his and Dabi’s breathing were the only sounds filling up the room. The latter laid his head against the heaving chest underneath him, listening to the beating heart inside. After a few more minutes, the silence began to worry Dabi but he was too anxious to look up at Tomura’s face. He was about to say something when he felt two slender arms cradling his head, guiding him upward. He followed the silent instruction and crawled up to look at his boyfriend.

Beaming like a ray of moonlight.

“I love you,” Tomura whispered, almost choking on his own words, “so much.”

His hair was a mess, falling in front of his cheery eyes, and he was smiling with that one goofy grin that Dabi adored so much. He looked so …him.

“You’re just saying that because I made you come really hard but I’ll take it,” Dabi teased, kissing his chin.

*

Tomura cleaned himself while Dabi was taking the coldest shower in his entire life. He wanted to take care of his boyfriend himself, but he had insisted that it was a bad idea that was only going to get him hard all over again. Dabi had to downplay how fucking aroused their little game got him because he knew Tomura would feel guilty of not being able to give him pay back yet. Or worse, he would have insisted to give him something in return, and as wonderful as it sounded, Dabi just knew that Tomura wasn’t exactly ready to be on the giving end yet.
When he got out of the bathroom hair still wet, he found Tomura sitting on the couch, visibly waiting for him. Dabi was cooled off now, but there was something about Tomura’s look right now that threatened to send him back all over the edge. The messy hair, the pink cheeks, the loose shirt and the fresh hickeys on his collarbone … perfect.

But there was some nervousness back on his expression, not enough to overshadow the beaming blissfulness, but enough for Dabi to notice. He was expecting it though.

“I made some tea in the kitchen if you want to,” Tomura said.

“Thanks.” Dabi went to pour himself a cup. “What do you want to eat?”

“Actually I was thinking we could go out for lunch? All four of us if the girls wake up soon, or just us …”

Dabi went to sit next to him with a cup in his hands and a smirk on his lips. “Well ain’t that a perfect Sunday? Getting some brunch after pleasuring my beautiful man …”

Tomura blushed but did not shy away from Dabi even though he clearly he wanted to. Instead, he looked right back at Dabi and after a short moment of reflexion, he threw his long legs across his laps.

“I’m just sorry I couldn’t really … you know, return the favour.”

“Don’t you even dare.” Dabi rested his free hand on Tomura’s knee; it was still warm from holding the tea. “You know, sometimes I feel like you don’t even realise the effect you have on me … like honestly you barely need to do anything.”

Tomura’s expression shifted a little, he raised his eyebrows and the shadow of a smile passed on his lips as he sipped his tea. “Really?”

“Y-yeah …” Weirdly enough, Dabi was now the one feeling flustered. Hiding how wiped he was for his boyfriend was probably the last thing he wanted to do, but there was still something a little odd and thrilling about admitting it so clearly. It wasn’t something he was used to, talking, confessing, admiring … he wasn’t really used to passion. With Sun it had been an obsession and after that, a long list of faceless partners who had never lasted more than a week.
“You know,” Dabi said, pulling on Tomura’s legs to bring him closer, “I feel that we should kind of like … talk about it you know? About what we did just now, and about what we will do later.”

And just like that, the blush was back on the other’s face, colouring his cheeks, neck and shoulders, and Dabi couldn’t help but smile remembering that he now had the confirmation that it spread even lower.

“What do you want to talk about?” Tomura asked. Looking closer, Dabi realised he wasn’t really embarrassed, but actually flustered and maybe a little … excited.

“Well, I mean, I think I can safely say that you enjoyed it, but I’d like to know what you enjoyed the most you know?”

“Okay … uuuuuuh I mean, right now I’m not gonna lie, it’s kind of all beautifully blurred together, but I’m sure I can think of something.”

“Okay, let me give you an example …” Dabi put down his cup of tea, moved his legs on the couch and moved Tomura’s body so they practically straddling each other. He wanted to have him close right now. “So for me, to start slow, I realised that I really like to be on top of you. I’d love to try to switch around sometimes, but when I’m having dirty thoughts about you I like to imagine you lying underneath me.”

“O-okay …” Tomura finished his tea in one long sip and put his cup on the table. “Okay yeah, uuuuh, yeah I think I like that too …”

“Good,” Dabi ran his hands up and down Tomura’s thigh for reassurance, “that’s nice, really nice, anything else?”

“Uuuuuuh … I mean, well I uh …” They were alone in the room, but Tomura still scooted a little closer to Dabi, asking for both encouragement and intimacy. In a way, talking about this with Dabi felt like an even bigger jump for him then what they had just done in the bedroom. There, it all been about instinct, desire and trust, and now he actually had to think and formulate his feelings out loud. He was never very good at that, but as always, Dabi made it easier for him to leave his comfort zone.

“I think …” Tomura said softly, “I really like when you compliment me and stuff … when you
praise me and tell me I’m doing good. Even when we’re not, like, in bed.”

“Yeaaaaah, I kind of noticed this one …” Dabi chuckled softly, tenderly reaching out for Tomura’s face to let him know he wasn’t mocking right now. He had realised that Tomura was sensitive to praises even before he had realised that he was in love with him. But he was glad to hear Tomura confirm it and figure it out on his own.

“Yeah, and I kind of noticed that you noticed,” Tomura smiled, leaning his cheek into Dabi’s palm. “So yeah, I really really liked everything you said to me this morning. I also liked the way you were looking at me. And the way you touched me. I also liked how hot your body was …”

Tomura stayed quiet a moment, not because he was done, but because he was trying to explain something very specific. His psychiatrist had often told him to try to put words on his feelings because it could help to make them less scary and easier to understand. What he was feeling right now wasn’t scary, but he realised that it was still helpful to try to put it into words.

“I think I really liked … how safe you made feel? It was all so new and intimidating, at first I felt so weak and bare but then you took control, and suddenly it was just … fucking amazing. I realised that it was you, that you were here and that you loved me, and then I just trusted you completely to do absolutely whatever you wanted with me.”

Dabi felt the blood in his veins running hotter, the fire under his skin teasing him and threatening to burst out any minute now. It still amazed him how Tomura could just hit him in his weakest spot without even trying.

“So yeah,” the blue-haired boy continued, “for now, I like when you’re the one in charge. And besides, you just … you just look really, really hot when you take control like this. When your voice gets deep, and when your eyes seem to glow and you look at me like you want to … like you want to …”

Tomura couldn’t finish his sentence, and that was probably a good thing because otherwise, Dabi would have considered taking him again right here, on the couch, not caring if Magne and Toga could walk on them any minute.

“What about you?” Tomura asked, reaching out to play with the hem of Dabi’s shirt. “What did you like? Care to share your filthy thoughts with me?” There were some playfulness and confidence in that last sentence that caught Dabi off guards and had a shiver run down his spine.
“Aw, baby, you’re not ready for the filthy kinks running in my mind …”

He tried to smile confidently, but it was all shattered when Tomura looked up from under his bangs and simply said. “Try me.”

_Ooof._

“Well …” Dabi said softly, grabbing Tomura by the waist to pull him completely on his laps, “I love taking care of you. It may sound silly, but I really do. I love being in charge, I love being the one doing the work while you just lay back and fall apart under my fingers.”

A shiver ran all over Tomura’s body, each words caressing his skin like a kiss. He still didn’t completely understand how and why Dabi loved him so much, and maybe he never would, but at least he was slowly learning to stop questioning it. It wasn’t always easy, old habits die hard and sometimes he just couldn’t stop himself from wondering why someone as luminous as Dabi would choose _him_ out of all people. But moments like this one, like this morning in bed, were slowly taking roots in his mind to bloom into beautiful colourful flowers that would eventually overshadow the dark thorns usually growing there.

“I also like how flustered you get,” Dabi continued, leaning in to press his forehead against Tomura’s, playfully hovering over his lips. “I’m excited to try new things when you’ll get more comfortable and confident, but for now … literally, all you have to do is blush and moan for me.”

“So no gag for now, then?” Tomura asked, wrapping his arms around Dabi’s neck.

The black-haired man slightly pulled away, just enough to look Tomura in the eyes properly.

“Yeah so … were you, uh, kind of serious about this?”

“Well if you like hearing me moan so much, it’s out of the question now.” Tomura smiled at Dabi’s expression, something confused, excited, amused and a little aroused. Sitting in his laps so close to him, Tomura felt more and more confident and safe and his thoughts were becoming clearer about the many things he wanted to do with his stupidly hot boyfriend.

“I will confess though,” he continued, leaning back into Dabi’s space and tangling his fingers in his hair, “that I’ve been thinking about something … can I share it with you?”
“Go on …” Dabi said, his voice a little shakier and his throat a little drier than what he expected. Most of Dabi’s fantasy had been focused on a shy, inexperienced, flustered Tomura, but … this confident and flirty Tomura was giving it a run for his money.

“So,” Tomura practically whispered, “as you probably noticed I’m still a little… nervous about touching you like this. And I really want to work on that but in the meantime, I’m just anxiously grabbing whatever I can to stay focused and that’s not the best feeling. So I thought that uh … well, maybe next time we do something like … maybe not next time, but at some point …you could just tie me up somehow?”

Actual smoke came out of Dabi’s hands this time. Not enough to burn Tomura’s shirt that he was grabbing tight, but still enough for both of them to notice it and for Tomura to laugh.

“Mr Shigaraki,” Dabi dramatically gasped, overplaying the indignation to hide how flustered he truly was, “an artist like you … I wasn’t expecting your mind to be so filthy …”

“An artist like me has been drawing porn commissions for seven years you dumbass,” Shigaraki laughed while kissing the staples in Dabi’s chin, “I know that I get flustered easily and that I have absolutely zero practical experience, but it doesn’t mean I don’t know how to let my imagination run wild …”

“I’m so fucking happy I found you …” Dabi grunted, pushing the pillows with his legs as he desperately tried to hold his boyfriend closer.

“You found him thanks to us I will remind you, so the least you could do is to pervert him in his own bedroom rather than on our couch.”

They broke the kiss to look at Magne who just past by them without giving them a glance, walking directly toward the kitchen.

“And I will also remind you,” she continued from the other room, “that he has his presentation soon and that we actually have a pretty big show the night before that. So you both better leave some room for work and practice on your schedule between two make-out sessions. I fucking swear to god … and stop stealing my tea, I need to sip it when I judge you both.”
So this chapter was initially supposed to be longer, with a whole other segment that will now be the beginning of chapter 13. As I said many times, I tend to plan chapters way too long, and it's not the first time I have to move things around to make it easier for me and also for you guys. So I apologize for people who were excited to see Stain as I teased in the End Notes of the previous chapter, he will be here next time I promise this time!

So, I know it's no you guys job to give me feedback, you don't have to comment if you don't want to but ... on this one, some comments would be really helpful. It's been so long since chapter 11, this chapter took especially long to write because I was very anxious about getting the characters and the mood right. Even as I post it, I'm not 100% happy with it, I'm still anxious that it feels different somehow ... all I'm asking is that if you felt like the chapter was off, different and not quite fitting the rest of the story, please please please let me know so I can work on it for next time!

Hopefully, I'm just anxious for no reasons and it's all the same and it feels like before. But if it doesn't, don't hesitate to tell me why! I want to improve and give you guys the best story!

ANYWAY ENOUGH SELF CENTERED RAMBLING! All of that aside, I'm so happy to be back in Something Good and I hope you enjoyed this chapter! The boys are getting confident, and everyone in the group keeps moving on with their life and finding success! Good thing we have a new generation to take over ... am I right All Might?
During the weeks that followed the launching of Spinner’s game and All Might’s fight, the world just seemed to get … busier, for the lack of a better word. Tomura knew that it was just an impression because everyone in the group had a lot going on, but it felt like there was a weird energy buzzing all around Japan. He couldn’t really explain it. Only a few people knew All Might’s secret and so it was unlikely that anyone else had realised how dangerous this last fight had been for him. As far as these people were concerned, this was simply another glorious victory of their symbol of peace. And yet … there was something special about that one fight. Tomura wondered if everyone had felt it on a subconscious level. If there was one thing he had learned these past two years, it was that people were often a lot more perceptive and sensitive than he gave them credit for.
But even though this fight was still on his and his friend’s mind, they didn’t have much time to ponder on it with everything going on in their lives.

Tomura had never been as thankful for the invention of texting as he was during that specific autumn. His art presentation was getting closer and closer every day, every hour and every minute. He had been practising it and working on it for so long now that the idea of actually going through with it seemed completely surreal. So much had happened since he had gotten the news on the phone … Dabi and him weren’t even together back then, which seemed like a completely alien concept now. And then, there had been all the work, all the practice, this terrible night when he had accidentally decayed his study cards … it seemed so far away and yet still so close.

“Jin, how can time feel so excruciatingly long and yet so terrifying short at the same time?”

“Tomura, are you high right now?”

Tomura was lying on the couch with his notes all over the floor, and Jin was looking at him from across the room, sitting on the armchair with his book on his laps, not really suspicious but definitely confused. They had spend the entire day alone in Jin and Dabi’s flat, one working on his psychology thesis and the other on his art presentation. It had been a very long day and Tomura’s brain was turning into mush right now.

“What are you even talking about?” he complained, flipping on his back. “I’ve been with you all day, when would I have the opportunity to smoke anything?”

“I don’t know man, I’ve been to the toilets a few times, you could have sniffed the glue while I was away …”

Tomura squinted at him.

“Oh I see, when Dabi write things like that in songs he is a sensitive genius, but when I say it it’s because I sniffed some glue … I see how it is. I can be deep too, you know? I’m just … thinking about life and stuff.”

Tomura couldn’t help but giggle as well. In parallel to his internship, Jin had started to work on a very promising thesis project and the two have them had been spending a lot of time together recently, just quietly working in each other’s company. Jin always had some sort of appeasing effect on Tomura, so he really enjoyed their “study sessions” together. It probably came back to the night they had first met, when Tomura had locked himself crying in the kitchen and Jin had come to get him. Another thing that felt like a lifetime ago … it was hard to believe that it was Dabi who had gotten him in such a state back then. They were both so different …

Everyone else was incredibly busy right now. Spinner’s game had gotten a lot of attention and great reviews, much more than what he had expected, and many professional game companies had contacted him, eager to work with him. Dabi, Toga, Magne and Giran were all working hard to prepare a big show coming soon, they were either at the studio or doing stage rehearsals until very late at night. So all in all, it had been quite difficult for the group to find time to properly get together for more than a week now. Which was when the marvellous invention that was texting came into play.

*You’ve entered => The League Of VSCO Girls (6:25 pm)*

**Nekobitch:** Jin is bullying me :(((((((

*<sips tea>*: I don’t know what happened but my big sis senses tell me that you deserved it.

**Nekobitch:** >:o

**Gremlin Rights:** (◎_◎;)

**Gremlin Rights:** what happened???

**Dr Baby** has entered the chat.

**Dr Baby:** bro you literally went like “Much to think about” except unironically

**Gremlin Rights:** loooooooololololol!!!

*<sips tea>*: oh my god

**Nekobitch:** I came out here to have a good time and I’m honestly feeling so attacked right now.

**Epic Gamer Moment** has entered the chat

**Epic Gamer Moment:** is this Tomura bullying hours???
**Nekobitch:** fbeuzrbuizeb how the fuck

**Epic Gamer Moment:** I was summoned

**Gremlin Rights:** hey Spinner!!!!

**Epic Gamer Moment:** yo!

*sips tea*: hey buddy!

**Dr Baby:** hey dude <3

**Nekobitch:** ur all so mean to me … I need my bf to protect me where is he?

**Gremlin Rights:** UwU

**Epic Gamer Moment:** HE PROTECC

*sips tea*: he is recording something right now but he’ll be out in a minute

**Nekobitch:** tell him I love him

**Dr Baby:** awwwww

**Gremlin Rights:** ♡ ^▽^♡

*sips tea*: what did I literally just say???? he is recording

**Nekobitch:** I know you can see him through the glass of the booth

**Nekobitch:** don’t fucking lie to me Magne

*sips tea*: you can also wait literally thirty seconds

*sips tea*: you attention hoe

**Nekobitch:** noooo I’m being bullied agaaaain T_T

**Gremlin Rights:** I declare the chat a non-bully Tomura zone!!!!!

**Gremlin Rights:** (∩ `·´⊃━☆ﾟ・。)

**Nekobitch:** ur the only one I trust

**Gremlin Rights:** I gotchu fam (・ω・) ~ ☆

**Epic Gamer Moment:** boooooo laaaaame

**Dr Baby:** how many emoji do you have??? where do u keep them???

**Gremlin Rights:** tis … a secret …

**Gremlin Rights:** (◉\_\_◉)
Nekobitch: I fear you and respect you equally <3

*sips tea*: she is so powerful …

Gremlin Rights: lmao!!!! Dabi just ran out of the booth to his phone!!!

G Note has entered the chat

*sips tea*: I cannot … believe this boy

Epic Gamer Moment: lmaoooo

G Note: who the fck is bullying my boufruend???

G Note: who the fuck is bullying my boyfriend???

Nekobitch: hey love <3

G Note: hey babe <3

Dr Baby has left the chat

*sips tea*: damn I can’t believe Dabi killed Jin just like dat

Epic Gamer Moment: f

Gremlin Rights: f

Nekobitch: he deadass said NOPE and turned off his phone lmaooo

G Note: @Epic Gamer Moment ur next bitch

Epic Gamer Moment has left the chat

G Note: Nothing Fucks With My Baby <3

G Note: Except me ;)

Nekobitch: erbgberguiberzug ur so lame

Nekobitch: <3

G Note: <3 <3 <3 <3 <3 <3
Thank god for texting. With their busy schedules, it was almost impossible for all of them to meet
during the week, but at least they could still roast each other in their group chat. It wasn’t exactly
the same thing, but it was good enough for now. Sometimes, a GIF was much more powerful than
any verbal response could ever be.

But there were some things that couldn’t be done through texting.

Tomura and Dabi hadn’t really had the chance to … experiment, since that one night. They barely
had time to just see each other right now, and when they did they were both way too tired to do
anything. For now, they were both intensely focused on their work and projects, but they knew that
things would calm down after the show and the presentation, so it wasn’t too hard on their mood.
But Tomura, when he wasn’t deep in his work, couldn’t stop thinking about Dabi’s hands on him.
He was still incredibly nervous about the idea of baring himself completely for his boyfriend, but
he had gotten a taste of how wonderful everything was going to be once he was ready. And now,
he was excited to taste a little more.

Fortunately for him, it was Dabi who brought it up first. One night, Tomura was lying on his bed
after a long day of studying and was rambling about his day with Dabi through texts. Then, one
message changed the mood.

**Bright Star:** hey so I was thinking

**Moonlight:** yeah?

**Bright Star:** I was thinking about like

**Brigh Star:** about the next time

**Bright Star:** like when our show is done and when ur presentation is done

**Bright Star:** you know

Tomura did know. And even though he felt blush spread from his face all the way down his body,
he wasn’t gonna play dumb.
Moonlight: yeah

Moonlight: I was thinking about it too

Lying on his own bed in his own flat across the city, Dabi felt his heart beating a little faster when those words appeared on the screen. So Tomura had thought about it too … in retrospect, he really shouldn’t be surprised but it still felt incredible to hear him say it. The last thing he wanted was for Tomura to feel pressured into doing anything, so it was good to know that they were both equally eager about this.

Brightstar: oh good oh my god

Brightstar: not to sound desperate or anything but I’m so happy to hear you say that

Tomura chuckled, looking at his screen. He wondered how he had ever thought that Dabi was this smooth, detached, mysterious bad boy when he was actually so … cute.

Moonlight: have you still not realised how crazy I am about you???

Brightstar: I guess not haha

Moonlight: well let me tell you then

Tomura lied on his stomach to rest his arms and began to type and Dabi looked at the little dots on the screen with anticipation.

Moonlight: I love you. I love you so much. I think about you all the time, I think about your voice, I think about your eyes, I think about your hands and your chest and your hair you’re your long legs and your strong arms and I think about how I can feel your toned muscles whenever you carry me around. I think about your breath on my neck and your hands under my shirt and your fingers on my nipple and your leg against my crotch.

Holy shit … Tomura had hit “send” at the end of his sentence without thinking, and he only realised what he had written when it appeared on his screen. He only meant to compliment and reassure Dabi, but it was as if his fingers had a mind of their own. He definitely meant all of these things, but it felt a little weird not only to say it so bluntly but also to see it written as a text before his own eyes and on his screen forever. Oh shit, I hope that’s okay.

It was more than okay. Dabi’s breathing got louder as he read Tomura’s text, one time, two times,
three times, again and again. A delicious and familiar heat ran through his body, and a blissful
smile grew on his lips. He wasn’t expecting this much details but he certainly wasn’t complaining.
It had been a long day, and this was exactly what he needed right now. Although he wasn’t sure
that Tomura actually knew what he was doing.

**Moonlight:** uuuuuuuuuuh you’re not answering was that okay I’m so sorry

**Moonlight:** I got carried away. Is this weird????

**Brightstar:** nononononono!!!

**Brightstar:** no this is great im so sorry im just

**Brightstar:** wow

**Moonlight:** good wow?

**Brighstar:** EXCELLENT wow

It occurred to Dabi that Tomura probably didn’t have much experience with “sexting”, if at all. He
was, apparently, just naturally amazing at it. *What did I do to deserve him?*

**Brightstar:** look I’m not gonna answer to this right now because it’s already late and we both get
up early tomorrow and if we go down that road right now neither of us will sleep

**Brightstar:** but let’s put a pin on that

**Brightstar:** like a MASSIVE neon pin on that

**Brightstar:** because wow that’s so hot

Tomura rolled over on his back with a giggle, almost dropping his phone on his face. At times,
their relationship was still one step forward and another step backwards. Tomura was still
experimenting with his own taste and boundaries, and for now it was still easier to be on the
receiving end Dabi’s affection. But he started to enjoy taking the initiative. It still felt like hit or
miss, but whenever he hit, he really hit and Dabi was sure to let him know.

**Moonlight:** okay good!!!

**Moonlight:** because like let me know if I ever get too weird or just do something that you’re not
into okay???

**Brightstar:** that’s impossible babe I’m into everything you do

**Moonlight:** I’m serious though
Moonlight: I know you have a lot more experience than I do and I know that I’m the one with weird boundaries issues and stuff but like … consent goes both ways okay?

Moonlight: I don’t ever want you to go through something you’re uncomfortable with just because you want to make me happy or because you’re afraid to hurt my feelings.

Dabi’s eyes went wide as he read the message. He wasn’t expecting the conversation to go this way but … but he still felt some warmth spread inside of his chest. It wasn’t the same type of warmth as earlier, but it was just as good. Since the beginning of their relationship he had been so focused Tomura’s comfort and happiness that he had never considered a scenario where he would be uncomfortable. And he still couldn’t think of a single that Tomura could do that would hurt him. But the realisation that Tomura had thought about this and was worried about him … it made him grin like an idiot. He also desperately wanted to hear Tomura’s voice right now, so he just called him.

For a second, Tomura was a little worried when he saw Dabi’s name and picture appear on his screen. Was I too much? Did I break the mood? Is he okay? He answered nonetheless.

“Hey,” Dabi simply said.

“Hey love,” Tomura answered, smiling just because of the sound of his voice. “Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think I just wanted to hear your voice. It’s been days since we actually spoke to each other.”

“Yeah that’s true,” Tomura said, reassured. “I miss you.”

“I miss you too. But we’re almost at the end of the tunnel! Just one more week to go and we’re both free for a while.”

“Yeah, except that what you have to go through is a kick-ass rock show. What I have to go through is the fucking inquisition.”

“Hey, we’ve been through this! You’re more than ready. I believe in you, we all do. Besides, try to see it like this, whatever happens during this presentation, it won’t last more than two hours. And after that, you’re free for a while before the results.”
“Yeah, you’re right. Besides, I also shouldn’t undermine your show. I know you love it, but I also know it can be nerve-wracking.”

“Yeah, it’s kind of a package deal, isn’t it? But the great always outweighs the bad. Especially if I know you’re watching me. Promise you’ll be watching me.”

“That’s an easy promise to make.”

“And babe … thank you. For, you know, making sure that I’m comfortable too. I mean, I absolutely am, but thank you for asking.”

“Of course. That’s only natural.”

“It’s actually not. But I love you for thinking that it is.”

These words hanged heavily between them for a few seconds and Tomura’s heart sunk as he processed their meanings. Even though Dabi had a lot more sexual experience than Tomura, they were both equally inexperienced when it came to real romantic relationships. It wasn’t likely that any of Dabi’s previous partners had ever taken the time to have this type of conversation with him. First, there had been Sun, toxic and controlling in every possible way, using Dabi selfishly for her own fancies. And after that, a long series of nameless partners with no words, no questions, and no tomorrows …

“I really want to kiss you right now Dabi,” Tomura said softly, holding the phone close to his hear with both of his hands.

“Don’t say that babe, or I’ll swear I’ll come running to your flat right now,” Dabi laughed.

“Tempting … but Magne would kill you before you could reach me, considering we should both be sleeping right me.”

“Shit, you’re right … but we’ll see each other soon. And, uh, don’t forget about … about what you texted me earlier, okay? Remember, there’s no rush for anything! But it’s good that we take time to figure things out before anything happens. Just … so you can …”
“Be ready?”

“Yeah. So we can get familiar with the idea.”

“You know …” Tomura hesitated for a minute, before continuing. “I’m sorry to make everything so complicated.”

“Tomura listen to me. You’re not making things complicated. Things like this are important and worth taking our time. I … I, uh …” It was Dabi who hesitated this time, the words stuck in his throat. “I ruined many things in my life. I don’t want to ruin this.”

He wasn’t expecting his own voice to sound so … emotional. That was one of the new things he was experiencing in this relationship. Anything involving Tomura was always extremely emotional but in a good way, light years away from the cold boring detachment he had forced upon himself for decades after Sun and before meeting him. Being vulnerable with Tomura was still … odd, and a little difficult sometimes, especially considering how protective Dabi felt toward his boyfriend. He was still working on accepting the idea that he didn’t always have to be the strongest one of the two. Fortunately for him, Tomura was there to remind him.

“Dabi, my love,” he whispered into to phone, “there’s nothing you could ever do that would ruin things between us. We can face together any obstacles that come our way.”

He said those words with calm and confidence. If Dabi still struggled to accept his own vulnerability, Tomura still struggled to accept his own strength. Sometimes, there were still voices in the back of his head telling him that he was broken and unworthy of Dabi’s love, that his happiness wouldn’t last, and he would be the one running everything in the end. But in moments like this one, his love for Dabi was stronger than those voices and reassuring his boyfriend was more important than doubting himself.

“Tomura, I … I … I don’t know what to say.” Dabi chuckled into the phone, his heart warmed with love and affection.

“You don’t have to say anything Dabi. Just earing you laugh is enough for me. Besides,” Tomura added mischievously, in a lower tone, “considering how hard you made me come that one night, I think I’m in capable hands.”
He was glad that Dabi couldn’t see his face blushing furiously right now, so he could maintain the illusion of confidence. It still felt weird to hear himself say stuff like this, and in a way, he didn’t even feel like he had the right to do so. But Dabi’s reaction on the other end was just too good for him to overthink this.

“Oh my god,” Dabi groaned, “oh my god, oh my god, oh my god, you’re going to be the death of me. We can keep talking about it later.”

And they did. As the days passed, Dabi and Tomura continued to text, to call each other, and even to facetime when they could. They were still partaking in the group chat with the rest of their friends, but they also had their own private conversations, during which they talked about their day and sent each other dumb memes, but also kept exploring what they had touched upon previously.

It often started with love words and mushy talk, I miss you, you look so pretty tonight, I can’t wait to see you, and it would gradually turn into questions such as, what would you do if you were with me right now? Would you like it if I used my mouth on you? Or would you prefer my hands? Would it be okay if I touched your staples or are they too sensitive? I love your hair can I pull them sometimes?

As much as Tomura wanted to see Dabi, in that particular case the distance between them made things easier. It was a simpler task to think about sex and boundaries without looking directly at Dabi’s gorgeous face, and without feeling his blue eyes undressing him the entire time. Tomura usually loved the way Dabi messed with his brain just by being around him, but … he kind of really needed his brain for this.

In a way, it reminded him of the times before Dabi and him got together when he would spend his nights imagining Dabi’s hands on him and fantasise about all the things they could do together. But unlike back then, there was no guilt, no anxiety and no self-loathing attached to these fantasies, not anymore. Tomura no longer felt guilty about touching himself while thinking about Dabi, because it was no longer an unachievable dream tarnishing his dearest friend, but the promise of something wonderful to come.

If he was perfectly honest with himself, the perspective of sex was still quite intimating to him. Decades of trauma, body shaming, and fear of intimacy probably couldn’t be erased after one good experience. But now, he was open to other experiences and possibilities. Last year, he was convinced that he would die alone without ever letting anyone touch him or even see him naked, and now, he laying the groundwork to have sex with the love of his life. Life was just crazy like that.

“How knows …” he thought one late afternoon, reading one of Dabi’s text while Jin was falling asleep on his shoulder and Spinner was making coffee in the kitchen, “with all these impossible
things happening around me, I might be able to win that art competition … who knows …”

And eventually, after months of planning, after talking about it for so long, it was *that* night, the night before Tomura’s presentation, and night of *Bring Me The Heroes*’ biggest show to date.

Waking up that morning, Tomura was surprised by how calm he was. He had been preparing for six months now, with every day feeling like another weight of pressure on his shoulders. And yet this morning he was … surprisingly relaxed. Well, “relaxed” probably wasn’t the right word. “Stunned” was more like it. He was stunned and would probably stay that way until after the whole thing was over with. Tomura was the type of person who always felt too much, and in that case, it was as if he felt so much that he actually couldn’t feel anything anymore. *Good*, he told himself. *I’ll take it.* Besides, he didn’t want any of his anxiety running his reunion with Dabi and the girls.

The day started surprisingly normal. When he woke up, the girls were already gone for some final rehearsals, but Jin arrived an hour later. They had both decided that they wouldn’t work today as a celebration for their friends’ show (and Jin by solidarity for Tomura who didn’t feel like going through his notes the day right before the presentation), so they basically just chilled on the couch until Spinner joined. After that, they simply played video games and ordered pizzas.

And then, it was already late afternoon. Around 6 pm, they were all surprised to hear a key in the door lock, and a smile grew on everyone’s face when they heard the familiar chirpy high pitched voice of their favourite blond tornado.

“Boyyyyyyyys!” she sang, “it’s me!”

“Toga!”

The three boys all jumped from the couch and practically wrestled with each other to be the first one to reach her. Even though Tomura wasn’t the fittest, his light weight gave him an advantage, and he was the one who managed to throw himself in Toga’s arms first. Although the girl was small, she was physically the strongest of the bunch, and so she carried him without any difficulty.

“I’ve missed you so much …” Tomura whined.
“Hey there, Tomu,” she chuckled, petting his hair, “don’t be so dramatic, you cutie! I still live here and come home every night!”

“Yeah, but you work so hard and always come back so late and leave so early …” Tomura continued, holding her tighter, “I’ve barely seen you or Magne this month …”

“Awww darling,” she said holding his squishy face between her hands, “look at you being all mushy and soft for us!”

“Maybe I like you both a lot,” Tomura whispered, “but you’re not allowed to tell the others, it’s a secret, I’m watching you okay?”

“Hey Tomura, leave so room for us!” Jin protested. “We want some Toga hugs too!”

The three boys were now all wrapped around their smaller friend, who was still standing somehow. It wasn’t like they hadn’t seen each other at all during the past month, but they were all so used to spend all of their time together that it felt like they had been separated for a year.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Spinner said as they all let go of her to let her breathe, “I’m super happy to see you, but shouldn’t you be getting ready for your show in like … two hours?”

“That’s why I’m here though!” she said, giving them a toothy grin before focusing her cat-like eyes on Tomura.

Spinner and Jin followed her gazed, confused, and Shigaraki blushed under the attention.

“Why do I feel so threatened, suddenly?” he asked.

“Tomura, my sweet precious boy,” Toga said, carefully taking both of his hands in hers, “do you know where we’re playing tonight?”

“Uuuuuh … is it like … the dent thingy?”
“It’s called the Killer’s Dent you dumbass …” Spinner sighed, while Jin snickered.

“Yes, exactly,” Toga nodded, “the Killer’s Dent. It’s kind of special place though … Kurogiri, Compress, and Mustard are not joining us tonight and there is kind of reason for that.”

Tomura looked at all of his friends one by one, trying to understand what Toga trying to say. But she only looked at him more intensely with an even bigger grin, showing off her fangs.

“It’s not a place young kids or old dads,” she continued, “no matter how cool these dads are. Gira can come because he is, well, our manager, but he is on thin ice. Dabi, Magne and I used to go there all the time before we even started the band seriously. Spinner and Jin also went a few times, so they know the deal. But you don’t.”

Tomura raised his eyebrows, still confused, but not impressed.

“So what?” he asked, tilting his head. “Is this a place for like, firstborn sacrifices?”

“Almost!” Toga winked. “But not quite! It’s bar and concert room, but they only do punk, grunge, rock, and all that good stuff! And it’s … hmmm, how can I put it? It’s very … underground.”

“Underground, uh?” Tomura repeated, amused.

“Yeah! Basically, it’s the coolest place ever, and it’s a dream come true to play there! So all of us here have been there except you, and I want to make sure that you will make good impression! That you will, like … fit in, you know?”

“I think we’re good!” Jin said. “He’s got that … cute emo pretty boy look going for him, he is going to be fine!”

“Hmmm true …” Toga agreed, rubbing her chin. “But I know he can go even further if wants to, and I’m here to guide him! So come on, Tomu! Let’s get ready!”

Although Toga had a lot of opinions, Tomura was still allowed to chose his outfit for tonight. Well, actually he was only allowed to wear it because Toga had approved it. He had picked his black
leather pants with a black tank top, and a red jacket over it. Toga whistled when he put it on.

“Wow, Tomura!” She clapped her hands excitedly. “This jacket is amazing! I didn’t even know you had that!”

“Sako offered it to me for my twentieth birthday,” he said looking at himself in the mirror. “I genuinely love it, but I never really dared to wear it until now.”

“That’s a shame, it’s a perfect fit and it matched your eyes … I’m glad you’re wearing it now! But … it’s funny though.”

“What is?”

“Weeeeell,” Toga gave a little twirl, visibly very amused by what she was about to share. “Black and red … it’s kind of Stain’s colour scheme, isn’t it?”

Tomura let out a deep groan. Fucking Stain … Even though he didn't exactly hate the man as he used to, Tomura still had no respect for him. He could bear to listen to him when it was on Dabi’s mixtape (because Dabi’s mixtape was special and magical), but that was it. Any other times, he wanted nothing to do with him and he always did his best to leave the room whenever the others put his songs on during their parties.

“You fool,” he simply told Toga. “These are the colours of Shadow the Hedgehog. That’s a true edgy icon for you, Stain has nothing on him. Don’t soil Shadow’s name like that.”

“Alright, alright,” Toga said, raising her hands as an apology. She had never been offended by Tomura’s contempt for her favourite artist. She actually thought it was the funniest thing in the world. “But the place we’re going tonight? It’s kind of very … Stain-ish. You know what I mean?”

“Yeah, I figured just with the name. The Killer’s Dent. How original. The things I do for you all I swear to god …”

“Your our best boy! Now come! We have something else to do!”
Toga dragged Tomura in the bathroom, and before he could react, she pulled out of her makeup bag.

“You can’t call yourself emo if you don’t wear eye shadow you know?” she told him.

“I never called myself emo. You all call me emo.”

“You called yourself an emo icon two months ago when we got drunk at your dad’s bar.”

“Touché.”

“Never lie to my face ever again.”

It didn’t take long for Toga to convince Tomura to sit down and let her do her work. Tomura had always been attracted to makeup. Whenever the girls were getting ready for a night out, he was always sitting in the bathtub next to them, and although he just wanted to keep them company, he also liked to watch them apply their makeup on. As a teenager, he also used to enjoy looking at Sako who often liked to put on some eye shadow or lip gloss for his dates with Kurogiri.

But he had always been afraid that makeup would look ugly on his scarred and dry face. His anxiety was telling him that it would only look like a clumsy attempt to cover his imperfections and that people would only laugh at him. And yet, somehow, he felt quite calm and tranquil as Toga began to apply dark eye shadow over his lids.

“I’m going for a classic black here,” she explained, “because it will look good with your outfit. Besides, dark colours make your eyes pop out. If that’s okay with you, I’m thinking about adding some light blue sparkles over it, it will match your hair and look like a night sky. Would you like that?”

“I … yeah. Yeah, that’s okay I guess.”

“Neat!”

Even though Tomura’s eyes were closed, he could hear Toga’s smile in her voice.
The Killer’s Dent was exactly what Tomura had expected. It was an old factory by the river converted into a bar and a concert hall, with street art of over its walls and dark red light creating a surprisingly warm atmosphere. It was also pretty crowded, which made Tomura incredibly happy. Bring Me The Heroes was the only band playing tonight unlike most of their previous gig, which meant that all of these people had come to see them specifically.

Toga guide Tomura, Jin and Spinner through the crowd until they reached the bar. She had to pull Tomura’s wrist quite hard a few times because he would stop at every wall to look at the art.

“So Tomura?” she asked. “First impressions?”

“It’s all right I guess …” he said with a crooked smile.

As he said these words, a woman with short jet black hair confidently walked through the crowd and reached their little group. She was quite beautiful, but also a little scary with very intense magenta eyes that she had set on Tomura.

“Hey there, cutie,” she said bluntly, but with a warm and seductive voice, “I’ve never seen you around before. Don’t hesitate to let me know if you want someone to … show you around.”

Before Tomura could process any of that, the woman winked at him and walked away. He just stood there blinking, while his three friends giggled at his confusion.

“What just happened?” he asked them. “Is she the owner? A sort of guide or something?”

“Wait,” Spiner said, “Tomura are you serious?”

“About what?”

“Tomura bro, this woman was so flirting with you.”
“She was what now?”

“I’ll explain it to you later,” Toga said grabbing his arms, “but we should meet Dabi, Magne and Giran backstage. Follow me!”

Tomura let his friend drag him through the crowd with Spinner and Jin walking close next to him. The entire place was so packed that Tomura felt a spike of anxiety go through him, and he suddenly became very worried about his hands. Closing his fist and burying them in his pockets, he began to wonder if he should have brought his special gloves with him when he ran into something that turned out to be a solid chest.

“Oh shit, I’m so sorry!”

The guy standing in front of his was huge, and probably one of the most muscular men that Tomura had ever seen in his entire life. He also had short blond hair and a weird bruise over his eyes, which made him look like the type of guy who easily got into fights. But weirdly enough, he didn’t seem pissed that Tomura had run into him. He was actually smiling.

“Hey, that’s alright no worries,” he said with a deep voice. “But a pretty thing like you should be careful in a place like this. You never know what could happen … wanna stick with me for a while?”

“YIKES,” Toga groaned, rolling her eyes and stepping in front of Tomura “Go away Muscular, he is with us. Also he is taken.”

“Alright, alright,” the guy said with an amused smile. “It was worth a shot, wasn’t it? Have a good show Toga.”

Toga dragged Tomura, Spinner and Jin away without an answer.

“Who was that?” Tomura asked when they were far enough.

“Oh that’s right you never met him,” Toga said. “That’s Muscular. I don't think that's his real name, but that's how we call him. He was Dabi’s first roommate before Jin. He isn’t all that bad,
but he is kind of an annoying dudebro, you know what I mean? Also, he is just a massive fuckboy.”

Tomura vaguely remembered earing that name before, but he had never met the guy. Based on this first impression, he was very happy that Jin had taken his place; he was obviously the superior blond roommate.

“Tomura you’re quite popular tonight,” Spinner snickered as they finally got to through the backstage door and walked through the dark corridor amongst the staff members.

“Of course he is!” Toga agreed. “Have you seen him with that jacket and my mak up? Dabi is going to straight-up die when he sees him!”

The mere mention of Dabi’s name was enough for Tomura to smile again. He was finally going to see him after weeks of intense work and separation. Soon he was gonna kiss him and touch him and hug him, he was going to see him sing and perform on stage after so long, and nothing could ruin this. He was barely paying attention to his three friends who were still discussing Tomura’s previous encounters, and laughing about how jealous Dabi was gonna get when they would tell him.

They found Giran and Magne in the dressing room. Magne looked absolutely stunning, with her red hair pulled up in a messy bun and held together by a white flower matching the frame of her sunglasses and her perfectly fitted suit and heels. Giran wore his usual lilac jacket and just generally looked the same as he always did, except for very … mischievous look in his eyes, as if he was about to tell a very good joke.

“Hey guys!” Magne smiled.

She didn’t have the time to take two-step towards the three boys before they all jumped on her, like they had done with Toga only a few hours before. Magne wasn’t as strong as Toga though, so she had to rest against the wall to stay standing.

“Hey! Easy, easy!” She laughed. “I’m wearing white tonight, I can’t fall on the ground, not even for the three of you!”

“But we missed you so much!” Tomura protested, burying his face in her neck.
“And I’ve missed you too.”

She patted their heads, and gently pushed them away to have a good look at them.

“You all look great! I’m so happy to see you guys. It feels like it’s been ages.”

Tomura couldn’t agree more. Even though Magne still came home every night, they had both been so busy that had barely seen each other for a month. She looked at Tomura from head to toe and gave an appreciative whistle with a thumb up.

“Damn boy, what a look! You’re stunning! Dabi is gonna faint!”

“I know right?” Toga squealed. “I did his eyes, but he picked the jacket! I’m so proud of him! They grow up so fast …”

Toga, Spinner and Jin then proceeded to tell everything that had happened since they all first arrived here, but Tomura wasn’t listening, scanning the room for any sign of Dabi.

“He is outside, smoking a cigarette,” Giran told him with a wink. “You should go see him, he is quite stressed about tonight. You’re exactly what he needs right now.”

Tomura thanked him with a nod, and he did his best to not run to the exit door on the other side of the room. It led to a small backyard, still part of the factory, but far away from the noise and the crowd. With only his jacket and his tank top underneath, Tomura was immediately hit with the cold December wind. But the sight on his left immediately filled his body with warmth and fire.

Dabi was leaning with his back against the wall, a cigarette between his fingers and the smoke escaping from his lips. The sky was quite clear tonight, and so he was perfectly lit by the moonlight that made his eyes look almost phosphorescent and electric. He was wearing his usual long black coat, but with a new outfit underneath, a white shirt and leather pants covered with silver sippers that kind of looked like his staples. For a moment, Tomura was mesmerized. It didn’t feel real; he was like a traveller lost in the desert seeing a beautiful mirage. But before he could snap out of it, Dabi turned around and saw him.

“Hey,” Tomura said.
“Hey,” Dabi answered.

Dabi felt like he had been struck by lightning, and as if electricity was running through him from head to toes, bringing him back to life. Tomura was here, standing right in front of him, and he looked hot. It shouldn’t have been a surprise, because Tomura always looked hot, but he looked especially hot right now, with dark eye shadow and a red jacket, and his beautiful neck and collarbones expose to the moonlight.

He couldn’t take it anymore; he dropped his cigarette to the ground and immediately reached out for Tomura’s face, and planted a hungry kiss on his lips. The boy’s response was immediate; he opened his mouth for him and threw his arms around his neck to press their bodies together. It was good, it was comfortable and it was warm. For both of them, it was home.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful,” Dabi said against Tomura’s lips after a few minutes.

“Y-you’re … you’re not looking too bad yourself …”

Tomura found himself stuttering, he always had trouble catching his breath whenever Dabi kissed him, and this was no exception. The condensations of their breaths were mixing up between the two of them, and Dabi wrapped his coat around Tomura’s shivering body to keep him warm.

“I’ve missed your warmth,” Tomura said, happily burying his face in the crook of the scarred neck.

“Don’t be so dramatic, we saw each other last week.” Dabi smiled against the mess of blue curls. “But I’ve missed your smell.”

They both laughed at that. Tomura looked up and reached out to carefully hold Dabi’s face between his hands. He looked beautiful, but tired, and definitely a little nervous. He remembered what Giran had told him only a few minutes ago.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.

“So much better now that you’re here.” He gave Tomura his trademark crooked smile. “But yeah, this place is … it’s quite iconic. Magne, Toga and I used to hang out here all the time a few years
ago. We saw thousands of shows here. So being on the other side it’s … it’s a lot.”

“But it’s also good, isn’t it?”

“Oh yeah for sure! Like, I know that as soon as I’ll be out there on stage, it’s going to be amazing! But … yeah. I tend to think too much before shows. That’s why I prefer to have you with me.”

Tomura couldn’t help but remember that one show when Sun had showed up out of nowhere, almost sending Dabi into a panic attack right before going on stage. He had looked so vulnerable and terrified back then … of course, things weren’t nearly as bad tonight, but Tomura still wanted to do his absolute best to help Dabi to relax before going on stage.

“I’m so proud of you Dabi,” he said, rubbing his thumbs against Dabi’s cheekbones. “You’ve come so far. You’re playing in this incredible place, surrounded by people who love you. All the people here tonight connected with your music in one way or another, you gave something to them.”

Dabi’s smile got a little brighter, and the tension in his shoulder relaxed. Tomura ran his hands and fingers through Dabi’s hair like he had done on that beach six months ago. The effect was immediate; there was a warm fire in his eyes.

“Do you remember that one show at the Vigilante bar, two years ago?” Tomura continued. “On that ridiculously small stage, with those shitty mics? It was the night … it was the night we met.”

“It was,” Dabi smiled, tightening his hold on Tomura’s waist.

“You almost killed me.”

“I did.”

They both laughed to the memory.

“God, it’s so weird to think about that night now,” Dabi said. “I don’t even feel like it was me. I was so fucking mean to you that night.”
“I mean, I was pretty mean to you too. I was kind of a bitch.”

“Yeah but that’s what I liked about you. I still like it.”

Tomura raised an eyebrow and smiled, intrigued.

“Really?”

“Well … yeah. I mean don’t get me wrong, I love how soft and sensitive you are. I love that you created this beautiful chaotic family around us and that you always see the good in people. But god, I love how much of a brat you can be sometimes.”

“Holy shit, are you for real?” Tomura didn’t know why he was so amused by this, but he desperately wanted to hear more.

Dabi bit his he lips and looked around for a bit, almost as if he was … embarrassed, by this. It was actually kind of cute. Dabi continued nonetheless: “Look I don’t know, I just … I mean that’s pretty much why I was always trying to pick a fight with you back then, you know? I know I was dumb about it, but I think I liked it when you talked back to me a little. It was cute. I was into it. I still am.”

“And uh, when you say into it … you mean…?”

The implications of this unfinished question hanged in the air between them. They suddenly became hyper-aware of each other’s body and of how close they were. They were feeling each other’s the skin underneath the clothes, hearing each other’s heartbeat, and seeing the gloss on each other’s lips. And suddenly, the memories of their text conversations from the past few weeks hit them all at once.

“Hey you know what, maybe we should go back inside,” Dabi suddenly said.

“Y-yeah!” Tomura nodded vigorously. “It’s almost time for you to go on stage, you don’t want to keep your fans waiting.”
“Yeah, and also you must be freezing like this! But, uh, this is a good look though.”

“I’m glad you like. Toga helped me with it; it was to, uh, to fit the mood of the place or something.”

“Yeeaaaah, about that …” Dabi wrapped his arm around Tomura’s shoulders as they walked to the door leading back inside. “The type of people hanging out around here can be … okay so, I don’t want to sound like some sort of overprotective asshole, but maybe try to stick with Jin and Spinner tonight, okay? I don’t want anyone bothering you.”

Tomura suddenly wondered if he should tell Dabi about the two encounters he just had. It hadn’t felt like anything special to him, but according to the others, these people were … flirting with him? It was hard for Tomura to say. The last time something like this had happened, it was that one night in the club, with this purple-haired guy trying to have his way with him. It still made him anxious and sick whenever he thought about it too much, he had been so stupid and desperate that night. Dabi was probably still thinking about it too.

But Tomura didn’t have the time to decide what to say to Dabi. When they walked back inside, Toga was in the centre of the room and surrounded by the group. She was in the middle of a tale, and obviously didn’t see Dabi and Tomura walking in as she continued to speak very loudly.

“And I mean, everyone was looking at him as soon as we arrived! But Muscular was by far the horniest one; I can’t believe Tomura didn’t even realise that he was hitting on him! But he looks so pretty, can you really blame them?”

“EXCUSE ME? WHAT?” Dabi yelled with wide eyes before Tomura even had the chance to close the door behind them.

Toga turned towards him, surprised, but definitely worried or even guilty. She dramatically pressed her hands on each side of her face and silently mouthed the words “oh no!” before giggling like a child. Jin and Spinner looked a lot less relaxed, but Magne was smiling.

“What DID YOU JUST SAY?” Dabi was still yelling but he didn’t sound scary at all. He looked more confused and offended than anything else.

“Nothing!” Toga smiled innocently. “A few people hit on Tomura on our way to the dressing
room, that’s all! It’s actually surprising that only two people made a move, considering that everyone was eye-fucking him …”

Dabi wasn’t even listening to the end of her sentence. He just looked around the room to each of his friends, as if he hoped that this wasn’t really happening. Eventually, he turned toward Tomura. Even though there was anguish in his boyfriend’s eyes, Tomura realised that he wasn’t really worried. Dabi didn’t look actually hurt, simply … jealous.

“Baby, is that true?” he asked Tomura.

“I … it’s … yeah.” Tomura almost burst out laughing when he saw Dabi nervously running his hands through his hair. “But it wasn’t anything bad!” he promised. “It wasn’t … it wasn’t like that time. Nothing like that. Honestly, I didn’t even realise what was happening before the others pointed it out to me.”

Dabi seemed … very vaguely relieved. But it probably wasn’t noticeable to anyone else than Tomura, because he still looked quite distressed and even a little pissed off. Not angry, but irritated and annoyed. He began to rub his jaw with one of his hands as if he was trying to calm down, his eyes still intensely fixed on Tomura.

“Look at hiiiiiim, he is so jealous!” Toga said, pointing at him.

“I’m not,” Dabi protested. “I’m just … I don’t … I don’t want anyone thinking that they can just flirt with my boyfriend, okay? He’s mine.”

As he watched the scene, Tomura noticed a very pleasant feeling growing in the pit of his stomach. He quite liked the way Dabi talked about him right now, and he also liked how heat up and passionate he was about this situation.

“Well, I’m pretty sure that Tomura can defend himself,” Magne sighed. “Besides, you’re not actually worried that Tomura would look at anyone else than you, are you? Because if you are, you’re even dumber than I thought.”

“Of course I’m not worried!” Dabi said. He turned toward Tomura with an apologetic look, and wrapped his arms around his narrow waist to plant an tender kiss on his lips. “I’m sorry babe, okay? I completely trust you, and I really don’t want to be possessive or controlling. I’m just … I don’t know, I guess I’m actually a little jealous. But I promise I’ll behave.”
“Hmmm, I don’t know …” Tomura said softly, low enough to be sure that only Dabi would hear this. “Maybe you don’t have to behave too much. I’m into it.”

Dabi pulled away just enough to have a good look at Tomura’s face.

“When you say into it … you mean…?”

He was trying to read his expression to understand how serious he was about this. But to be perfectly honest, Tomura himself didn’t really know where he was going with this. He only knew that the simple thought of Dabi clamming him as his in front of everyone was doing ... things, to him.

But they didn’t have the time to unpack all that because a staff member opened the door to let them know that they were ready to start in 10 minutes. Everyone rushed out of the room and they walked through the corridors leading them backstage. Once there, they could all hear the crowd and feel their energy as they were impatiently clapping and cheering for the band. There was an almost mystic feeling surrounding them here, with the lights, the curtains, the staff members running around, and the side view to the stage where the magic would happen.

“Alright kids,” Giran said, clapping his hands to get everyone’s attention. “It’s showtime! I know it’s our biggest show yet and that we spent a very stressful month organizing all of this, but tonight I just want you to have fun! We’re doing this because we love music, and these people out there love you, so just have a blast with them! Just give it all you’ve got! And after the show is over, I will have a little surprise for you …”

Giran didn’t let anyone the time to meditate on this mysterious promise. He grabbed Dabi, Toga and Magne into a hug, and pushed them forward. Magne and Toga ran on stage first, welcomed by the crowd’s crazy applause. Dabi planted one last adoring and even possessive kiss on Tomura’s lips before running on stage with his guitar in his hand.

The show was absolutely amazing. It was one of the most energetic and craziest crowd the band had ever gotten, and Tomura understood why Kurogiri, Sako and Mustard weren’t joining them tonight. People were jumping wildly in the pit during the catchiest songs, cheering, screaming, laughing, and yelling love declaration to Dabi, Magne and Toga. Even during the softer song, the crowd still moved as one, either waving their arms or singing with Dabi. There were even a few
quirk related incident, nothing too serious and no one got hurt, but people were definitely excited.

Even from backstage with only a side view, Tomura, Spinner and Jin got to experience some of that crazy energy. It was feeding the band members who were also getting more and more excited. Toga was even more out of control than usual, and even Magne who was usually so calm and collected let out some excited screams and even danced on stage. And Dabi … well, he was absolutely magnificent, as always. Burning even brighter than usual. He was so happy and excited that in between a few songs and ran backstage to kiss Tomura passionately before running back on stage, more energized than ever. Each time, it left Tomura absolutely breathless.

But all shows, even the best ones, must end. Around 1 am, after their third encore, Dabi had to announce that they had just played the final song of the night.

“I know, I know, it sucks,” he laughed into the mic as the crowd playfully booed that announcement. “But hey, we had a great time with you tonight! Thank you for being such an awesome crowd! But now if you’ll excuse me, I have a very cute boyfriend waiting for me backstage, and I cannot wait to kiss him again!”

Tomura felt himself growing as red as his eyes and jacket. On each of his sides, Jin and Spinner started laughing and sympathetically rubbed his back.

“Actually some of you might have seen him tonight,” Dabi continued. “He is literally the prettiest, cutest and sexiest boy in the world, with gorgeous blue hair and a sick red jacket.”

There were some whistling and howling in the crowd.

“Ah! I thought so!” Dabi said. “So yeah, he is beautiful, but now you all know he is my boyfriend, so don’t try any shit! I’m watching you all!”

He pointed at the crowd with a sign that said I’ve got my eyes on you, which got everyone laughing, including Toga, Magne, Jin, Spinner, and even Tomura himself. After a few more jokes and a few more cheering, the band eventually left the stage for good and ran back to their friends. It was all laughing and singing and hugging and excited screaming, everyone still high on the energy of the night.

“Oh my god!” Spinner yelled while hugging Toga. “You were all amazing! You’ve never been so good!”
“God I know!” Magne laughed, running her hands through her now completely undone hair. “That crowd was crazy! My heart is still beating so fucking fast!”

“Toga, that drum solo was absolutely insane!” Tomura said after hugging Dabi. “I could barely see you move!”

They all kept excitingly congratulating each other for a while, until Dabi asked where Giran had gone. Looking around, the manager seemed to have disappeared.

“I swear he was here a minute ago,” Jin said, comically looking over his shoulder again and again.

“He probably went to get that mysterious surprise,” Dabi smiled. “He has been hinting at “something big” for a few weeks now. He always looks at us like he is our weird uncle who got secretly got us the best Christmas present.”

“Well, he kind of is everyone’s weird uncle,” Spinner noted.

As the others continued their conversation about Giran’s big uncle energy, Dabi brought Tomura closer to him and whispered in his ear: “Speaking of presents, it’s almost your birthday.”

Besides the usual shiver that he always felt whenever Dabi spoke so close to his skin, Tomura also felt a short circuit in his brain when he registered his words. He looked up at him with a frown. Dabi was proudly smiling, visibly very pleased with his reaction.

“I don’t think I ever told you when my birthday was,” Tomura said. He wasn’t annoyed in any way, just genuinely surprised.

“I have my ways,” Dabi smirked. “Also not to sound like some white gothic poet but … I think I have the definite proof that you and I are soulmates.”

Tomura raised an eyebrow while leaning in, demanding a kiss. So Dabi whispered directly against his lips: “You’re born the 21 of December and I’m born the 21 of Jun. First day of winter and first day of summer. We were meant to be, baby.”
As the two boys kissed, they heard a loud cough behind them. It wasn’t destined at them specifically but to the entire group, and so they all proceeded to turn around. Giran was standing there with a cat-like smile on his face, and with someone else next to him. He gave them a look that said “tadaaam!” and moved to the side to let the other person walk forward.

It was a man. He was tall but visibly slouching, and extremely muscular. He was wearing a black sleeveless tank top that revealed some impressive arms covered with scars, and the way he crossed them made him seem even more buff. He had a very square and sharp jawline and dark intense eyes, with long black messy hair falling across his face. But one of the most noticeable things was that he actually didn’t have a nose. For a moment, Tomura felt like there was something familiar about this man, but he couldn’t put his finger on it. Other than that, he was pretty sure he had never seen him before.

He looked over to Dabi and his friends, expecting to see them as confused as he was, but it was quite the opposite. The entire group was staring at the man with eyes and mouth wide open, completely stunned as if someone had just electrocuted them. Judging by their reaction, they could have been looking at All Might right now, especially Spinner, Toga and Dabi who all looked like they were trying really hard to stay calm. Toga pressed her hands against her mouth, Spinner was holding on to Jin and Dabi squeezed his hand tighter on Tomura’s shoulder. The later frowned. It became obvious that none of his friends would hear him if he asked who this man was, so he took another look at him. And that’s when he realised.

Oh, that’s Stain. Okay.

“So Bring Me The Heroes, uh?” Stain said. “It’s nice to meet you all.”

His voice was deep and raspy, and his tone serious and intense. It almost made Tomura snort. This man was definitely as dramatic and cliché in person as he was in his songs … but, he was also a very important artist for his friends, so Tomura swallowed back the chuckle in the back of his throat. The last thing he wanted was to ruin this moment for them.

“Oh my god,” Toga eventually squealed, “oh my god, oh my god, oh my god!”

“It’s him,” Spinner whispered with actual tears in his eyes, “oh my god it’s him, he is right here, he is real …”

“That was quite a show you had tonight,” Stain continued, visibly unfazed and used to these kinds
of reaction. “I’m impressed, the *Killer’s Dent* is known for its difficult crowd. Sometimes, people who play here will be booed and lynched if the public thinks they’re not good enough, but you really enraptured the audience. You’re good.”

There was a short silence after that, as Stain visibly expected some kind of response from the band members. Dabi was still completely dumbfounded, eyes wide open and mouth agape, and although the sight was adorable, Tomura wasn’t about to let him ruin his big moment with his idol and so he carefully squeezed his hand to snap him out of it.

“Oh, uh, hi, yes, thank you!” Dabi blurred out all at once. He looked panicked for a few more seconds when Stain’s eyes focused on him, but impressively enough, he managed to shake it off with a nervous and slightly awkward laugh.

“Damn, I’m so sorry,” he said running his free hand through his hair. “This is just all a little surreal, but this is a dream come true, thank you so much for meeting us!”

With that, he extended his hand to Stain who took it and shook it. The older man’s face relaxed just a little bit, and he shook Toga and Magne’s hands as well.

“I’ve been hearing about the three of you for a while now,” Stain continued. “You’re making some good stuff, I’m glad Giran reached out to me.”

After that, everyone seemed to relax a little bit. Giran stepped back in and took over for a bit, which made things easier. He talked about how he had reached out to Stain a few months ago and how they had organised this meeting tonight, and Stain talked about how he had discovered the band and what he thought of them.

“I’ll be really honest,” he said, “when I first heard about you, I thought you were just gonna be one of those bland copycat bands that began to pop up a few years after me. But I was wrong. Giran told me you guys were fans, and I definitely see the roots and the inspiration, but you managed to create something unique and personal out of it. So good job, I’m excited to see what you will do next.”

Everyone one in the group was smiling, and just for that, Tomura couldn’t help to smile too. Dabi, Magne and Toga especially were beaming. They were having an almost casual conversation with the man who had brought them together and changed their lives. They were all a little more relaxed now, and so they were talking about music, styles, texts and inspirations … all the things that they loved. Even Spinner got a little bit of spotlight when Stain recognized him as “*that talented new videogame guy that everyone talks about*” and even though the poor lizard genuinely looked like
“I think you all know that I’m really difficult and demanding when it comes to music,” Stain said.  
“Almost everything we hear on the radio nowadays is shit, absolute garbage. It’s all just lukewarm soup made to satisfy the mass, just commercial mediocrity everywhere. True, respectable, real music, is hard, difficult and rare. And you guys … you’ve touched something special. I hope we can do something together soon.”

“Oh shit, are you for real?” Dabi asked, running his hands across his face. “I mean … fuck, thank you so much, this is such an honour to even have you here with us tonight. You really deeply inspired us humanely and artistically. We’d love to do anything with you!”

Tomura knew that he wasn’t objective on how he viewed Stain, and so he probably shouldn’t be making these kind of judgement, but he definitely felt like he saw the older man relishing in the praise and compliments he was getting. *That’s a man who believes in his own hype if I’ve ever seen one.*

“Good,” Stain said, with the hint of a smile for the first time tonight. “We’ll keep in touch then. Giran has my contacts and I have his, so we’ll all meet again and discuss later. Sounds good?”

“Fantastic!”

“Great,” Stain nodded. “But actually before I go, there’s something I wanted to talk about with you. I really love art design you’ve got going on. You know, your logo, your decorum, your album jackets, and just the entire aesthetic you’ve created for yourself. There’s something incredibly raw, passionate and … unique, about it. Who worked on that?”

“I did,” Tomura said, casually.

He was honestly quite surprise to ear himself speaking up, he hadn’t even meant to say this out loud, but he didn’t feel awkward or anxious at all. Not even when Stain laid his dark and intense eyes on him for the first time.

Everyone seemed surprised to hear Tomura speak. He had been so still and quiet and standing in the background the entire time, they might have even forgotten that he was there. It definitely was the first time Stain noticed him. He was looking at Tomura from head to toes again and again, methodically examining him with his dark gaze. With literally anyone else, Tomura would have
probably felt the urge to hide his face and scratch his neck, but right now he felt no stress and no anxiety whatsoever. He had no emotional connection to this man or to his music, so he simply didn’t give a single fuck about what Stain might think of him.

“You did?” Stain repeated, finally meeting Tomura’s eyes. “And so, who might you be then? Some kind of designer?”

“This is Dabi’s muse and our friend Shigaraki Tomura!” Toga announced proudly, waving her hands in the boy’s direction as his she was presenting a masterpiece. “He’s not in the band, but he helps us and inspires us a lot! And he also did all the art for us!”

“A muse, eh?” Stain snickered. His eyes travelled up and down Tomura’s body again, and although he wasn’t sure, Tomura felt something other than judgement or curiosity in the man’s gaze.

“Yes!” Toga continued. “And he is very talented and he is going to be very famous soon, so we’re very lucky to have him working with us!”

Everyone chuckled at that, except Stain who was still looking at Tomura, Dabi who hadn’t said a word or moved a muscle since Tomura had spoke up, and Tomura himself who simply smiled and shrugged.

“Is that so?” Stain smiled, but there was something sharp about it. “That’s good to know. Your art is impressive, who would have thought there would be so much passion inside a skinny kid like you, uh?”

“Yeah, you’d be surprised,” Tomura simply said.

There was another short moment of silence after that. Stain was still staring at him, and Tomura still felt nothing, but there was a weird energy surrounding them and the group right now. Magne, Toga, Jin and Spinner began to exchange some weird looks while Dabi remained still and silent, his gaze moving from Stain to Tomura again and again.

“Well, if you’re a future famous artist,” Stain continued, “I guess I better get my hands on you while I can, right? How would you like to do some designs for me, kid?”

Spinner let out a soft gasp before pressing his hands over his mouth. Everyone’s eyes went wide,
including Dabi’s, but Tomura simply raised an eyebrow. He was finally figuring out what was that weird energy he was feeling right now. The way Stain was looking at him right now … it was just like the way the people had been looking at him when he arrived here. It was the way … the purple-haired guy had looked in that club long ago.

But strangely enough, Tomura still felt completely calm after this realisation. Maybe it was because he was now in a loving stable relationship with the man of his dreams and no longer felt alone, ugly, or tempted by the first guy who looked at him with appetite. Or maybe it was because he was surrounded by his friends and therefore felt safe and happy. Or maybe, it was simply because he was just that uninterested by Stain. Whatever it was, it made him feel good.

“Tempting,” he simply said, smiling, “but I’ll have to decline.”

Spinner squealed this time, and then he bite his fist as if he was stopping himself from screaming. Everyone else looked just as shocked and surprised, including Stain himself, even though he was better at hiding it.

“Are you sure, kid? You might want to think about it, this could be something big for you.”

“Thank you for this opportunity,” Tomura said. “But I don’t usually do designs and album art in the first place, you see? I’m a painter, and I would much prefer to work on my original projects. I collaborated with Bring Me The Heroes because they’re my friends and because I genuinely love their work and their music. But I don’t intend to keep doing that kind of work in the future unless it’s with them, or with another artist of my own choosing. But thank you for your interest, I appreciate it.”

And Tomura truly did. Even though he didn’t really care for Stain as an artist, he seemed like a decent enough guy, and it was really encouraging to know that someone of that level genuinely appreciated his work. But god, he had no interest in designing anything for Stain.

Around him, his friends looked like they were about to lose their mind, but to their credit they were really doing their best to stay still and quiet. Even Giran was looking at the whole situation with a smirk and intrigued eyes. Dabi still didn’t say a word, but standing right next to him, Tomura felt like his body heat just kept getting higher and higher by the minute.

“That’s a shame,” Stain eventually sighed, but looking quite amused by Tomura’s response. “I take it that you’re not a fan, are you?”
“Can’t say that I am,” Tomura shrugged. “But hey, I love *Bring Me The Heroes* and they love you, so that’s something.”

“You know, I’d like to have a conversion with you at some point. You see, your artistic work really spoke to me; I really wanted something similar to represent my music. I felt like the two fitted together almost perfectly. Are you sure you don’t want to give it a shot?”

“I don’t think you and I could ever properly work together.”

“How come?”

“We just don’t do art the same way,” Tomura said. “I think you and I agree on one thing: there’s a lot of fucked up bullshit in this world. The world we live in is pretty shitty, and the bad stuff just keeps coming and keeps hitting us every day, and it fucking hurts. You and I both see that, but we don’t deal with it the same way. You, you take all that hate and suffering that you have in your heart, and you amplify it, you make it a weapon, you scream it from rooftops. I used to hate that, but now I see that it can genuinely help some people. I see how helpful it can be for young people to rally behind you, to scream with you from the top of their lungs, to brandish their wounds and their pain like a weapon. I get it. But that’s not for me. I’m grateful to you for helping my friends and bringing them together, but I’m different. I can’t live like that. I can’t make art like that. The only way I’ve found to survive in this fucked up world is to take all my pain, my fear, my anger and my suffering, and to make something beautiful out of it. This is why I do what I do. This is why I paint and create. I’m genuinely flattered that my work spoke to you, but I can’t make art for your music. Because my art is not my negative emotions amplified, but negative emotions turned into … well, turned into something good.”

Tomura hadn’t meant to speak so much. He suddenly felt a little bad for taking Stain’s attention like that when he was here tonight for his friends, but not bad enough to flinch under the older man’s gaze. *Besides, he’s the one who started it.*

To his surprise, Stain had listened to the whole thing very attentively, and although he seemed a little shocked, he didn’t seem upset in any way. In fact, his smile grew a little wider.

“Hard for me to argue with that,” he snickered. “I guess some people are just fundamentally different, uh?”

Tomura was still looking at Stain, but he felt his friends’ gazes on him, and he felt like it had … *shifted*, for the lack of a better word. They hadn’t really talked about Stain since that one night a year ago that had ended with Tomura crying in the kitchen. They had all just accepted that they all
had different tastes and moved on. As time had passed, it eventually became a private joke between all of them and nothing more. But Tomura had never managed to explain his dislike for Stain as coherently and intelligibly as he just did right now, in front of Stain himself. So they all felt like they understood something new about their friend.

“I’ll respect your choice kid,” Stain continued, pushing his hands in his pockets. “But I’ll still keep an eye on you and your work in case you change your mind. I must say, I think I kind of misjudged you. You’re an odd one … but a “mind” … the sprouts of an interesting creed dwell inside you.” He smirked and licked his lips with an abnormally long tongue. “I wonder what fruit those sprouts will bear. I can’t wait to see you bloom, painter boy. No regrets?”

“No regrets,” Tomura smirked in return. “Don’t forget, I’m exclusive to Bring Me The Heroes.”

With these words, Tomura wrapped his arm around Dabi’s waist, and got on his tiptoe to plant a kiss on the corner of his lips. Just to be sure Stain would get the message. His boyfriend’s body was almost burning hot by now, but Tomura didn’t mind. The kiss seemed to snap Dabi out of whatever trance he was in since the beginning of this conversation, he caught Tomura’s lips with his and practically lifted him off the ground as he kissed back.

“Anyway,” Dabi said, looking at Stain after pulling away from his boyfriend. “It was an honour to meet you, thank you so much for coming to see us tonight. I look forward to working with you!”

Stain looked at the couple with a defeated but somewhat amused look in his eyes.

“I do too, kid,” he said, sincerely. “I’ll keep in touch with you and Giran, okay? I have some ideas for you, and things we could do together. I truly had a blast tonight, and I can’t wait to see where you’ve all got in store for us. See you around, kids.”

And with one final shake of hand to the members of the band and one final nod to the others, Stain and Giran walked away, followed closely by some staff members. The group watched them in silence, but as soon as they disappeared around the corner, everyone lost their mind.

“OH MY GOOOOOD!!” Jin kept screaming, “OH MY GOD, OH MY GOOOD!! Did that really just happen? Was any of that real?”

“Aaaaaah Jiiiiin!!” Toga squealed, jumping in his arms, “This was real!!! This was incredible!!! He was really here!!! And he … and he…”
She was talking so fast that she had trouble catching her breath, but Jin didn’t seem to mind as he simply kept holding her and twirled around. Spinner was just straight up screaming at this point, with a surprisingly high pitch, and although Magne was holding him in her arms to calm him down, she just kept laughing nervously as she did so.

“Giran really got us good,” she said. “Fuck that was incredible! And he liked us?”

“He loved us!” Toga corrected, still in Jin’s arms. “And we’re going to work with him, I can’t believe this!”

“Okay but wait, can we please address the elephant in the room here?” Jin asked.

Without any more word, their eyes immediately turned toward Tomura who was still in Dabi’s arms, and after one short second of silence, they all lost their minds yet again but this time even louder somehow.

“Oh MY GOOOOOOOD!!” Toga roared directly into Jin’s ear.

“The mad man!” Spinner screamed, pointing at Tomura. “The absolute mad man! Holy shit!”

“What a fucking twist,” Magne laughed. “We’ve all been hard-core thirsting over Stain for years, but turns out that Stain was actually thirsting for the only one of us that never wanted anything to do with him.”

“Poetic cinema,” Jin whispered, delicately putting Toga back to the ground. “We all want the things that we cannot have …”

“Oh my god guys!” Toga yelled. “Look at Dabi’s face!”

Following everyone’s gaze, Tomura looked up toward Dabi and almost burst out laughing. It was the redder he had ever seen Dabi, who generally didn’t blush much because of his skin. His eyes were squinted and his jaw contracted, and he seemed to breathe a lot harder than when he got off-stage, which was saying something. It was funny, but it also sent some shivers down Tomura’s spine, and filled his chest with warmth.
“Damn, look at him!” Spinner said. “You can really see the conflict … the undying love and admiration for Stain, fighting with his feral need to murder everyone who tries to flirt with his boyfriend … beautiful.”

“Shut the fuck up, Spinner!” Dabi snapped back, blushing a little harder. “He wasn’t … he wasn’t … honestly, I think he wasn’t even that cool. I’m a little disappointed.”

Everyone laughed at how badly Dabi was trying to keep it together. No matter how thoughtful and detached he tried to sound, he couldn’t fool anyone, least of all Tomura.

“I’m serious!” he protested. “Like, honestly, he sounded a little full of himself. And his voice definitely doesn’t sound as good when he’s just talking. He was also really fucking short and weird looking. Honestly Tomura, I totally understand why you hate him. From up close, he looked like a douche.”

“Hmmm, I don’t know …” Tomura purred, twisting his hair around his finger and looking up as if he was in a deep reflection. “I honestly thought he was kind of hot.”

The group collectively screamed “oooooh shit!” and Dabi took a step back to look at Tomura. For a short second, there was doubt and confusion in his eyes, but he quickly noticed Tomura’s mischievous smirk and relaxed.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Tomura continued, “his music is still garbage, but like … damn, those arms …”

Dabi raised an eyebrow. He was fully aware that Tomura was teasing him right now, but it didn’t stop his blood from boiling to the mere thought of someone else’s arms wrapped around his boyfriend. Tomura was his. Everything, his hair, his smile, his laugh, his moans … it all belonged to Dabi.

“What game are you playing right now, pretty boy?” Dabi smiled. He reached out for Tomura’s wrist, but the boy casually moved away from him with twirl … and with eyes that dared Dabi to come after him.

“I’m not playing any games Dabi,” Tomura said slowly walking away. “But that guy seemed so desperate to work with me, I almost feel bad for denying him like that. Do you think Giran still has
his number? Just in case?”

Figuring that they were witnessing some kind of weird foreplay, their friends collectively rolled their eyes and walked away, going back to the bar outside and letting the two idiots play their game. Tomura was still strolling away further backstage, pretending to go look for Giran, while still giving needy glances toward Dabi behind him.

The young musician felt something burning deliciously in the pit of his stomach, something possessive and almost feral. He took a few strides toward Tomura, trying to grab his arm this time, but the boy escaped him once again, almost as gracefully as a dancer.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Dabi asked.

His voice was already a lot deeper than a few seconds ago, and that sound alone almost made Tomura trip over his own feet. Dabi kept walking towards him, with a hungry smile on his lips, and his chest rising and falling heavily with his breathing. As they moved further backstage the lights got darker, and Dabi’s silver staples seemed to shine against his skin like jewels.

Tomura fucking loved that. He loved how confident and powerful Dabi looked right now, he loved the burning desire radiating from him, and he love how it seemed to warm the air with each step he took. *Fuck he is so tall … his shoulders are so broad … he is so hot … he is so fucking beautiful. Fuck I love him so much.*

The backstage area was practically desert by now, but the lights from the show were still on, making the whole environment look like a nightclub. With one quick movement, Dabi grabbed Tomura shoulders and pinned him against a wall next to them. But the boy was slippery, and before Dabi could even plant a kiss to his neck, Tomura dodged and escaped his grasp with a giggle.

“You’re not as strong as you look,” Tomura taunted him from the darkness, as they got further and further back, where the area was getting quite narrow.

“I’m still strong enough to burn anyone who tries to take you away from me.”

Dabi hadn’t meant to say it like that. With everything happening inside of him right now, the words had escaped him and he only now realised how fierce it sounded. For a moment, he worried that this was going to turn off Tomura completely and ruin this game they were playing, but it ended up
to be quite the opposite. Tomura’s chest rose up with a whimper, and his red eyes now looked like two pieces of burning ember glowing in the dark. He very, very, very clearly liked this kind of talk. Noted.

“Maybe you should get these hot hands and me before talking about burning anyone else,” Tomura still managed to say. His voice was a delicious mix of confidence, apprehension, but also insolence.

“Here’s that little brat I love,” Dabi groaned.

It was almost like a dance, Dabi made a move and Tomura avoided him, Dabi grabbed him and Tomura broke free with a laugh. It fitted them, in a way. They had spent so much time fighting, avoiding each other, moving closer then further away... so much time pacing around and making the other’s head spin. But now, after all that, they were just having fun.

Eventually, Dabi made a decisive move, waltzing around Tomura and then grabbing his wrist to pin him against the wall all the way back. His hands were so warm, his grip so strong, and his eyes so intense, Tomura no longer had any interest in escaping him.

“Don’t run away from like that, okay?” Dabi asked.

It was so beautiful the way he said it. He sounded so strong and yet so vulnerable as if he was ordering him and begging him at the same time. Tomura relaxed against the wall, comfortable in Dabi’s grasp. His head was spinning from all that dancing around, and from that night, and from Dabi looking at him with so much love and desire after being apart from so many weeks.

“Then don’t let go of me, okay?” Tomura simply responded, his voice almost cracking.

It was too much for Dabi to endure. He kissed Tomura, pressing him against the wall with all of his strength, drinking the soft gasps escaping his boyfriend’s mouth. He tasted even better than Dabi remembered. He was raw and clumsy, and in a way, it reminded them both of their first kiss in Tomura’s apartment, months ago. Right after one of Dabi’s show and right against a wall, but this time, none of them were crying.

“F-fuck … fuck Dabi …” Tomura moaned in between two kisses, “touch me, fucking touch me pleaaaase …”
Dabi didn’t need to be asked twice. He let go of Tomura wrist to slide his hands under the black tank top, underneath the red jacket, warming up the icy cold skin as he moved, explored, and re-discovered his boyfriend’s body. Tomura gasped to the contact, and squirmed as Dabi pressed his leg against his crotch to keep him pinned to the wall as best as he could. For the second time tonight, Tomura regretted not bringing his gloves with him, and he began to panic, as he didn’t know what to do with his hands. But as soon as Dabi caught a glimpse of that anxiety his red eyes, he took charge, bringing his hands to Tomura’s to close them into fists, and guiding his arms around his neck.

“Hold me like that,” Dabi whispered against the scarred lips. “Just hold me like that, okay? Just hold me. Hold me.”

Tomura nodded eagerly, biting his lips and closing his eyes as soon as Dabi’s hands went back under his shirt, returning to their eager exploration. His fingers were incredibly dextrous, tracing the lines of his stomach, the shape of his ribs, and eventually travelling all the way up to his nipples.

“D-Dabi!” he gasped, squirming against the wall.

“I’ve got you,” Dabi simply whispered.

They were both vaguely aware, in the back of their mind, that they were still technically in a public place, but it was hard to stop when everything about the other was so incredibly intoxicating. Dabi began to suck on Tomura’s neck.

“Can I …” he began to ask, out of breath, “is it … is it okay if I live some mark?”

Tomura nodded eagerly, but Dabi still wanted a proper oral response, so he waited. But once he heard Tomura whispering a soft “yes, yes, do it please” directly into his ear, he began to kiss, suck, lick and bite the pale and sensitive skin. Tomura’s neck was one of his favourite spot to play with just because how responsive it made him. It got even better when he felt Tomura’s fingers tentatively playing with the tip of his hair. He loved when Tomura touched his hair.

“You look so fucking hot tonight,” Dabi whispered against Tomura’s pulse. “So fucking pretty, so fucking cute, so fucking sexy … of course everyone is looking at you. Of course, everyone wants to touch you as I do. But they can’t. They fucking can’t because you’re mine, you’re my kitten, my darling, my baby, my boyfriend … I’m the only one for you.”
“Yes,” Tomura moaned in response. “Yes, you are. You’re, fuck, you’re the only one, and you’re the man of my dreams I’m …”

Tomura couldn’t even finish his sentence. They were both painfully hard by now, and Dabi had just started to grind his crotch against his. It might have been on accident because of how close they were but it didn't matter. Tomura immediately bucked his hips in response, desperate to get more of that delicious friction. Judging by the way his blue widened, Dabi wasn't expecting that. Tomura didn't expect that from himself either, but it didn’t matter. He was still high from all the events of the night, from the energy of the show, from their conversation with Stain, and from Dabi’s mere presence. He wasn’t even sure of how they got there, feverishly rubbing against each other in the wings of one of the biggest concert hall in town when they were just casually talking with their friends only a few minutes ago.

“Hey … hey baby, wait …” Dabi suddenly whispered, snapping Tomura out of his thoughts. “Maybe we should … maybe we should slow down for a bit, or I think I’m gonna … uuuuh …”

Tomura, still intoxicated by his own euphoria, cut him off, also with a whisper: “Let’s do it.”

Dabi was still pressing him hard against the wall, but he stopped kissing his neck to look at him in the eyes. He didn’t answer right away, he was looking at Tomura both because how beautifully fucked up he looked right now and because he was trying to read his expression.

“Let’s do … what?” Dabi eventually asked.

“You know what,” Tomura laughed.

He tried to hook one of his legs around Dabi’s hips to make his point. But even though Dabi smiled and grabbed his leg to keep it in place, he didn’t resume to kissing.

“Well,” Dabi chuckled, “I think someone is a little high on adrenaline right now. I can’t blame you, but I don’t think that you know what you’re saying right now …”

“I do!” Tomura protested, running his hands through Dabi’s hair, just how he knew he liked it. “I’m ready Dabi. I love you and I want you. I never wanted you so bad and my entire life. I want you to … I want to have sex with you. I want you inside me, here and now.”
Dabi couldn’t repress the shiver that ran through him when he heard those words. Tomura probably didn’t even realise how much he was controlling himself right now, how hard it was for him to stay in control when he had his boyfriend so beautifully fucked up, pressed hard and close against his body and making those sounds. They had spent weeks talking about sex over the phone, and now, all that built-up desire was burning inside of him ready to explode. But, he also knew that the same energy was running through Tomura right now and was probably clouding his thoughts and his judgement. The boy wasn’t drunk or drugged in any way, but his pupils were still blown, making his usually bright red eyes look dark.

Dabi lovingly ran his free hand from Tomura’s hair, down his face and jawline, against his throat, and down against his collarbone. He bit his lips, seeing the boy twisting his body to lean into the touch as a cat would.

“I want you to,” Dabi said with a raspy voice. “Believe me when I tell you that it’s taking all of my willpower to not take you against that wall right this second.”

Tomura’s gasped, making his collarbone heave beautifully against Dabi’s hand.

“But,” Dabi continued. “We’re not gonna do that.”

“Why not?” Tomura whined, trying to move his hips against Dabi’s and to bring him closer with his arms.

“Well first of all,” Dabi said, squeezing his leg to keep him in place, “because you’re a virgin and neither of us has any lube with him right now.”

Tomura immediately stopped his wriggling and turned crimson. It was hard to tell because of the lighting, but Dabi knew him well enough to see it instantly. He always looked so cute when he was embarrassed, Dabi couldn’t help but smile when he tried to look away to avoid his eyes. He gently grabbed his chin with his fingers to force him to look at him again.

“Hey, don’t shy away from me. That’s okay.”

Tomura was still furiously blushing, but he didn’t fight Dabi’s hold and let him guide his face forward again. He looked so cute like this Dabi suddenly got an idea. He definitely wasn’t going to fuck Tomura right now, but if they were both quick enough, they could still have a little bit of fun, just like that one morning in Tomura’s bed.
“The other reason why I won’t fuck you right now,” Dabi continued, pressing himself a little harder against Tomura, “is that I don’t want our first time to be like this.”

He spread Tomura’s leg a little wider and went back to grinding him against him, just like he was doing earlier. The friction made Tomura’s face twitch.

“I get why you want this baby. Trust me, I really want it too. The rush of adrenaline, the light, the place, and the fact that we’re kind of in a public place right now … this is all so fucking hot. And maybe we’ll do that someday, but this won’t be our first time together.”

Dabi had picked up a steady pace right now, and Tomura frowned lightly, confused by the dissonance between Dabi’s words and Dabi’s action. But his body was still responding for him, his cock getting harder and harder in his pants, his eyes clouding with desire, and his head spinning with lust.

“Here’s what we can do right now baby. I can slide my hand inside these super, super, super sexy leather pants you’re wearing. I can slide my hand inside your underwear to grab your cock and take care of you. If you’d let me, I can even pull out my own cock to press them together, and to take care of both of us at the same time. We’re both really hard so it will be quick. Would like that, Tomura?”

As he spoke, Dabi brought his hand to Tomura’s crotch to gently caress his clothed erection. Tomura tightened his grip in Dabi’s hair. His breathing was getting louder and louder, but he still tried to compose himself enough to give his boyfriend a proper answer, because he knew well enough that Dabi wouldn’t do anything without his verbal consent. And Tomura really needed Dabi to do something right now.

“Yes, please.”

Dabi kissed him and reached out for the zipper of his pants as he did. Tomura moaned against his lips, and Dabi kept their foreheads pressed together as he opened the leather pants, and continued talking.

“I would suggest you to be quiet,” he laughed, “but I think it’s too late for that.”

Just as he said he would, Dabi slid his hand inside of Tomura’s underwear and reached out for his
cock. The mere contact almost made Tomura scream, but he bit his lips at the last second.

“I’ve got you,” Dabi whispered.

*I know,* Tomura wanted to answer, but he just couldn’t say any words right now or he would be way too loud. Dabi’s hands fitted so perfectly around him, it was enough to drive him crazy. It wasn’t what he initially wanted, *but god,* this was more than enough.

“I know you wanted to do more,” Dabi said as he began to tease him. “But we can’t have our first time like this. Do you want to know why?”

Tomura nodded, staring directly into Dabi’s eyes. These eyes were his anchor right now, everything else happening around him was so crazy; he needed that familiar blue to stay sane. Although, when he heard Dabi reaching out for his own zipper, he knew it was all going to be a matter of seconds.

“We can’t have our first time like this,” Dabi continued, “because when we actually have sex for the first time, I don’t want it to be rushed. I don’t want to do it urgently with all of our clothes still on and the risk of someone people walking on us.”

Dabi brought their cocks together squeezing them both with one hand. The mere contact was already so much that Tomura didn’t even dare to look down at it. He was already so on edge that he just knew that he would faint if he looked at his member pressed against Dabi’s. So he stayed focus on Dabi’s face, their foreheads still pressed together, as Dabi kept talking.

“Tomura, when I will make love to you for the first time, it’s going to be *slow.* It will be in a comfortable quiet place, somewhere where no one can reach us. We will have a soft and large bed, with headboard, just in case we want to try some things.”

Dabi was now jerking them both together, and Tomura couldn’t stop the litany of moans that escaped his mouth. It was like two stimulations at the same time, he felt closer to Dabi than he had ever felt before and even though that could have been enough, Dabi also kept saying all these wonderful things. It all sounded like a long beautiful promise.

“I’ll bring you to that place, and I’ll take off your clothes. I’ll do that slowly too. It will take me hours to do so because I will be kissing every inch of your bare skin as you reveal yourself to me. And then … then I’ll see you naked for the first time, and I’ll probably want to write a thousand
songs about your body, but I will restrain myself. I will keep them in my mind for now, and I will lie you on the bed instead.”

Tomura was so fucking close right now, but he didn’t want this to stop. He wanted Dabi to keep talking; he wanted to stay pressed against him forever and ever. But he could tell that Dabi was close too. He was jerking them faster and faster, his body was trembling and his face was twitching in beautiful ways.

“I’ll lie you on your back and I’ll just … I’ll just admire you for a while. I will touch you and kiss you everywhere, and when it will get too much, I will take off my clothes. I won’t be as slow this time, but still slow enough to make you wait. And when I’ll be naked too I’ll … I’ll just …”

Dabi was struggling to finish his thoughts now. Tomura was looking at him with such eyes right now, like he was the most beautiful thing in the world, like he had waited for him and only him his entire life like he was the only one who could ever make him feel the way he felt right now. Like I’m the man of his dreams. Just like he said. He was jerking them as fast he could right now.

“I’ll just lie on top of you. And we will be so close then, skin against skin, bodies against bodies … and I will fucking cherish you for hours, and tease you, and kiss you, and caress you, and praise you before I even get inside of …”

He couldn’t even finish his sentence. Tomura came all over his hand, and the feeling and sight of Tomura’s ecstasy were enough to make Dabi come right after him. They both let out a choked gasp, keeping it as quiet as they possibly could in the circumstances, riding that high together, not losing eye contact for even a second. It was the first time they came together like this, and the only thing they wanted now was to do it again and again for years.

Eventually, the adrenaline wore off after a few minutes. Their breathing calmed down and their minds were able to focus again. Tomura finally let go of Dabi’s hair and let his hands carefully slide down each sides of his face, caressing the lines of his scars with the tip of his fingers.

“Fuck …” Tomura eventually said. “That was … that was fucking amazing.”

“If you think that’s amazing, I can’t wait to see you react to the real deal.”

Dabi was trying to sound cocky right now, but he was just as fucked up as his boyfriend was. Tomura looked so incredible right now, with eye shadow even more smudged than before, his lips
still pink and lustrous from all the kissing, his neck covered in red marks, his hair all over the place, and especially with that blissful smile.

With his free hand, Dabi reached out for tissues in his back pocket, and he proceeded to clean up the mess between them. It took him a minute because he was careful around their overstimulated members. After that, he cleaned his own hand and they both pulled their members back in their underwear.

“How are you feeling?” he asked Tomura. “Was that okay?”

“God, it was more than okay … was I not clear enough? Because I feel like I made that clear enough. Was it, uh, was it good for you? Did I do good?”

“Oh god yes, oh my god, you were amazing! It just kind of feels like we went from zero to one hundred on this one, you know? So I just want to be sure you don’t regret anything.”

Tomura tried to genuinely think about it for a second. He completely understood where Dabi was coming from and why he was a little worried. They had only really experimented with sex together once, and it had been in the comfort and safety of Tomura’s bed, so this was … completely different, to say the least. And yet, he couldn’t help but feel like this had been a very natural continuation of their journey together. It had been delightful, thrilling, amazing, and somehow, it had made complete sense for them.

“No regrets,” Tomura promised, giving Dabi a quick kiss on the lips. “I was comfortable and happy the entire time, and I’ll gladly do it again.”

“Good,” Dabi smiled, kissing him back.

On their way back to the main hall, they both couldn’t help checking if any member of the staff was looking at them weirdly. They were pretty sure that they had had their fun far enough in the back so that no one would have heard them, but they couldn’t possibly be sure. But, the few people who were still around didn’t seem to pay them any mind at all. Besides, it was already close to 2 am right now, so the place wasn’t exactly crowded.

“I can’t believe we did this,” Tomura whispered to Dabi. “I mean, I’m super glad we did, but I still can’t quite believe it.”
I can’t believe that I did this. It was still crazy to him that something so out of his comfort zone had felt so easy and natural. But I guess that I shouldn’t be that surprised by now. Everything I do with Dabi feels easy and natural. Even things like this.

Dabi grabbed his hand and kissed it. He still couldn’t figure out what he had ever done to deserve Tomura, but if the universe had decided to bless him with this cute, funny, smart, sexy boyfriend who was just as into wild and passionate semi-public sex as he was into soft and tender lovemaking, he wasn’t gonna question it.

They made their way back to bar, where Magne, Toga, Spinner and Jin were all drinking and laughing. They hadn’t technically been gone for that long, but they still braced themselves for whatever suggestive comments the group was going to throw at them. It was all fairly predictable by now really, Toga saw them first and made some suggestive finger movements, Jin and SPinner snickered and pointed at their messy hairs, and Magne had to calm everyone down.

“Giran isn’t here?” Tomura asked, ignoring Jin and Spinner who were making loud slurping noises next to him.

“No, he texted to tell us than he was going to talk some more with Stain,” Magne told him with a smile. “I think we’re gonna have some exciting news soon.”

“Well, only if Mr. Jealous over there can keep it together,” Toga said, throwing her arm around Dabi’s neck. “Just so you know Dabi, if you refuse to work with Stain because he flirted with Tomura, I’m quitting the band and starting my solo career.”

“Chill, okay?” Dabi sighed. “It’s still Stain, and he is still my favourite artist, of course, we’re gonna work with him. Besides, I think he got the memo about Tomura and I, right baby?”

Tomura kissed Dabi’s cheek as a response. That crazy night ended surprisingly quietly. Everyone finished their drink, and they all walked back to Spinner’s van to make their way home. It was getting late, and tomorrow afternoon was Tomura’s oral presentation.

“Fuuuuuuuck, I had almost forgotten about that,” Spinner said, sitting behind the wheel. “How are you feeling, dude?”

“I … don’t know.”
Tomura could tell he had some nervousness, and maybe even some anxiety in him right now. But these feelings seemed incredibly small compared with the euphoria and excitement still running through his veins.

“It’s hard to tell right now,” he continued. “Everything will be clearer tomorrow I guess. But it’s not like there is anything else I can do at this point.”

Toga rested her head on his shoulder. Even though she was possibly the loudest person in the world, Toga was also the most empathic and sensitive person Tomura had ever met. He accepted the quiet support, resting his head against hers in return.

Tomura and Dabi went back to their respective homes that night, without Magne needed to tell them like she usually did. The ride home had cooled them off, and even though they were both still thinking about their fun in the wings, they also knew that Tomura needed as much rest as he could possibly get tonight.

“Do you want me to drive you to your university tomorrow?” Dabi asked as they said goodnight down Tomura’s building. “I don’t mind.”

“Thank you but I’ll take the bus. I don’t know if that makes sense, but I feel like I kind of need to go alone to clear my head and be ready, you know?”

“It makes perfect sense.”

“But I wouldn’t mind it if you came to get me after I’m done, around 3pm. Would that be okay? Maybe we can go to that coffee together, the one where we, uh, we had that talk long ago. Next to the gymnasium”

Dabi smiled, and planted a tender kiss on Tomura’s lips, running his hands through his soft and curly hair.

* 

Ten hours later, Tomura was sitting on the most uncomfortable chair in the world, in the corridor next to the room 2D in the building H of his university. He was holding his portfolio tightly against his chest, each muscle in his body contracted so as not to wrinkle the pants that Magne had
carefully ironed for him this morning. The only limbs he allowed himself to move were his legs. His anguish was that they would be numb by the time he was called, and he would be unable to get up. At first, he tried to focus on the large clock hanging on the wall in front of him, thinking that the ticking was maybe going to soothe him like a metronome, but it backfired spectacularly.

So instead, he closed his eyes and tried to relax. So this was it, the moment he had dreaded for months now. It felt so surreal that he couldn’t bring himself to actually be scared. When he had gotten the call telling him that he had been selected for the final round, he had been ecstatic, and the first person he had called to share the news was Dabi. The memory made him smile. They weren’t even together back then, and he still called him.

Tomura tried to think about Dabi. He thought about the things they did together last night, about their hands on each other and their lips connected, and he thought about how good it had felt to come together. He thought about the show and about how amazing it was, and about how good his friends were.

He thought about how good Magne looked in that white suit. He thought about how happy and excited she was yesterday. She was their Big Sis, the mom of the group, and she often felt the need to be the calm and serious one to balance out all of their craziness, so it was always a pleasure whenever she let go of everything. Tomura knew she had had some difficult years before she met Toga and before her transition, but now, she was happy, thriving, and herself. She had picked him up and carried him so many times; he didn’t even dare to think about where he’d be without her.

He thought about how Toga had gently rested her head on his shoulder as a sign of quiet comfort the night before. He thought about that special bond they had, about how she and him could practically read each other’s mind at this point, and about how she could often understand him before he understood himself. She was their sunflower, radiating positive energy wherever she went, warming them all with her beautiful glow. Under all the sparkles and dick jokes, she was actually the wisest of them all. Tomura knew she also had her share of suffering, and yet, she was always smiling and spreading that smile on as many people as she could. She had enlightened some of Tomura’s darkest days.

He thought about Spinner’s excitement last night and about his happy little screams when he had met Stain. He thought about how much his relationship with Spinner had changed since their first meeting. It seemed almost impossible to think that Spinner and him used to dislike each other, that they used to let something as stupid as music tastes get in the way of a beautiful friendship. Tomura had come to realise that Spinner and him were very similar. They were both creators, they both worked hard to achieve a dream that they once thought unreachable. And now, after all of his struggles, Spinner finally had all the success he deserved. And it was Tomura’s turn to try.

He thought about Jin, and about all the weeks they had spent working and studying together for this day. He thought about how Jin’s presence always soothed him, no matter the circumstances.
Jin was undeniably the heart of this group, the glue sticking them together, their guardian and protector. Jin always said he was considering them his family, but he didn’t seem to realise that he was the one who had made them a family in the first place. Jin who was still struggling with his own mental health, who was sometimes still feeling like he was splitting into thousands of pieces with many voices in his head, was the most caring of them all. He was the one who had come to get Tomura when he was crying in that kitchen so long ago, even though he had literally just met him. Jin had so much love inside of him, and he was spreading it every day.

Tomura thought about Sako. He thought about his amazing theatrical dad who had just waltzed into his and Kurogiri’s life one day to spread his magic. Sako had immediately cared for him as a son, even if Tomura hadn’t seen it right away, and their bond was getting stronger and stronger every day. He was the daily dose of sparkles and fantasy in their lives, he was a lover and a dreamer, and he wanted nothing more than the joy and happiness of the people surrounding him. He had done everything he could to nurture Tomura’s creativity and love for art, and he had always pushed him to explore the world more while still respecting his boundaries. He was the one who had introduced him to Toga and Magne, and just for that Tomura would always be grateful to him. Just like Sako had brought him all the happiness in the world, Tomura now wanted nothing more than happiness for Kurogiri and him. Nobody deserved it more than them.

He thought about Kurogiri. His father. His dad. He was the first and for a long time the only loving and positive presence in his life. Kurogiri had seen him when everyone else ignored him. He had looked at him in the eyes when everyone was avoiding his gaze. Kurogiri had picked him up with his bare hands when Tomura was nothing more than a bag of sharp pieces broken glass, hurting anyone near him. Together, they had build a home and filled it with love, care, respect, and affection. Kurogiri had ripped him away from the abyss of fear, anger, loneliness and suffering. They both cared about each other more than anything; they were the constant in each other’s life now and forever. They were family. Everything good that had ever happened in Tomura’s life always started with Kurogiri.

And of course, he thought about Dabi. The man of his dream. The love of his life. The brightest star in the sky and the most beautiful man in the world. He loved Dabi so much, he never would have imagined that he had so much love stored inside of him; he had never dared to hope that he could ever experience a love like this one. For almost a decade, Tomura had been building walls around his heart, and although some people had managed to jump over that wall a few times, Dabi was the one who had taken that wall down brick by brick, one day at the time. Dabi. Dabi Dabi Dabi. There were no more words needed in Tomura’s mind to describe him. Just his name meant it all.

Tomura was still sitting there, washed over by the warm feeling of love and comfort, when his phone buzzed. He looked at it nonchalantly, expecting an umpteenth text message from the group wishing him luck, but when he saw the name on the screen, his eyes went wide.

*Is that ... is that really ...*
He read the phone number underneath the name just to be sure. It was a number he learned by hearth as a kid, but that he hadn’t used in almost a decade. But even so, as he opened the text and read it, the phrasing was just so familiar that there were no more doubts in his mind.

Received at 1.27pm:

HELLO TOMURA MY BOY!!!

I HOPE YOU ARE DOING WELL. GRAN TORINO TOLD ME THAT YOU HAVE A BIG ART PRESENTATION TODAY, AND SO I JUST WANTED TO WISH YOU LUCK AND TELL YOU THAT I’M PROUD OF YOU!!!

I’M DEEPLY SORRY THAT I HAVEN’T TALKED TO YOU IN SUCH A LONG TIME. KNOWING YOU, YOU PROBABLY AREN’T EVEN MAD AT ME, BUT YOU’D HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO BE. THINGS HAVE BEEN COMPLICATED LATELY AND I HAD A LOT ON MY PLATE. BUT I PROMISE THAT WE WILL SEE EACH OTHER SOON, AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WE WILL HAVE A LOT OF THINGS TO TALK ABOUT.

FOR NOW, JUST KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU AND THAT I AM PROUD OF YOU

GOOD LUCK TODAY!!! I KNOW YOU WILL GO BEYOND!!! PLUS ULTRA!!!

TOSHINORI

Tomura read that message again and again. He could practically hear his voice as he read it, and it was actually quite hard to not imagine him screaming because of all those caps. But then again, he had always been pretty loud. Tomura smiled. I wonder what would happen if I ever put Toga and him in the same room. The image made him weirdly emotional.

For a long time, All Might … or rather Toshinori, had been his only family with Kurogiri. But then, for some reason that Tomura didn’t quite understand yet, they had drifted apart. For a long time, Tomura had blamed himself for it, thinking that he was just destined to push everyone away from him eventually. But now, years later, there was one thing he finally understood: Toshinori Yagi was a very complicated person. Possibly even more complicated than Tomura himself. He didn’t know what to make of that fact yet, but it somehow helped him to deal with his absence. So now, to imagine the man who had been his first family meeting his current family … yeah, that was nice.
“Shigaraki Tomura?”

Tomura looked up from his phone. A woman was standing in the doorway, smiling at him kindly. She had long maroon hair and brown eyes, and a warm voice that he recognized.

“I’m Akizuki Maria,” she said, presenting her hand to him. “We spoke on the phone a while back, I was the one who gave you the results.”

“Oh, yes of course!”

Tomura very carefully shook her hand with his pinkie up. They exchanged a few polite formalities, but he knew why she had come to get him. **It’s time.** He followed her for a few minutes through the corridors until the reached the class 1A. The entire time, Tomura was holding his cell phone his the pocket of his sweater, as if it was now infused with his friend’s and Toshinori’s powers.

“Break a leg,” Akizuki Maria whispered to him with a smile as he walked inside.

Tomura knew that room; it was one of the biggest in the campus. In the back, there was a long line of tables with six people sitting behind them, with their back to the large windows. **So these are the people who are gonna judge me today, uh?** They looked … surprisingly ordinary. Tomura was feeling his heart beating like crazy against his chest but, surprisingly, not itch. Or if there was one, it was so faint that he could barely feel it. That’s when Tomura realised something incredible.

*I’m really, really, really nervous.*

**But, I’m also really, really, really excited.**

It was weird to feel so distinctly these two different sensations inside of him. And it wasn’t even like the two feelings were fighting with each other; they actually seemed to coexist quite peacefully. **I’m anxious, but I also want this. I really, really, really want this. All this time I’ve been telling myself that I don’t expect to win this, that it doesn’t matter if I don’t succeed because I’ve already been far enough … but the truth is, I really want this.**

Admitting these things to himself was like a weight off his chest. His heart was still beating like
crazy, but his entire body felt lighter, and he was surprisingly easy to make his way to the tables in front of him.

“Shigaraki Tomura, is that right?” the old man sitting in the centre asked him.

“That’s right.” Yes, that right. That’s my name. That’s who I am.

Tomura had thought a lot about his friends and his family this morning, he had thought about every single one of them only a few minutes earlier while waiting for his turn. But right now, he was only thinking about himself, and it felt surprisingly right. He loved them more than anything in the world, but this moment right now, it was all about him. About what he wanted, what he was capable of, and about who he was. A shiver ran down his spine.

“Alright,” the man said. “Let’s see what you have in store for us!”

Tomura smiled. This is my moment. This is what I can do right now. And he opened his portfolio.

Chapter End Notes

A crime has been committed.
I’ve posted a chapter without the dads making an appearance.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME D:

It’s really funny to come back to that fic after everything that happened in the manga. Like I said before, I won’t address most of these reveals and development because I’m gonna stick with the story I planned all the way back in 2018. So it’s even more of an AU than before!

I hope that you enjoyed this chapter! As always, I’m a little anxious about whether the crew is still “in character” because it’s been so long since the last chapter, sometimes it takes me some time to get back into the groove. But whenever I do, I just want to keep writing non-stop for thousands of pages! I love them!

Happy New year to you all! I wish you the best! :D

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